

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 165

**Korach** | The Role of Master and Student

# MESILOT

## *Pathways to the Soul*

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha  
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son  
**Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita**

# ...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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# Parshat Korach

## Three Questions, One Conclusion

**Rabbi** Abraham Ibn Ezra, the renowned Torah commentator, was famously impoverished, with financial fortune seemingly always out of his reach.

He humorously said about himself:

If he were to sell shrouds, no one would die as long as he lived.

If he sold candles, the sun would never set.

If he were a mohel, all babies born would be girls.

It's well-known that Ibn Ezra wandered from place to place all his life.<sup>1</sup>

Once, he arrived at a town during his travels and immediately noticed all its Jewish residents were agitated and rushing about. He approached one man and asked: "What happened? Why all the noise

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**1.** It is said that during one of his wanderings, Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra arrived at a city right before the Shabbat. It was customary in that city to have a fixed rotation among all the city's residents, and each resident had a predetermined Shabbat during which they were to host any guests who came to the city, and if there were many guests, they were divided according to the list.

**It** so happened that Ibn Ezra's luck led him to arrive in the city precisely when the 'weekly host' was an individual known for his great stinginess. In order to save on

Shabbat expenses, this person would habitually go to the market very late, just before the Shabbat, and buy the remaining food items that the sellers were left with, and which were sold at a low price and would hurry home and ask his wife to prepare them quickly before the Shabbat.

**On** that Friday, when Ibn Ezra arrived in the city, the homeowner passed through the market at an earlier time than usual and saw a beautiful and fine fish, which his heart desired. He bargained with the seller for a long time until he managed to lower the price and buy it.

## Parshat Korach - Three Questions, One Conclusion

**However**, right before Shabbat, he was notified that this week would be his turn to host a guest for Shabbat.

**The** man's face turned pale. He was very reluctant to allow any guest a portion of that expensive fish. His stinginess was so great that his heart would not allow him to give of his own to another.

**Having** no choice, he ran back to the market right before Shabbat, and bought three small, old, and spoiled fish for the guest. Upon returning home, he asked his wife that on Shabbat night she serve the cheap and old fish to the guest, and he would find a way not to eat them. Later, when the guest would be full from the meager meal, he would then take out the fine and fresh fish.

**On** Shabbat night, as the homeowner and his guest, Ibn Ezra, approached the house, Ibn Ezra smelled the stench of the rotten fish and immediately understood who his host was and what his intention was, but said nothing.

**Following** the Kiddush and washing of the hands, when the hostess served the little poor fish to the guest, Ibn Ezra leaned towards one of the fish and began to whisper various words to it, after which he turned to the second fish and whispered, and so on with the third.

**The** homeowner was very puzzled by his guest's actions and asked him the meaning of his behavior and whether, G-d forbid, he was performing witchcraft by whispering to the fish.

**Ibn** Ezra answered that he writes commentaries on the Torah and always wanted to clarify how the splitting of the Red Sea occurred, and now, seeing these very old fish, he thought they might be from that era and perhaps could share with him some insights about the splitting of the Red Sea. However, the first fish did not remember, nor did the second, while the third fish said that perhaps it's bigger and older brother, who is currently in the kitchen, remembers.

**The** homeowner realized that his scheme had been uncovered, and with no other choice, asked his wife to serve them the large fish. As the homeowner ate, his heart burned with pain.

**“How** did the guest succeed to get a piece of my fish?

**“Well**, he said he writes commentary on the Torah - so, perhaps after all it's a mitzvah to give a scholar something to eat. But on the other hand, who said he's even telling the truth, perhaps he's just an impostor?”

**The** homeowner decided to test him.

**After** the meal, the homeowner turned to Ibn Ezra and said, 'Rabbi, you mentioned that you are involved in the study of the miracles of the splitting of the Red Sea. Please, share with me what happened then.'

**Ibn** Ezra then proceeded to teach him lessons in faith and charity deep into the night, until the host had a change of heart and repented from his crooked ways.

**Parshat Korach - Three Questions, One Conclusion**

and commotion?" The man replied: "The town's rabbi passed away a month ago, and now the trustees have asked all the Jews of the town to gather in the synagogue."

Ibn Ezra joined the man, and together they walked to the synagogue. The head trustee took the stage and announced: "We are looking for a rabbi for our town and are prepared to offer a respectable salary. Anyone who believes they are fit for the position or knows someone who might be, is invited to come forward and propose themselves."

Ibn Ezra approached the trustees and expressed willingness to take on the role. However, because he was dressed plainly, like one of the poor, they didn't take his offer seriously and instead, insulted him.

Ibn Ezra was deeply saddened that the trustees judged him solely by appearances and decided that he would teach them a lesson. As he continued to travel, he saw a distinguished Jew dressed in rabbinical garments, his white beard and ruddy cheeks giving

him the appearance of a great scholar. However, Ibn Ezra, knowledgeable in all the world's mysteries, quickly discerned the man's spiritual shallowness.

He approached the man and said: "I have an offer for you that you cannot refuse. The nearby town is looking for a rabbi, and you will indeed be their rabbi."

"Ah... I don't really know."

"Do not worry," Ibn Ezra reassured him, "you do not need to know anything. You will be the rabbi, and I will be your assistant, speaking on your behalf."

The man agreed to the proposition, and together they went to the town.

