

**Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet**  
**Parshas Korach**  
**שבת פרשת קרח**

ראש חדש תמוז

**In My Opinion :: Rabbi Berel Wein**  
*Answering Machines*

Almost all of our telephones today, whether they are landlines or mobile phones, are equipped with a “leave a message” answering service. Like all of our modern technological wonders, this telephone answering service has a darker side to its apparent sunny convenience. When I arrive home late at night after attending an event or a celebration and I see that red light flashing on our answering machine, indicating that a caller or numerous callers have left a message, my mood darkens.

I must then and there listen to those messages for there may be an emergency situation that demands my attention – and even a response late at night. But most of the time, these messages can certainly wait for my response until the next day. But, I must listen to them even though it will now take me more time to get into my “going to sleep” mode, simply because I know that these messages exist and the callers expect my response.

I was born at a time when and in a place where phone numbers were only four digits in length and one spoke to a real live person called an “operator” to connect a call. Our home phone was one of four homes connected on a party line, and no one thought of having an answering machine attached to one’s phone. We have certainly progressed at least as far as phone technology is concerned.

But, the nostalgia that overtakes those of my age tells me that life was simply less stressful when there were no answering machines attached to our phones and that miraculous hand-held phones were not the center point of our daily existence.

Heaven must also have an answering machine service to receive all of our calls and requests. There is no doubt that the Lord’s omniscience and omnipotence allows for instant awareness of all requests and entreaties to Heaven. Yet we do not always receive instant responses to our calls to Heaven. Sometimes we are put on hold and at other times our messages are recorded on the Heavenly answering machine for further attention and processing.

Our calls are never ignored though, for the Heavenly answering machine is always turned on and working. According to Jewish tradition and belief our calls can be returned, so to speak, years and even generations later. But once our message is recorded on that Heavenly answering machine it remains there permanently and will be dealt with in Heaven’s good time and effective manner.

The Talmud teaches us that not only our words and spoken wishes are recorded but that even our tears, unspoken and private as they may be, are also counted and stored in the vaults of Heaven. And the gates of tears are never closed or locked. Tears do not bring forth or require a “leave a message” response. They are immediately assessed, counted and considered. In a macho society, tears are sometimes considered to be a sign of personal weakness and soft character. In Jewish life they are viewed as the lubricant of our souls and one of the keys to emotional holiness and psychological stability.

The call that the Jewish people placed to Heaven millennia ago regarding our restoration to national sovereignty in our ancient homeland, the Land of Israel, was on the Heavenly answering machine for a long time. Heaven never erased that original call from its answering machine and the Jewish people never stopped making that call over and over again, certainly many millions of times over the centuries of exile and dispersion.

And unexpectedly, against all odds and rational predictions, that call has been returned by Heaven in our times. And all of the tears shed over our exile and persecution have been counted and remembered and have, in

fact, become the fuel for the renewal of our national energy and nation-building drive.

Maybe when I overcome my frustrations at having to listen to and respond to my answering machine messages I do so with a feeling that I am attempting to imitate Heaven in so doing. The Heavenly answering machine records when our calls were received but it does not indicate exactly when that call will be returned. Yet, we are confident that the return call will eventually come and that our communications are never completely ignored or deemed to be irrelevant and unnecessary.

The mysteries of our private lives and of Jewish national life oftentimes overwhelm and even discourage us. But we should continually remember that we left a message on the Heavenly answering machine and that we are certainly not alone or forgotten in our struggles and hopes.

Shabat shalom

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**Weekly Parsha :: Rabbi Berel Wein**  
*Korach*

Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban) is of the general opinion that events, as recorded in the Torah, occurred in a linear timeline. This is in spite of the maxim that there is no late or early in the Torah. He limits that rule to certain halachic instances as they appear in the Talmud. Thus the story of Korach and his contest against Moshe that forms the central part of this week’s parsha occurred after the tragedy of the spies and their negative report about the Land of Israel.

As I have commented before, the negative report of the spies was motivated, according to rabbinic opinion, by personal interests having no objective value as to the issue of the Land of Israel itself. So too, this uprising against Moshe led by Korach is also not an issue of justice or objective benefit to the people, but rather it is motivated purely by the personal issues and jealousies of Korach and his followers.

Both Korach and the spies masked their own personal drives for power and position with high-sounding principles of public good, social justice and great concern for the future of the people of Israel. The very shrillness of their concern for the good of society itself calls attention to their true motives – they protested too much!

Pious disclaimers of any self-interest seem to always accompany those that clamor for social betterment and a more just society. But it is often personal ambition and the drive to acquire power over others that is the true face of these movements and individuals. All of the dictators of the past and present centuries promised great improvements for their peoples and countries and yet all, without exception, eventually only pursued their own personal gain and power. Always beware of those who speak in the name of the people. Most of the time they are only imitations of Korach.

This is perhaps an insight as to why Moshe took such a strong stand against Korach and demanded an exemplary punishment from Heaven. It is extremely difficult for humans to judge the true motives of others in their declarations and policies. Only Heaven, so to speak, can do so. Moshe’s plea to Heaven is directed not only against the current Korach that he faces, but it is also against the constant recurrences of other Korachs throughout Jewish and world history.

Only a shocking miracle of the earth swallowing Korach and his followers and of a fire consuming those who dared to offer incense in place of Aharon, would impress the historical psyche of Israel, as to be wary of Korach’s imitators through the ages.

There is an adage in Jewish life that one should always respect others but also be wary of their true motives. Only regarding Moshe does the Torah testify that as the true servant of God, he is above criticism and suspicion. But ordinary mortals have ordinary failings and self-interest is one of those failings. Moshe is true and his Torah is true. After that, no matter how

fetching the slogan or how glorious the promise, caution and wariness about the person and cause being advocated are the proper attitudes to embrace.  
Shabat shalom

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## Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Korach

For the week ending 8 June 2013 / 29 Sivan 5773

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - [www.seasonsofthemoon.com](http://www.seasonsofthemoon.com)

### Insights

#### Men At Work

**"...why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of G-d?" (16:3)**

You're driving home after a long week's absence. On your way out of town there was a large hold-up where they were fixing the road. You wonder how long it will take to get through it. You turn the bend, and to your delight the traffic is flowing like money at a casino. The road repair crew has already finished their work. Sailing over the new tarmac you notice that it has already lost its pristine blackness. In a few short days it will be indistinguishable from the thousands of other dusty gray miles of tarmac.

In 1873, a holy Jew in Russia authored a work which changed the course of Judaism. The book was called *The Chafetz Chaim* - 'The Desirer of Life'.

The subject matter of the book was the set of laws governing proper speech. In clear language the Chafetz Chaim led his readers through the sometimes tortuous laws of permitted and forbidden speech. The author of the Chafetz Chaim was famous for guarding his tongue with such care that his name became synonymous with that of his creation. He became known as the Chafetz Chaim.

One might have expected the Chafetz Chaim to be extremely taciturn, visibly standing guard over every syllable that left his lips. The opposite was, in fact, true.

A visitor came to the Chafetz Chaim and his son-in-law, Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Levinson (the rosh yeshiva of Radin), and was struck by the difference between the two men. Rabbi Levinson was a man of few and measured words, obviously checked for kashrut prior to utterance. By comparison, the Chafetz Chaim was almost verbose, his conversation flowing with the ease.

In this week's Torah portion it's difficult to understand how Korach could have hoodwinked the whole of the Jewish People into suspecting Moshe of 'lording it up' over the congregation. Just a few chapters previously, the Torah testifies that Moshe was the 'humblest of all men.' How could there have existed even a suspicion that Moshe was pumped up with his own self-image?

When we master a certain character trait it becomes an indivisible part of who we are. However, when we are still doing 'road work' to perfect a part of our character, the signs of digging and construction are everywhere in evidence. It's clear to all that there are still 'men at work'.

To the untrained eye, Moshe might have seemed lofty and removed. He was, after all, the king of the Jewish People. And he behaved in the manner of a king. But in his heart, Moshe understood, as no man before or since, exactly how small he was compared to G-d. Moshe didn't need to trumpet his humility. It was already integrated into his personality as seamlessly as the tarmac of last year's road repair.

Source: Rabbi Mordechai Perlmán

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## Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Parshas Korach

### **And Korach separated himself. (16:1)**

In the beginning of Sefer Devarim, Moshe Rabbeinu details the places in which the Jewish nation acted inappropriately. Rather than underscore the sin and humiliate them, our leader alludes to various indiscretions by the names and places in which these events took place. Bein Paran u'bein Tofel, v'Lavan va'Chatzeiros v'Di Zahav. The commentators note that these

places do not exist on any geographical map; rather, they are allegories to sins, with Paran being a reference to the spies who were sent out from the Wilderness of Paran. Tofel and Lavan allude to the people's complaints about the Manna. Chatzeiros is where Korach's rebellion took place, and Di Zahav, literally an abundance of gold, is a veiled reference to the sin of the Golden Calf.

While we can infer the various indiscretions from the geographical names stated by the Torah, we find it necessary to be creative in linking Chatzeiros to Korach. No such place exists, and, as a term, it has no connection to Korach. The Chidushei HaRim explain this with a brilliant synopsis of the meaning of Chatzeiros. A chatzeir is a courtyard. On Shabbos, one may not carry from one private courtyard to another unless the members of the collective courtyard all agree to make an eiruv. Chazal provide a dispensation whereby a parcel of food is placed in one of the houses of the members of the courtyard. Everyone contributes toward the purchase of this eiruv, thus making all of the members partners, essentially transforming the area into one large chatzeir in which all may carry.

Chazal laud Shlomo HaMelech who was mesakein, created, the eiruv reform. He saw a problem and addressed it. Hashem was quite pleased with this tikun. Why? The Gerrer Rebbe explains that eiruvei chatzeiros teaches the value and power of achdus, harmony/unity among Jews. The very method through which an eiruv becomes valid is by the partnership that encompasses all of the members of the neighborhood.

