

The boss was very exasperated with his new secretary. She ignored the telephone when it rang.

"You must answer that telephone," he told her irritably.

"Okay," she replied, "but it all seems so silly. Nine times out of ten, it's for you!"

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Calendar

Rosh Chodesh Tammuz

- ◆ Shacharis 8:30 am; Shtibl 8:45 am
- ◆ Shul Brocha in the Seeff Hall sponsored in honour of Meyer & Sybil Slonim's Golden Wedding Anniversary and Sybil's birthday by their children & grandchildren.
- ◆ **Sushi & Black Label Farbrengen.**
- ◆ Mincha: 4:50 pm
- ◆ Pirkei Avos: Chapter 4
- ◆ Shabbos ends: 5:59 pm

- ◆ The **Scottish Leader Signature** whiskey at Shul is sponsored by **Distell** & available for purchase at **Norman Goodfellows.**
- ◆ **Nathan Fine** of **I.deal Furnishers** at Midway Mall, Bramley Gardens wishes all congregants a Good Shabbos. Call 011-887-5456/082-854-5706. **Furniture, Bedding & Appliances.**
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- ◆ Acknowledgements: Chabad.org

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Sunday 6 August 2017 / 14 Menachem Av 5777

Siyum: Finishing the Torah Scroll at Stern Residence, 99 5th Avenue, Highlands North – 11 am
Parade to the Shul – 1 pm
Welcoming the Torah & Dancing at Shul – 2 pm
Festive Meal – 3 pm

We look forward to sharing our special Simcha with you
RSVP: 011 640 5021 or sydshul@sydshul.co.za

Good Shabbos SYDENHAM!
Published by the Sydenham Highlands North Hebrew Congregation Johannesburg, South Africa
23 Jun 2017 Parshas Korach 30 Sivan 5777

“Everyone is Holy!” by: Rabbi Yossy Goldman

Despite all the drama of a world in turmoil, I sometimes get the feeling that we live in a boring world. Everyone is so politically correct. G-d forbid, we should say what we really think!

Recently, I attended a dinner for a local organization and the entertainer was a comedian. He got up and told the audience that the Rabbi had called him and made him promise he wouldn't use any material that was 'below the belt.' Then, another committee member reminded him not to be racist or anti-religious or gender discriminatory. A third made him promise not to offend any minority groups. Having been duly stripped of every opportunity for satire, the comedian just said, "Ladies and gentlemen, good night," and walked off the stage.

The argument of Korach, the mutineer in this week's reading, smacks of such inane political correctness. Korach accuses Moses and Aaron of nepotism, of grabbing positions of power for themselves. In doing so, he insists that "The entire community is holy. Why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of G-d?"

In fact, the very same argument could be used against Jews in general. "Who do you think you are? Chosen People! Aren't all men created equal?"

The fact is that Jews are different. Ask any anti-Semite and he'll confirm it. The blatant hypocrisy of the nations of the world and the international media in constantly holding

Israel to a higher standard of morality than it does its Arab neighbours only reaffirms that Jews generally adhere to a value system that is distinctive and unique.

Indeed, we do.

The Chosen People concept means greater responsibility, not privilege. Far from being pompous and condescending about it, it has moulded Jews into the most sensitive, humane nation on earth. And that is precisely why if we do occasionally veer from those principles, it is such an aberration that it is considered front page news.

Our belief in and respect of the inherent worth of every human being does not contradict our conviction that Judaism is unique. Does not every single religion maintain that its path is the correct one? Almost all, besides Judaism, actively evangelise to graciously save the lost souls of other faiths. We Jews do not seek converts because we believe that "the righteous of all nations have a share in the world to come" and they don't need to become Jews to get a slice of paradise.

Some years ago, the University of Cape Town was considering building a student religious facility which would unite all three major faiths in one house of worship. It was to service Muslims, Christians and Jews in a combined Mosque-Church-Synagogue to be known as a *MosChuraGogue*.

I was asked by a local newspaper what I thought of the idea. My answer was that the mistaken presumption in the founders' thinking was that three separate faiths could not possibly get along. There was therefore a need to combine them into one composite. The fact is that we are each distinct

with our own set of beliefs and practices but there is no good reason why each specific faith should not respect the other. Why must we suppress individuality to achieve harmony?

My saintly mentor, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, whose Yahrzeit will soon be observed, thus explained the Midrashic account of Korach's rebellion. Korach gathered his men and they donned prayer shawls made of the *tcheles* blue wool used for the *tzitzis*. "Does a Talis made of *tcheles* still need *tzitzis*?" they challenged Moshe. Moshe answered in the affirmative and they laughed and mocked him. "If one strand of *tcheles* exempts an entire Talis, does not a whole Talis of *tcheles* exempt itself?"

Said the Rebbe, this was precisely the argument of Korach. The whole Talis, i.e. the entire congregation, is holy. We are all *tcheles*, holy wool. There is no need for distinctions between us. Why do you, Moses and Aaron, appoint yourselves leaders and exalt yourselves over us?

The fact is, however, that distinctions are a necessary reality of life. While we don't look to create divisions between people, not everybody is a doctor. Imagine if every fellow who felt like playing physician would hang up a sign outside his house and start dispensing medicine! We'd have a very sick society.

The Rebbe was a great humanitarian. He was concerned about every nation and every single individual - Jew or Gentile - and tried to make a difference to the broader society, as evidenced by his efforts for a sacred Moment of Silence in American public schools and his emphasis on education for all. Simultaneously, he was adamant that Israel needs to be uncompromising in its territorial strategy to safeguard the security of its citizens.

