

hardy began to send their children to the Lemmel School.

On *Sivan* 9, 1847, the Orthodox community gathered in the Churvah *shul*. Yerushalayim's preeminent leadership graced the eastern wall of the *shul*. *Horav Yeshayah Bardaky, zl*, led the group, as fifty *Sifrei Torah* were removed from the Aron *HaKodesh* and carried by the *Rabbanim* during the recitation of the *Yud Gimmel Middos*, Thirteen Attributes of Mercy. Other *Rabbanim* held black lit candles in their hands. *Horav Yosef Landau, zl*, grandson of the *Noda B'Yehudah* and son-in-law of the *Pe'as HaShulchan*, recited the malediction against anyone who would send his child to the secular Lemmel School. At that moment, Suleiman Machluf, who was observing the proceedings in extreme anger, lost it. He grabbed the candle held by the holy *Horav Yonah Leib Mendelson, zl* (one of the premier disciples of the *Chasam Sofer*), and flung it at the *tzaddik's* face! *Rav Yonah's* beard caught on fire, and his face was singed, but *Baruch Hashem*, due to quick thinking on his part, he was able miraculously to prevent greater injury to himself. *Horav Raphael Abulafia, zl, Rosh Yeshiva* of Bais Kel, the *yeshiva* for *mekubalim*, noticed *Rav Yonah's* singed beard and, upon hearing the reason said, "I do believe with all certainty that Heaven will intervene and the perpetrator of this terrible indignity will pay *middah k'neged middah*, measure for measure."

Sixty years later... the head nurse at the Misgav Ladach Hospital was let go, based upon the trumped-up charges that her negligence was the cause of the terrible and painful death of a patient under her care. This was a righteous woman who used her earnings as a nurse to support her husband's learning in *Kollel*. Her devotion to her patients was legendary. When a tragedy occurs, however, someone must be blamed. As head nurse, she was that "someone." Apparently, an elderly patient by the name of Suleiman Machluf was admitted following the loss of his hand to a stray bullet during World War I. As a result, he was paralyzed in part of his body due to infection from the wound. (Interestingly, it was his throwing hand.)

Suleiman enjoyed reading novels written by his *Haskalah* heroes, and, as a result, he would argue with his roommate who wanted to go to sleep early. Suleiman had difficulty falling asleep; therefore, he read until he was exhausted. To help him, the head nurse set up a wooden partition, upon which she had a shelf made for the kerosene lamp to burn and illuminate the area for Suleiman, while not depriving his roommate of sleep. One night (no one was able to figure out how it happened), the lamp fell upon Suleiman. His bed clothes immediately caught fire, as well as his body. Screams of terror shattered the peace of the hospital ward. By the time that help reached Suleiman, his charred body was

evidence that he had sustained a painful death. Rav Abulafia's portent sadly came true. (It is important to emphasize that writing this story is by no way an expression of revenge that this person suffered. No Jew, regardless of his deeds, should suffer. Hashem metes out punishment as He sees fit. Our only purpose is to demonstrate that raising a hand or any other display of disrespect against a Torah scholar will not go unrequited.)

### Va'ani Tefillah

ויקח קרנך – ונצלתנו מהרה למען שימך  
**Shemecha. And redeem us quickly for Your sake.**

When Hashem places us in a given situation, it is for a purpose. Thus, when we pray for redemption from the situation in which we are placed, we must be certain that Hashem's goal for us has been fulfilled. Otherwise, asking for redemption undermines the very purpose of our exile. When we pray to Hashem to redeem us from exile, we are actually petitioning Him to help us make use of our spiritual potential, so that we can leave our exile sooner. We do not ask Him to end it permanently, but that we should be able to accept its challenges. When we affirm the challenges of the exile, we have begun the redemptive process. The purpose of exile is for us to realize that we are distant from Hashem. Our desire to return initiates the road to redemption, with this quest serving as its catalyst. This is the meaning of redemption for Your sake. If our sole goal is simply to leave the exile, then it is self-satisfying. If our goal is for Your sake, then we do not necessarily have to leave exile – only to take stock and change. Such redemption is for Hashem's sake.