Eiruvei chatzeiros symbolizes Jewish unity. Korach fought against Jewish unity. He created a rift when he separated himself from the klal, community. Thus, the word chatzeiros is an excellent choice for emphasizing the machlokes Korach, dispute of Korach. He catalyzed the opposite of eiruv by creating divisiveness within the nation.

It is amazing that, so many years later, Korach stands alone as the individual who created machlokes in Klal Yisrael. Furthermore, he impugned the leadership of Moshe and Aharon, which is in itself an unforgivable mutiny. Yet, the Torah focuses on the machlokes, the shattering of unity. Perhaps everything could have been "worked out," even overlooked, had Korach not destroyed the harmony that existed in Klal Yisrael. Some people are rabble-rousers, always on the lookout for an opportunity to dissent and discord. They cannot leave well enough alone. It is almost as if they are nothing in their own right. When sides are taken and discord reigns, they come to the fore with their perverted opinions. They thrive on machlokes, very much like bacteria flourishes on an infection. Every community is cursed with such Korachs, who appear out of the woodwork once they smell a dispute brewing among partners, husband and wife, parent body of a school, or members of a shul. They do not

really care who triumphs, as long as machlokes is present. Such individuals represent the greatest danger to a united Klal Yisrael. I just cannot figure out why everyone is so frightened of them.

### **And Korach separated himself. (16:1)**

Korach was no fool. Yet, he acted in a manner unbecoming a person who possesses even a modicum of common sense. He had it all. Why did he throw it all away for a chance at a moment of glory? Did he not realize that he had no prospects of succeeding in this ill-fated endeavor? Rashi explains that his "eye" threw him off. He saw a succession of distinguished offspring descending from him. The illustrious Shmuel HaNavi, who was to succeed Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon HaKohen as the nation's spiritual leader, stood at the helm of this revered lineage. How could he be wrong? His descendants would save him.

Korach was dead wrong. His sons repented at the very last moment, resulting in their being spared the gruesome death of the other mutineers. Rashi refers to Korach as a pikeach, a clever, shrewd person. Why is he referred to as clever - as opposed to chacham, wise? Horav Naphtali, zl, m'Ropshitz distinguishes between a pikeach and a chacham, in that a pikeach is not only astute, but he also knows how to "play the game." A pikeach never officially takes sides. In fact, when two people are in dispute with one another, the clever person knows exactly what to do and what to say, in such a manner that each side thinks he is supportive of his

individual cause/opinion, etc. This is alluded to by the gimatriya, numerical equivalent, of pikeach, which is 188, double the gimatriya of tzad, side. The pikeach takes "both" sides.

This is what Rashi means when he says, Vayikach Korach, Lakach atzmo l'tzad echad, "He took /separated himself to one side." Then Rashi asks, "Korach was a pikeach; what did he see that provoked him to do this foolishness, to take himself to one side?" Rashi intimates that a clever person never takes sides. What made Korach lose perspective of what he was about to do? He explains that he saw his future descendants. He thought that he could not possibly go wrong. This time he would not hedge his bets. He would take sides.

This might explain why Korach acted foolishly, but what motivated his two-hundred and fifty henchmen? These were learned men, scholars who were heads of the Sanhedrin. Clearly, one does not achieve such distinction unless he is blessed with an astute mind and possesses amazing diligence. They had no chance of becoming leaders. It was going to be a toss-up between Moshe Rabbeinu and Korach. They were completely out of the picture. Furthermore, they did not have Korach's excuse, looking into the future and seeing an illustrious lineage originating from them. Why did they act so foolishly?

Horav Meir Chodosh, zl, cites the Talmud Sanhedrin 52b, where Chazal present an analogy concerning the way in which an am ha'aretz, unschooled, ignorant Jew, views a talmid chacham, Torah scholar. At first, the scholar is unapproachable, similar to a jug made of pure gold. He is regarded as precious and highly revered. Once the scholar converses idly with the am ha'aretz, his standing in the eyes of the ignorant man plummets to that of a silver jug. His value has decreased considerably, but he is still considered to be precious. Once the talmid chacham accepts gifts from the am ha'aretz, it is all over. The scholar now appears as nothing more than an earthenware jug which, once broken, can never be repaired. In his commentary, Rashi states that this analogy applies to Korach and the way he was able to ensnare the heads of the Sanhedrin in his web of deceit. Interestingly, these men were not ignorant. They were the primary scholars of the nation. Once they were the beneficiari

es of Korach's wealth, however, he neither respected them, nor did they have any self-respect. A talmid chacham must maintain an aura of respectability. Taking money from an am ha'aretz - or even a scholar, but a despot such as Korach - diminishes one's standing.

The Mashgiach explains that once the two-hundred fifty heads of the Sanhedrin benefitted from Korach's wealth, they had been bribed. It was a done deal; they were in Korach's pocket. Korach, on the other hand, knew the score; he had not been bribed. Chazal wonder how such an astute person could act so foolishly.

#### ***And Korach separated himself. (16:1)***

Throughout the millennia, the name Korach has personified one idea: machlokes, controversy, strife, dispute for the sake of destruction. As Korach succeeded in destroying himself and his followers, so, too, do the modern-day heirs to his ignominious title destroy themselves and all those who chose the ill-fated path of following him.

In a letter written in 5760, Horav Aharon Leib Shteinman, Shlita, bemoans the fact that disputes among individuals, and even among institutions, have risen to epic proportions. The Rosh Yeshivah expresses his extreme pain and anguish over this tragedy. Each party thinks that he is justified, not only in his claim, but he even conjures up a dispensation to speak lashon hora and slander the other party. The only ways to put an end to this pandemic are: to adopt the middah, character trait, of vittur, tolerance, forbearance; to look away; to ignore and often swallow one's pride, so that a full-scale flare-up of tempers does not take place.

Horav Hersh Palei, zl, was well-known as an individual who went out of his way to distance himself from any form of machlokes. He viewed controversy as a flaming fire which would singe anyone who came within its proximity. In a similar vein, Horav Feivel Epstein, zl, son of Horav Moshe Mordechai Epstein, zl, Rosh Yeshivas Slabodka was wont to say, "If I had before me two possibilities: on one side a burning fire and on the

other side the fire of machlokes, I would choose to walk into the actual fire, because it is cooler!"

#### ***And On ben Peles. (16:1)***

Chazal teach that On ben Peles, one of Korach's early supporters, was destined to suffer the same bitter end that befell Korach and his mutinous followers. It was his wife that saved him. First, she attempted to bring him to his senses, claiming that he was in a lose-lose situation. Whether Moshe Rabbeinu persevered or Korach succeeded, On ben Peles was not going to become the leader of the nation. He was going to be a lackey, regardless of who triumphed. So, why did he get involved? The problem was that On ben Peles had committed himself and was a man who took his commitments seriously. He had been part of the conspiracy from the get-go. How could he back out now?

His wife was a true eishes chayil, putting her husband before herself. She was willing to do whatever it would take to preserve her marriage and prevent her husband from destroying his life. She gave her husband a good dinner, with enough strong wine to leave him slightly inebriated. She then coaxed him to take a nap. As her husband slept off his stupor, his wife heard the men coming to fetch him for the "meeting" to rebel against Moshe. On's wife understood the hypocrisy of these men - individuals who exemplified Torah scholarship, but who had no problem impugning the leadership of G-d's chosen leader. She knew how transparent their frumkeit was. She went to the window and unbraided her hair. The men saw a woman with her hair exposed, and they ran! Destroy Moshe - yes. That was fine, because they behaved for the sake of the Jewish People, according to their perverted logic. They all deserved to be leaders. Men who did not fear Hashem's wrath concerning their dispute with Moshe should not be "afraid" of some exposed hair. Why did they run?

The Yalkut HaUrim offers a practical explanation. The Talmud Yoma 47 states that a righteous woman named Kimchis merited to have seven sons, all of whom served as Kohanim Gedolim, High Priests. Clearly, this is no simple merit. Chazal questioned her concerning what it was that she did - or did not do - that warranted for her such incredible nachas, Torah-oriented satisfaction. She replied, "The walls of my home never 'saw' my (uncovered) hair." This teaches us that tznius -- modesty and chastity - is a reason to merit sons who are great enough to serve as High Priests.

We now understand why Korach's henchmen made an about-face when they saw On's wife revealing her hair. Obviously, she was not a tzenuah, modest woman. Such a woman would not produce sons worthy of carrying on the legacy of Korach. They would never achieve spiritual distinction - so why bother with On altogether? We now have an insight into the perverted logic that guided these men.

Mayanah Shel Torah offers a similar explanation with a slightly different twist. The two hundred-fifty heads of the Sanhedrin held themselves in very high esteem. Indeed, every one of them thought himself worthy of becoming Kohen Gadol. Concerning the High Priest, the Torah writes, V'chiper baado ub'aad beiso, "He shall atone on behalf of himself and on behalf of his house" (Vayikra 16). Chazal define beiso, his house, as ishto, his wife. The mere fact that the wife of the Kohen Gadol is on an even keel with him in regard to atonement is an indication that a Kohen Gadol whose wife acts inappropriately has a serious problem concerning his own suitability for this lofty position. Thus, when the men saw On's wife acting in a manner unbecoming a Jewish woman, they became acutely aware that On was not their man.

#### ***And Korach ben Yitzhar ben Kehas ben Levi separated himself. (16:1)***

The Midrash Tanchuma observes that Yaakov Avinu's name is glaringly omitted from Korach's lineage. The Midrash says that it was by design, so that Yaakov's name not be included together with that of Korach. The mere thought of dispute distances Yaakov Avinu from these people. This reverts back to bircas Yaakov, the blessings the Patriarch gave his sons shortly before his death. He said, B'sodam al teichad kevodi, "Into their conspiracy may my soul not enter!" (Bereishis 49:6). This refers to the Korach controversy.