Seeing the new distinguished-looking rabbi that had appeared, the trustees immediately agreed to appoint him as the town's rabbi, and Ibn Ezra as his assistant.

On Shabbat, all the townspeople came to see their new rabbi and to take delight in his Torah teachings. The 'rabbi' was indeed an unlearned and simple

## Parshat Korach - Three Questions, One Conclusion

man, and when he was called up to the stage, he went up and simply uttered: "Aleph, Bet, Gimel, Dalet," and immediately stepped down.

Ibn Ezra then ascended the stage and said: "Ladies and gentlemen, let me explain what the rabbi in his great depth was hinting to in his sermon:

'Aleph' stands for 'Emunah' - Faith, and Ibn Ezra began to expound on faith, great and lofty ideas that they had never heard before.

'Bet' stands for 'Bitachon' - Trust. This time he shared with them another hour of wonderful Torah words with parables and stories from our sages.

The congregation was astounded, thinking, if this is the assistant, how great must the rabbi be?

In this manner things went on, with the public posing halachic questions to the 'rabbi,' who would then supposedly whisper with 'his assistant' Ibn Ezra, who would answer the questioners with astonishing depth and knowledge.

One day, the trustees requested: "We want to hear from our rabbi directly. He has been with us for several months, yet we haven't heard even a single word from him."

Ibn Ezra decided that now was the time to teach them a lesson.

He told them: "Gentlemen, in three days, the rabbi will deliver a lecture on halacha and answer all your questions."

He went to the 'rabbi' and said: "I need to continue on my way; we are parting now. Therefore, I will teach you how to answer their questions and queries."

"First question: My tefillin fell, what should I do? You must answer: Pick them up, kiss them, and give money to charity.

Second question: My wife is causing me trouble; what should I do? You must answer: Come back next week; surely they will have made up by then.

Third question: Is my cow kosher or treif? And you will answer: Slaughter it, take out the

**Parshat Korach - Palace for Horse and Carriage**

lung and inflate it. If it inflates - it's kosher; if not - it's treif."

The 'rabbi' rehearsed the answers for three days until he knew them by heart.

The congregation gathered in the synagogue on the third day to hear their revered rabbi. He said: "Please, ask any question you wish."

The first to stand up asked: "Honorable Rabbi, is my cow kosher or treifa?" The rabbi replied: "Pick it up, kiss it, and give charity."

The second person got up and asked: "Honorable Rabbi, my tefillin fell; what should I do?" The rabbi answered: "Come back next week."

The third question was: "Honorable Rabbi, me and my wife are having trouble, she is really wicked. What should I do with her?"

The rabbi told him immediately: "Slaughter her, take out her lungs, and inflate them. If they inflate - she's kosher, but if not - she's a treifa."

The congregation realized what kind of 'rabbi' they were dealing with, and from that day forward, they learned not to judge wisdom and righteousness by shallow appearances...

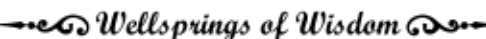
We will share yet another story.

**Palace for Horse and Carriage**

**As** is known, before the holy brothers Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk and Rabbi Meshulam Zusha of Anipoli were revealed, they wandered from place to place in exile to partake in the holy Shechinah's exile, as was the

way of the ancient Kabbalists, and to purify themselves through the suffering of wanderings and the atoning exile.

Many stories are recorded from these travels, including the following tale:<sup>2</sup>



2. 'Tzintarot Hazahav' By Rabbi Mordechai Gerlitz Shlita. (Part 3 - Page 102).

## Parshat Korach - Palace for Horse and Carriage

Rabbi Elimelech and Rabbi Zusha occasionally visited the town of Ludmir, and they had a regular host there, a poor and pious man named Rabbi Aharon, who was related to the Great Rabbi Aharon of Karlin.

The townspeople didn't even grant the two guests, whom nobody recognized, as much as a glance, and needless to say, didn't find it necessary to invite them to stay in their homes and dine at their tables. The fact that Rabbi Aharon himself was quite poor didn't make any locals think that it would be more fitting for wealthier homeowners to fulfill the mitzvah of hosting these illustrious guests.

Many years later, after their reputation spread worldwide, the two holy brothers once made a joint visit to Ludmir. This time, they arrived in a grand coach drawn by a pair of horses, and a herald went ahead and announced their arrival to the townspeople.

Upon hearing the news, the entire town was abuzz. The community leaders immediately gathered for an urgent meeting, and

debated seriously how to honor the distinguished guests properly.

The town's wealthiest man, a respected and influential Jew, harnessed his carriage to swift horses and rushed to the main thoroughfare to invite the holy brothers to stay in his luxurious mansion.

The holy brothers thanked him for his generous invitation but immediately declined it.

"We have regular lodgings in town," they said to his astonishment. "Our sages have already said (Arachin 16b): 'A person should not change his lodging place.'"

However, they refused to reveal the location of their lodgings to him.

As the holy brothers arrived in town, and the entire population, from the greatest to the smallest, trembled before them, Rabbi Elimelech and Rabbi Zusha directed their carriage to the home of Rabbi Aharon, their poor but devoted host. To the astonishment of the townspeople accompanying



**Parshat Korach - Palace for Horse and Carriage**

them, they stepped off the carriage and headed into his dilapidated hut, which was set to collapse at any moment.