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Peninim is published weekly by *Peninim Publications* in conjunction with the *Hebrew Academy of Cleveland*, 1860 S. Taylor Rd. Cleveland, Ohio 44118

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### Parashas Korach

תשע"ז

פרשת קרח

ויקח קרנך

**Korach took, (separated himself). (16:1)**

Korach had it all, but, it was not enough for him. He wanted more, or he simply did not want Moshe *Rabbeinu* to have it. Korach was a clever dissident who was able to attract a powerful following of supporters. First, he told the people that he was acting on their behalf. Since he already had it all, he had no need for personal leadership. He was taking a stand for "others." He felt that the people were being exploited, and he was coming to their rescue. *Kol ha'eidah kulam kedoshim*, "The entire congregation is holy"; "Hashem is in their midst." Why do you, Moshe, set yourself apart?

Such a caring and loving leader-to-be had only the people's best interests on his mind. His agenda was not personal. It was about *Klal Yisrael*. He wanted to make them "great." Veritably, Korach did not really care about the people. He had one goal: to destroy everything that Moshe *Rabbeinu* had established. He was obsessed with taking Moshe down. He knew quite well that Hashem would never allow "His" Moshe to falter. Why was Korach doing this? Moshe had never hurt him, so, it could not be revenge. Envy? Quite possibly, but Korach was way "up there," a blessed and overly fortunate man. Why did he envy Moshe?

Korach was an unhappy, negative person who – regardless of how successful he was; how much he possessed – was never happy. If someone else had it – he had to have it! He could not tolerate when someone had something which he did not have. In today's vernacular, this is an apt description of a malcontent: an unhappy, never satisfied person. Regardless of how smart and clever a person may be, his obsession with others diminishes his ability to enjoy what he personally has achieved, because he is so busy begrudging others their success. This is a person who measures his own success by his friend's achievement. He is envious of everyone – even his own children!

Such a disgruntled person is never happy, unable to offer a compliment, because he views every achievement negatively, always comparing it to that of others. Such a parent judges his child's success relative to his potential – which, on the whole, can be a powerful motivator if used positively. If, however, it becomes a parent's tool/medium for constantly putting his child down, it reflects a deep-rooted, harmful illness. The parent who demands that his child be the best in the class is of the same short-sighted, miserable school of thought. Children thrive on compliments – not on

parental negativity.

Korach was afflicted with an even deeper morose. It is one thing to demand more of oneself or one's children; it is completely another to ignore one's blessings. Korach's inner-craving for what others possessed, his envy of those around him, his self-dissatisfaction, blinded him from seeing, and, thus, enjoying his own wonderful blessings. His myopic vision was always focused outward, degrading himself and those closest to him, when he saw that someone else was one step ahead. Driven by jealousy, he was never happy with personal accomplishment. Even when he was on top, he was looking behind him to see who was catching up with him.

We all know a "Korach." They are divisive people, who are harmful to a community. They wrap themselves in a façade of competitiveness, always striving for a more ambitious position, when, in reality, their behavior is nothing more than a cover-up for bitter discontent. These people find fault in everyone but themselves. As Korach erred because of his "eye," (He saw the illustrious lineage descending from him; thus, he thought he could not go wrong.) likewise, these modern-day Korachs turn a blind eye to their own failings.

Korach's antagonism towards others stemmed from his own feelings of dejection and discontent. When one is unhappy with himself, he turns on others. Self-loathing generates animus towards others, because the antagonist must focus his hatred on someone other than himself. Thus, it is one's failure to see himself in the best possible light that creates the Korach-like attitude that causes us to turn against others – often our closest friends and relatives. Hatred brooks no discrimination. It is an all-purpose, all-inclusive deviation from what is proper and correct. Hatred directed against oneself, but expressed towards others, is the saddest form of animus, since the individual hurts others when, in fact, the one whom he really wants to hurt is himself. The consequences of such deviant hatred are outlined in *Parashas Korach*.

