



The Community

Boruch Hashem

12550 Biscayne Boulevard · Suite 310 · North Miami, Florida 33181

(305) 892-1234 · Chabadniami@gmail.com

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Rabbi Avrohom Lipszyc

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Rabbi's Article

Korach's War Demystified

Introduction: Korach, a first cousin of Moses (the son of the oldest brother: *Amram*), goes to war with Moses (for skipping over him in the hierarchy of honors, and appoints the son of the *youngest* brother: *Uziel*, the head of family, to which Korach (the son of the *second* brother: *Yitzhar*) reacts with) demanding (the highest honor of all,) to be the *Kohain Gadol -High Priest* (-[Link](#)). Chassidus wonders how (-Bamidbar Rabba 18:8), "*Korach was a smart man*," could have gone to war with Moses (who did everything *only* by the word of G-d) especially after Moses warns that only the one chosen by G-d (i.e. Aharon) would make it out alive?! There are three explanations in Chassidus:

- (i) *Noam Elimelech* (Rabbi Elimelech of Lozensk -[Link](#)): *Onkeles* (-[Link](#)) translates the word, "*And Korach took...*" as "*And he separated himself.*" This gives mystical insight into Korach's war. Being that (-Chronicles I 23:13), "*And Aaron was separated, to be sanctified as most holy, he and his sons forever,*" and specifically the *Kohain Gadol* who (-Leviticus 21:12), "*He shall not leave the Sanctuary,*" but be completely submerged and isolated within holiness, therefore, Korach demands (-Numbers 16:3), "*So why do you raise yourselves upon G-d's assembly,*" mystically meaning, "*Why and how is Aharon to draw down his influence of, 'raise yourself -exaltedness, upon G-d's assembly,' so that it to permeate them?!*" Korach was demanding that the *Kohain Gadol* be of one whose spirituality is all about, "*separation,*" such as Korach!
- (ii) *Ohr HaTorah* (The *Tzemach Tzedek*, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch -[Link](#)): In connection with the above, Korach was a Levite, and Aharon a Kohain. Korach was demanding that the *High Priest* must be a Levite and not a Kohain, because, mystically speaking, the Levite manifests the service of "*Ebb*" upward, while the Kohain manifests the service of "*Flow*" downward. Being that the world is not a vessel to receive the revelation of *Divinity*, therefore, its relationship with G-d must be one of *Ebb*, *leaving* the inferior world, yearning upward to G-d.
- (iii) *Likutei Torah* (The *Alter Rebbe*, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi -[Link](#)): Our sages tell us (-Rashi, Numbers 16:1) that Korach represented his demand with questions to Moses, the first being concerning the mitzvah of *tzitzit* (-[Link](#); "*They shall make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments, throughout their generations, and they shall affix a thread of sky blue [wool] on the fringe of each corner*"), "*Does a cloak made entirely of blue wool require fringes, or is it exempt?*" He (Moses) replied, '*It does require.*' They began laughing at him [saying], '*Is it possible that a cloak of another [colored] material, one string of blue wool exempts it, and this one, which is made entirely of blue wool, should not exempt itself?*' Mystically speaking, the "*Garment*" represents the, "*Infinite Circular Encompassing Light*," while the "*fringes*" attached to the garment represent the, "*Finite Linear Permeating Light*". Korach was stating that the, "*Infinite Circular Encompassing Light*," --that of the *High Priest*-- does not need "*fringes*" --a permeable downward *Flow* from to *High Priest* to "*upon the G-d's assembly*"-- attached.

After the Torah tells the story of Korach's war, it goes on to tell --of G-d performing the miracle of '*Aharon's Staff*' sprouting almonds (-[Link](#)) as a testimony that Aharon was chosen by G-d, and then-- of the "*24 Gifts*" that G-d gave to the Kohain, which was as a (-Kesubos 20:1), "*A document that one challenged and that was deemed valid in court*". The Rebbe therefore sees the "*24 Gifts*" as answering Korach's challenges to the *kehuna*. This is the Rebbe's approach in this "*Talk*" of understanding and intertwining all of the above, with an understanding of G-d's answers, weaving into this the mystical secrets of the *Gimmel Tammuz* (-[Link](#)), redemption of Rabbi Yoseph Yitzchok of Lubavitch (-[Link](#)) in 1927 --See the article "*Was It Only A Partial Redemption?*"

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Among the gifts listed of, "*G-d told Aaron: Behold I have given you the charge of My gift [offerings]... and as an eternal portion for your sons (the Kohanim),*" there is the, "*And to the descendants of Levi, I have given all tithes of Israel as an inheritance.*" How does this fit into the reason of listing these gifts after Korach's war on the *kehuna* in order to validate the *kehuna*? On the contrary, Korach was a *Levite*, and of the *important* Levites?!

