

# WHICH CAME FIRST?

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Sponsored by  
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on the yahrzeit of his mother  
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Harav Aharon ben Harav Nossan Lewin z"l Hy"d  
(the Reisher Rav)

In this week's Parashah, we read about Korach's mutiny. Midrash Rabbah asks: Korach was wise; what did he see that led him down his nonsensical path? The Midrash answers: He saw a great line descending from himself, including the prophet Shmuel, who is equated with Moshe and Aharon [see Tehilim 99:6], and he thought that he therefore deserved honor.

R' Yosef Yozel Horowitz z"l (1847-1919; the Alter of Novardok) asks: Seemingly, the Midrash is not answering the question; it is making the question stronger! If Korach was so great that he could see the future, how did he err?

The Alter explains: Sometimes justifications are born from the truth; other times, the "truth," as a person sees it, is born from a justification. The Midrash is not explaining why Korach rebelled; he rebelled because he was jealous. Rather, the Midrash is explaining how Korach, a wise man who would never admit he was jealous, justified his rebellion to himself.

Had Korach been honest with himself, he would have reasoned: I am already great because a great person -- Shmuel -- will come from me. I do not need to enjoy that greatness now. Alternatively, he would have told himself that the Torah abhors those who exercise control over others; therefore, there is no reason to pursue greatness.

This is a very common behavior of man, the Alter continues. We justify actions that are contrary to

the Torah's will instead of recognizing that our justifications were developed after we already had the desire to perform the action in question. One who wants to can, however, be honest with himself. (Madregat Ha'adam: Beirur Ha'middot ch.8)

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***"They stood before Moshe -- and two hundred fifty men from Bnei Yisrael . . . They gathered together against Moshe and against Aharon . . ." (16:2-3)***

R' Ovadiah Seforno z"l (1470-1550; Italy) explains: Korach, Datan and Aviram arranged that their 250 co-conspirators would "happen" to wander into Moshe's presence while he was judging cases brought by other members of Bnei Yisrael. Then, the main conspirators would come to voice their complaints, giving their attack the greatest possible publicity. (Be'ur Ha'Seforno)

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***"They gathered together against Moshe and against Aharon and said to them, 'It is too much for you! For the entire assembly -- all of them -- are holy and Hashem is among them; why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of Hashem?'" (16:3)***

R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (1865-1935; first Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael) writes: When it comes to Matnot Kehunah / the gifts that Yisraelim are required to give to Kohanim [for example: Terumah and Bechor], there are two Mitzvot: (1) to set aside and sanctify the item [for example: the produce or animal], and (2) to give it to the Kohen. Once a "gift" has been set aside for a Kohen, a non-Kohen may not have benefit from it.

Ordinarily, continues R' Kook, the recipient of a "hand-out" is viewed as being inferior to the giver. In the case of Matnot Kehunah, however, this is not so. Goodness comes to the world in the merit of the true servants of Hashem. Thus, a Kohen who serves Hashem is the cause of the Yisrael having something to give. In a sense, therefore, all the produce that is harvested and all the animals that are born belong to the Kohen. Nevertheless, the Torah permits the Yisrael to keep a large percentage of them after he has given the Kohen his due. However, to drive home the true nature of the relationship, a non-Kohen is prohibited to have enjoyment from many of the gifts set aside for a Kohen.

Korach did not believe the above, R' Kook explains. In his view, the Kohen and the Yisrael are equal partners: one (the Kohen) provides the spiritual side of the relationship and the other (the Yisrael) provides the material side of the relationship, but as equals. In that case, Korach argued, why do specific people have to be set aside as Kohanim? Why can't anyone do that job?

Korach was wrong. Therefore, R' Kook concludes, after Korach and his followers had died, Hashem commanded (17:3), "As for the fire-pans of these sinners against their souls -- they shall make them hammered-out sheets as a covering for the Altar." By making a covering for the Mizbei'ach -- something secondary to the Mizbei'ach, where the Kohanim perform their service -- out of the

offerings of Korach's co-conspirators, Hashem was driving home who is primary and who is secondary in the relationship. (Metziut Katan 178)

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***"This distressed Moshe greatly, and he said to Hashem, 'Do not turn to their meal-offering!'" (16:15)***

Rashi z"l quotes a Midrash: Moshe said, "I know that they have a portion in the daily-offerings of the community, but let their portion not be accepted favorably before You."