ויקח קרנך

**Korach took (separated himself). (16:1)**

Korach was the first prominent demagogue to create a rift in *Klal Yisrael* when he impugned Moshe *Rabbeinu's* leadership, and, by extension, created a mutiny against Hashem. *Targum Onkeles* defines *machlokes*, controversy, as: *pilug*; a split; a breach; a rift. *Klal Yisrael* is supposed to live in harmony. We must strive to emulate Hashem, Who is *Echad*, One. Thus, when we live together as one, we give satisfaction to Hashem. *Chazal* distinguish

between a *machlokes*, which is *l'shem Shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven, and one which is not. A *machlokes l'shem Shomayim* is a dispute in which each party seeks the truth. They each want to meld together to reach an acceptable conclusion which will please Heaven. They seek to become one. In contrast, in a *machlokes* that is not for the sake of Heaven, each disputant seeks to satisfy himself. It is not two seeking to become one; rather, it is one seeking to become the only one.

Why do some people thrive on dispute? Some take arguments personally. Thus, in their minds, to lose means to be disgraced. They must win. Others do not care about what is right – as long as they are considered to be right. Others simply refuse to change their beliefs – regardless of how often they are proven wrong – while yet others feel that capitulating is a threat to their ego. Then there are those who just argue for the sake of argument.

*Machlokes* has claimed some of our brightest and finest, as they become embroiled in the malignancy of battle from which neither side emerges unscathed. Even he who wins ultimately loses. Usually, it is not as if “A” wants personally to be at the helm; he just wants to make certain that “B” does not achieve the position. One of the most dangerous aspects of *machlokes* is the *l'shem Shomayim* validation, whereby each disputant has convinced himself that he is battling to preserve the dignity of Heaven. Each one has convinced himself that he is acting in the best interests of the community. For this reason, he has found self-justification to commit just about every act of degeneracy in order to impugn his competitor from achieving his would-be prominence. He has nothing to gain other than to see the other fellow lose.

All of the above aptly describe Korach, who was not only spiritually distinguished – of enviable lineage, with more wealth than he knew how to handle – but he was also considered a *pikeach*, wise, clever man, who was able to discern the truth and give advice. While all of the above is true, the thought of Moshe *Rabbeinu* serving as leader instead of him drove him to a premature grave.

Sadly, the Korach debacle has repeated itself throughout the ages, as whole communities have been torn apart by the scourge of *machlokes*. Potentially great leaders have been personally destroyed as they occupied themselves in destroying others. In the end, no one but the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, emerges victorious, having destroyed yet another great Jew. Anything which is the result of a *machlokes* cannot really endure – and, if it does, it is, at best, weak, and its leaders do not wield the same level of respect as those who have waited. How could anyone respect someone who has achieved his position through force?

ויקחו קרוזו בן יצהר בן קהת בן לוי

**Korach ben Yitzhar, ben Kehas, ben Levi, took (separated himself). (16:1)**

Noticeably, Yaakov *Avinu's* name is omitted from Korach's lineage. *Rashi* comments that it was the Patriarch himself who prayed that his name be deleted from anything connected to Korach. Simply, Yaakov wanted no association whatsoever, even by name, with

Korach. This, of course, does not deny the fact that everyone knows that Yaakov was Levi's father, and, in turn, the Patriarch of Korach's lineage, but the deletion of Yaakov's name declares that no part of Korach's nefarious behavior had its source in Yaakov. Yaakov is the epitome of *emes*, truth. *Machlokes*, controversy, by its very nature, is founded in *sheker*, falsehood.