Before they entered the house, they instructed their carriage driver to lead the horses and the carriage to the barn of the wealthy man who had invited them to his palace.

The wealthy man stepped out from the crowd, joined by the town's finest and leaders, and they all entered Rabbi Aharon's humble abode, standing before the holy brothers as representatives of the community, in the name of all the townspeople.

"Our masters, please enlighten us." - they requested to know - "What is the nature of this severe affront to the honor of our town and its inhabitants, that our holy teachers, the shepherds of the people of Israel, found no better dwelling to stay in except for a ruin of the most poor, a hut that has all but collapsed?"

"G-d forbid," - the holy brothers responded - "There's no

offense intended here, but rather this the natural course of things: for years, we came here time and again, always staying in this lodging, and never did anyone object or offer us any other lodging in its place.

What, then, has changed now?

Previously, we came on foot and with our packs on our shoulders, like all the poor of Israel, who are children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob just like us - while this time, we arrived in a carriage drawn by a pair of horses.

The invitation to stay in the luxurious palace in town was extended solely on account of the carriage and the horses, and not to us.

Therefore, we sent the carriage and the horses to the mansion - while we, who have not changed in any way, will stay in our usual lodging..."

These stories are both amusing and revealing.

However, a most relevant lesson will be understood upon further delving into our Parsha.

## The Virtue of Korach

**Let's** take a moment to let our imagination take flight:

The year is 2449 to the world's creation.

The place is the Israelite encampment in the Sinai desert.

The participants are the entire nation of Israel.

We try to guess who is the happiest and most fortunate in Israel.

It's not easy and quite impossible to decide, but one of the most serious contenders is Korach.

Korach had every reason to be happy and satisfied:

He descended from a righteous and well known

lineage and all of his ancestors were righteous, as it says: "Korach, the son of Izhar, the son of Kehath, the son of Levi, the son of Israel" (I Chronicles 6:22-23).

As our sages testified, he was a great sage and a brilliant man: 'Korach was very wise.'<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, he was extremely wealthy, having found one of the great treasures hidden away by Joseph.

Most importantly: Korach possessed very high personal virtues, a great level of holiness,<sup>4</sup> and immense righteousness, which is evident by his being selected to be one of the four Levites privileged to carry the holy Ark.<sup>5</sup>

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**3.** Midrash Rabbah (Numbers 18:8).

**4. Rabbi** Tzadok HaCohen of Lublin wrote (Pri Tzadik, Parshat Korach, 8):

**Korach** was a righteous person and a chariot to the Divine attribute and referred to as 'The Righteous, Foundation of the World' who drew down spiritual influence upon the people of Israel.

**5. The** Ark of the Covenant was "two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high" (Exodus 25:10), and on both sides of its width were two poles "to carry the ark with them" (ibid, verse 14).

**It** turns out that the distance between the poles was two and a half cubits (since the entire length of the ark separated between the poles)

Parshat Korach - Who is Happy ?

We do not know the identity of the other Sons of Kehath who had this incredible and holy privilege to carry the Ark of the L-rd's Covenant, but this one name we do know - Korach, the son of Izhar.

As stated in the Midrash (Numbers, 18:3): The sages said, Korach was a great sage and one of the carriers of the Ark.

As Rabbeinu Avraham, the son of the Rambam, wrote:<sup>6</sup>

"Korach, Dathan, and Abiram, even though they did not reach the level of Nadab and Abihu, were nonetheless great, especially

Korach, as opposed to what insolent fools may think.

Indeed, the Torah explicitly describes those who were attached to Korach's camp as: 'Princes of the assembly, famous ones in the congregation, men of renown' (Numbers 16:2). This is sufficient proof of Korach's greatness, for all these respected men thought that G-d would select him for the priesthood or at least that he was the most worthy of it."

Well, if so, it's clear as day.

Korach must have been the happiest person in the whole Jewish encampment in the wilderness !

Who is Happy ?

In a talk given by Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler Zt"l, he said:<sup>7</sup>

'A life of happiness.' Who doesn't know the explanation of

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The Talmud (Menachot 98:) explains that four Levites would carry the ark: on each of the two sides of the ark, two men walked between the poles, one of them carrying the right pole of the ark on his right shoulder, and the other carrying the left pole on his left shoulder.

The Talmud learns from the verse: "The Sons of Kehath set out, carrying the sanctuary" (Numbers 10:21) - that four men carried 'the sanctuary,' that is, the most sacred vessel, which is the holy ark.

- 6. 'Hamaspik L'Ovdei Hashem' (Chapter On Humility).
- 7. 'Michtav M'Eliyahu' (Part I, Page 1).

## Parshat Korach - Who is Happy ?

these four words? For what is happiness in this world? It seems that one who achieves what he desires is truly happy.

For this reason, we naturally think that someone capable of trading with the talent to accumulate wealth is the happy one, together with those with more vigor, sharpness, and cunning who have the necessary abilities.

We see and hear from those involved in worldly matters how much they praise the ambitious and scorn the 'loafer', a person they consider miserable and useless.

But the truth is - Rabbi Dessler continued - that this definition is

very superficial, for it is obvious that happiness is not at all not even the slightest, with those who can achieve whatever they wish.

