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Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Korach

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"As he finished"

Rabbi Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig

Moshe's leadership, and the challenges he faces and to which he responds, stand out as a central element of the narrative in Sefer Bamidbar generally, and Parshat Korach in particular. When Korach and his gang rise up and argue their side, Moshe's position as leader is met with the greatest test it has seen in the Midbar experience. In light of this, it is fascinating to see how his response is described in the Torah.

Upon hearing Korach's argument that, "this entire congregation is holy," Moshe is described as falling on his face. While this language often connotes prayer, here it appears to convey a deep sense of shock, as if all Moshe's strength instantly vanished from his body. Midrash Tanchuma 4 highlights this, arguing that Moshe is completely overwhelmed when he realizes he is facing a fourth revolt. He had already led the nation through the Golden Calf, the complainers (Bamidbar 11), and the spies (ibid. 13). During each of these provocations, Moshe rose to the challenge and saved the Jews, with a key element of his response being prayer. Now, Moshe is uncertain whether or not prayer will be effective in garnering forgiveness for this crime; "How many more times can I disturb the King!"

The text of the Torah itself seems to hint at a deep connection between the Golden Calf incident and the rebellion of Korach. The word *k'chaloto*, "as he finished", only appears in this form in these two spots in the Torah. The first time, in Shemot 31:18, it closes the story of Moshe receiving the Tablets, which is followed immediately by the story of the Golden Calf. The second time, in Bamidbar 16:31, it concludes

Moshe's speech to the rebels and is immediately followed by the earth opening up to swallow Korach and his mob. On the surface, the usage of *k'chaloto* regarding Korach could be a subtle hint to *keliah*, destruction, the fate that Korach would meet. However, when viewed in tandem with its appearance regarding the Golden Calf, the message is less clear. What is the Torah communicating by linking these two episodes?

To answer this question, it is necessary to look at each event in broad terms. The handing over of the tablets and the sin of the Golden Calf come a short time after the Jews leave Egypt, and in the midst of the revelation at Sinai. Korach's rebellion occurs after a series of protests which have corroded the nation's faith in Moshe's leadership, opening the door for Korach's rebellion (see Ramban 16:1). It is in these contexts of upheaval that the word *k'chaloto* is utilized. However, there is a critical difference between these two episodes, with regard to how Moshe's leadership is portrayed.

Not long after receiving the Tablets, Moshe saw the Golden Calf and smashed them. The Sages (Shabbat 87a) note that Moshe did this of his own volition, but that Hashem subsequently agreed to his decision. This is a powerful notion, given that the verses seem to present the decision as being solely Moshe's. Yet, our Sages argue, even when Moshe appears to be acting of his own accord he is, in truth, still following the will of Hashem. *K'chaloto* appears at the moment when Hashem hands the tablets over to Moshe, with the ability to make decisions that would shape the Torah

In contrast, during Korach's revolt Moshe cries out to the rebels, saying, "Hashem sent me to do all of these things; it isn't from my heart!" This is the very opposite of what appears to happen with the Tablets, in which Moshe's actions are endorsed by G-d. Ironically, by tying this to the Golden Calf, *k'chaloto* alludes to a scene of Moshe's independent leadership, which bolsters Korach's argument! However, perhaps by linking the sections the Torah hints to us that even those decisions that Moshe did in fact make from "his own heart," from the time of the Tablets and onward, had received the stamp of approval from Hashem – making them really Divine. Despite the fact that Moshe does make independent decisions, the fact that all of Moshe's leadership has divine endorsement seals the fate of Korach's rebellion.

The repetition of *k'chaloto* serves to frame Moshe's leadership, and perhaps ours as well. Moshe balanced explicit commands from Hashem, as represented in his interaction with Korach, and innovation, as made clear from the decision to shatter the tablets. While the latter decision was based upon principles instilled within the Torah, it is still viewed as an innovation on Moshe's part. We must strive to maintain the awareness that these two ideas are not mutually exclusive, and perhaps together they are the key to greatness.

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Jewish Spiritual Practices
Yitzhak Buxbaum
Aronson Press, 1990

The Aim

The Orthodox Jewish community often places its primary focus on the nuances of halachic observance, and appropriately so. However, there are times when, due to the depth and importance of halachic application, individuals overly focus on the technical questions of how to fulfill halachic obligations. The importance of establishing a relationship with Hashem, though those same halachic practices, can be overlooked.

Some might believe that Jewish law and Jewish spirituality are somewhat mutually exclusive. However, Yitzhak Buxbaum in *Jewish Spiritual Practices*, through the lens of the great Chassidic masters, shows that there is great spiritual depth in fulfilling halachic obligations. "The aim of this book is to make available to the reader some part of the wealth of Jewish spiritual practices whose goal is the attainment of G-d consciousness."

