

Torah Weekly

ת"ב

June 21-27, 2020
29 Sivan- 5 Tammuz, 5780

Torah:
Korach: Numbers 16:1 - 18:32
Haftarah:
Samuel I 11:14 - 12:22

PARSHAT KORACH

Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

Family Programs

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

Grape Juice & Matzah

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

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**ALEPH
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No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

The Greenest Grass A rabbinical colleague of mine tells me that he's had extensive contact with one of the most popular and renowned entertainment celebrities of our time. This star is not only hugely famous, wealthy and successful, but has been acclaimed around the globe for his rare talent and genius. Hundreds of thousands of fans wish they could have his life, that they could be him. In the course of their conversations, the rabbi asked this man what it is that he constantly wishes for in life. His answer: Obscurity. His dream is to fade from the limelight, and lead a simple, anonymous, man-on-the-street, white-picket-fence existence. In this week's Torah portion, Korach, we meet a man who by all accounts was a very intelligent, affluent and gifted individual. A Levite by birth, he already occupied a position of prominence and prestige within the community of Israel. Yet he rallies together a band of fellow Levites to challenge the leadership of Moses and the priesthood of Aaron. "The entire community—all of them—are holy, and G-d is among them," Korach protests, "so why do you [Moses and Aaron] exalt yourselves over the congregation of G-d?" How virtuous. How egalitarian. After all, every soul, bar none, is a spark of G-d. How then can distinctions be drawn between Jews—whereby this one is a tribal prince, this one a Levite, this one a priest and yet another a high priest? Let us all stand as one without separation or distinction. Righteous indignation is often nothing more than envy with a halo. Indeed, for all of his "man of the people" posturing, Korach was not nearly as unselfish and altruistic as his words might

suggest. The man felt rebuffed in that Aaron, and not he, was granted the high priesthood, and could not abide this perceived snub to his own standing and stature. In responding to Korach, Moses says: "It is too much for you, O offspring of Levi." In other words, can you not recognize the beauty and uniqueness of the gifts you do have? You are a member of the chosen people. As a Levite, you are a keeper of the sanctuary. You are a respected dignitary. You have so much going for yourself. How could you possibly be discontent? Why must you seek the priesthood, when G-d clearly gave that to somebody else? Korach's begrudging spirit gave him no peace, and ultimately led to a fatally disastrous end for him and his group. The sages teach us: "There is no man who does not have his place." If that's the case, the commentaries ask, why is it that there are so many people who are so unhappy with their lot? The answer is that instead of savoring their own special place and flourishing therein, they futilely crave the place that belongs to somebody else. The reason G-d created man as a single unit rather than as an entire species (as He did with the animal kingdom) is to show you that one man equals the world, says the Mishnah. Every individual is unique. You were handpicked to fulfill a specific mission, a mission that only you can perform. That mission is to enhance and perfect your world. And what is "your world"? It's whatever you wake up to in the morning: your life, your family, your community, your personality, your problems, your circumstances—that's your world. That's the life you were put into, and that's where your purpose can be found. We don't

sit around saying "if only." "If only I had kids like those . . . if only my mother wouldn't have married my father . . . if only I were better looking, more intelligent, more talented . . . if only I were Donald Trump . . ." It makes for nice fantasy, perhaps, but a total waste of time and energy when it invades reality. When you live with a sense of divine purpose, you recognize that you are who you are, your life is what it is, because that's what it's meant to be. And it is within your own life that you are called upon to serve your Creator and fulfill your very distinctive mission and purpose. Korach would have done well (as would we all) to heed the profound words of the serenity prayer. The key to living a good and happy life is to have the courage to change those things which can be changed, the serenity to accept those things which cannot be changed and the wisdom to know the difference. When Tevye the milkman demands of G-d: "Would it spoil some vast eternal plan if I were a wealthy man?" The answer is: of course not! In fact, your being a wealthy man is very much part of the vast eternal plan. Now, as to the definition of wealth . . . "Who is rich?" say the sages. "He who is happy with his lot." The chassidic master Rabbi Zushe of Anipoli once said, "If I were offered a deal wherein I could trade places with the patriarch Abraham, so that he would be Zushe and I would be Abraham, I would not take it. For although I would benefit by being Abraham, what gain would there be for the Almighty? He would still have one Abraham and one Zushe." A person who sees the essence of life as serving the will of His Creator does not expend useless energy craving places where the grass is greener. He finds meaning, purpose, joy and

fulfillment in the place where the grass is greenest of all: his own. *By Rabbi Moshe Bryski*