R' Aharon Lewin z"l Hy"d (the Reisher Rav; killed in the Holocaust) asks: Moshe's request specified the meal-offering brought with the Korban Tamid / daily-offering, not the Korban Tamid itself. Why?

He explains: The Gemara (112a) teaches that an animal that is owned in partnership by a person who lives in an Ir Ha'nidachat / a city in which the majority of citizens worshiped idols and a person who lives in another city may not be brought as a Korban. In contrast, flour that is owned in partnership by a person from an Ir Ha'nidachat and a person from another city may be used to make a meal-offering. Why is the law different for an animal compared to flour?

Commentaries explain based on the Talmudic expression, "It is impossible to eat the smallest measure of meat without slaughtering the entire animal." In this sense, an animal is not divisible; it is all or nothing. Therefore, each member of the partnership is viewed as having a stake in every molecule of the animal. We cannot say, for example, that one person owns the front half and another person owns the back half. It follows that, if even one owner of the animal lives in an Ir Ha'nidachat, no part of that animal may be offered as a Korban. [All the property of an Ir Ha'nidachat must be burned.]

Flour is different. Each molecule of the flour can exist independently of each other molecule. Therefore, if flour is owned in partnership by a person from an Ir Ha'nidachat and another person, that flour may be used to make a meal-offering, because we can say that Hashem will only accept part of the offering.

R' Lewin concludes: For the same reason, Moshe could not pray that Hashem accept one part of the Korban Tamid and not another part. [The Korban Tamid was a lamb.] In contrast, Moshe could pray that Hashem accept one part of the meal offering accompanying the Korban Tamid and not another part. (Ha'drash V'ha'iyun 173)

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***"Korach gathered the entire assembly to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting . . ." (16:19)***

R' Yaakov Moshe Charlap z"l (rabbi of Yerushalayim's Sha'arei Chessed neighborhood and Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav; died 1952) writes: G-d forbid that the entire assembly believed Korach. Nevertheless, it is one of the weaknesses of man that he is easily drawn into things unthinkingly. (Mei Marom: Nimukei Mikraot)

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## A Torah Tour of the Holy Land

***"Then Shmuel said to the people, 'Come and let us go to Gilgal, and let us renew the kingdom there'." (Shmuel I 11:14 -- opening verse of the Haftarah for Korach.)***

R' David Kimchi z"l (1160-1235; Spain; Radak) writes: They used to honor that place (Gilgal) because the Aron Ha'kodesh and Ohel Mo'ed were located there when Bnei Yisrael first entered Eretz Yisrael [see Yehoshua 4:19], even though they were no longer there by the time of the events in our verses.

R' Yehosef Schwartz z"l (1805-1865; Germany and Eretz Yisrael; Torah scholar and geographer) identifies Gilgal as a city in the territory of the tribe of Binyamin, and writes: According to Josephus, Gilgal is ten ris (a half hour walk) from Yericho and fifty ris (a 2½-hour walk) from the Jordan River. Near Yericho is a mound--essentially a pile of rocks--which the Arabs call "Galgala," i.e., Gilgal. However, it is not 2½ hours from the Jordan as Josephus wrote.

Referring to Yehoshua 4:20 ("These twelve stones that they had taken from the Jordan, Yehoshua erected at Gilgal"), R' Schwartz writes: "I did not see the stones of Gilgal." [This is not surprising, since thousands of years had passed.]

R' Schwartz continues, describing the surrounding region: The Jordan and the surrounding areas are a wonder of wonders! There is nothing comparable in the whole Land! The Kikar Ha'Yarden / plain of the Jordan is very wide, and the river flows through it. On either side of the river are forests with many species of flora. Many of the trees make tent-like coverings in which one can dwell; it is all natural. One would not believe it if he would hear how beautiful and pleasant it is. There is a soft sound, which is the river; the sound of birds chirping and singing; and the rays of the sun, which flicker into the "tents" through the tree branches. All this adds to the beauty, but also inspires a person to reflect and to pour out his heart. "My Elokim! My soul is downcast, because I remember You from the land of the Jordan" (Tehilim 42:7). "He saw the entire plain of the Jordan that it was well watered everywhere . . . like the garden of Hashem" (Bereishit 13:10). (Tevuot Ha'aretz p.155 & 113)