

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 36

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KORACH

3rd Tammuz 5775

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 16, verses 1 - 13

- ✚ Korach convinces Dattan and Aviram along with two hundred and fifty other men to create a rebellion, challenging Moshe's and Aaron's leadership."
- ✚ Moshe calms the situation down by suggesting a showdown which will take place the following day, between himself and the rebels. They each have to bring a pan and burn kotores (incense) in them. The rightful leader would be the one whose kotores is accepted by Hashem.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 16, verses 14 - 19

- ✚ Moshe tries to convince Korach, Dattan and Aviram to reconsider the Rebellion but his efforts were rebutted.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 16, verse 20 - Chapter 17, verse 8

- ✚ Everyone turns up the next day to watch the events unfold. Hashem tells Moshe he intends to destroy all the men who still wish to rebel and so he must draw the people back, away from Korach's, Dattan and Aviram's tent to escape punishment.
- ✚ Moshe proclaims if these rebels die like regular men, then Hashem is no longer with me, however if they receive a miraculous death, everyone will know that these men have provoked and angered Hashem.
- ✚ As soon as Moshe finishes speaking, a flame came down from heaven and consumed all the men who had offered up the kotores. At the same time, the ground where the Korach and the remaining rebels were standing opened up and swallowed them alive along with all of their possessions.

R'VI' - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 17, verses 9 - 15

- ✚ Moshe tells Aaron's son Elazar. To serve as a reminder that only Aaron's offspring can bring kotores to Hashem. Hashem would like Elazar to gather up and melt down all the pans used by the rebels and make a covering to go on top of the Aron (Altar).
- ✚ A new rebellion broke out among Bnai Yisrael, this time accusing Moshe and Aaron of smiting down 'the people of Hashem'. As a punishment against those people, Hashem sent down a plague to wipe them out. Aaron intervened by running round the camp, holding burning incense persuading the people to do Teshuva (repent). Despite his efforts 14,700 people still perished in the plague.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 17, verses 16 - 24

- ✚ Aaron's appointment as Kohen Gadol is reconfirmed through the test of the staffs. Every leader of each tribe had to inscribe their names on their staff and place them in the Ohel Moed (tent of meeting). When they came to collect their staffs the following day, Aaron's staff had blossomed and was full of ripened almonds.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 17, verse 25 – Chapter 18, verse 20

- ✚ Aaron's staff is placed in the Holy of Holies to serve as reminder to those who wish to rebel in the future will only accomplish death.
- ✚ The duties of the Kohanim and Levi'im are reaffirmed along with a list of the Kohanim's share in the nations produce and livestock.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 18, verses 21 - 32

- ✚ The laws relating to the Levi'im's share of the nation's produce and the Terumah they must give to the Kohanim are also reiterated.

Haftorah – FIRST BOOK OF SHMUEL (SAMUEL), Chapter 11 Verse 14 to chapter 12, Verse 22

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ Bnai Yisrael summon Shmuel the Navi to appoint a king, so he can rule over them, just like the other nations.
- ✚ Shmuel chastises them for wanting a king, but will adhere to their demands by anointing Shaul (Saul) to become the first king to rule over Israel. However Shmuel points out that everyone, including Shaul will be subject to the Torah and Hashem who is and always will be their true king.

LINK TO SEDRA READING:

- ✚ The sedra speaks about Korach rebelling against the authority of Moshe and Aaron in front of Bnai Yisrael ordering them to step down as leaders. Whereas the Haftorah is the complete reverse. This time it's Bnai Yisrael challenging the leadership with Shmuel who was a descendent of Korach's.
- ✚ While Korach expressed a right to interpret the Torah as he saw fit, Shmuel tells the people that the success of a king and his nation is totally dependent upon the torah and the unquestioned teachings of Moshe.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

Every year when I read through Parshas Korach, I always feel that there seems to be a few important details missing which would have helped to give me a better understanding of what was occurring at that moment in time. For example, let's take the opening verse. Va'yikach Korach... 'Korach took'. Firstly it's grammatically incorrect - it is missing an object: For some reason, the Torah prefers not to tell us what Korach took. Also you might have noticed that Korach does a lot of complaining, yet once again the torah never clarifies what he proposes or any ideas he might have had to improve the situation.

The phrase 'Va'yikach Korach' is so vague that almost every commentator offers a different interpretation. For example: When Korach confronted Moshe, The S'forno explains he took 250 'national leaders with him.' The Ibn Ezra holds that Korach took 'other people with him'; and Rashi says he just took himself.

Regardless of whose interpretation you think is the most accurate, a more basic question remains: why does the Torah begin this Parsha in such an ambiguous manner? After all, wouldn't the Torah's message be clearer had it been more specific?

Let's begin by finding out what was going on here. Korach, Dattan and Aviram, along with 250 other men all unite behind a common cause. Mainly, their joint criticism of Moshe and Aaron's leadership, which is voiced in their opening protest: However it remains unclear from this opening complaint precisely what they are arguing for:

Are they asking for Moshe and Aaron resignation, so they can lead the Jewish Nation in their stead? Or are they just simply demanding 'spiritual equality'? For we know that one of Korach's gripes was the decision to limit the kahuna (priesthood) to just Aaron and his sons and not to the rest of the Levi'im

The answer is simple. There were two different disputes going on, simultaneously and the method of how to resolve them occurred simultaneously also resulting in two different forms of punishments being meted out subsequently as well.

To prove to the people the divine origin of Moshe's leadership, Hashem created a "beriya" - a new form of creation, in order to punish the people involved. The ground miraculously devoured Dattan and Aviram and all of their followers who did not heed to Moshe's warnings. The narration also tells us that those who participated in the kotores test were punished as well in a miraculous fashion. As the Torah quotes 'a fire came forth from Hashem and consumed the 250 men who were offering the kotores.'

This might explain the ambiguity in the first pasuk of the Sedra of what Korach took. My understanding is that Korach took two legitimate protest groups and joined them together to form his own political power base and encouraged them to take action against both Moshe and Aaron. Korach probably reasoned with himself as the most suitable candidate to become not only the next national leader but the next Kohen Gadol as well. To that end, he involved himself with each group to try and eliminate his opposition. Just like many people around the world today. Korach was simply nothing but a corrupted politician and dictator.

In Conclusion, Parshas Korach teaches us that whenever a dispute arises; before reaching any conclusions and taking a particular side, we must carefully examine not only the claims themselves but also the true motivations behind them and more importantly what repercussions there might there be afterwards. Korach believed the arguments he were making were for 'sheim Shamayim' (sake of heaven) when in truth, his real intentions of confrontation was purely for his self-interest; to replace both Moshe and Aaron positions of being Israel's physical leader and the Kohen Gadol with himself, which was why he was punished accordingly.

