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No One Forgotten.

TORAH WEEKLY

T"01

18 - 24 June, 2017
24 - 30 Sivan, 5777

Numbers 16:1 -18:32

Haftorah: Isaiah 66:1-24
Isaiah 66:23; Samuel 1
20:18; Samuel 1 20:42

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MOSES IN ME

In this week's Torah portion, Korach, we read about a man by that name who rallies together a bunch of his fellow Levites and approaches Moses and Aaron with a protest: "The entire nation is holy and G-d is among them. Why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation...?"

Moses proposes the following challenge: Korach and his followers would bring an incense offering, and Aaron the High Priest would do the same. The people would then watch and see which of the offerings would be accepted by G-d. When the offerings were brought, G-d accepted Aaron's, and the earth opened up and swallowed up Korach and his entire household.

If you think about it, there seems to be some element of legitimacy to Korach's complaint. Since the people are all holy, each one of them possesses a spark of G-dliness, why should one person be "exalted"? He even merits to have an entire Torah portion named after him! Where then did his logic fall short?

We can resolve this by first understanding the role of a leader. A leader empowers people to realize their potential and express it. Without such leadership, even though people possess positive qualities, it is possible that they will lack the drive to express

them. True, the entire nation was holy, but to bring out that holiness, they needed a little boost and some motivation.

As we see clearly in Torah, there were many occasions when the Jewish people failed to live up their potential. Moses' leadership was what motivated them to push forward and express who they really were.

Moses' position was not as much an honor as a responsibility. He was given a mission and he carried it out faithfully. Like a true leader, he spent all of his time and energy being concerned with the wellbeing of the people, not himself.

This went on for Moses' entire 120 year life. He was a leader at his core.

This same reality is very much the same today. Even today we must seek leaders, people who inspire us to use out our qualities. When one has a leader it enables a him to accomplish more than he could on his own.

At the same time, true leadership is not restricted to one person. At home, at work, with friends, there are constantly occasions when we must step up and activate the inner leader within ourselves. We must utilize that little spark of Moses passed down as an inheritance for each and every Jew. When we are put in such a position, we need

Parshat Korach

to follow in Moses' ways and offer only support and nurturing to those with whom we come in contact.

By Rabbi Nissan Friedman

SPORTSMEN OR SPECTATORS?

Are you a spectator or a participant? Do you only watch the soccer World Cup, or do you sometimes kick a ball yourself?

A few years ago, it was decided to widen the seats at Wimbledon. Apparently, the problem was rather simple—obesity. It appears that the fans who admire the tennis stars in action don't get much exercise. The chairman of the British Sports Council was prompted to state, "If only the admirers of sport would practice it themselves."

The Parshah this week is named after Korach, cousin of Moses, and a revolutionary who attempted to usurp the authority of Moses and Aaron. His ill-fated rebellion came to a bitter end when the earth opened and swallowed Korach and his followers, demonstrating to all that Moses and Aaron were truly chosen by G-d.

But why name a Parshah after a villain? Korach was a sinner, and is surely not a role

model for us to emulate.

My saintly teacher and mentor, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, whose yahrtzeit is observed this week, offered a novel approach. There is one area where Korach can indeed be a good role model. What was Korach's burning desire in life? It was to be a kohen gadol, high priest. He coveted Aaron's position of honor.

Now, being a high priest meant much more than just fame, fortune, glory and privilege. Many sacred responsibilities came with the job. It was no easy task to be a kohen gadol. There were numerous restrictions: where he could go, what kind of activities he could be involved in, whom he could marry, etc. Yet Korach was absolutely single-minded in his aspiration to become the high priest.

Said the Rebbe: this is something we can all learn from Korach—the yearning to serve G-d in the holiest capacity, the craving to be a kohen gadol. Would that all of us shared similar aspirations to holiness. Wouldn't it be wonderful if each one of us longed for a life of sanctity, dedicated to the service of G-d?

How often we are only too happy to allow others to handle the sacred stuff. “You can put on tefillin for me, Rabbi.” And your bobba (grandmother) can keep kosher for you, and the ADL can fight anti-Semitism for you, and the Lubavitchers will save the world for you. And what will you yourself do? Watch them?

It is interesting that in many parts of the world, much of the financial support for religious institutions comes from people who themselves are not religious. It has, in fact, been suggested that this phenomenon may well be a form of vicarious Judaism. These are fine people, who really do believe in the truth of Judaism, but they haven't got sufficient commitment to practice it themselves. Nor do they believe that their own children will do it. Who, then, will defend the faith, and perpetuate Judaism and the Jewish people? So they sponsor a religious institution to do it for them.

I recall hearing a pertinent story from Professor Velvl Greene of Ben Gurion University. A young man signed up to join the paratroopers. On his first training flight, the instructor has him in his parachute, huddled at the door of the airplane, and starts counting down. 5 . . . 4 . . . 3 . . . 2 . . . 1 . . . “JUMP!” The candidate is paralyzed with fear, and doesn't move. “Okay, it happens to the best of us,” says the instructor sympathetically. “We'll try again.” The second attempt, however, is no better, nor the third or the fourth. The would-be paratrooper is simply too petrified to jump. Exasperated, the instructor asks him, “Tell me, son, if you are so scared to jump, why on earth do you want to join the

paratroopers?” The young man answers, “It's true, I am scared out of my wits. But I just love to be around people who are not afraid.”

It is wonderful to support and encourage the activists among us. But let us learn from Korach, who wanted so badly to be a high priest himself. Let's not be content with being spectators as others do it for us. Let each of us participate in the Jewish idea. And let us do it personally.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

In Jewish History

Monday, 25 Sivan, 5777 - June 19, 2017

Three of the “Ten Martyrs” Killed (2nd century CE)

Among the millions of Jews cruelly killed by the Romans were the “Ten Martyrs”—all great sages and leaders of Israel—memorialized in a special prayer recited on Yom Kippur. Three of them—Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha and Rabbi Chanina S'gan Hakohanim—were killed on Sivan 25.

Egyptians Sue Jews (4th Century BCE)

Egyptian representatives appeared in the court of Alexander the Great, demanding that the Jews pay restitution for all the Egyptian gold and silver they took along with them during the Exodus. Geviha the son of Pesisa, a simple but wise Jew, requested the sages' permission to present a defense on behalf of the Jews.

Geviha asked the Egyptians for evidence that the Jews absconded with their wealth. “The crime is clearly recorded in your Torah,” the Egyptians gleefully responded.

“In that case,” Geviha said, “the Torah also says that 600,000 Jews were unjustly enslaved by the Egyptians for many, many years. So first let us calculate how much you owe us...”

The court granted the Egyptians three days in which to prepare a response. When they were unable to do so they fled on the following day and never returned.

In Talmudic times, the day when the Egyptian delegation fled was celebrated as a mini-holiday.

(According to some traditions, this event took place on Nissan 24.)