The Content

While this book is not a spiritual commentary on the Shulchan Aruch (for such a work, see *Likutei Halachot* by Rabbi Natan Sternhartz), it is a spiritual guidebook that sees the

practical observances of Jewish life as opportunities for spiritual expression. The book incorporates techniques for making "spiritual mitzvot," such as prayer and Torah study, into transformative experiences. However, even the more mundane aspects of life, such as eating, working, and being tired are also described as potential ways to serve Hashem.

Far from being merely descriptive, the book guides the reader to a greater sense of spiritual awareness. Each section is filled with stories and practical teachings from various parts of kabbalistic and Chassidic thought, to be used in different situations.

The author focuses largely on directing readers to feel the impact of their actions more deeply. While some believe that obeying G-d's will is inherently spiritual, Buxbaum implies that even when one is following Halachah, he must focus on using each action to establish a personal relationship with Hashem.

The Structure

The book is divided into three main parts: The General Principles of Hasidic Spirituality; Spiritual Practices; and Individual Practices. The first discusses the importance of connecting with Hashem and remembering Hashem, and provides a

methodology for using the information in the second section.

"Spiritual Practices" follows, more or less, the order of the day, from waking up to going to sleep. It incorporates lessons about character development and practical steps, to enhance one's life and halachic observance with deeper spirituality.

Finally, "Individual Practices" are additional practices, above and beyond those required by halachah. This section includes ideas for how one can connect with Hashem through the lens of Jewish tradition and Hasidic thought.

The latter two parts are broken into numbered sections and subsections. The divisions are helpful in making the book more user-friendly, for cross-referencing and ease of access.

Reflection

The book does not read fluidly. The author may write a brief note or thought before proceeding to quote a number of sources, in block paragraphs, that illustrate his point; it reads more like shiur-notes than a book. However, this book is a gamechanger, as it views all of Jewish life as a spiritual pursuit. It provides a worthwhile learning experience for every single Jew.

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613 Mitzvot: 525: Don't Be Afraid

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

As explained in Devarim 9:5, the Jews receive the land of Canaan because G-d wants them to dismantle Canaanite society. If the Jews were to fall short of this goal, then G-d would have fulfilled His promise to their ancestors, but the Jews would have failed in their own responsibility. Therefore, Moshe repeatedly warns the Jews not to fear the Canaanites, lest they fail to prosecute their wars. Examples include "Do not fear them (Devarim 3:22)," "You shall not be broken by fear before them (Devarim 7:21)," and "Do not fear, and do not tremble, and be not broken by fear before them (Devarim 20:3)." Rambam codified this as the Torah's 58th prohibition, and Sefer haChinuch listed it as the Torah's 525th mitzvah.

Rambam contended that the emotion of fear is not, in itself, a violation of this mitzvah. Rather, the prohibition is against allowing and enabling the fear to dominate us, to such an extent that we withdraw from the battle and flee. (For more on this, see Rabbi Avraham Shirman, *Niv haMidrashiah* 5743, available at <http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/kitveyet/niv/sherman-1.htm>.) Sefer haChinuch added that the soldier should maintain in his heart the ideas and feelings which will encourage him: "He should empty his heart of all other matter, for war. And he should also think that the blood of all Israel depends upon him, as though he would be murdering all of them if he were to fear and retreat." [See, too, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchot Melachim* 7:15.]

Ramban (Hasagot, Lo Taaseh 58) argued that this is not actually a mitzvah; rather, it is a promise that the Jewish

soldiers battling the Canaanites will not fear. Otherwise, it would hardly make sense for the Torah to free a frightened soldier from battle (Devarim 20:8, as explained by Rabbi Akiva in *Mishnah Sotah* 8:5). Should a sinner be rewarded? However, Rabbi Yitzchak Leon, in his 16th century *Megilat Esther* commentary to Rambam's *Sefer haMitzvot*, defended the view of Rambam. He noted that a soldier has great reason for fear, and there can be no promise that he will not fear. Rather, this must be an instruction not to fear.

There is also a great deal of debate as to whether this mitzvah prohibits fear before the battle, or during the battle. For more discussion regarding the specifics of this challenging mitzvah, see Rabbi Aryeh Stern's *Issur haPachad b'She'at haMilchamah* at http://asif.co.il/?wpcf_dl=7008.