Humility vs. Low Self Confidence *Moses was exceedingly distressed, and he said to the L-rd, "Do not accept the offering [of Korach and his cohorts]. I have not taken a donkey from a single one of them, and I have not harmed a single one of them." (Numbers 16:15)* Humility was one of Moses' most outstanding qualities. In fact, the Torah affirms that "Moses was exceedingly humble, more so than any person on the face of the earth." Yet, when his leadership was contested by his scholarly and prodigious cousin Korach, Moses responds with seemingly uncharacteristic righteous indignation. One would have expected Moses to turn to G-d and say, "Almighty, perhaps You should consider allowing Korach to assume my position—he is far more qualified than me! I am more than happy to abdicate my position to the worthier candidate!" A proper understanding of how the Torah views humility will explain how Moses' reaction to Korach's uprising wasn't inconsistent with his exceptional humbleness. True humility is not a result of an undervaluation of one's talents and accomplishments. Such is a false humility, for it is built on a false foundation. Rather, the truly humble individual is keenly aware of all his strengths and qualities—but simultaneously recognizes that all these talents are G-d-given, and therefore do not constitute a reason to feel superior to another whom G-d has not bequeathed such talents. "Perhaps," the humble person thinks, "if that person had been blessed with the same gifts, he would have accomplished the same as me—or perhaps even more!" Moses recognized that G-d had endowed him with tremendous leadership qualities, and he therefore absolutely rejected the notion of relinquishing his position to anyone. This cognizance, however, did not interfere with his genuine humility and respect for every Jew. On a deeper level, the person who is entirely devoted to fulfilling the will of his Creator is naturally egoless, because he has no personal ambition—his goal is only to further G-d's "agenda" on this world. While arrogance is a sense of self-importance, dedication to G-d means realizing that life isn't about the individual or what he wants, it's about serving a higher purpose. Moses, despite all his greatness, of which he was keenly aware, was a dedicated servant of G-d. And when Korach sought to impede his fulfillment of his divinely ordained mission in life – shepherding the Jewish Nation – Moses responded by firing on all cylinders. Many confuse humility with meekness. In truth, the humble person is very driven and will not stomach any opposition. But he is not driven by his own ego; he is driven by a desire to implement the Divine plan.

By Rabbi Naftali Silberberg

Sunday, June 21, 2020 --- 29 Sivan, 5780

Spies Dispatched (1312 BCE)

Moses dispatched 12 spies to tour the Holy Land in preparation for its conquest by the people of Israel.

Tuesday, June 23, 2020 --- 1 Tammuz, 5780

Birth and Passing of Joseph (1562 and 1452 BCE)

Joseph, the son of the patriarch Jacob, was born in Charan (Mesopotamia) on the 1st of Tammuz of the year 2199 from creation (1562 BCE), the first child of Jacob's most beloved wife, Rachel, born after 7 childless years of marriage. He passed away on the same date 110 years later, in Egypt.

Thursday, June 25, 2020 --- 3 Tammuz, 5780

Joshua Stops the Sun (1273 BCE)

On the third of Tammuz of the year 2488 from creation (1273 BCE), Joshua was leading the Jewish people in one of the battles to conquer the Land of Israel. Victory was imminent, but darkness was about to fall. "Sun," proclaimed Joshua, "be still at Giv'on; moon, at the Ayalon valley" (Joshua 10:12). The heavenly bodies acquiesced, halting their progress through the sky until Israel's armies brought the battle to its successful conclusion.

R. Yosef Yitzchak Released from Prison (1927)

The sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson (1880-1950), who was arrested on Sivan 15 of 1927 by agents of the GPU (soviet secret police) and the Yevsektzia ("Jewish section" of the Communist Party) for his work to preserve and disseminate Jewish learning and observance throughout the Soviet Empire. Held in the notorious Spalerno prison in Leningrad, he was repeatedly interrogated and beaten. Initially sentenced to death, international pressure compelled the Soviet regime to first commute the sentence to ten years hard labor in Siberia, and then to a three-year term of exile in Kostrama, a town in the interior of Russia. On the 3rd of Tammuz, 18 days after his arrest, he was released from prison and allowed six hours at home before reporting to the Leningrad train station to embark on his exile. Many gathered at the station to see him off. Though he knew that there were GPU agents present, he spoke to the assembled crowd, encouraging all to persist in the very activities for which he had been arrested. "This," he proclaimed "all the nations of the world must know: Only our bodies were sent into exile and subjugated to alien rule; our souls were not given over into captivity and foreign rule. We must proclaim openly and before all that any matter affecting the Jewish religion, Torah, and its mitzvot and customs is not subject to the coercion of others. No one can impose his belief upon us, nor coerce us to conduct ourselves contrary to our beliefs!" (On the 12th of Tammuz, after serving only nine days of his three year term, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak was informed that he was free to return home. Shortly thereafter, he was allowed to leave the Soviet Union and resettled in Riga, Latvia.)

Rebbe's Yahrtzeit (1994)

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson of righteous memory (b. 1902) passed away in the early morning hours of the 3rd of Tammuz, of the year 5754 from creation (1994).

Friday, June 26, 2020 --- 4 Tammuz, 5780

Passing of R. Mendel Futerfas (1995)

As a young man, R. Mendel Futerfas (1906-1995) studied in the underground network of Yeshivat Tomchei Temimim in Soviet Russia. He subsequently was given the task of obtaining the funds necessary to maintain the network of hidden classes, a mission fraught with danger of tremendous proportions. He later risked his life once again to oversee the clandestine escape of hundreds of Lubavitcher Chassidim from the U.S.S.R. via Lemberg in 1946. As a result of these latter efforts, R. Mendel was caught and sent to work in the Siberian gulags for eight years. After finishing his sentence, he was denied exit from Russia for an additional eight years, until his request was finally granted in 1963. He lived in London and then in Brooklyn until his passing. R. Mendel was a legend in his time. His dedication to the sixth and seventh Lubavitcher Rebbes, R. Yosef Yitzchak and R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson, were unsurpassed, as were the lengths he was ready to go to assist a fellow Jew. He was known for his sharp wit and humor, and his well-attended *farbrengens* were interspersed with life-lessons creatively deduced from his experiences in Siberia.