

GIFTS FROM HEAVEN

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape # 17, Visiting the Sick. Good Shabbos!

The Double Vow: Wisdom, Strength, Wealth: Gifts from Heaven

In this week's parsha we have one of the most upsetting incidents in the history of Klal Yisroel: Korach's challenge to the leadership of Moshe Rabbeinu and to the Priesthood of Aharon haKohen. There is an interesting Medrash Tanchuma (at the end of Sefer Bamidbar) that deals with Korach.

The Medrash Tanchuma notes that there were two exceptionally wise people who came to this world -- one from Israel and one from the nations of the world. The one from Israel was Achitofel; the one from the nations of the world was Bilaam. Both of them were destroyed -- both in this world and in the world-to-come.

Two exceptionally strong individuals came to this world -- one from Israel and one from the nations of the world: Samson from Israel and Goliath from the nations of the world. Both of them met a terrible end.

Two exceptionally wealthy individuals came to this world -- one from Israel and one from the nations of the world: Korach from Israel and Haman from the nations of the world. Both of them met a terrible end.

The Medrash asks why these people's lives met terrible endings. The Medrash answers, because "their gifts were not from Heaven." How can the Medrash tell us that their gifts were not from Heaven? Obviously, when the Medrash says "their gifts were not from Heaven," it is not a literal statement. The Medrash is saying that people need to realize that these three tremendous gifts -- Wisdom, Strength, and Wealth -- are just that -- gifts!

Most people realize that Wisdom and Strength are gifts -- that's just the way you were born. The one thing that people may not look at as a gift is Osher -- money. If a person becomes wealthier than his neighbor he tends to attribute it to the fact that he was shrewder or that he was a better

businessman. The Medrash tells us otherwise.

That was the downfall of the those individual mentioned: The lack of realization that these are gifts. They failed to realize that it was a gift from Heaven. If a person thinks: It's my wisdom, my strength, my money, he will suffer the same fate as Billaam, Goliath, Haman and Korach. If we realize that these things are gifts, our actions will be different and our fate will be different.

Mikdash Mordechai:

The Symbolism of the Almonds -- A Thing in its Proper Time: How Good!

The verse states that Korach argued "The entire congregation is holy; why do you rule over the Congregation of G-d?" The truth is that this argument of Korach has merit. The Ba'al HaTurim tells us regarding the verse "And you shall be to be a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation" that if Klal Yisroel merits it, we will all be Kohanim... and in the future this is how it will be! If so, what was wrong with Korach's argument?

The answer is that Korach's argument was premature. At that point in time Klal Yisroel was not on the proper level. If it is not the right time, when Klal Yisroel is on the proper level, then such a plan can be destructive.

Everything has its proper time and proper place. We cannot jump the gun. To do things prematurely is destructive. Parents should not rush their children into phases of life that they are not yet ready for.

The story is told of a genius-child who later became one of the great Sages of Israel. At seven years of age he was already discussing profound Torah topics with the scholars of the generation. At one point in the discussion he excused himself and went to play on a rocking horse. He was asked to reconcile the incongruity of holding discussions in Torah with the Gedolei Hador with riding on a rocking horse. He astutely responded, "I still have to be a child. If it doesn't come out now, it's going to be terrible down the road."

Davar b'ito mah tov (How good is a thing in its proper time).

This, says the Mikdash Mordechai, is the symbolism of the staff of Aharon. The Torah tells us that only Ahron's staff blossomed, as a symbol that Aharon was in fact chosen by HaShem to be the leader. What blossomed forth from the staff? "Vayatzetz Tzitz vaYigmol Shekaidim." - Shekaidim (Almonds) - What is the Torah telling us by using Almonds as the symbol of Aharon's selection?

The Mikdash Mordechai makes reference to a Talmudic discussion (Chullin, Berochos) which mentions that almonds are bitter before they ripen. They are exempt from tithing and the normal brocha before eating is not made on them. Only when they ripen do they require tithing and a Borei peri haEtz. When the almonds are ripe, they are a beautiful fruit. But, before they ripen, the Talmud

calls them "bitter almonds." They are not ready, they're no good.

This is similar to the response to the Congregation of Korach. There will be a time when the Jewish nation will be entirely made up of Priests, but not now. To do things prematurely is destructive. That is the symbol of the Shekaidim: Everything in its proper time.

Glossary

Gedolei Hador -- Great Torah scholars of the generation

Borei Peri haEtz -- "...who has created the fruits of the tree" (conclusion of blessing before eating fruit)

Personalities & Sources:

Ba'al HaTurim -- Torah commentary by R. Yaakov ben Asher (1268-1340), Germany/Spain

Medrash Tanchuma -- Aggadic (Homiletical) Medrash on the Torah

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (#17). The corresponding halachic portion for this tape is: # 17 is: Visiting the Sick. The other halachic portions for Parshas Korach from the Commuter Chavrusah Series are:

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