Did it mean that much to Yaakov not to have his name included with these miscreants? Does everyone not know that Yaakov was their grandfather? Does hiding one's face in the sand protect his identity? Would anyone blame Yaakov for Korach's failure as a human being? Horav Meir Shapiro, zl, offers a practical explanation. Chazal teach (Meseches Kiddushin), "Fortunate is he who sees his parents engaging in an umnus meulah, an appropriate vocation. Woe is to he whose parents are engaged in a degrading vocation." Regarding this statement, the Alshich would quote the pasuk at the end of the Rebuke in Parashas Bechukosai, "And I will remember My Covenant with Yaakov" (Vayikra 26:42). The fact that this perpetuation of the Covenant is mentioned in the Rebuke would seem to imply that it is a curse to have the relationship Hashem had with Yaakov included in the curses. It is as if it is being held against the Jews.

The Alshich explains that one who is himself engaged in an appropriate vocation - yet has seen his parents in an unseemly vocation - shows that it did not rub off on him. While his parents may have had "issues," he, at least, pulled through and made a name for himself. If, however, he is engaged in an unseemly vocation, while his parents are upright, distinguished members of the community, he will, in turn, look even worse. Thus, when Klal Yisrael "blew it," their distinguished ancestors' relationship with Hashem makes them appear even worse.

Thus, explains Rav Meir Shapiro, Yaakov was doing his descendants a great service by praying for his name to be ignored. Knowing that these reshaim, wicked people, were descendants of the Patriarch indicated that their nefarious rebellion was that much more egregious.

#### ***This distressed Moshe greatly. (16:15)***

Moshe Rabbeinu had just experienced the nadir of chutzpah: Korach and his rebels had openly defied his authority. When Klal Yisrael's leader, the individual who had led the nation out of bondage, asked them to appear before him with their grievances, they flatly refused. That was, however, not all. They read off a list of concocted complaints which were blatantly false. Talk about chutzpah. They referred to Egypt, the country that had enslaved them for over two centuries as, "the land of milk and honey." Egypt - not Eretz Yisrael! They laced into Moshe for the sin of the meraglim, spies, placing the onus of guilt on him. Moshe was demanding; he was a demagogue who lorded over the nation. Sounds ludicrous? If we had not read it in the Torah, it would be absolutely inexplicable.

Moshe's reaction was unusual. While he certainly was deeply upset and angry, one could never tell this from his reply to them. Rashi informs us that Moshe was greatly pained. He was saddened by their actions, but it does not seem that he was very angry. Why? Would it have been wrong for Moshe to become infuriated, incensed - at least angry - at the mutineers? True, Moshe exemplified humility, but does this character trait demand that one allow ruffians to walk all over him? What about kavod ha'Torah, the honor of Torah? Moshe represented the supreme spiritual leadership of the Jewish nation. He had achieved what no one before him - or after him - has achieved. These people had undermined the integrity of his leadership and impugned Hashem's Divine authority. Yet, Moshe's reaction is only pain. Why?

In "Forever His Students," by Rabbi Boruch Leff, an anthology of discourses based upon the lectures of Horav Yaakov Weinberg, zl, the Rosh Yeshivah distinguishes between doing what one enjoys versus acting out of necessity. There are those who not only hate, but actually take pleasure in acting out their venomous feelings towards others. They actually enjoy taking a life. Sometimes, however, punishment is necessary. The question that we must clarify is: When we see evil perpetrated by individuals who are no doubt criminals, persecutors, terrorists, how do we react? Do we despise the perpetrator, or is it the evil which we seek to expunge? Do we hate the message or the messenger? Are we able to discern between the two? The difference will be in our initial response. If we revile the person, then our response will be filled with personal animus bent on revenge. We will not be happy until we have literally rubbed his face in the dirt. In such a situation, everyone suffers. The perpetrator hardly acknowledges his evil, since he cannot differentiate between himself and his evil. The avenger becomes a hateful person who is really

not satisfied, because revenge never really satisfies. Indeed, it ultimately destroys both parties. There is an old proverb: "He who seeks revenge should prepare two graves." How true this is.

If, however, one only hates the action, but not the evildoer, he will act with a strong desire to eradicate the evil. He will not have a personal hatred for the perpetrator, since he is above that. Most perpetrators of evil have their own issues which were responsible for catalyzing them to lead a life of crime preying on others. Many of them are themselves victims.

We must bear in mind that there is not necessarily a great deal of difference in the manner that we fight our battles. Regardless of who really is the enemy, the evil must be expunged - even at the expense of human life. The battle is similar; the intent, however, is vastly different.

The Jewish People are by nature an ethical, humane and loving nation. Our tradition expounds a commitment to the promulgation of ethical values and standards. Religion is not merely a part of our lives - it is our life blood! We have survived centuries of hatred and persecution, maintaining our national character, because we are guided by our Torah. Indeed, as a noted secular author observes, "For two thousand millennia Jews turned their victimization by anti-Semites into a uniquely gentle and ethical self-imagery." The author bemoans the fact that, "in this century, the Nazi attempt to exterminate Europe's Jews and the creation of a new, secular Jewish state have created a new Jewish type." He refers to the "tough Jew," so foreign to our heritage of old, "who is distinctive, precisely because of the history of Jewish weakness and the Jewish claim to the moral high ground of gentleness."

Moshe Rabbeinu was pained and distressed at the need to punish the perpetrators. He was angry at what they were doing, but he would not permit the anger that he harbored toward the evil to consume him, redirecting it toward the evil-doers. Personal feelings and fury may not dominate our ability to think cogently. Our goal should be to punish evil - not to destroy the evil-doers. Otherwise, we risk losing control of ourselves and acting very much like the animals who throughout the millennia have been our persecutors.

Putting an end to evil often entails meting out severe punishment against the evil-doers, but it does not mean that we have to enjoy it. On the contrary, it should cause us grief that we must act without compassion. We should first and foremost pray that the sinners repent and that an end to sin will materialize.

Let us return to the Korach rebellion and the manner in which our quintessential leader dealt with it. Moshe had every reason to be infuriated with Korach, but he was not. He was pained. His feelings were not personal. He was saddened that such distinguished individuals allowed themselves to destroy their lives. Moshe was disturbed by the forces of evil that had invaded his camp.

We have to question our own motives when we are called upon to respond to evil. Is it the evil that disturbs us, or is it the evil-doer whom we despise? Often, it is the yetzer hora, evil inclination, burning within us, provoking us to descend to their nadir of depravity. We must learn to ignore the messenger, but to expunge the influence of the message. Indeed, by focusing our hatred on the people, we lose sight of the evil.

#### ***He (Aharon HaKohen) stood between the dead and the living, and the plague stopped. (17:13)***

Literally, Aharon stood between the dead and the living. The Baba Sali suggests that this pasuk refers to Aharon's advocacy on behalf of the living, rather than his standing between them and preventing the Malach Ha'Maves, Angel of Death, from completing his mission. Aharon prayed to Hashem concerning the distinction between the living and those who have passed from this world. The living have the opportunity to serve Hashem, study His Torah and observe His mitzvos. The dead no longer have this opportunity: Lo ha'meisim yehallelu Kah, "Neither the dead can praise G-d" (Tehillim 116:7).

This is how Aharon was able to swing the balance of judgment in favor of those who were still alive. He asked Hashem what was to be gained by their deaths. They would neither be able to serve Hashem any longer, nor

would they be able to repent their sins. By keeping them alive, the chance for teshuvah, repentance, increased exponentially.

While this is a powerful argument on behalf of the living, one would thus assume that it should be applied equally to everyone - regardless of his sin. We see that Moshe Rabbeinu obviously did not feel this way as he asked Hashem, Al teifan el minchasam, "Do not turn to their gift-offering" (ibid 16:15). Did the two leaders have divergent perspectives on outreach to sinners: Aharon prays for life, whereas Moshe asks Hashem to ignore their sacrifice?

The difference is in the identity of the sinner and the egregious nature of the sin. Moshe spoke concerning the leaders of the mutiny, the rabble-rousers who sought to undermine his leadership and impugn Hashem's authority. They had gone too far. Their rebelliousness was of such a nature that teshuvah was but a dream. Aharon, however, was addressing the hamon am, common folk, who were misguided and often followed those who made the most noise. They had a chance to return, because they were not sinners; they were just disillusioned people who had been misled by a demagogue seeking honor for himself.

### ***Va'ani Tefillah*** ***Shma Yisrael***

The ayin, last letter of the word Shema, is written in a larger size than the other letters. We, thus, have two letters written in the larger font: daled of Echad; and ayin of Shema. Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, explains the reason for the large ayin is that it places emphasis on the meaning of the word shema, hear. If the ayin were to be mistaken for an aleph due to the similarity in sound, it would result in the word she'ma, perhaps indicating that one is not really certain of the statement he is making.

The combination of these two large letters, ayin and daled, spell out the word eid, which means witness. To paraphrase Rav Hirsch, "The contents of Shema Yisrael are a testimony by Klal Yisrael to Klal Yisrael, and everybody who utters it stands forth thereby as a testimony of G-d to himself and to the world."

Furthermore, he adds that the emphasis on the letter ayin, which means eye, is to underscore that the nation was an eyewitness to the Giving of the Torah.

In loving memory of my aunt Yolanda bas Baruch A"H Dr. Jacob Massuda

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### **Orthodox Union / [www.ou.org](http://www.ou.org)**

### **Rabbi Weinreb's Parsha Column, Parshat Korach**

*Sponsored in memory of Nathan and Louise Schwartz a"h*

### ***"The Secret of Remaining Correct"***

Very often, we think that if a person is especially spiritual, he cannot possibly be very practical. It is as if religious devotion and good common sense just don't go together.