Those wealthy people whose money is without end, whose gold is scattered in the streets out of abundance, and who dwell in palaces and drive luxury cars, say outright and without shame:

'Happiness is not our lot, nor ours to be had. Yes, we are privileged to wealth, but not to bliss. Envy and desire are killing us,<sup>8</sup> and the familial quarrels between siblings annihilate our peace of mind.'

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**8. In** one of his lessons, Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, of blessed memory, shared a story that happened to him in his youth ('Divrei Mordechai', Exodus, Page 219):

**Once**, my uncle, Rabbi Yehuda Tzadka, needed to go to the house of a wealthy man for an important matter, and he asked me if I wanted to join him. Of course, I happily agreed to join my illustrious uncle.

**We** arrived at the entrance of the house and went inside. On our way, we passed through the parking area where I saw

several parked cars, each more luxurious than the other. I had never been accustomed to seeing so many cars owned by one person, and naively thought that the rich man was a luxury car dealer or the like.

**One** of the servants led us into the house, guiding us up an extravagant staircase the likes of which I had never seen before, all made of marble, a rarity at the time.

**The** servant knocked on the grand wooden door which adorned the entrance to the rich man's office and announced our arrival.

Parshat Korach - Who is Happy ?

So we might immediately try to change the definition of happiness:

Happiness = to have a settled and tranquil life; to work an organized job and bring home a respectable livelihood.

But no. If we look closely, we will see that those who are of the middle class, work hard all their lives to increase their money, but ultimately all their days are busy preparing happiness for themselves, not enjoying it, and

if so, when will they ever have time to enjoy and be happy? We know the answer is: 'No, they won't ever find the time.'

When they grow old and no longer have the strength to work in their profession, they no longer find any taste or interest in their lives, and appear as mere shadows of their former life, and in this way they see themselves.

So perhaps the hard laboring farmworkers are the happy lot?

*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

The rich man remained standing, his face turned towards the window and his back to us, seemingly indifferent to our presence.

**My** uncle, Rabbi Yehuda Tzadka, was a gentle man and did not comment on the cool 'reception' we received. But I was younger and a bit brazen, so I said to him: "Aren't you ashamed to receive us in such a manner? After all, the great Rabbi Yehuda Tzadka has come to see you. Stand up to greet him and say 'Welcome' as is fitting for a great sage of Israel." - Yet, the rich man did not respond.

I approached him, and saw that his face was crestfallen. His features were so sad that I was convinced he was in mourning over his father or mother. I asked him: "Why are you so downcast?" and he did not wish to tell me. He only sighed: 'You wouldn't understand anyway.' I insisted that he tell me

what was troubling him, and eventually, he nearly cried out of utter despair because he had seen a luxury car passing by in the street, and he was heartbroken over the fact that he did not have this model in his car collection.

**When** I heard this, I told my uncle: "Let us leave, we have nothing to look for here, he's just a miserable man."

**The** rich man was offended and exclaimed: "Why do you say this about me?"

"**It's** not a curse," I replied. "If you behave as a mourner because of a car you don't have in your 'collection', then you are poorer than poor. Such a 'wealthy' man has indeed nothing of his wealth, and nothing at all."

**About** such a person the Ethics of the Fathers states (4:1): "Who is rich? He who is happy with his lot."

**Parshat Korach - We Have Erred**

Certainly not. Farmworkers cannot possibly be happy since they work hard every day and often even at night. After all this toil, they feel that theirs is the smallest of shares, thinking that the rich have taken all of the wealth entirely at their expense, and that they - the workers - are the ones who bring all the good into the world, to all but not for themselves, for others rob it from them.

If so, where are the happy lives in the world? where do they reside? Our question reverberates, and no one answers us. Only the voice of all mankind will answer us: 'Truly happy lives? They do not exist.'

Surely G-d, who created His world to benefit His creations, created it so the creations would feel happy.

So why, indeed, do we not feel so?

Our holy sages answered this question, saying (Pirkei Avot 4:21): 'Envy, lust, and honor drive a person out of the world.'

The world, as G-d created it, is a world of happiness, but we, who have left the world of happiness for a world of suffering due to these three destructible forces that lie within us, are the ones who have removed ourselves from enjoying it.

However, if a person escapes envy, lust, and honor - that is, if one expels them from his heart - he will repair his inner world and be found in an endless world full of happiness.

Not only will he be happy, but he will also have physical wealth, as our sages said (ibid., Mishnah 1): 'Who is rich? He who is happy with his lot.'

We now return to our previous assumption, that Korach was the happiest of men..

**We Have Erred**

**Korach** indeed was the happiest of men until one day the attribute of envy awoke in his heart, which removed and

expelled all happiness from its midst.

You might wonder: Envy? Who was of his high

Parshat Korach - We Have Erred

caliber that he had to  
envy?

Our sages reveal that Korach was envious of Elizaphan the son of Uzziel,<sup>9</sup> and this envy led him to declare: 'Moses appointed

Elizaphan by his own volition.' Since he speaks from himself - his words have no validity, and it is possible to dispute them.

Rabbi Avraham Tzvi Kluger wrote:<sup>10</sup>

...*Wellsprings of Wisdom*...

**9. As** Rashi (Numbers 16:1) explains: 'What prompted Korach to argue against Moses?

**He** was jealous of the appointment of Elizaphan, son of Uzziel, whom Moses had appointed as prince over the children of Kehath by the word of G-d. Korach said: My father's brothers were four in number. Amram's children took two great positions, one as king and one as high priest. Who is suitable to take the next position, if not me, the son of Izhar, Amram's second brother? Yet, Moses appointed as prince Amram's youngest brother's son, Elizaphan; I will dispute him and nullify his words.'

