

PARSHAT KORACH

24-30 Sivan 5784
30 June – 6 July 2024

Torah: Numbers 16:1-18:32; 28:9-15
Haftorah: Isaiah 66:1-24, 23; Samuel I 20:18, 42

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, but 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 Yossy Goldman

Let Me Be You

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 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. Appointing an agent isn't like hiring a plumber. The agent doesn't just do your job; he becomes you! 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

Psalms for our brethren in the Holy Land

Psalm 117

1. Praise the Lord, all nations, laud Him, all peoples.
2. For His kindness has overwhelmed us, and the truth of the Lord is eternal. Hallelujah!

(Please say Chapter 20 daily)

Ben Zoma would say:

Who is wise?

One who learns from every man.

Who is strong?

One who overpowers his inclinations.

Who is rich?

One who is happy with his lot.

Who is honorable?

One who honors his fellows.

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“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 Elisha Greenbaum

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE (1902-1994)

Born in Nikolaev, current-day Ukraine, in 5662, or 1902, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, or “the Rebbe” displayed exceptional intellectual gifts from a young age, earning the title “Illuy”, or “genius” in Jewish scholarship by age 13. In 1928 he married Chaya Mushka, daughter of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitchak Schneerson, a distant cousin. Alongside his Torah studies, the Rebbe studies mathematics and science at universities in Berlin and Paris. Upon the Nazi invasion of France, the Rebbe and his wife miraculously escaped to the United States in 1941. In the US, the Rebbe was appointed by his father-in-law as director of Chabad's three central organizations; he also worked as an electrical engineer designing ships for the US Navy. In 1950, upon the passing of his father-in-law, he reluctantly accepted leadership of Chabad-Lubavitch, becoming the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe. Central to the Rebbe's vision was love for every Jew, regardless of background or Jewish observance. He directed the establishment of a global network of thousands of Chabad centers

on six continents, providing religious and humanitarian assistance to Jews as well as non-Jews. The Rebbe led by example, working tirelessly for over forty years, meeting and advising, cajoling and consoling. He met with world leaders, from US presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy to Israeli PM Menachem Begin, and spoke on issues stretching from the need for a US Dept. of Education to predicting the fall of the Soviet Union. In the communist Soviet Union, the Rebbe led a Jewish underground, teaching Jews about their religion, and building Mikvaot (Jewish ritual baths) and Synagogues under the nose of the Soviet regime. Eventually, following the fall of the Soviet Union, the Rebbe built a network of dozens of Jewish schools and community centers, reviving Jewish life in the bloc. The Rebbe also directed the founding of the Aleph Institute in 1981, along the lines of Aleph's motto, “No One Alone, No One Forgotten”. In 1992, the Rebbe suffered a stroke, largely paralyzing him. His soul ascended two years later, on the 3rd of Tammuz of 5754, or 1994.

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Monday, July 1, 2024-25 Sivan, 5784

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.

Tuesday, July 2, 2024-26 Sivan, 5784

Jews of Olyka Saved from Cossack Mob (1649)

During the Chmielnitzki Massacres, a Cossack mob gathered around the fortified town of Olyka. Among the Jews who had found refuge inside was R. David Halevi (the Taz), a refugee from the nearby city of Ostroh. As the Cossacks prepared to breach the walls, the Jews gathered in prayer in the synagogue. Weak and tired, R. David drifted off to an uneasy sleep, and in his dream he envisioned the verse, "*I will protect this city to save it, for My sake and for the sake of My servant David*" - II Kings 19:34. Indeed, the old cannons atop the walls miraculously fired spontaneously toward the enemy, who proceeded to flee.

Wednesday, July 3, 2024-27 Sivan, 5784

R. Chananya ben Tradyon Killed (2nd century CE)

Rabbi Chananya ben Tradyon, one of the "Ten Martyrs" (see entry for Sivan 25) was killed on this date. When the Romans discovered him

teaching the outlawed Torah, they wrapped him in a Torah scroll, piled bundles of twigs around him, and before setting him afire they placed damp woolen cloths on him to prolong the agony of being burned to death. As the flames engulfed him, his disciples asked him, "Master, what do you see?" Rabbi Chananya replied: "I see a scroll burning, but the letters flying up to Heaven."

Thursday, July 4, 2024-28 Sivan, 5784

Lubavitcher Rebbe Arrives in US (1941)

After escaping Nazi-occupied Paris, and many perilous months in Vichy France, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994), and his wife, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka (1901-1988), boarded the SS Serpa Pinto in Lisbon, Portugal. On Monday, June 23--Sivan 28 on the Jewish calendar they arrived in New York.

Shabbat, July 6, 2024-30 Sivan, 5784

Passing of R. Shlomo Kluger (1869)

R. Shlomo Kluger, rabbi of Brody, was one of the renowned halachic authorities of his day. He was a prolific writer, authoring over 100 books. He passed away on 30 Sivan of 1869.