*Horav Berel Povarsky, Shlita*, posits that it is specifically due to a lack of truth in any of Korach's words that Moshe *Rabbeinu* responded so negatively to their claims. For any of the other communal sins perpetrated by the nation, our quintessential leader petitioned Hashem to forgive them. The Korach debacle did not receive such benevolence. In fact, Moshe prayed that not a single member of the Korach mutiny survive. When an endeavor possesses not a smidgeon of truth, it cannot endure and should not be permitted to survive.

Furthermore, Yaakov's prayer that his name not be included with regard to *machlokes* seems a bit circumscribed. Why did he not pray that there not be controversy – at all? *Horav Moshe Landinski, zl*, explains this pragmatically. The Patriarch was acutely aware that the harmful effects of dispute were unavoidable and that dispute was, sadly, a part of the fiber of the community. As human beings, we are given to envy, arrogance and strife. The day that people unquestionably respect one another and overcome their inner tendency to be jealous of others has yet to arrive. Thus, Yaakov's prayer was realistic: “I cannot stop the dispute, but please do not include my name.”

The *Chidushei HaRim* questions the Torah's mention of Dasan and Aviram, Moshe's nemeses, when no other names other than Korach's (On *ben Peles*) (not even the 250 members of the *Sanhedrin*) are mentioned. There seems to be a premium on names. The *Rebbe* explains that the 250 members of the *Sanhedrin* had reason to benefit from the dispute. They sought personal *kavod*, honor. Being men of distinction, they wanted more. Dasan and Aviram were not *Leviim*. They had absolutely nothing to gain. Hashem might overlook the sin of one who has acted out of a desire to satisfy his *yetzer hora*, evil inclination. Dasan and Aviram, however, were in this *l'shem Shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven (so they claimed). One who enters the fray of controversy for no personal reason other than *l'shem Shomayim* is not forgiven, there is no *l'shem Shomayim* in *machlokes*. The two do not go together. A true *machlokes l'shem Shomayim* is not a *machlokes*, period; rather it is two opinions that run counter to one another, with each one seeking the truth. When truth is the beacon which guides both positions, then they are really one position with two perspectives.

רב לכם בני לוי

**There is much to you, Bnei Levi. (16:7)**

*Rashi* asks: Korach was a *pikeach*, clever person. What is it that he saw which led him to this *shtus*, folly? (What did he think? He obviously knew that what he was undertaking was mutinous. Did he think that he would emerge unscathed?) *Eino hitato* – His eye led him to error. He saw a great chain of descendants emerging from him (referring to Shmuel *HaNavi*, the twenty-four

*mishmaros*, watches, which officiated in the *Bais Hamikdash*. Among them were included *Neviim*, prophets, who possessed *Ruach HaKodesh*, Divine inspiration). Korach ruminated to himself, “Is it possible that all of this greatness is destined to be established from me, even if I will remain silent?” He joined in partnership with others, assuring that, even if the others would perish, one could live – and that would be him. (It was Aharon, but Korach was so drunk with power, seeking glory that he failed to realize that it might be Aharon that would live, and they would all die.) Korach did not see well (this was his error), for his sons repented from their original complicity in the mutiny and lived. It was their illustrious descendants whom Korach had seen – only he did not realize that the lineage was made possible by his sons' last minute repentance.

The *Midrash Tanchuma* is the source of this remarkable, eye-opening understanding of Korach's actions. A clever man made a foolish decision based on short-sightedness, an error in judgment based on the premise that if he took a position antagonistic of Moshe *Rabbeinu*, his sons, whom he had raised, would follow suit. Apparently, he did not think that his sons had minds of their own. He had educated them to follow their father (which, under normal circumstances, is a good thing). Wherein lay his mistake? Why did his sons not follow in their father's path? (Veritably, they did, but, at the last moment, they repented.)