To explain:

**Ten** months had passed since the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai and on the 1st of Nissan in the year 2449 to creation, Moses appointed princes over Israel, one prince over each tribe.

**Over** the tribe of Levi, given the many and various responsibilities - he appointed three princes:

**For** the family of Gershon - Eliasaph son of Lael.

**For** the family of Merari - Zuriel son of Abihail.

**And** for the family of Kehath - Elizaphan son of Uzziel.

**Korach**, one of the wealthiest men in Israel, belonged to the family of Kehath, and when he saw that Moses appointed Elizaphan to be the prince over his tribe, jealousy entered his heart, and he decided that he was more deserving to be the prince.

His reasoning:

**"Kehath** had four sons: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. To Amram, the eldest, were born two sons - Moses and Aaron, and one daughter - Miriam the prophetess.

**Moses** appointed himself as king and his brother Aaron as high priest by the word of G-d. He now appointed Elizaphan - the son of the youngest of my father's brothers - Uzziel - as a prince of the tribe of Levi. However, he should have appointed me, the son of Izhar (the second son of Kehath). It's time to organize a rebellion against Moses," and Korach began to assemble dissenters.

**10.** 'Asichah Bechukechah' (Numbers, page 277).

**Parshat Korach - We Have Erred**

Had our sages not revealed this to us, who could have said this - that a great and holy man, from whom a great chain of holy prophets emerged, including Samuel the prophet who was comparable to Moses and Aaron - that such a great person would suffer from envy and narrow-mindedness.

Especially since he was among those who carried the Ark, about whom our sages said (Sotah 35a): 'The Ark raises those who carry it'.

Who would have conceived, that a holy and exalted man who carried the Ark of G-d's Covenant, would experience such a downfall?

Together with him were "two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous men in the congregation, men of renown" (Numbers 16:2), which included the princes who offered their sacrifice at the dedication of the Tabernacle, and were of the greatest stature

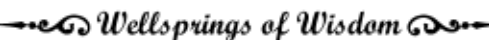
in Israel - as stated in Midrash Tanchuma (Korach, 2) that these men were 'Elizur son of Shedeur and his companions'<sup>11</sup> - how could it be that such righteous individuals would gather 'for frivolous talk all night'.

However, we have already learned the Mishnah in which Rabbi Eliezer HaKappar says (Avot 4:21): 'Envy, lust, and honor drive a person out of the world', and as the verse states: "Envy rots the bones," (Proverbs 14:30). 'Rots the bones' - meaning that it causes the person's essence to decay.

The envious become blind, replacing light for darkness and darkness for light, and thus all calculations are confounded and bewildered.

So ultimately, we were wrong.

Despite all his endowments and gifts, Korach was unhappy; envy removed it from him, leading him to utter destruction.



**11.** On the fourth day (of the dedication of the Mishkan, offering his sacrifice was) the

prince of the tribe of Reuben, Elizur son of Shedeur" (Numbers 7:30).



## Personal Application of the Torah

We mentioned numerous times in the name of the holy Rashash that there are three million interpretations on every verse in our holy Torah. Each person studies the Torah according to the root of their soul and their part in the Torah.

However, there is one kind of interpretation that is common to all those who study the Torah. It is the study with the interpretation and application of the study to 'one's self'.

That is, when a person studies the Torah, to find their personal life situations within the Torah, and to interpret and apply its lesson to themselves. Consequently, from it, they will learn how to behave, rectify themselves, and enlighten their soul.

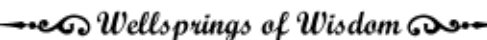
In the words of Gaon from Vilna:<sup>12</sup>

"Everything that occurred to the patriarchs and Moses and all

of Israel occur within each generation and every individual, since their sparks reincarnate in every generation as is known to the initiated. Likewise, all the actions from Adam until the end of the Torah exist in every generation and every individual."

Rabbi Yaakov Edes expanded on this, saying:<sup>13</sup> "The words of the Vilna Gaon are a fundamental principle in studying the events recorded in the Five Books of the Torah.

Beyond merely learning the Torah contained in these events, there's a personal interpretation to the events that relate to a person throughout their life and in all their matters. The Vilna Gaon did not mean that every biblical event happens to a person in the literal sense, since none ever see the Red Sea split and so on, but rather to the internal content of these events.



12. Commentary of the Gr"a to 'Sifra d'Tzniutah' (Chapter 5).

13. 'Divrei Yaakov' - Parshiot Hatorah (Page 2).

## Parshat Korach - Personal Application of the Torah

To make this concept more relatable, consider two examples:

**The Giving of the Torah.** Over 3336 years ago, the people of Israel received the Torah at Mount Sinai.

In its inner meaning, every moment is a renewal of the Sinai experience. When a person merits to learn Torah Lishma (for its own sake), they merit to receive the Torah as if they were at Mount Sinai.<sup>14</sup>

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### *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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**14. Rabbi** Shalom Meir Wallach told the following tale ('Maayan Hamoed - Shavuot, Page 360):

**In** the village of the Kabbalists, Mawza in Yemen, lived a righteous man of great holiness named Rabbi Yaish Korin. His guarding of the eyes was extraordinary. When he would leave his house, he wrapped his head in a tallit so as not to see any forbidden sights, and at all times his lips murmured Torah and prayer.