My own experience has taught me that, on the contrary, some of the soundest advice I have ever received came from people who spent most of their time in sacred practice, and who seemed, on the surface, to be quite detached from every day affairs. Indeed, it was an old pious Chassid who encouraged me to embark upon my career as a psychologist, and it was a Chassidic Rebbe who, much later in my life, advised me to make a mid-career change and assume a rabbinic pulpit.

In my study of Jewish sources, I have encountered individuals who devoted their lives to very lofty ideals, but who had sage counsel to offer those who were engaged in much more worldly matters.

One such person was Rabbi Israel Salanter (November 3, 1810-February 2, 1883). Reb Yisrael, as he was known by his many disciples, founded the Mussar Movement, which endeavored to inspire the public to be more conscious of the ethical components of our faith. Whereas his "curriculum" consisted of sacred writings, some of which bordered on the mystical, he used techniques which were extremely down to earth. Indeed, it seems clear that he was aware of the theories of psychology that were just beginning to be introduced during the latter half of the 19th century, when he began to spread his teachings.

Reb Yisrael had much sound advice to give, even to those who were not members of his movement, and one such piece of advice always struck me as being unusually insightful and very useful, even in quite mundane situations. This is what he said, with reference to someone who is involved in an argument with another:

"If you are right, make sure that you remain right."

What he meant was that it is human nature that when a person is right and utterly convinced that his cause is just, he often goes to ridiculous extremes to justify his position—so much so that he goes on to say or do things which undermine his position. He says things he shouldn't have said, attacks his enemies in an unseemly fashion, and further conducts himself in a manner which eventually proves to be his own undoing.

It is much better, suggested Reb Yisrael, to state your case succinctly and cogently, and leave it at that. It is even advisable to yield a bit to your opponent, losing a small battle or two, but winning the bigger war. It is best to remain relatively silent after expressing the essentials of your case and to realize that, in the end, "truth springs up from the earth, and justice looks down from heaven." (Psalms 85:12)

Knowing about his magisterial erudition, when I first came upon Reb Yisrael's helpful admonition, I knew that he must have had sources in sacred Jewish texts for all that he said. Over the years, I have collected quite a few citations in our literature that might have served as the basis for his words.

One such source occurs in our Torah portion this week, Parshat Korach (Numbers 16:1-18:32). I am indebted to a precious little book of Torah commentary, Zichron Meyer, by Rabbi Dov Meyer Rubman, of blessed memory, who was a pupil of a pupil of Rabbi Salanter, and who helped establish a yeshiva in Haifa.

The story is a familiar one. Korach rebels against the authority of Moses and Aaron, and rallies two hundred and fifty "chiefs of Sanhedrin" to his cause. The opening words of the story, "And Korach took himself..." imply that, rather than expressing his complaint privately and respectfully to Moses, Korach chose to incite a crowd of others to publicly and brazenly protest.

Rabbi Rubman quotes from the collection known as Midrash Tanchuma: "'And Korach took...' This bears out the verse, 'A brother offended is more formidable than a stronghold; such strife is like the bars of a fortress.'" (Proverbs 18:19) It refers to Korach, who disputed with Moses and rebelled, and descended from the prestige he already had in hand."

Korach, explains Rabbi Rubman, had some valid and persuasive arguments—so much so that he was able to gain the allegiance of two hundred and fifty "chiefs of Sanhedrin," each of whom was a qualified judge. He was a "formidable stronghold."

Had he addressed Moses and Aaron properly, those aspects of his complaint that had legitimacy would have been heard. They may have been able to find an appropriate leadership capacity in which he could serve. Was this not the case when others, such as those who were ritually unqualified to bring the Paschal offering, or the daughters of Zelafchad, approached Moses with their complaints? Did Moses, under Divine guidance, not find an adequate solution to their complaints?

Initially, there was some merit to Korach's dissatisfaction. In some sense, he was "right." But he was not satisfied with that. He had to push forward, involve others, speak blasphemously, and enter into a full-fledged revolt. He thus "descended from the prestige he had in hand."

Had he heeded the very practical counsel of Rabbi Salanter, "if you are right make sure you remain right," his story would have turned out very differently. Instead of being one of the rogues of Jewish history, he may have become one of its heroes.

Here you have it. Rabbi Israel Salanter may have been considered a naïve luftmensch by his contemporaries, a man with his head in the clouds. However, here we have an example of but one of his sayings, and it is a useful statement even for the most practical of men.

When we are convinced that we are right we tend to invest as much energy as we can to prove ourselves right. Reb Yisrael advises us to spare ourselves the effort and trust more in our convictions. If they are indeed warranted they will speak for themselves.

### *Power vs. Influence*

The Korach rebellion was an unholy alliance of individuals and groups unhappy with Moses' leadership. There was Korach himself, a member of the tribe of Levi, angry (according to Rashi) that he had not been given a more prominent role. There were the Reubenites, Datan and Aviram, who resented the fact that the key leadership positions were taken by Levites rather than members of their own tribe. Reuben had been Jacob's firstborn, and some of his descendants felt that they should have been accorded seniority. Then there were the two hundred and fifty "princes of the congregation, elect men of the assembly, men of renown" who felt aggrieved (according to Ibn Ezra) that after the sin of the golden calf, leadership had passed from the firstborn to a single tribe, the Levites. Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. The Korach story is an all too familiar tale of frustrated ambition and petty jealousy – what the sages called "an argument not for the sake of heaven."

What is most extraordinary about the episode, however, is Moses' reaction. For the first and only time, he invokes a miracle to prove the authenticity of his mission:

Then Moses said: "This is how you will know that the Lord has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea. If these men die a natural death and experience only what usually happens to men, then the Lord has not sent me. But if the Lord brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have treated the Lord with contempt."

In effect, Moses uses his power to eliminate the opposition. What a contrast this is to the generosity of spirit he showed just a few chapters earlier, when Joshua came to tell him that Eldad and Medad were prophesying in the camp, away from Moses and the seventy elders. Joshua regarded this as a potentially dangerous threat to Moses' leadership and said, "Moses, my lord, stop them!" Moses' reply is one of the most majestic in the whole of Tenakh:

"Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his spirit on them."

What was the difference between Eldad and Medad on the one hand, and Korach and his co-conspirators on the other? What is the difference between Moses saying, "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets," and Korach's claim that "The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is with them"? Why was the first, but not the second, a legitimate sentiment? Is Moses simply being inconsistent? Hardly. There never was a religious leader more clear-sighted. There is a distinction here which goes to the very core of the two narratives.

The Sages, in one of their most profound methodological observations, said that "the words of the Torah may be poor in one place but rich in another." By this they meant that, if we seek to understand a perplexing passage, we may need to look elsewhere in the Torah for the clue. A similar idea is expressed in the last of Rabbi Ishmael's thirteen rules of biblical interpretation: "Where there are two passages which contradict each other, the meaning can be determined only when a third passage is found which harmonises them."

In this case, the answer is to be found later in the book of Bemidbar, when Moses asks God to choose the next leader of the Israelites. God tells him to take Joshua and appoint him as his successor:

So the Lord said to Moses, "Take Joshua, son of Nun, a man of spirit, and lay your hand on him. Make him stand before Elazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. Give him some of your splendour so that the whole Israelite community will obey him."

Moses is commanded to perform two acts over and above presenting Joshua to the priest and people. First he is to "lay his hand" on Joshua. Then he is to give him "some of your splendour." What is the significance of these two gestures? How did they differ from one another? Which of them constituted induction into office? The sages, in Midrash Rabbah, added a commentary which at first sight only deepens the mystery:

"Lay your hand on him" – this is like lighting one light from another. "Give him some of your splendour" – this is like pouring from one vessel to another.

It is this statement that will enable us to decode the mystery.

There are two forms or dimensions of leadership. One is power, the other, influence. Often we confuse the two. After all, those who have power often have influence, and those who have influence have a certain kind of power. In fact, however, the two are quite different, even opposites.

We can see this by a simple thought-experiment. Imagine you have total power, and then you decide to share it with nine others. You now have one-tenth of the power with which you began. Imagine, by contrast, that you have a certain measure of influence, and now you share it with nine others. How much do you have left? Not less. In fact, more. Initially there was only one of you; now there are ten. Your influence has spread. Power operates by division, influence by multiplication. With power, the more we share, the less we have. With influence, the more we share, the more we have.

So deep is the difference that the Torah allocates them to two distinct leadership roles: king and prophet. Kings had power. They could levy taxes, conscript people to serve in the army, and decide when and against whom to wage war. They could impose non-judicial punishments to preserve social order. Hobbes famously called kingship a "Leviathan" and defined it in terms of power. The very nature of the social contract, he argued, was the transfer of power from individuals to a central authority. Without this, there could be no government, no defence of a country and no safeguard against lawlessness and anarchy.

Prophets, by contrast, had no power at all. They commanded no armies. They levied no taxes. They spoke God's word, but had no means of enforcing it. All they had was influence – but what influence! To this day, Elijah's fight against corruption, Amos' call to social justice, Isaiah's vision of the end of days, are still capable of moving us by the sheer force of their inspiration. Who, today, is swayed by the lives of Ahab or Jehoshaphat or Jehu? When a king dies, his power ends. When a prophet dies, his influence begins. Returning to Moses: he occupied two leadership roles, not one. On the one hand, though monarchy was not yet in existence, he had the power and was the functional equivalent of a king. He led the Israelites out of Egypt, commanded them in battle, appointed leaders, judges and elders, and directed the conduct of the people. He had power.