Humanitarianism need not mean blurring all the lines. "Imagine," John Lennon's peace song where there are no more religions, is not only impractical and anarchic, it is a denial of truth. We don't all have to be the same to get along.

Within our own people, some are Kohanim, others Levyim, while most of us belong to

the rest of the tribes of Israel. There are doctors and lawyers, priests and prophets. The challenge of those who hold legitimate, genuine high office is to keep the distinctions from disintegrating into divisiveness.

We can be holy, distinctive, special -- and sensitive.

Parsha Pointers

Korach: Artscroll Chumash pg 820;
Living Torah pg 723

Korach incites a mutiny challenging Moses' leadership and the granting of the *keburnab* (priesthood) to Aaron. He is accompanied by Moses' inveterate foes, Dathan and Aviram. Joining them are 250 distinguished members of the community, who offer the sacrosanct *ketoret* (incense) to prove their worthiness for the priesthood. The earth opens up and swallows the mutineers, and a fire consumes the *ketoret*-offerers.

A subsequent plague is stopped by Aaron's offering of *ketoret*. Aaron's staff miraculously blossoms and brings forth almonds, to prove that his designation as high priest is divinely ordained.

G-d commands that a *terumah* ("uplifting") from each crop of grain, wine and oil, as well as all firstborn sheep and cattle, and other specified gifts, be given to the *kohanim* (priests).

The Road to Heaven

By Rabbi Yanki Tauber

The Talmud doesn't believe in "equal time." According to this ancient repository of Jewish wisdom, if a good guy and a bad guy are running for office, you should give the good guy all the publicity and ignore the bad guy. Don't even mention his name.

The Talmud has a source for its bias -- the even more ancient Book of Proverbs by King Solomon, which states, "The mention of the righteous should be for blessing, and the name of the wicked shall rot" (Proverbs 10:7). Quoting this verse, the Talmud rules that "it is forbidden to name

one's child after a wicked person."

Which begs the question: Why, then, is this week's Torah reading (Numbers 16-18) named "Korach", after the man who led a mutiny against Moses and Aaron? If the Torah doesn't want us naming our kids Pharaoh, Joseph Visarionovich or Captain Hook, why does it name one of its own sections after an unrepentant sinner, a person whose actions so endangered the very existence of the people of Israel that G-d made the earth swallow him up so that he "descended alive into the abyss"?

"The road to hell," says the saying, "is paved with good intentions." Korach, the only man reported to have reached that unsavory place alive, was also propelled there by positive desires and motives. As the Torah tells it, Korach was motivated by a lofty spiritual yearning -- the desire to become a *Kohen Gadol* ("High Priest"), which is the highest level in the service of G-d a person can attain.

How do we know that this was a positive desire? Firstly, because our Sages tell us that in the future perfect world of Moshiach each and every one of us will attain the level of intimacy with G-d which Korach desired. Secondly, because we know of another person who, like Korach, was forbidden by Divine decree to act as a *Kohen Gadol* and who nevertheless was driven by an insatiable desire to do so. That other person? Moses himself.

Here is Moses speaking to Korach: "We have but one G-d, one Torah, one law, one *Kohen Gadol* and one Sanctuary. Yet you... desire the High Priesthood. I, too, desire it!" (Midrash Tanchuma; cited by Rashi on Numbers 16:10).

"I, too, desire it!" Is Moses being facetious? Playing devil's advocate? Or are we being accorded a glimpse into Moses' soul, a soul driven by an all-consuming desire for something so exalted and G-dly that it is beyond the reach even of a Moses, a soul that finds its deepest yearnings frustrated by a divine command barring its path, commanding: "Stop. No. Not Yet."

Both Korach and Moses desired the forbidden. In Korach, the desire brought destruction upon himself and his followers. In Moses, the same desire fueled a life of greatness.

The road to hell is paved with holy desires. So is the the road to heaven. The difference is subtle, yet crucial: the difference between acting on a holy desire contrary to G-d's command, and feeding the desire, wrestling with it, living a life passionately devoted to attaining it--yet refraining from any action that the object of the desire has forbidden.

This is why, the Rebbe explains, there is a section in Torah named *Korach*. The Torah is telling us that there are two Korachs: Korach the human being, and Korach the Torah portion. Or, if you will, the body of Korach and the spirit of Korach. Korach the human being, who crossed the line that separates good from evil, the line demarcated by G-d's commands, is to be spurned. Korach the Torah portion -- the holy yearning that storms the barricades which G-d throws up to thwart our soul's rush to heaven, that strives and strains yet dares not cross in violation of the divine will -- is to be embraced.

Working Lessons

By Rabbi Tzvi Freeman

If all the world is a classroom and all of life is a lesson, then certainly your profession and workplace are included.

After all, He has unlimited ways to provide your livelihood—why did He direct you to this way of life?

What sparks of the divine await you here?

Live & Laugh

Reaching the end of a job interview, the Human Resources Officer asks a young engineer fresh out of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, "And what starting salary are you looking for?" The engineer replies, "In the region of \$125,000 a year, depending on the benefits package." The interviewer inquires, "Well, what would you say to a package of five weeks vacation, 14 paid holidays, full medical and dental, company matching retirement fund to 50% of salary, and a company car leased every two years, say, a red Corvette?" The engineer sits up straight and says, "Wow! Are you kidding?" The interviewer replies, "Yeah, but you started it."

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