**Everyone** - Jews and non-Jew alike - knew that his prayers had the power to annul decrees. But when they turned to him, he would simply say in humility: 'Indeed, everyone needs to pray, and I too will pray.' and the decree would pass and be annulled.

**His** daughter, a clever and keen girl, followed her father's righteous deeds. She noticed that he often secluded himself in nature. She asked him about this, and he explained that the service of G-d requires concentration and the study of Torah requires deep contemplation, which can be achieved through solitude.

**One** day, she decided to secretly follow him. She saw him walking in the field, immersed in his thoughts, and suddenly he

marked a circle in the sand with his staff and sat down in its center to study in depth - and behold, a fire descended from Heaven and encircled him, blazing all around him - yet he did not move or flinch, and continued his study as if nothing had happened. The daughter restrained herself with all her might not to scream and holler to the heavens - her father was engulfed in flames !

**After** a few hours, he rose, and the fire disappeared at once. His daughter came out to meet him and ask him about the fire and the miraculous vision she had just witnessed. His eyes shone, as he said to her:

**“My** dear daughter, at the giving of the Torah it is said: "And the mountain burned with fire to the heart of the heavens" (Deuteronomy 4:11). Since then and to this day, whoever studies the Torah with purity and devotion as it was given, merits that same wonderful fire.

**Regarding** Yonathan ben Uzziel it is said by our sages (Sukkah 28b), that when he engaged in Torah, a fire blazed around him, and any bird flying over him would be burnt.

**Fortunate** are you, my daughter, that you merited to see this. But please, do not tell anyone about this.”

Parshat Korach - Don't Throw a Stone into Your Well

An additional example: After the sin of the Golden Calf, Moses stood in the cleft of the rock, and merited the revelation of the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy. According to Ibn Ezra (Exodus 33:21), this was the strongest experience of Divine closeness ever experienced.

Even today, every person can merit to some extent, each according to their level, this form of Divine closeness,

and one must strive for this.

With this all in mind, when we learn about all that occurred with Korach's dispute, and understand all that unfolded there, we must introspect, and evaluate ourselves, whether we are caught in the snare of 'envy, lust, and honor'.

There is much to elaborate on, but we will specifically focus on the relationship between a rabbi and pupil.

**Don't Throw a Stone into Your Well**

**Korach** was from the tribe of Levi, who, as is known, were not enslaved in Egypt.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout the entire period of slavery, the tribe of Levi sat in the study hall and learned Torah with dedication.<sup>16</sup> Thus, even in

Egypt, Korach was engaged in Torah study.

However, since Moses took leadership, all of Israel, especially Korach, were elevated even higher.

In the fifty days from the Exodus of Egypt until the revelation at

*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

**The** daughter kept the deed in her heart, and did not reveal it until after her father's passing.

**15.** In the words of the Midrash (Exodus Rabbah, 5:16): 'Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said, Levi's tribe was free from the hard labor of servitude in Egypt.'

**16. Thus** wrote the Arizal (Sefer HaLikutim, Beshalach,14):

**"The** people of Israel were refined in Egypt, through the Torah studied by the tribe of Levi, for they were the essence and core of the entire nation, and by their study of the Torah, they repaired everyone."

**Parshat Korach - Don't Throw a Stone into Your Well**

Mount Sinai, Moses succeeded in elevating all the people of Israel from the depths of degradation to lofty levels of prophecy.

At Mount Sinai, all of Israel received the Torah and its commandments, and Moses additionally received the knowledge of Torah novelties.

Although Moses alone received this wisdom, he treated the people of Israel kindly and taught them this wisdom (Talmud, Nedarim 38a).

Moses was the teacher of every Jew and the man G-d chose to bring down the Torah to the world.

The connection between Moses and the people of Israel was even more than spiritual.

All of Israel were financially dependent on Moses, as it was through him that the people of Israel had manna to eat, water to drink, clothing, and a dwelling to live in.<sup>17</sup>

If this was so for all of Israel, how much more so for Korach.

Korach received endless benefits from Moses, for besides the physical sustenance that he received from him, he was privileged to carry the holy Ark. This role elevated him to exalted levels and endless heights. A role by which he merited sublime lights, and awe-inspiring revelations.

And then, one day, it happened.

After more than a year of being around Moses, he began to feel that he was his own authority and knew better than Moses how to lead.

This feeling bred in his heart a terrible contempt for his teacher - Moses, and as a result of this contempt, he developed a 'compassion' in his heart for the people of his generation who were 'blindly' following Moses, and to 'save' them, he began to open his mouth with harsh criticism and insults, humiliations and debasements.

His bitter end is well known, it's already 3335 years that he has

...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

17. For after Aaron and Miriam passed away, the clouds of glory and the

wellwater were reinstated in Moses' merit (Tractate Taanit 9a).

Parshat Korach - A Story As Ancient As Time

been in the depths of the abyss, and will continue to be there until the coming of the Messiah.

This tale is greatly detailed in this week's Torah portion, and as aforementioned, when we study

everything that happened in the dispute of Korach, and see the whole process that occurred, we must introspect, what is our state, are we completely free of disrespect for our teachers and scholars ?

