

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 18

Korach, Sicha 5

The Context:

After Korach's rebellion had been put to rest, G-d introduced the "Priestly gifts" — twenty-four unique offerings that were to be given to the Priestly class for their private consumption. "G-d told Aharon: "Behold I have given you the charge of My gift [offerings]. I have thus given you all the holy things of the children of Israel for distinction, and as an eternal portion for your sons." (Bamidbar 18:8)

The sages explained the continuity of the gifts with the previous narrative of Korach's failed rebellion as a ratification of the Priests' Divinely assigned role: "This may be compared to a king who gave a field to his friend but... did not record it in court. A person came and contested his ownership. The king said to him... "Behold, I will write and sign a deed for you, and record it in court." Here, too, since Korah came and made a claim against Aaron regarding the priesthood, Scripture comes and gives him

twenty-four 'gifts' of priesthood as an everlasting covenant." (Rashi to Bamidbar 18:8)

The Questions:

1. In the section detailing the gifts to the priests, the Torah also includes instructions for giving the tithe to the Levites. This seems to contradict the sages' explanation, for Korach himself was a Levite, and was seeking the Priesthood. What relevance, then, does the gifts to the Levite have to Korach's rebellion?
2. Beyond the fact of the gifts themselves, how do the details of the gifts — what was given and how it was to be enjoyed — counteract Korach's revolt?
3. Chassidus explains that Korach desired to make the Priesthood into an elite cadre of spiritual seekers who would be disconnected from the common man and woman. He did not approve of the Priests' mission to uplift and refine the common people.

If this was the case, then the strongest repudiation of his argument would be to mandate new sacrifices that the Priests

would offer on behalf of the population. This would emphatically show how the Priests can take the mundane property of the common people and transform it into an offering for G-d. Instead, the Priestly gifts are intended for the private consumption of the Priest, and in some cases, are not even sacred food items that are subject to conditions of purity, but mundane items that can be consumed in any fashion. Why were the gifts the private possession of the Priest and not Divine possessions, sacrifices?

4. There is an upper limit imposed on the donations to the Priests and Levites. Why limit the donations to those serving in the Temple on behalf of the people?

The Explanation:

The Priesthood is associated with kindness and giving and the Levites are associated with restraint and judgment. Korach, a Levite, believed that the mundane world had no spiritual value; it could only be redeemed by being wrenched away from its lowliness and brought into a spiritual realm. Korach took issue with the model of Priesthood where the Priest brought holiness to the people. Korach believed that the people had to leave behind their mundane preoccupations.

Therefore, the true repudiation of his argument was the Priestly gifts. Although these items were portions of sacred offerings, they remained the private possession of the Priest. This illustrated that even the mundane, private possessions of a Jew can be sacred. The tithe that was given to the Levites makes this point even more

emphatically: The Priest's gifts were pre-ordained by G-d, so that when the item came into existence, it already "belonged" to the Priest. The Levites' tithe, however, is not designated in advance. The Jew chooses which tenth of his produce to set aside for the Levite. This, again, illustrates that even the grain that is the private possession of the Jew can be holy, even as it remains in its mundane state, not as a consecrated offering to G-d.

Korach's Tallis:

The Midrash relates that one of Korach's arguments was concerning a garment woven entirely from techeles, the turquoise wool that was meant to be woven into four separate threads and attached to a four-cornered garment as tzitzis. Korach maintained that such a garment would not need tzitzis, while Moshe defended the law.

Chassidus explains the significance of Korach's scenario: The garment, which surrounds the person, represents the all-encompassing light of G-d, the threads represent the immanent light of G-d that fills the particulars of the individual. Korach did not believe that G-d's light can penetrate the mundane particularities of the person. The gifts to the Priests and Levites address this point as well.

When separating the gift or tithe, the remainder of the Jew's possessions becomes fit for his or her private use. Until then, the produce or animal is off-limits. Thus, not only is the gift itself a reminder that mundane material can be sanctified, but even the product that remains in the

Jew's possession can be infused with the Divine, because it is being used in accordance with G-d's will. The remaining product thus shows that G-d's light can penetrate those parts of the world that are not even part of a mitzvah themselves.

3 Tammuz:

Parshas Korach coincides with the 3rd of Tammuz, the day the Previous Rebbe's death sentence was commuted to an exile within the Soviet Union. After his release from prison, the Rebbe was permitted to establish certain Jewish infrastructure in the place of his exile. This mirrors the theme of this parshah — that even the lowest of realities, in this case, communist Russia, can become a home for the Divine.

In his farewell address to his Chassidim, the Previous Rebbe quoted the verse, "May G-d, our G-d be with us as He was with our ancestors, let Him not leave us, nor forsake us" (Melachim I, 8:57), and said, "even

though we are not comparable to our ancestors..." [still, G-d should not abandon us.]

This teaching alludes to the three stages in the unity between the Divine and mundane realities: 1) "May G-d, our G-d" — alludes to a stage where G-d's energy suffuses our life, so that we can call Him, "**our** G-d." This occurs when G-d's reality is openly revealed on earth, inspiring the earth to flee to heaven. 2) "May G-d...be with us" — alludes to a stage where the earth is seeking to connect with G-dliness on its own terms, therefore there is a divide between G-d and the mundane reality, G-d is merely "**with** us." 3) "Even though we are not comparable to our ancestors, do not abandon us" — this alludes to the stage where G-dliness permeates even the lowliest realm of unworthy recipients. Even we are who are distant and undeserving will never be abandoned by G-d.