--We might answer that precisely because Korach was a Levite, hence, through his war may have *damaged* the realm of Levites, therefore, after the war of Korach, the verse speaks of the gifts to the *Levite*, in order to clarify that the war did not damage the realm of the Levites. However, being that the gift to the Levites comes in *continuation* with the gifts of the Kohanim, clearly stating the connection of, "*And to the descendants of Levi...*" it therefore leans to say that the verse is *not* '*removing a blemish*' from the realm of Levites, but rather, emphasizing the *virtue* of Levites, just as it is doing with gifts for the Kohanim.--

Additionally, being the Torah is precise, we must say that the gifts listed here are not a *general* emphasis of the virtue of the *kahuna*, but of specific and precise answers to Korach's demands and questions upon the *kahuna*.

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FRIDAY, JUNE 23, 2023 * תמוז תשפ"ג *

Shabbat Candle Lighting: 7:58 PM · Kabbalat Shabbat: 7:45 PM

SATURDAY, JUNE 24, 2023 * ה' תמוז תשפ"ג *

TORAH READING: [Korach](#) (Numbers 16:1-18:32) · HAFTORAH: [Samuels I](#) (11:14-12:22)

[Shacharit](#): 9:30 AM · [Mincha](#): 7:45 PM · [Shabbat Ends](#): N. Miami: 8:55 PM

This Week...

Explanation: Korach's demand was (See *Introduction* to this article: (i) *Noam Elimelech*), the *High Priest* needs to be separated from all worldly matters¹, and therefore, Korach wanted a different form of *kahuna*, in which the Kohanim would be detached from influencing the people. Unto this end, the Torah is responding with the people's gifts to the Kohanim of their worldly possessions, signifying the people's elevating their physical realm, transforming it to now being part-and-parcel of the Kohanim's, "I (G-d) am your (the Kohanim's) inheritance," which the gifts are to be, "Given to G-d".

Question: Seemingly, this does not fully answer Korach's erroneous demands. Korach was demanding an absolute separation, and no connection at all between the *Kohain* and the *below*, like the gifts of the sacrifices, which are completely given over to holiness. However, among the gifts there were those that remained mundane, which the Kohain can use for personal pleasure?

Explanation: Let us first understand why the gifts given to the *Kohain* is but a small part of the Israelite's total possession, to the point that the rule concerning some of the gifts is that it is forbidden to give more than the obligatory measurement, including the general law of (-Maimonides Laws of *Eirchin V'Charomin*), "A person should never consecrate all of his property or designate it as a dedication offering. A person who does so violates the Torah's guidance... Instead, a person who distributes his money for mitzvot should not distribute more than a fifth." It is understood why the law would give a minimum amount, however, why give a maximum amount?!

The reason is, Chassidus explains that the difference between the *Kohain* and the *Levite* (See *Introduction* to this article: (ii) *Ohr HaTorah*) is the different services of "Ebb" (*Levite*; *Strictness-Justice*; yearning; separating from *below*) and "Flow" (*Kohain*; *Kindness*; absorbing; drawing into the *below*). Korach's demands of *kehuna* was coming from his being a *Levite*, *Strictness-Justice*, and *Ebb*. As a *Levite* (*Justice*), he felt that the world, in its own *being-ness* (definition and limitations), was not a vessel for *Divinity*. Hence, Korach felt that the only way one can truly connect with G-d is through Ebbing out of one's own being-ness². With this we now understand that the answer to Korach's mistake is not the gift in which the physical becomes all and only holy upon the *altar*, --where cannot see that the *below*, as it remains mundane and below, can become a vessel to *Divinity*-- but rather, it is the gift which becomes the *Kohain's* possession (mundane) of (-Rashi, Numbers 19:8), "'For distinction': For greatness (exalted)," which is (-ibid), "Compared to a king (exalted) --even a non-Jewish king (Mundane)-- who gave a... to his friend..."