But Moses was also a prophet, the greatest and most authoritative of all. He was a man of vision. He heard and spoke the word of God. His influence is incalculable. As Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote, in a manuscript discovered after his death:

. . . an astonishing and truly unique spectacle is to see an expatriated people, who have had neither place nor land for nearly two thousand years . . . a scattered people, dispersed over the world, enslaved, persecuted, scorned by all nations, nonetheless preserving its characteristics, its laws, its customs, its patriotic love of the early social union, when all ties with it seem broken. The Jews provide us with an astonishing spectacle: the laws of Numa, Lycurgus, Solon are dead; the very much older laws of Moses are still alive. Athens, Sparta, Rome have perished and no longer have children left on earth; Zion, destroyed, has not lost its children.

The mystery of Moses' double investiture of Joshua is now solved. First, he was told to give Joshua his authority as a prophet. The very phrase used by the Torah – *vesamakhta et yadekha*, 'lay your hand' on him – is still used today to describe rabbinic ordination: *semikhah*, meaning, the 'laying on of hands' by master to disciple. Second, he was commanded to give Joshua the power of kingship, which the Torah calls 'splendour' (perhaps majesty would be a better translation). The nature of this role as head of

state and commander of the army is made quite clear in the text. God says to Moses: “Give him some of your splendour so that the whole Israelite community will obey him . . . . At his command, he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out , and at his command they will come in.” This is the language not of influence but of power.

The meaning of the midrash, too, is now clear and elegantly precise. The transfer of influence (“Lay your hand on him”) is “like lighting one light from another.” When we take a candle to light another candle, the light of the first is not diminished. Likewise, when we share our influence with others, we do not have less than before. Instead, the sum total of light is increased. Power, however, is different. It is like “pouring from one vessel to another.” The more we pour into the second, the less is left in the first. Power is a zero-sum game. The more we give away, the less we have.

This, then, is the solution to the mystery of why, when Joshua feared that Eldad and Medad (who “prophesied within the camp”) were threatening Moses’ authority, Moses replied, “Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets.” Joshua had confused influence with power. Eldad and Medad neither sought nor gained power. Instead, for a while, they were given a share of the prophetic “spirit” that was on Moses. They participated in his influence. That is never a threat to prophetic authority. To the contrary, the more widely it is shared, the more there is.

Power, however, is precisely what Korach and his followers sought – and in the case of power, rivalry is a threat to authority. “There is one leader for a generation,” said the sages, “not two.” Or, as they put it elsewhere, “Can two kings share a single crown?” There are many forms of government -- monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy – but what they have in common is the concentration of power within a single body, whether person, group or institution (such as a parliament).

Without this monopoly of the legitimate use of coercive force, there is no such thing as government. That is why in Jewish law “a king is not allowed to renounce the honour due to him.”

Moses’ request that Korach and his followers be swallowed up by the ground was neither anger nor fear. It was not motivated by any personal consideration. It was a simple realisation that whereas prophecy can be shared, kingship cannot. If there are two or more competing sources of power within a single domain, there is no leadership. Had Moses not taken decisive action against Korach, he would have fatally compromised the office with which he had been charged.

Rarely do we see more clearly the stark difference between influence and power than in these two episodes: Eldad and Medad on the one hand, Korach and his fellow rebels on the other. The latter represented a conflict that had to be resolved. Either Moses or Korach would emerge the victor; they could not both win. The former did not represent a conflict at all. Knowledge, inspiration, vision – these are things that can be shared without loss. Those who share them with others add to spiritual wealth of a community without losing any of their own.

To paraphrase Shakespeare, “The influence we have lives after us; the power is oft interred with our bones.” Much of Judaism is an extended essay on the supremacy of prophets over kings, right over might, teaching rather than coercion, influence in place of power. For only a small fraction of our history have Jews had power, but at all times they have had an influence over the civilization of the West. People still contend for power. If only we would realize how narrow its limits are. It is one thing to force people to behave in a certain way; quite another to teach them to see the world differently so that, of their own accord, they act in a new way. The use of power diminishes others; the exercise of influence enlarges them. That is one of Judaism’s most humanizing truths. Not all of us have power, but we are all capable of being an influence for good.

To read more writings and teachings from the Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, please visit [www.chief Rabbi.org](http://www.chief Rabbi.org).

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***Parshat Korach: Better not to get involved***  
**By Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz**

This week, we read of an “escalation” in the complicated relationship between the nation and its leader, Moshe.

Over the past few weeks, we have been reading in the Torah portions over and over again about Am Yisrael’s complaints as it walks through the desert on its way from Egypt toward the Promised Land, Eretz Yisrael. This week, we read of an “escalation” in the complicated relationship between the nation and its leader, Moshe.

Actually, this is not just a simple escalation; it is an open rebellion led by important people in the nation and aimed directly at Moshe and his brother, Aharon the Priest. The rebellion ended in a clear-cut decision in favor of Moshe, when the earth opened up suddenly and “swallowed” the leaders of the rebellion.

At the beginning of the story, the Torah mentions the names of the rebellion leaders: Korach, son of Yitzhar,...and Datan and Aviram, sons of Eliav, and On, son of Pelet. (Numbers 16, 1) As the story continues, the Torah repeats the names of the leaders of the failed rebellion, but here we discover a discrepancy between the lists of names. By reading carefully, one can see that in the name repetition, Korach, Datan and Aviram appear, but On, son of Pelet, is missing.

Where did On ben Pelet go? What happened that caused him to quit the rebellion leadership? The Talmud sages complete the story in an original description of the events that occurred in the home of On, the fourth leader of the rebellion who disappears from the rest of the story. The Talmud tells it this way: On, the son of Pelet, was saved by his wife.

She said she to him, “What matters it to you? Whether the one [Moshe] remains master or the other [Korach] becomes master, you will be just a disciple.”

He answered her, “But what can I do? I have taken part in their counsel, and I swore allegiance to them.”

She said, “I know that they are all a holy community, as it is written, ‘all the congregation are holy.’” (Numbers 16:3).

She proceeded, “Sit here, and I will save you.” She served him wine to drink. He got drunk and she laid him down on his bed within (the tent). Then she sat down at the door of the entrance to the tent and loosened her hair. Whoever came (to summon him) saw her and retreated (as they didn’t want to be exposed to a married woman’s uncovered hair). In the meantime Korach and his supporters were swallowed up. (Talmud Bavli, Tractate Sanhedrin, page 109) We listen to the dedicated woman’s claims and learn from her an important lesson for the generations. Disputes are an inseparable part of history. Anywhere and anytime, there will be people who stand up and see themselves worthy of leadership and they will try to capture the hearts of the nation in various ways, where their goal is to place themselves in a position of leadership.

This is human nature. It has been this way throughout history.

But those same people who are interested in undermining the present leadership are not able to do so without public support. For this they must invest in a campaign promising “heaven on earth” to their supporters.

One promises to lower taxes, another promises freedom, and yet another persuades by badmouthing someone else. This is what politics looks like. And the public buys the promises and offers its support to different sides while it is sure that if a certain leader wins and gets the reins of power, all the citizens will live peacefully and in economic prosperity.

But On ben Pelet’s wife figured out the secret. She understood that the public doesn’t really benefit from changing the leadership. The ones who benefit are the different leaders. “Whatever happens,” she tells her husband, “your situation will not change significantly.”

When a person understands this truth, he understands that it is not worth participating in a dispute, that it’s not worth it to quarrel or get into arguments and lose dear friends.

These messages are just as relevant today. Am Yisrael is quarreling over important and central issues, and that is legitimate. Different people have different opinions and they argue among themselves. This is a natural phenomenon.

But we must be careful not to get carried away unnecessarily which would carry a heavy social price.

Arguments and disagreements – absolutely. But that does not mean that we should see those who disagree with us as personal enemies. Best to leave the personal disputes to the politicians. We will not benefit at all. We will

only lose. The relationship among all the segments of the nation must remain based on love, brotherhood, peace and friendship.  
Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.  
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**Rabbi Yakov Haber**  
**The TorahWeb Foundation**  
*The Mystery of the Ketores*

Ketores, the mixture of incense offered twice daily in the Mishkan and later in the more permanent Mikdash, plays a prominent role in Parashas Korach. It is both the means of proving the chosenness of Aharon, simultaneously leading to the death of Korach and his followers, (Korach 16:17, 35) as well as the tool for stopping the plague befalling the Jewish people when they accused Moshe and Aharon of killing Korach and his allies (17:11-12). This contradictory nature of the ketores as a vehicle of execution and as a method of salvation requires elucidation.

The twice daily ketores service is shrouded in secrecy. Its very nature, causing a screen of aromatic smoke, detectible by the senses of sight and smell, but yet ephemeral, not quite physical, untouchable but certainly real, is mysterious. It is one of the primary services on Yom Kippur in the holiest place on earth, the kodesh kodashim - "and the cloud of incense shall cover the cover of the (Ark of) Testimony" (Acharei Mos 16:13).

Much has been written about this topic. Here we will try to present some of the salient themes and connect them to the famous treatment of Parashas Korach presented by Rav Y. D. Soloveitchik zt"l.[1]

Many commentaries note the theme of Jewish national unity inherent within the ketores. The component spices number eleven, ten sweet-smelling spices plus the chelb'na, a foul-smelling ingredient. They represent the Jewish community, symbolized by the number ten, the minimum microcosm of an eida, a representative community. The chelb'na represents the wicked who have temporarily divorced themselves from the community but must be included since they too must and will return to the fold. The offering of the ketores represents in a sense, the offering of K'nesses Yisrael, the totality of the Jewish people to HKB"H. The great love of HKB"H for his nation and even the wicked among them is thus actively demonstrated twice daily and once a year in the inner chamber, in the presence of the keruvim representing this love.

