

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 36

20th June 2014

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, Arron'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.

GEMATRIA LINKED TO SEDRA READING:

- ✚ To be prove once and for All that Aaron was divinely selected to become Kohen Gadol., his staff miraculously grew and produced ripe almonds.
- ✚ The gematria of שקדים Sh'kaydim (Ripened) is 454. This the same numerical value as the חשמונאים Chashmonaim who revolted and waged war against the mighty Greek army that led to the miracles we celebrate at Chanukah.
- ✚ This means not only almonds sprouted in Aarons honour but the future saviours and Kohanim of Israel.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

This week's sedra opens up with Korach gathering together 250 men of stature and mounting a rebellion against Moshe and Hashem. Rashi explains that Korach's motivation was jealousy; he felt that he should have been appointed to the position of Nasi (Prince) of his shevet (Tribe), and was seeking revenge. Even though Moshe Rabeinu was commanded by Hashem to appoint Elizaphan Ben Uziel to that position, Korach felt that Moshe had made that decision on his own, and he set out to depose him. To demonstrate his point, Korach gathered 250 leaders of the Jewish people and gave each one a Tallis made completely out of techeiles. (A Tallis requires only one strand of the Tzitzits to be dyed the purple/blue colour of techeiles to be deemed kosher.) Korach brought this group in front of Moshe and began mocking him and launched into his revolt. "It's madness!" Korach cried out "Tell me Moshe, how can a garment that is made completely from wool requires only one strand of techeiles, and yet you say that a garment made completely of techeiles still needs additional techeiles. It doesn't make sense!"

It seems clear from this Midrash that Korach's strategy was to ask a question so powerful that Moshe wouldn't be able to answer it. If so, why ask this question in particular? The answer doesn't seem too difficult. If Korach really wanted to catch Moshe out, surely there are far more challenging questions that he could have asked.

The solution is based on understanding how 'Being bias blinds the mind of man'. Rav Chaim of Volozhin was once approached by a student who had left his yeshiva three years earlier because he felt 'The Torah way' seemed to be archaic and outdated; He believed science alone could provide the answers to all that ailed the world and set off to find the truth. Realizing he was wrong, the student wanted to come back. Apologetically Rav Chaim, turned him away, telling the Student he cannot help him. "But I have many questions." pleaded the student. Rav Chaim then asked him, "Did these questions come to you whilst you were still in my yeshiva or after you left? If these questions troubled you before you left then, they are considered questions, and for those I would be able to provide you with the answers, meaning, I'll welcome you back with open arms. However, I fear these questions you now have only began troubling you after you left my yeshiva, therefore It's not questions you have; but answers you seek and for those answers, you've come to the wrong place as I don't know them myself.

Rav Chaim was explaining a basic principle here. Being bias greatly affects our ability to understand. If a person has a prejudice against a way of thinking, then they aren't open-minded and instead just become incapable of hearing the truth, no matter how clear or obvious it is. When a man has made up his mind and doesn't want to hear the truth, there is nothing that anyone can say or do to prove them wrong. They just won't listen. This is the personification of Korach. He wasn't approaching Moshe to seek answers; his sole intention was to mock and discredit Moshe, nothing more! With that mindset, the strength of the question and whether there was an answer to it is irrelevant.

This concept has great relevance in our lives. There will be times when we are perplexed by situations that we don't understand. We don't know which way to turn, and the answers that we seek may not be forthcoming. Sometimes when an answer eludes us, it's not because the answer isn't there, but because we aren't listening. Sometimes the answer may be right there, but we aren't open to it, making us incapable to hear it. It's not that there aren't any answers to give; it is that we aren't asking the right questions.

Hashem created man with a heart of truth, allowing us to put aside our biasness opening up our minds, making us capable of hearing the true response and abiding by it May Hashem help us to forget our self-interests and jealousies because that's not the right path for us. Instead ask 'What does Hashem want me to do?' in order to guarantee an answer. If we can follow this process, and not be biased, our inner sense will prevail and guide us past the darkness of the unknown and into the light of the ultimate truth.