**A Story As Ancient As Time**

**At** Mount Sinai, a new leadership model began - that of teacher and student.

**As** our Sages said (Ethics of the Fathers 1:1): 'Moses received the Torah from Sinai, and passed it on to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets handed it over to the Men of the Great Assembly.

The Torah continued to be handed down from the Men of the Great Assembly to the pairs, and from there to the Tannaim, the Amoraim, the Savoraim, the Geonim, the Rishonim, the Achronim, until it reached us today.

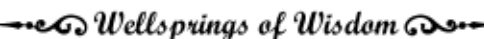
This leadership model cannot be bypassed. Every Jew must receive the Torah from a teacher."

**As** Rabbi Israel Meir Lau writes:<sup>18</sup>

The sages are the link that connects us to Mount Sinai, and consequently to the Giver of the Torah - generation after generation who express the word.

The Torah passes by tradition from teacher to student. Thus, one who learns from his teacher is as if he learned from his teacher's teachers and so on up to Moses, who learned from the Divine Presence.

Before performing any commandment, including rabbinic commandments, we bless: 'Who sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us..' The Talmud (Shabbat 23a) asks, how can we bless G-d and



18. 'Yachel Yisrael - Avot' ( 6 - Page 147).

**Parshat Korach - I Held On - And Will Not Let Go**

say that He 'commanded us' regarding commandments that our sages instituted? Did the Holy One, blessed be He, instruct us these rabbinic commandments?

The Talmud answers, the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded us to listen to the words of the sages, and thus it is as if the Al-mighty at Sinai commanded us to fulfill their ordinances.

G-d commanded us to listen to the voice of the sages as is said:

'Do not deviate from the word they will tell you, to the right nor the left' (Deuteronomy 17:11).

Additionally it is said: 'Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders and they will speak to you' (Deuteronomy 32:7).

**I Held On - And Will Not Let Go**

G-d created the world according to His will and arranged it in awe-inspiring orders and systems.

The 'rabbi and student' relationship is one such wonderful system.

Thus, the obligation to listen to the sages arises from two reasons:

The first - because the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded us to heed the sages due to their extensive knowledge and the wisdom they possess.

The second - because the Torah tradition passes from teacher to student, and this is the method of learning Torah, there is no other way.

When a student receives the words of the sages with humility and faith, these teachings enter his heart and become his own. Then, he too becomes an additional link in the chain of tradition from generation to generation. As the Talmud states (Shabbat 23a): One who fears the sages becomes the brightest among the scholars.

Before a Jew - especially a Torah scholar, is born, it is already decreed in Heaven who his rabbi will be and from whom he will receive Torah. Every Jew must yearn and long to find his

rabbi, who will be responsible for rectifying his soul.

When a Jew merits, the Divine Providence orchestrates a way for him to meet his rabbi, and from then on, it's as if the Jew is reborn; his soul starts upon the path of rectification.

All is good and well, but if one detail is missing - 'the love to one's rabbi' - it all can be considered null and void.

We quote the words of Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac Yehuda Yechiel of Komarno:<sup>19</sup>

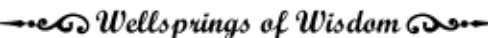
My uncle, my teacher,<sup>20</sup> told me that a person faces many challenges whether they will stand firm in their love for their righteous rabbi, for the love and soul-connection to one's spiritual master is essential. Through this, the spirit of the rabbi will rest upon him, as did Elijah's spirit rest upon Elisha.

It is in this that the Satan's evil powers overpowers and challenges

to create a separation between a disciple and his spiritual master. See, my son, what is written in 'Sefer Hachizyonot' of our master, Rabbi Chaim Vital (Part 4):<sup>21</sup>

"My teacher (the Arizal) told me that I would face many trials, to test whether I would stand by my teacher's love or not."

See, my son, that even our master the Arizal who was truly an angel of the L-rd of Hosts, and there has not arisen anyone like him among the prophets, Rabbi Chaim Vital himself testified that he faced trials that tried to make a separation between him and his teacher. This is even more true today when the evil forces greatly provoke one and make it difficult to bind oneself with love to a true spiritual master. The above are the righteous words of my teacher, my beloved uncle, of blessed memory (The Chassidic master Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh of Zidichov).



19. (Heichal HaBracha - Devarim 13:2)

20. The holy Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch of Zidichov Zt"l.

21. As also stated in Shaar HaGilgulim (Introduction 39).

**Parshat Korach - I Held On - And Will Not Let Go**

It is in this regard that the Evil Inclination strives to create separation and to disrupt this devotion and love between disciples and their holy rabbi, knowing well that all the goodness and success of the disciples, both in the material and spiritual worlds, here and in the hereafter, depend on their rabbi. Therefore, it does everything to sever, G-d forbid, this love between them.

Yet, anyone with sense will not be tempted by this, but rather will say to himself: 'I will not part from my rabbi and master - come what may.'

Whoever behaves this way, adheres firmly to the tzaddik, and educates his household in this path will not lack anything, materially and spiritually.

He will experience a flow of blessings and success, health, good livelihood, and all good things, enjoying serene happiness from all his offspring.

In him will be fulfilled the sense of "And all your children will be taught by the L-rd , and great will be the peace of your children" (Isaiah 54:13).