Others note that the ketores represents the Jewish soul, whereas korbanos, brought mostly from animals, represent the body. Sacrificing forbidden desire in the service of G-d and channeling permitted desire toward Divine service are represented by the korbanos. Wholehearted devotion of the totality of our inner personality is represented by the ketores. King David describes the almost indescribable yearning of the soul for G-d by comparing it to the instinctual drive of the deer for water, "as the deer longs for the brooks of water, so too my soul longs for you, G-d!" (T'hilim 42:2). Seifer Tanya speaks of the ahava m'suteres, the hidden love, the soul feels for G-d, ever-present yet hidden, mysterious, and often inaccessible, just like the aromatic smoke of ketores. This also highlights the great love between the Jewish people, both individually and collectively, and HKB"H.

The Torah is the greatest expression of this Divine love. In the language of the Gemara (Shabbos 105a), the first word of the Divine, national revelation, "Anochi", "A-N-Ch-I," can be interpreted as an acrostic, "ana nafshi k'savis y'havis", I have given over myself, kiv'yachol, in the Torah.[2] The Divine dictates in the Torah, when studied and performed precisely as commanded, connect us intensely to their Author.[3] Rav Soloveitchik presented the central duality of mitzvah performance on the one hand coupled with the "great romance" inherent with that performance. Korach's "common-sense rebellion" sought to skip the precise mitzvah performance and aim straight for the "great romance".[4] If the t'cheiles is supposed to remind us of Divine majesty, would not an entirely blue garment serve this purpose better? Why the need for the "detail" of the blue string? (See Rashi to 16:1.) Moshe's response implied, "Yes, there is a 'great romance' inherent within mitzvah performance. But, in order to achieve that, the precise 'mitzvah act' must be primary, not secondary."

Based on Rav Soloveitchik's approach, perhaps we can suggest a reason that the ketores was so prominent in crushing the Korach rebellion and in stopping the plague. For it represents the enormous love of HKB"H for K'lal Yisrael and vice versa. This love stopped the plague. This same representation of this love, which Korach attempted to pervert and invert, destroyed him.

Rav Soloveitchik further explained that the menorah with its illumination, its precise form and design, represents exact mitzvah performance, dikdukei mitzvos; the ketores whose smoke had an imprecise shape and was not comparable to other physical objects, represents the religious feeling and experience. Both were offered at the same time in the morning and evening (T'tzaveh 30:7-8), since both form crucial components of the framework of our 'avodas Hashem. To quote the powerful, eloquent words of the Rav:

What does ketores represent? The hidden and the intimate the mysterium magnum of creation and the mysterium tremendum of Divine presence in creation and beyond. ... Ketores tells us the great story of human craving for G-d ...for the Beginning of All... of tragic human waiting for an ecstatic unity with the Almighty. The colorful religious experience is represented by ketores. The clear, intelligent religious fact and intelligent action is represented by the menorah. The Torah, however, admonished us that the burning of the incense be coordinated with the lighting; The mystery feeling with the clarity of thinking and acting; the excitement and passion of craving be united with the serenity and peace of halachic comprehension and halachic implementation. Both are necessary. ... Yet ketores cannot be separated from hadlakas haneiros. The subjective must never be isolated from the objective. ... the halachic detail and the halachic precision is necessary for one who wants to obtain a great, colorful religious experience."

[1] The audio of this intense, enormously insightful d'rasha on Korach is available at [www.bcbm.org](http://www.bcbm.org) and is summarized by Rav A. Besdin in Reflections of the Rav.

[2] See Likutei Moharan 173, among others, who interpret this Gemara as presented above. Also see the Tefilas HaSh'la for children who makes this general point as well.

[3] The second blessing preceding k'rías sh'ma, ahava rabba and ahavas 'olam, highlight the Torah as a manifestation of Divine love.

[4] The common modern notion of jumping to Kabbala study and ideas without emphasis on limud halacha and dikduk b'mitzvos also seems to be a manifestation of this problem.

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**Rav Kook List**  
**Rav Kook on the Torah Portion**  
***Korach: Who Needs the Priesthood?***

***"You have taken too much upon yourselves! All the people in the community are holy, and God is with them. Why are you setting yourselves above God's congregation?" (Num. 16:3)***

Korach's call for religious equality resonates well with modern, egalitarian sensibilities. Why indeed do the Jewish people need a special caste of priests? Why cannot each member of the nation participate in the holy service, personally offering up his own gifts to God? Why do we need kohanim to serve as intermediaries?

**Specialized Sectors**

To answer this question, Rav Kook employed the paradigm of the human body. Each organ performs a unique function, providing for the health and general welfare of the body. Despite their different qualities and tasks, the organs work together, functioning harmoniously as a unified organism. Human society is also a living organic body, composed of various sectors and groups. Each sector - farmers, scientists, doctors, and so on - provides a specific service for the collective whole. These communal 'organs' meet society's various needs according to their particular talents and training. As they work together and acknowledge the contribution of other sectors, they ensure the harmonious functioning and flourishing of the community as a whole.

The analogy may be extended further. Just as each individual is blessed with certain strengths and ambitions, so too each nation has specific talents and ideals. These national aspirations may be expressed in the sciences, art, philosophy, economic strength, etc.

Not every limb of a gifted individual is directly involved in his chosen profession. The artist utilizes the hand and eyes, the singer uses the voice, the philosopher uses the mind, and the Olympic runner uses the legs. It is similarly impossible for the entire nation to be directly involved in advancing the nation's ideals. Each nation needs a cadre of spiritual leaders who cultivate the soul of the nation. This spiritual elite allows the other sectors to attend to society's material needs, confident that the unique content that gives the nation its distinctive nature will not be forsaken.

#### Guarding Israel's Spiritual State

The need for a spiritual leadership is even more pronounced when it comes to the Jewish people, whose national ideology transcends the physical world in which we live. All efforts made to advance the nation's material welfare run the risk of diverting energy from the nation's spiritual aspirations. As a mediaeval Jewish moralist commented, "Whatever builds up the physical detracts from the spiritual."

Due to this concern, practical affairs are attended to in desultory fashion. In the end, both aspects are harmed. The nation's spiritual efforts become disoriented due to its confused material state; and its physical state is weakened due to the coerced admixture of concern for spiritual matters.

Therefore, we need a cadre of lofty tzaddikim, blessed with breadth of knowledge, charged with securing the spiritual state of the nation. This elite is not perturbed if the rest of society cannot not fully share in the richness of their spiritual life due to preoccupation with material matters. They know that spirituality will automatically permeate the nation due to the people's natural inclination to holiness. These public servants represent the entire community, and they safeguard its spiritual treasure. The nation in return regards them as its most important assets, and honors them accordingly.

#### Radical Agents of Godliness

The kohanim are mistakenly thought of as intermediaries between man and God. In fact, they are not meant to be intermediaries to God, but to enable immediacy to God.

When we approach God, we do not approach Him with our basest drives and inclinations, but with our holiest aspirations and desires. It is our elevated qualities which draw our entire being toward a Godly, enlightened life.

The same is true for the national organism. It is not right or even possible to approach God using society's weakest elements. The nation cannot draw near to God with those who are preoccupied by lives confused by physical sensations and upheavals. This would lead to a feeble level of enlightenment, spiritually impoverishing the nation and the world at large. Society therefore designated a special sector to enable the entire people to approach God. The lofty, righteous kohanim, steeped in kindness and elevated wisdom, truly know God. The rest of the nation relies on the holiness of their knowledge and emotions. The nation takes pride in the spiritual greatness of the kohanim; it is blessed through their blessing and sanctified through their sanctity. The people are bolstered with strength and inspiration as they work toward their material, social, and political objectives.

The need to appoint a select cadre of spiritual leaders reflects an innate aspect of human nature. Only after a long progression will this institution be truly revealed in all of its nobility - but we are not deterred by lengthy processes. We continue along the path we started so long ago, and we look forward to its completion and perfection.

To designate the entire people as priests, without distinctions, all equally wise and spiritually enlightened - this is not feasible in the world's present state. Currently we need to aspire to a national spirit of holiness, by virtue of the nation's noblest parts. The kohanim will serve as radical agents for

sanctity and spirituality, enabling the entire nation to flourish in all endeavors, in its renaissance of life in the Land of Israel.

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Orot, pp. 53-55)

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### Weekly Halacha

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

#### *The Mitzvah of Shiluach ha-Kein*

The mitzvah of shiluach ha-kein is quite difficult to understand: If one happens upon a nest where a mother bird is roosting on her young birds or eggs, he should not take the eggs or young birds while the mother is roosting on them. Instead, he should send the mother away and then take the young birds or eggs for himself. While the Torah says that fulfillment of this mitzvah is "good for you and will prolong your days," the Torah does not explain the rationale behind it, and indeed, Chazal<sup>1</sup> tell us that it is a *gezeiras ha-kasuv*, a Torah decree that we do not understand.

The Rishonim, however, offer a number of possible explanations as to why the Torah would command us to perform shiluach ha-kein. Among them:

\* Rambam<sup>2</sup> explains that shiluach ha-kein shows God's mercy on His creations, similar to the prohibition against slaughtering a mother animal and her offspring on the same day — as animals instinctively love their young and suffer when they see them slaughtered or taken away.

\* Ramban,<sup>3</sup> who rejects Rambam's explanation, writes that the concern is not for the animal's feelings, but rather to inculcate compassion in people; to accustom people to act mercifully to each other.

\* Rabbeinu Bechayei<sup>4</sup> writes that this mitzvah symbolizes the concept that people should avoid doing anything that will destroy a species, for to slaughter mother and children on the same day is akin to mass extermination.

\* The Zohar<sup>5</sup> explains that this mitzvah is meant to awaken and intensify Hashem's mercy on His creations. The pain which the mother bird suffers when she is sent away and forced to abandon her young "awakens the forces of mercy in the world" and releases an outpouring of mercy from the heavens above which alleviates all kinds of human suffering.

While the explanations cited above give us some insight into the rationale for shiluach ha-kein, we are still left with many unanswered questions: If someone happens upon a nest but has no interest in the young birds or eggs, should he still send away the mother and take the eggs? Should one search for such a nest so that he may fulfill this mitzvah? What if the nest is in a tree in one's back yard? These and other issues will be discussed below.

