



Parshas Korach 2023, holiness will override

This Thursday is the third of Tammuz, which marks twenty nine years since the passing of the Lubavitcher Rebbe—Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson.

Traditionally, this is a day for reflection, re-commitment, and positive action.

Our Parsha begins with Korach, a rich and influential man from the tribe of Levi staging a rebellion against Moshe and his brother Aaron. Together with a few ringleaders, he gathered 250 men and accused Moshe and Aaron of nepotism and power hoarding. They took specific issue with Moshe's appointment of his brother, Aaron, as the Kohen Gadol, the high priest.

Furthermore, they argued that since the Jewish nation was all holy, there was no need for any person to be higher than the other. Therefore Moshe Rabbeinu didn't have to be the leader of the Jewish people.

In response, Moshe proposed that they all participate in a test the next day, which would determine who indeed was chosen to be the Kohen Gadol. Everyone would bring an incense offering in the Mishkan, and then G-d would make His choice known.

G-d was immensely angered by the nation's association with Korach and wished to destroy them. But Moshe and Aaron prayed on the Jewish people's behalf, and the decree was averted. Instead, G-d made the earth open up and swallow Korach and the rest of the rebels.

However, a question comes to mind: Following the death of Korach and his accomplices, the Jewish people started revolting against Moshe and Aaron, (17:6)

"you have brought death upon G-d's nation."

In response, G-d told Moshe and Aaron to remove themselves from the congregation as He wants to destroy them for their continued defiance. A plague began and Aaron quickly offers his own incense offering and ended the plague that killed 14,700 people. But why did G-d ask Moshe and Aaron to remove themselves from the congregation? Couldn't have G-d destroyed all those who revolted and rebelled without killing Moshe and Aaron?!

The Baal HaTurim, Rav Yakkov Ben Asher, gives an interesting explanation in his commentary, the Tur HaAroch. He refers to a similar scenario earlier in our Parsha (16:21) when G-d directed Moshe and Aaron to step back as He destroys Korach and his assembly. But instead of stepping back, Moshe and Aaron fell on their faces and prayed on behalf of the Jewish people.

The Baal HaTurim explains that the command to separate in both these scenarios was not just to Moshe and Aaron, but to all those who viewed Moshe as their leader. G-d wanted all those who wish to be saved to demonstrate that they are separating from this unholy congregation. Not using words, but through a physical act in public view, making their choice of a leader known.

However, the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh, Rav Chaim Ben Attar, offers a deeper and more profound explanation. He agrees with the Baal HaTurim that the command to step back was not solely addressed to Moshe and Aaron but also to all righteous individuals.

The word "Lemor" (saying) used by G-d in both scenarios indicates that the command to separate was meant to be conveyed to all those who believed in Moshe's leadership.

The Ohr Hachaim writes that G-d required Moshe, Aaron, and all righteous people to step back to allow the angel of death to fulfill his duty. Moshe and Aaron's devotion to G-d, along with the righteousness of many Jewish people, prevented the angel of death from carrying out his task. As the epitome of the "other side," the angel of death exists solely to oppose holiness, goodness, and righteousness in this world.

However, when spirituality and holiness are present and visibly displayed, the angel of death holds no power. For instance, the blood of the sacrifice placed on each Jewish doorpost in Egypt prevented the angel of death from harming the firstborn in those homes.

The Ohr Hachaim continues that Moshe and Aaron's response to these commands is why they were chosen to lead. In both instances, instead of stepping back, they fell on their faces and prayed for the people who were actively rebelling against them. They pleaded and beseeched that only those who truly deserved punishment be affected by G-d's anger and punishment.

This profound lesson is ever more relevant as we approach Gimmel Tammuz, a day that challenges our perception, emotions, and perspective. Although we cannot physically see the Lubavitcher Rebbe with our eyes, his holiness, presence, and mission remain unchanged. Since assuming leadership on the 10th of Shevat in 1951, the Rebbe's objective has been clear: to infuse Divine light into this dark world.

Just as Moshe led the Jewish people out of Egypt, the Rebbe illuminated the path of countless individuals, offering spiritual guidance, inspiration, and unwavering dedication. His teachings and actions continue to infuse our lives with holiness and bring us closer to the G-d.

Like Moshe, the Rebbe's devotion to G-d and tireless efforts to uplift the world continue to have a lasting effect and enduring impact on our lives. So in honor of the Rebbe's leadership and dedication, join his mission and add divine light by performing even the simplest of mitzvot and prepare our world for the ultimate redemption.

**The life of Tzaddik is not a life of flesh,
but a spiritual life consisting entirely of faith, awe and love of G-d."**

-The Tanya

*Have a meaningful & inspirational Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*