## Summary and Practical Conclusions

**1.** All bad traits stem and originate from dissatisfaction. When a person feels an internal lack and unease, and dissatisfaction permeates them, they direct their thoughts towards hatred and envy, all to quiet the discontent within him.

**2.** Whereas, when a person is content, there is no place for bad traits. Therefore, one should be happy and satisfied.

Indeed, everyone must demand and expect much more from themselves and not be satisfied with what they have achieved, but this does not contradict the need to be content and satisfied with oneself.

**3.** One who is content and happy with his lot can achieve perfection in the service of G-d. Joy and pleasure increase the desire to add and toil in the Torah, earning G-d's blessings.

**4.** "Envy, lust, and honor drive a person out of this world!" G-d created the world so that people may live in happiness. Yet envy,

lust, and honor remove a person from his tranquility and true happiness. When a person flees from envy, lust, and honor and expels them from his heart, he corrects his world, which becomes filled with happiness.

**5.** The trait of envy in particular, a person must eradicate and remove from himself entirely. A person who lives with a sense of envy, his very essence rots in this world until his death, and his bones decay in the grave after his death, G-d forbid.

**6.** G-d created His world in a wondrous order and with marvelous systems. One of these wonderful systems is the relationship between 'rabbi and student.' Even before the birth of a Jew, especially if he has the soul of a scholar, it is already determined in Heaven who will be his rabbi and from whom he will receive the Torah.

**7.** Every Jew must yearn and long to find his particular rabbi, responsible for correcting his soul. Faith in G-d is attainable

## Parshat Korach - Summary and Practical Conclusions

specifically through faith in the sages.

**8.** The way of the Torah is passed down by tradition from rabbi to student. The sages are the links that connect us to Mount Sinai, and thereby to the Giver of the Torah. Thus, when one learns from his rabbi, he is essentially learning from his rabbi's teachers, and so on, up to Moses who learned from the Divine presence. When a student accepts with submission and faith the words of the sages taught to him, the teachings enter his heart and become his. He thus connects to the tradition of generations, becoming an additional link in the chain of tradition passed from generation to generation.

**9.** Finding one's true rabbi isn't the ultimate so long as the person does not have 'love for his rabbi'. The main relationship between a rabbi and student is one of love and a soul-to-soul connection; through this, his rabbi's spirit will rest upon him as did Elijah's spirit upon Elisha.

**10.** Since the evil inclination knows that this is the core

challenge of a person, it exerts its full strength to create separation between him and his rabbi. The evil inclination knows full well that all the students' welfare and success, both material and spiritual, in this world and the next, depends on their rabbi, and therefore, does everything it can to separate, G-d forbid, the love between them.

**11.** However, one with a sound mind should not be tempted by this, but should say to himself: 'This does not concern me at all. I am inseparable from my rabbi - come what may!'

One who behaves in this way and adheres well to the righteous, and educates his household in this manner, will lack nothing, both materially and spiritually, and will merit a flow of blessing and success, health and good livelihood, and will experience a wealth of spiritual satisfaction from all his descendants.

**12.** Unfortunately, in our generation, the reins have been loosened and it has been permitted to disgrace scholars.

**Parshat Korach - Summary and Practical Conclusions**

They are publicly slandered and false and dishonest accusations are spread about them, causing them great sorrow and anguish.

Therefore, especially now, one must be extra vigilant not to be caught, G-d forbid, in this net, and to be careful not to speak disparagingly about

any Jew in general, and about scholars and righteous people in particular.

Those who guard their tongue from all forbidden speech, are assured that they and their household will be protected from all harm and that no evil will befall them.

**Shabbat Shalom!**





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30<sup>th</sup> of Sivan, 5784



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New York	8:12 pm	9:19 pm	9:42 pm
Miami	7:58 pm	8:55 pm	9:28 pm
Los Angeles	7:50 pm	8:52 pm	9:20 pm
Montreal	8:27 pm	9:42 pm	9:57 pm
Toronto	8:44 pm	9:55 pm	10:13 pm
London	9:01 pm	10:30 pm	10:30 pm
Jerusalem	7:33 pm	8:23 pm	9:19 pm
Tel Aviv	7:30 pm	8:20 pm	9:15 pm
Haifa	7:31 pm	8:21 pm	9:17 pm
Be'er Sheva	7:28 pm	8:18 pm	9:13 pm

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*From the Words of*

**HaRav Yoran Abargel zt"l**

*One should be accustomed not to complain, for there is truly nothing about what to complain, one indeed lacks nothing.*

*What is deservedly yours, no one can take away from you, as Ben Azzai said 'In your name, you will be called, in your place you will be seated, and from your own, you will be given, no one can touch what is prepared for his neighbor, and a kingdom does not usurp upon another even by a hairsbreadth' (Yoma 38); So why be frustrated?*

*In our generation, everything comes to our doorstep with minimal effort, a person must only be sure always to be happy, for if the goodness arrives and he is unhappy, it leaves and escapes, for goodness comes from a happy place above.*



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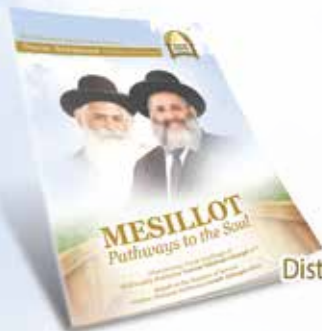
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