Question: How does one fulfill the mitzvah of shiluach ha-kein — sending the mother bird away from her nest — correctly?

Discussion: When one observes a mother bird roosting on one or more eggs (or young birds), one fulfills the mitzvah by performing the following two actions:

1. Sending away the mother bird. The Rishonim debate whether or not the mother bird must be lifted by its wings and then cast away, an act which is extremely difficult to perform, or if it is sufficient to scare her away by banging on the nesting area with a stick, throwing a stone in her direction or raising one's voice, etc. The basic halachah<sup>6</sup> and the prevalent custom<sup>7</sup> follow the lenient view that it is sufficient to drive off the mother bird by scaring her away.<sup>8</sup>

2. Taking the eggs or the young birds. While some poskim hold that taking the eggs or baby birds is not mandatory,<sup>9</sup> other poskim rule that one does not fulfill the mitzvah if the eggs or baby birds were not taken,<sup>10</sup> and the prevalent custom follows their view. After taking the eggs or baby birds and establishing halachic ownership of them, one is not required to keep them; they may be returned to the nest or discarded.<sup>11</sup>

Question: Is the mitzvah of shiluach ha-kein obligatory or optional? In other words, if one observes a mother bird roosting on a nest but has no

need for the eggs (or the young birds), is he still obligated to cast away the mother bird and take the eggs in order to fulfill the mitzvah?

Discussion: A minority view holds that even one who has no need for the eggs (or young birds) is obligated to send the mother bird away and establish [at least temporary] halachic ownership of them.<sup>12</sup> According to this view, the mitzvah of shiluach ha-kein is an obligation similar to the mitzvah of hashavas aveidah, returning a lost item to its owner.<sup>13</sup> But most poskim reject this approach and rule that one is obligated to send away the mother only if he wishes to keep the eggs or baby birds.<sup>14</sup>

Still, while we rule that one is not obligated to send the mother bird away if he has no interest in the eggs or young birds, many poskim recommend that one do so nevertheless.<sup>15</sup> In addition to fulfilling a mitzvah for which the Torah promises the reward of longevity, there are many other additional benefits and rewards that Chazal associate with the proper fulfillment of the mitzvah. Being blessed with children,<sup>16</sup> finding the proper shidduch,<sup>17</sup> being blessed with the means to buy or build a new house,<sup>18</sup> and hastening the arrival of Mashiach<sup>19</sup> are among some of the rewards that are promised to those who fulfill this mitzvah properly.

Question: Does one recite a blessing when performing the mitzvah of shiluach ha-kein? Does one recite the blessing of shehecheyanu?

Discussion: Although there are several opinions on this issue,<sup>20</sup> the majority view<sup>21</sup> and the prevalent custom<sup>22</sup> is not to recite any blessings when performing this mitzvah. One who wishes to do so may recite a berachah without invoking Hashem's name<sup>23</sup> using the following text: Baruch Atah Melech ha-olam, asher kideshanu bemitzvosav le-shaleiach ha-kein.<sup>24</sup>

Question: Does the mitzvah of shiluach ha-kein apply to all roosting mother birds?

Discussion: No. A number of conditions must be met before this mitzvah can be fulfilled:

\* The mother bird must be of a kosher species, e.g., a sparrow, a dove, or a pigeon.<sup>25</sup>

\* The mitzvah applies only at the time that the mother bird is actually roosting on the eggs or the young birds. The mitzvah does not apply to a mother bird who is hovering over or feeding the young birds, but is not roosting on them.<sup>26</sup>

\* While the father of the eggs or young birds also roosts on the nest, usually during daytime hours only, the mitzvah of shiluach ha-kein applies to a mother bird exclusively.

\* One does not fulfill the mitzvah if the eggs broke before the mother bird was cast away.<sup>27</sup> If the eggs broke during the performance of the mitzvah, it is questionable whether one fulfilled the mitzvah.<sup>28</sup>

\* On Shabbos (and Yom Tov), shiluach ha-kein is not performed.<sup>29</sup>

Question: Does the mitzvah of shiluach ha-kein apply to birds that one owns?

Discussion: No, it does not. Birds that are raised domestically, such as chicken or turkey, are exempt from shiluach ha-kein, as the mitzvah applies only to birds that do not have an owner who cares about them.<sup>30</sup>

Contemporary poskim debate whether or not one fulfills the mitzvah with a nest which is found on one's private property. Some poskim rule that the mitzvah cannot be performed, since one's private property "acquires" (kinyan chatzer) the nest on his behalf and it is no longer ownerless.<sup>31</sup> Others, however, hold that since the owner has no interest in owning the nest or eggs, his private property does not automatically "acquire" the nest on his behalf and the mitzvah can still be fulfilled.<sup>32</sup>

Question: Based on the above information, how is the mitzvah of shiluach ha-kein actually performed?

Discussion: As soon as eggs or young birds are observed in a nest, one should prepare himself to perform the mitzvah. The mitzvah can be performed anytime there are eggs or young birds in the nest as long as the mother is still roosting over them. If the mother is no longer roosting over

the young birds but is merely feeding them, usually five to nine days after they are hatched, then the mitzvah can no longer be performed.<sup>33</sup>

In order to be sure that the mother is the one roosting over the nest and not the father, shiluach ha-kein should take place between sunset and sunrise, since it is the mother who roosts on the nest in the evening and night hours.<sup>34</sup>

After ascertaining that the mother bird is of a kosher species and that the nest does not belong to anyone else, one should quietly<sup>35</sup> approach the nesting area<sup>36</sup> and gently<sup>37</sup> chase the mother bird away from the nest by using one of the methods described earlier (15 Elul). If the mother bird comes back repeatedly before the eggs are taken, she must be shoed away repeatedly.

Once the mother is gone, a wooden spoon should be used to carefully lift the eggs out of the nest, making sure not to break them. One should then lift up the spoon approximately ten to twelve inches, in order to halachically "acquire" the eggs. [If the nest contains young birds, one should use his hands to gently lift them out.<sup>38</sup>] He may then return the eggs to the nest. The mitzvah has been completed.

1. Berachos 33b.
2. Moreh Nevuchim 3:48.
3. See also Rashbam, Ibn Ezra and Chezkuni for a similar approach.
4. A similar explanation is offered by Sefer ha-Chinuch (545) and Ralbag.
5. Quoted by Rabbeinu Bechayei and by Chavos Yair 67. See explanation in Beur ha-Gra to Mishlei 30:17 and in Imrei Noam, Berachos 33b.
6. Chazon Ish, Y.D. 175:2.
7. Many contemporary poskim, among them the Satmar Rav, Harav Y.Y. Kanievsky, Harav Y.Y. Weiss, Harav S.Z. Auerbach, Harav E.M. Shach and Harav S. Vosner were all seen performing shiluach ha-kein by banging on the nest with a stick until the mother bird flew away. See also Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 1:329.
8. If, however, no action was taken to cast the mother away but she flew off on her own, the mitzvah is not fulfilled.
9. Chacham Tzvi 83. See also Aruch ha-Shulchan Y.D. 292:3-4. Harav Y.Y. Fisher rules in accordance with this view (Even Yisrael on Rambam Hilchos Shechitah 13).
10. Beis Lechem Yehudah, Y.D. 292; Chasam Sofer, O.C. 100; Chazon Ish, Y.D. 175:2; Harav C. Kanievsky (Shaleiach Teshalach, 3rd edition, pg. 50).
11. Harav Y.S. Elyashiv and Harav C. Kanievsky, quoted in Shaleiach Teshalach, pg. 54.
12. Chavos Yair 67 and Mishnas Chachamim, quoted by Pischei Teshuvah, Y.D. 292:1; Birkei Yosef, Y.D. 292:8; Aruch ha-Shulchan, Y.D. 292:1-2.
13. In other words, just as one may not ignore a lost object that he happens to see but rather is obligated to return it to its owner, so, too, one who happens to see a mother bird roosting on her eggs or young birds is obligated to send it away and take ownership of her offspring.
14. Chasam Sofer, O.C. 100; Avnei Nezer, O.C. 481; Chafetz Chayim (Sefer ha-Mitzvos 74); Meromei Sadeh, Chullin 139b; Chazon Ish, Y.D. 175:2; Chazon Yechezkel, Tosefta Chullin, pg. 39.
15. See Birkei Yosef, Y.D. 292:6 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 1.
16. Midrash Rabbah and Tanchuma, Ki Seitzei 6:6.
17. Yalkut Shimoni, Devarim 925.
18. Midrash Rabbah and Tanchuma, Ki Seitzei 6:6. See Keli Yakar, ibid.
19. Yalkut Shimoni, Devarim 930.
20. See Pe'as ha-Shulchan (Eretz Yisrael 3-20) and Aruch ha-Shulchan, Y.D. 292:10, who rule that a berachah is recited. See also Pischei Teshuvah, Y.D. 292:2 who mentions that some recite shehecheyanu as well.
21. See Pischei Teshuvah, Y.D. 292:2 and Binyan Tziyon 14.
22. As recorded by all of the contemporary poskim mentioned in note 59.
23. Beis Lechem Yehudah, Y.D. 292 and Maharam Shick 289-291.
24. Harav C. Kanievsky, quoted in Shaleiach Teshalach, pgs. 40-41. Aruch ha-Shulchan, however, quotes the text of the berachah as al shiluach ha-kein, while Maharam Shick writes al mitzvas shiluach ha-kein.
25. Y.D. 292:1.
26. Y.D. 292:11.
27. Rabbeinu Bechayei, Ki Seitzei 22:7.
28. See Shaleiach Teshalach, pg. 60, for the various views on this subject.
29. Chasam Sofer, O.C. 100.