Nevertheless, even the latter category of the gifts to the Kohanim does not fully express that the *below*, even as it remains in its being-ness of a *below*, can connect to *Divinity*: (a) Most of the gifts (10 Gifts are in the *Holy Temple*, 4 are in *Jerusalem*) first become Holy, only after which, is given, "From the Table of High," to the *Kohain*. So too, the gifts of *Trumah*, *Firstborns-First fruits*, and *Challah*, first have to be, "Set aside for G-d," and only then given to the *Kohain*. (ii) Concerning the remaining 10 Gifts that are within the *Boundaries of Israel*, the Torah has it, that even while they are in the possession of the Israelite, nevertheless, they are not the Israelite's, but rather, from the very start, they are the *Kohain's*. Therefore, the verses go on to speak of the *Tithing for the Levite*, which, (a) even after it is given to the *Levite*, remains absolutely mundane, with no holiness, at all, and (b) originally belongs fully to the *Israelite*, until he gives it to the *Levite*.

Another dimension to Korach's error (See *Introduction* to this article: (iii) *Likkutei Torah*): "The Blue-Tallit (garment) doesn't need Tzitzit (fringes)." The *Blue-Tallit* represents the refinement of the *below* happening from *Above* (the *Infinite Circular Encompassing Light*), of which Korach maintained does not *Tzitzit*: the work of the *below* (*Finite Linear Permeating Light*) to bring the refinement from Above --which is ultimately the *Above* imposing itself on the *below*-- internally drawn into the *below*, in which the *below* now makes this refinement its being-ness. Therefore, even the *Tithing for the Levite*, which is G-d's commandment³ --the *Above* imposing itself on the *below*-- is not the absolute answer to Korach's mistake. Rather, it is precisely that which remains his after he separates and gives the gifts, which is the ultimate answer to the mistake of "separating the Above and the below." When a person --through giving away the gifts-- truly recognizes and feels that what remains his is so only because G-d gave this to be his, and for this reason alone, he uses what remains his only in the fashion that G-d wants him too, this is when it is revealed that the *below*, in its fullest *being-ness* of being a *below*, becomes internally connected with *Divinity*. This is when there is the fulfillment of G-d's desire and purpose for creation (-Tanya, Chapter 36, from *Midrash Tanchuma*, Naso 16): "To make for Him, blessed be He, a dwelling place in the below."

1. See for example, (i) *Shammai* (-[Link](#)), --who was of *Strictness*; *Ebb*--. (-*Shabbat* 31a), "One gentile who came before *Shammai* and said, 'Convert me on condition that you teach me the entire Torah while I am standing on one foot.' *Shammai* pushed him away with the builder's cubit in his hand." Unlike *Hillel* (-[Link](#)) --who was of *Kindness*; *Flow*--, "The same gentile came before *Hillel*. He converted him and said to him, 'That which is hateful to you do not do to another; that is the entire Torah, and the rest is its interpretation. Go study.'" (ii) *Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai* (-[Link](#)), who stated (-*Brochois* 35b), "Is it possible that a person plows... sows... harvests... threshes... winnows... and is constantly busy; what will become of Torah? Rather, (one must dedicate himself exclusively to Torah at the expense of other endeavors)," and, "Many have acted in accordance with the opinion of *Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai* and were not successful." So too, his son, *Rabbi Elazar* (-*Shabbat* 33b), "They emerged (Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and his son *Rabbi Elazar*, from the cave in which they hid from the Romans for 13 years, studying Torah), and saw people who were plowing and sowing... every place... directed their eyes was immediately burned... Everywhere that *Rabbi Elazar* would strike (destroy with his look)..."
2. This is not in contradiction to that stated earlier of *Aharon's* influence upon the *Congregation of G-d*, was that he draw within the people the experience of exaltedness --seemingly *Ebb*--. For *Aharon*, who is all about *Flow*, even in his service of exaltedness of the *below* is --not about ebbing out of the below, but rather,-- all about using the below for a higher purpose: "In all your (mundane) ways should you know Him (exaltedness)," and, "All your (mundane) actions for the sake of Heaven (exaltedness)".
3. See *Sefer Mamorim Kuntreisim* (-Vol I page 119a) that even when one gives charity, that part of his possessions was always by him only as a "deposit" for him to guard for the poor, and so too concerning his *tithing*!