I think that Korach (as all parents should realize) should have understood that, while education is important and certainly sets the tone for children to be made aware of their parents' principles and guidelines, personal example is also a major (and, possibly, an overriding) factor in education. Korach's sons saw their father break the rules by rebelling against Moshe, impugning the integrity of his leadership, thereby questioning the Almighty's decision to establish Moshe as His agent to lead the nation. When children see a father break the rules (whenever he sees fit), they have no qualms about doing the same when it suits them. Korach's sons respected their father and followed him to infamy – until they realized that this was not the way to go. One does not rebel against Moshe; one does not question Hashem. How does a son, however, rebel against his father? He does not – usually – unless he sees his father rebelling! When Korach decided to dispute Moshe, he was, by his personal example, teaching his sons: when it suits “me” all bets are off, and I will even rebel against Moshe. This being the case, we understand why Korach's sons broke ranks with their father and repented. After all, this is what he had taught them to do.

ויאמר משה בזאת תדעו כי ד' שכחוני לנשות את כל המעשים האלה

**Moshe said, “Through this, shall you know that Hashem sent me to perform all these acts.” (16:28)**

Moshe *Rabbeinu* took an enormous chance when he implied to Korach that Hashem would back him up (with a miracle). What would have happened if Hashem had not provided Moshe with a miraculous intervention? Moshe was placing his position as *shaliach* Hashem, the agent of the Almighty, in jeopardy. Why did

he do this? *Horav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zl*, explains that, with Korach's rebellion, Moshe saw and was compelled to acknowledge that, sadly, there were Jews who still questioned Moshe's Divine mandate to serve as *Klal Yisrael's* leader. If this was the case, then all of the Torah that he had transmitted to them had little value. The first principle with regard to *mesiras haTorah* is that Moshe *Rabbeinu* was Hashem's agent in giving the Torah, and its interpretation is based upon his teaching, since he learned Torah directly from Hashem. To impugn the integrity of his leadership is to undermine the Torah and its Divine Author.

Moshe was compelled to ask for a miracle, because the belief in the Torah was dependent upon this. He could not allow people to murmur and question the integrity of his leadership. A leader must “quiet” those who threaten his position. Low murmurs ultimately become loud voices, and, before long, one's position is on shaky ground.

ואשׁ יצאה מאת ד' ותאכל את הזומישים ומאתים אישׁ  
**A flame came forth from Hashem and consumed the two hundred and fifty men. (16:35)**

Any believing Jew is acutely aware of the harmful effect of *machlokes*, controversy. It destroys communities, families, and individuals. It causes people to act in the most offensive and debasing manner. It “allows” them to conjure up a justification for acting with disrespect for individuals who not only deserve our respect, but whom the Torah demands that we respect. All of this is well-known. How many of us “believe” that when we cross the line of respect, regardless of how many reasons we have convinced ourselves we have, when we breach the Torah's perimeter for *derech erez* for a *Rav*, a *Rosh Yeshivah*, a Torah personality, we will ultimately answer for it. It might take time – it might even take a lifetime, but have no illusions, the perpetrator will pay. The following story, recorded in “*Yerushalayim Shel Maalah*,” underscores this verity.

Suleiman Machluf emigrated to Yerushalayim as a young teenager and soon became a protégé of Ludwig Frankel, a secular European émigré, who had established the infamous secular Lemmel School in Yerushalayim. The founding of this school was a major breach into the spiritual panorama of Yerushalayim's Old *Yishuv*. Heralding back to the students of the *Gaan, zl*, of Vilna and the earliest *Chassidic* and Hungarian leaders, the Old *Yishuv* was a holy center within the world's holiest city. To entertain any form of secularism in such a spiritual milieu was an unpardonable incursion into the community's sanctity. Sadly, this not only has not halted the secular streams from attacking the very underpinnings of our faith, it actually has encouraged them to continue their war against the Almighty.

The educational system in the Old *Yishuv* left much to be desired in the way of physical accoutrements. Poverty and hunger were a way of life for the community's spiritually committed, hardy citizens. Nonetheless, they refused to allow any secular incursion into their way of life. There were those, however, who lacked the spiritual fortitude to ignore the blandishments offered by the secularists. As a result, the less spiritually-