It is worth noting that Rabbi Avraham Shapira, who served as Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi from 1983 to 1993, contended that this prohibition applies not only to the soldier, but also to the Jews as a nation. He noted that Rambam's explanation of this mitzvah cited biblical verses which were directed not uniquely to the army, but to the Jews as a collective. All of us are commanded not to fear our national foes. (<http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/kitveyet/emunat/48/04802.htm>)

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Biography

Rabbeinu Tam

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

Rabbeinu Yaakov was born in 1100 in Ramerupt, France. He was a son to Rabbi Meir ben Shemuel and Yocheved, a daughter of Rashi. An heir to the most distinguished Torah family in Europe, Rabbeinu Yaakov learned mainly from his father and his brother, Rabbi Shemuel ben Meir, also known as Rashbam. While common legends had Rabbeinu Yaakov meeting his giant grandfather Rashi and learning from him, historians doubt he ever met him.

Rabbeinu Yaakov became famous as “Rabbeinu Tam”, because of Bereishit 25:27, “And Yaakov was *ish tam* (a straightforward man)”. It quickly became clear that Rabbeinu Tam should be appreciated not only as a son of a prominent family, but as one of the greatest Torah scholars who ever lived. While Rabbis in the centuries since the sealing of the Talmud had mainly contained themselves to interpreting the text, Rabbeinu Tam, in a systematic and thorough way, chose to continue the dialectic discourse of the talmudic discussion, and not to merely explain it. Thus, although the commentary known as “Tosafot” is the product of collaborative work by dozens, if not hundreds of different Torah scholars, the presence of Rabbeinu Tam is overarching. As Professor Haym Soloveitchik writes, Rabbeinu Tam scarcely treated a topic that he did not revolutionize by dialectic. He was able to offer many hundreds, maybe thousands, of legal distinctions that subsequent thinkers found, and to this day still find, essential for any understanding of Halachah. (Collected Essays I, pg. 6)

Rabbeinu Tam's role was not confined to that of a talmudic commentator. He saw himself, and was seen by others, as the leading authority of his time. He aspired to unite the Jews of Europe, from Ashkenaz (Germany) to Provence (South France). Some of his actions were fruitful, such as his corrections to the order of the weekly Torah reading, which were accepted throughout the Jewish world. Others were accepted only in the “Shu”m communities” – Speyer, Worms and Mainz. Because of his prominent position, the Crusaders of 1146 targeted Rabbeinu Tam in an attack he barely survived.

Rabbeinu Tam was taken to Heaven on Tammuz 4, 1171; his yahrtzeit is this Sunday.

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Torah and Translation

On Correcting “Errors” in Manuscripts

Rabbeinu Tam, Introduction to Sefer haYashar

Translated by Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

ספר הישר קראתי בשם את הספר יען כל פקודי כל ישרתי בו, שמועות הראשונות וגירסות הספרים אשר מעולם. כי ראיתם שותים מים הרעים לקריאת מגיה ספרים בלי שכר תרומת הלשכה ואיש לזרועו היו. כי הזריו הרי זה משובח.

ואף על גב דלט רבינו גרשום מאור הגולה כל מאן דמשבש תלמוד הכי והכי תהוי לא נמנעו מלשבש. ולא די להם בגרסות הנראין פירוש לשבש כי אם דברי האמוראין והתנאין עצמן ולא יתכן כן לכל יראי ד'.

כי גם רבינו שלמה אם הגיה גירסא, בפירושו הגיה. אבל בספרו לא הגיה. כי אם שותי מימיו הגיהו על פי פירושו אשר לא מלאו לבו לעשות כן בחייו זולתי במסכת זבחים לבדה. ובדקתי ומצאתי בספרים שלו כי לא הוגהו מכתבת יד.

והדין נותן אם לא ידע אדם הלכה יכתוב פתרונו לפי ראות עיניו אם ירצה אך בספרים אל ימחק שדברי תורה עניים במקומן ועשירים במקום אחר. ואם דבר רק הוא ממנו הוא רק.... ואם חס ושולם נשתבשו הספרים והגיהו לא ידענו עוד אמיתת הדברים.

ושרא ליה מריה לרבינו שמואל כי על אחת שהגיה רבינו שלמה הגיה הוא עשרים ולא עוד אלא שמחק הספרים. וידעת כי מגודל לבו ועומק פלפולו עשה זאת וראיתו במקומות מספרים ישנים. ואינה ראייה כי גם ספרים ישנים אכתוב לך בזה הספר אשר חיסרו [מאשר] לפנינו וקודמי קדומין ישנים ומיושנים לא יעידום ולא פירושי רבינו חננאל נאמנין.

ויהיו דברי אלה קרובים לכל יראי ד' לבלתי ישבשו הספרים למחקם ולא לעשות לאו הין והין לאו. וכ"ש שמתוך סברת האדם לא יסתור שמועתו וסברת התלמוד...

did it by the greatness of his mind and the depth of his scholarship, and he has proofs in certain places from old texts. But that is not a proof, for as I will demonstrate to you in this book, what was deleted before us is not to be attested even by ancient books, and even the commentaries of Rabbeinu Chananel are not to be trusted.

