

Torah Weekly

ת"ב

June 18-24, 2023
29 Sivan - 5 Tammuz, 5783

Torah Reading:
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 INSTITUTE
No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

Inside/Outside

Some arguments are petty affairs between small people who feel a little bigger need to stand up for their perceived honor or status. Other arguments are honest differences of opinion between people of stature, where each has an opinion worthy of consideration. We need to be able to discern the subtleties beneath the surface of any debate before we can know what sort of argument it is.

The sixteenth chapter of Numbers tells the story of the mutiny led by Korach, a cousin of Moses who challenged Moses' authority. In the end, Korach and his henchmen were swallowed by the earth in a divine display of rather unearthly justice.

The Midrash reveals some of the behind-the-scenes dialogue between these men. Remember, Korach was no pushover. Besides being of noble lineage, he was clever, wealthy and quite charismatic. One of the questions Korach put to Moses was this: does a house full of holy books still require a *mezuzah*? Moses answered that it did. Korach scoffed at the idea, ridiculing Moses. The little *mezuzah* contains the Shema—but two chapters of Torah. A whole houseful of books with the entire Torah won't do the trick, and a little *mezuzah* will? It doesn't make any sense, argued Korach.

Why was Moses' answer correct? What indeed is the significance of a small parchment on the doorpost in relation to a library inside?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explained that it all depends on location. The books are inside. The *mezuzah* is outside. When there are Jewish texts inside our study and living rooms, this indicates that the home is a Jewish home. This is good, and as it should be. But what happens when we leave the comfortable confines of our home? Do we cease to be Jewish?

The *mezuzah* is at the threshold of our homes, at the juncture and crossover between our inner lives and outer lives. As we make the transition from private person to public citizen, we need to be reminded of whom we are, and that we take our identity with us wherever we may go. There is only One G-d, says the little scroll, whether in our private domain or in the big, wide world.

One of the many works by well-known author Herman Wouk is an autobiographical novel called *Inside, Outside*, in which he portrays his own inner struggles straddling these two worlds. His pious Talmudist grandfather had a profound influence on him, but so did Hollywood and Broadway. It took him a long time to find his way and settle into an observant Jewish lifestyle while still writing bestsellers.

Being Jewish "Inside" is relatively easy. It's when we hit the "Outside" that we encounter temptation and turmoil. The challenge every Jew must face is to remain proudly Jewish even in the face of conflicting cultures, curious looks, and often, hostile attitudes.

In the German-Jewish

community of old there was a slogan which has long been discredited. *Yehudi b'veitecha v'adam b'tzeitecha*. "Be a Jew in your home and a human being outside." The Nazis did not distinguish between Jews who looked Jewish or those who had removed any visible identifying marks.

Today, traditional dress reflecting a national character is common, accepted and respected—from Scottish kilts to Arab *kaffiyehs*. The outlandish hairstyles of sportsmen and celebrities are not only accepted—they are mimicked mindlessly by millions of wannabes. Is it too much to expect a Jew to assert his Jewishness in unfamiliar corporate territory, or to keep the *kipah* on his head even when he walks out of *shul*?

Moses rejected Korach's argument, with good reason. The *mezuzah* does not replace the need for Jewish libraries, but it serves as a perennial reminder on our doorways. As we step out of our home to enter the outside world, it beckons us to take our G-d and our Torah, our values and our traditions, along with us.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

Do You Live Near Korach?

I have a *shtick* I do during the circumcision service, the *brit milah*. After the baby has been carried in and introduced to the crowd, I pass him to the proud father and make the following announcement: "The mitzvah of *milah* is incumbent on the father, and I am really just here as an agent. So now, choose: either appoint me as your agent . . . or do it yourself."

Never fails to draw a laugh from the crowd, and never yet has a father been brave enough, or foolish enough, to accept my challenge. Showmanship aside, if the obligation really lies with the father, what right does he have to cede his responsibilities to me? Furthermore, even if you accept that when it comes to *milah* our concern for the welfare of the child precludes us from granting chopping privileges to the average father rather than to a professional, why go through the whole rigmarole of officially appointing an agent? When you call a tradesman to the house, do you first make an announcement that “this man is my agent,” or do you just show him the problem and let him get on with the job?

In the Book of Numbers we learn that a percentage of one’s crops was to be donated every year to a *kohen* (priest). The priestly caste owned no land, and were financially supported by the other Jews, so they could fulfill their functions of serving in the Temple and traveling around Israel teaching Torah.

The Torah demands that one ceremoniously separate the *terumah* from his produce, and only thereafter forward it to the priest. This separation ceremony, the Torah informs us, can also be performed by an agent, but only one who was “like you”—i.e., the emissary, like the sender, must be Jewish.

Every commandment is a composite of the person performing the act and the act being performed. If all G-d cared about was that certain actions are accomplished at various times, then, as long as that task is completed, it would make no difference who implements it. However, G-d also cares how each mitzvah is done, and even who is fulfilling it.

Appointing an agent isn’t like hiring a plumber. The agent doesn’t just do your job as your representative; rather, he becomes you! When I perform a *brit* for your son, I am not just a paid functionary getting my hands bloody on your behalf. Rather, it is you doing the cut, and you are performing your mitzvah.

Every Jew shares a common soul, an identical spark of pure G-dliness. It is this connection that allows us to bond with our soul-partners, not just acting in their stead but becoming one with them, in the ultimate purpose of fulfilling G-d’s will.

Similarly, when we live up to G-d’s desire, fulfilling His will, becoming His agents as it were, we remove all sense of self from the mission, and bind ourselves to the source of that mission by becoming one with our G-d in the ultimate unity of existence.

By Rabbi Elisha Greenbaum

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, June 18, 2023 --- 29 Sivan, 5783

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 20, 2023 --- 1 Tammuz, 5782

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.

Wednesday, June 21, 2023 --- 2 Tammuz, 5783

Passing of Rabbi Nachman of Horodenka (Gorodenka) (1765)

Rabbi Nachman of Horodenka was a close colleague of the Baal Shem Tov. His son, Rabbi Simcha, married the Baal Shem Tov’s granddaughter, Feiga. Their son, the famed Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, became the founder of Breslov Chassidism. The Baal Shem Tov once asked Rabbi Nachman of Horodenka to deliver a letter to Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezritch (who later became known as the Mezritcher Maggid) in which he attempted to persuade Rabbi Dov Ber to become his disciple. Upon receiving the letter, Rabbi Dov Ber said, “I see an auspicious sign in the student who bears this letter. If Rabbi Nachman of Horodenka is such a holy tzaddik, how much more so is his teacher—the Baal Shem Tov.” Rabbi Dov Ber then agreed to meet with the Baal Shem Tov and later to join the Chassidic movement.

Thursday, June 22, 2023 --- 3 Tammuz, 5783

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 Schneersohn (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).