Let these words of mine be close to all G-d-fearing men, lest they edit the books and delete from them, making a No into a Yes and a Yes into a No. It is even more obvious that a person should not contradict his learning and the argument of the Talmud out of his own speculation...

I named the book 'The Book of the Straight', for I straightened in it all of the mitzvot, [based on] the earliest teachings and ancient editions of texts. For I saw people drink from bad water, by reading the work of those who edit “without the payment of the Temple office” [meaning: their work is not sanctioned], every man relying on his own strength, and the quicker [to revise] is seen as praiseworthy.

And although Rabbeinu Gershom Meor HaGolah cursed anyone who interferes with the Talmud's text, saying that such-and-such should happen to him, they did not refrain from editing. And it was not enough for them to change the texts of passages which seem to be commentary, but even the words of the Amoraim and Tannaim [talmudic sages] themselves! That would be impossible for anyone who feared G-d.

Even if Rashi corrected texts, he did it in his own commentary, but not inside the text. [The changes came] from those who drink his waters, who corrected text according to his commentary – which he never dared to do while alive, aside from Masechet Zevachim alone. I checked in his own books and found they were not edited in his handwriting. And logic dictates that if a person does not understand a law, he should write his explanation according to his view, if he so wishes, but he should not delete in the texts, for the words of Torah are poor [in explanation] in one place and rich in another, and if something seems empty, it is only from him that it is empty... And if, G-d forbid, the texts were mistaken, and they edited them, we still do not know the truth of the matter.

G-d should forgive Rabbeinu Shemuel, because for every revision made by Rashi, he made twenty, and even more, he deleted within the texts. And I know he

This Week in Israeli History: 8 Tammuz 2000
The Camp David Summit

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

8 Tammuz is Thursday

Building on the language of the 1978 Camp David Accords, the Oslo Accords of 1993 specified that a “final status settlement” should be brokered between Israel and the Palestinians within five years of the inauguration of the Palestinian self-government. To fulfill this goal, U.S. President Bill Clinton invited Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat to a summit in Camp David, Maryland in the summer of 2000. The summit began on 8 Tammuz 5760 (July 11 2000).

Negotiators for the two sides for two weeks, discussing issues including land disputes, sovereignty over Jerusalem, and the “right of return” demanded by Palestinians. The two sides remained significantly at odds over these contentious subjects. The Palestinians claimed that they had already compromised enough regarding land, by accepting Israeli

sovereignty over what they viewed as 78% of “historic Palestine”. The Israeli public did not see this as a compromise, and was unwilling to accept Palestinian sovereignty in East Jerusalem, or a broad “right of return”. Indeed, a Truman Institute poll taken after the summit showed that 58% of the Israeli public felt PM Barak had offered too much.

Ultimately, the talks collapsed in failure. The concluding “Trilateral Statement” issued on July 25th expressed commitment to further dialogue and the role of the United States as broker, but there was little else to show for the effort. In his autobiography, *My Life*, President Clinton blamed Chairman Arafat for the debacle. He wrote that Arafat had once told him, “You are a great man.” To this, Clinton had responded, “I am not a great man. I am a failure, and you made me one.”

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Weekly Highlights: July 9 – July 15 / 3 Tammuz – 9 Tammuz
Many of our classes are on summer hiatus, but opportunities remain!

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
שבת July 9				
After hashkamah	R' Yisroel M. Rosenzweig	Avot d'Rabbi Natan	Clanton Park	
8:50 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	The Machiavellian Korach	BAYT	Turk Beis Medrash
6:00 PM	Mrs. Ora Ziring	When (Not) to Quell Quarrels	BAYT	Women's Shiur
7:25 PM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Daf Yomi	BAYT	Rabbi's Classroom
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah: Shattering Stones?	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Sun. July 10				
8:45 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Responsa	BAYT	Not this week
8:45 AM	R' Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachah	BAYT	
9:15 AM	R' Shalom Krell	Book of Shemuel	Associated North	Hebrew
Mon. July 11				
7:30 PM	R' David Ely Grundland	Thought of Rav Kook	Shaarei Shomayim	Weinbaum Beit Midrash
8:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Authority in Israel 4 of 4: A Secular Government	Shomrai Shabbos	Men
Tue. July 12				
11:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Eruvin	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced
Wed. July 13				
10:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Intro to Kabbalah 4: Red Strings?	Yeshivat Or Chaim	For beginners
11:00 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	A History of Conversion 4: Loving the Convert	Yeshivat Or Chaim	For beginners
8:00 PM	R' Yisroel M. Rosenzweig	Lashon haRa and Journalism	Shaarei Tefillah	
Fri. July 15				
10:30 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Eruvin	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced

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