30. Y.D. 292:2.
31. Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Minchas Shelomo 2:97-26); Harav Y.S. Elyashiv, quoted in Shaleiach Teshalach, pg. 68; Harav S. Wosner (Mi-Beis Levi, Nissan, pg. 90). [In the atypical case where the mother bird did not leave the nest for even one moment from the time she laid the eggs, then all views agree that shiluach ha-kein could be performed with a nest which is found on one's private property; Y.D. 292:2.]
32. Igros Moshe, Y.D. 4:45; Harav C.P. Scheinberg, Harav N. Karelitz and Harav C. Kanievsky, quoted in Shaleiach Teshalach, pg. 67-68.
33. Chazon Yechezkel, Tosefta Chullin, pg. 38; Harav Y.S. Elyashiv and Harav C. Kanievsky, quoted in Shaleiach Teshalach, pgs. 62-63.
34. According to experts, this is true of most kosher birds, with the notable exception of the American Robin, where the male does not have an incubation patch and the female is the sole incubator of the nest.
35. So that the mother bird does not fly off before you have a chance to send her away.
36. Some recite a special l'sheim yichud before performing the mitzvah; see text in Kan Tzipor, pg. 138.
37. Otherwise the mother bird may panic and break the eggs or take them away with her.
38. If the young birds fit snugly into one's hands, there is no need to lift them up ten to twelve inches, since, halachically speaking, one's "hand" acquires the young birds for him; Beirur Halachah 366:9, s.v. tzarich.

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***Ata Yatzarta – An unusual Beracha***  
**By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

***In honor of Shabbos Rosh Chodesh...***

Question #1: An Unusual Blessing

“Why does Shabbos Rosh Chodesh have a completely different middle beracha rather than simply having a Rosh Chodesh insert in the Shabbos davening or vice versa?”

Question #2: Missing my Chatas

“Why is no korban chatas offered on Shabbos?”

Question #3: Shortchanged Yom Tov

“Why is Rosh Chodesh the only special day mentioned in the Torah that is not a Yom Tov?”

Answer:

When a holiday falls on Shabbos, the tefillah that we recite is usually the regular prayer either of the holiday or of Shabbos, with an addition or additions to include mention of the other special day. For example, when the major Yomim Tovim (Sukkos, Pesach, Shevuos, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur) fall on Shabbos, we recite the regular Yom Tov prayer, with added mention of Shabbos in the middle beracha. On the lesser holidays (Chol Hamoed, Rosh Chodesh, Chanukah and Purim), for most tefillos we recite the customary Shabbos prayer and add an extra paragraph, either Yaaleh Veyavo or Al Hanissim, at its appropriate place, to reflect the sanctity of the holiday. On Musaf of Shabbos Chol Hamoed, we recite the Musaf of Yom Tov with added mention of Shabbos in the middle beracha.

Ata Yatzarta -- A Special Prayer

The one exception to this rule is the Musaf that we recite when Rosh Chodesh falls on Shabbos. On Shabbos Rosh Chodesh, the middle beracha of the Musaf is an entirely new beracha that does not simply combine the elements of the Shabbos Musaf and that of the weekday Rosh Chodesh Musaf. Rather, it includes aspects of the Musaf of Yom Tov, and the prayer includes a unique introduction that appears in no other prayer. Thus, the sum is greater than its parts – the combination of Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh creates a greater kedusha than either has on its own. Explaining this phenomenon is the thrust of this week's essay, but first I need to explain certain themes more thoroughly.

Background to Musaf

To understand the tefillah of Ata Yatzarta better, we first need to understand why Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh and the Yomim Tovim are embellished with a tefillah

called Musaf. Each of our three daily tefillos, Shacharis, Mincha, and Maariv corresponds to a part of the service that was performed daily in the Beis Hamikdash (Berachos 26b). Musaf corresponds to the special korbanos described in parshas Pinchas that were offered in the Beis Hamikdash on Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh and holidays.

A Review of Rosh Chodesh Musaf

With this background, we can now examine the unique text of the Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Musaf. As I mentioned above, the central beracha of this tefillah is unusual in that it contains aspects of four different themes. The beracha begins with a declaration, Ata Yatzarta Olamcha Mikkedem, “You fashioned Your world from the very beginning,” a declaration that certainly reflects the inherent concepts of both Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh; yet, this declaration appears in none of the four regular Shabbos tefillos nor in the weekday Rosh Chodesh Musaf. This is highly unusual, particularly when we realize that, on all other occasions when Shabbos coincides with another special day, the wording of the prayers always reflects the exact text of either Shabbos or Yom Tov, and never a new version.

The special Musaf beracha then proceeds: Ahavta osanu veratzisa banu, “You loved us and desired us,” a text that appears in the Musaf of Yom Tov. Again, this is unusual, since this wording never appears either in the usual Shabbos or in the usual Rosh Chodesh prayers. How does a theme unique to Yom Tov find its way into Shabbos Rosh Chodesh, which is not a Yom Tov?

The next sentence, beginning with the words Vehi ratzon, is a text that is common to both the Shabbos and the Yom Tov Musaf prayers, and this passage then introduces the actual korbanos of both Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh. From this point onward, the prayer continues along predictable patterns, blending together the Musaf of a common Shabbos and a weekday Rosh Chodesh into one beracha commemorative of both occasions.

Yismechu Bemalchuscha

Included in the Ata Yatzarta prayer is the passage, Yismechu bemalchuscha shomrei Shabbos, “Those who observe the Shabbos shall celebrate Your kingship,” a special prayer that the Jewish people enjoy their celebration of Shabbos as they recognize Hashem's dominion and beneficence. In Nusach Ashkenaz, this prayer is recited every Shabbos Musaf, even when Shabbos coincides with Yom Tov or Rosh Chodesh. Nusach Sfarad includes this passage also in Maariv and Shacharis of Shabbos. (The Avudraham records a custom in some communities not to recite Yismechu bemalchuscha in regular Shabbos Musaf and to recite it only on Shabbos Rosh Chodesh. The Avudraham himself disapproves of this practice, and I am unaware of any community that follows this custom today.)

Closing the Beracha

Returning to Ata Yatzarta, we close this beracha with a text that is standard for the central beracha of all Shabbos and Yom Tov prayers. The conclusion of the middle beracha of Musaf always notes the special features of the day we are celebrating.

Why Ata Yatzarta?

At this point, we can address the original question we posed: “Why does Shabbos Rosh Chodesh merit its own special Musaf prayer, rather than simply having a Rosh Chodesh insert in the Shabbos davening, or vice versa?”

To explain why we recite the unique beracha of Ata Yatzarta, we need first to understand that each korban Musaf reflects something special about that day. An obvious example is the offering of bulls that is incorporated in the korbanos Musaf of the seven days of Sukkos. Over the seven days of Sukkos, we offer seventy bulls as part of the Musaf in a particular order, beginning with thirteen on the first day and decreasing by one each day until we offer seven on Hoshanah Rabbah, the last day of Sukkos. These seventy bulls correspond to the seventy nations of the Earth who descended from Noah. Thus, one theme of Sukkos is that our korbanos service is to benefit not only the Jewish People, but for the sake of the world and its entire population.

One unusual goat

The vast majority of korbanos offered as part of the Musaf are korbanos olah, which, Rav Hirsch explains, are to assist in our developing greater alacrity in observing Hashem's commandments (Commentary to Shemos 27:8). In addition to the many korbanos olah offered as part of the Musaf of Rosh Chodesh and of all Yomim Tovim, there is also always one goat offered as a korban chatas. A chatas is usually translated as a “sin offering” and, indeed, in most instances its purpose is to atone for specific misdeeds. The offering of a korban chatas on every Yom Tov and Rosh Chodesh provides specific atonement on that day that we cannot accomplish on an ordinary weekday (see Mishnah, Shevuos 2a; also see Vayikra 17:10 and Rashi ad loc.).

The Shabbos Musaf

However, the Musaf offering for Shabbos contains no korban chatas. As a matter of fact, Shabbos is the only special day mentioned by the Torah on which a korban chatas is not offered. Clearly, the purpose of Shabbos is not to atone, but to commemorate the fact that Hashem created the entire world in the six days of Creation and then stepped back. Thus, observing Shabbos is our acknowledgement of Hashem as Creator of the Universe, but the discussion of sin and its atonement is not part of the role of Shabbos.

#### Uniqueness of Rosh Chodesh

The celebration and role of Rosh Chodesh in our calendar is different from Shabbos or any of the Yomim Tovim, since the monthly waning and waxing of the moon that Rosh Chodesh commemorates symbolizes that people occasionally wane and wax in their service of Hashem (Rav Hirsch's Commentary to Shemos 12:1-2). Although we sometimes falter or are not as devoted to serving Hashem as we should be, we always can and do return to serve Him. Rosh Chodesh is celebrated at the first glimmer after the disappearance of the moon, after one might lose all hope. The reappearance of the first sliver of the new moon brings hope that, just as the moon renews itself, so, too, we can renew our relationship with Hashem. The chatas offering of Rosh Chodesh, therefore, allows atonement for our shortcomings of the past month, and, at the same time, reminds us to focus on our mission as Hashem's Chosen People.

#### Uniqueness of the Rosh Chodesh Korban Musaf

The Musaf of each of the Yomim Tovim also includes a korban chatas, and each Yom Tov therefore includes a concept of judgment and atonement (Mishnah, Rosh Hashanah 16a; Mishnah, Shevuos 2a). However, the Torah's description of the korban chatas of Rosh Chodesh differs from its description of the korbanos chatas that are offered on the other Yomim Tovim. The chatas of the other Yomim Tovim are always mentioned immediately after the other Musaf offerings of the day. However, when the Torah teaches about the Musaf of Rosh Chodesh, the Torah first lists the other Musaf offerings, then sums up with the statement, *Zos olas chodesh bechodsho lechodshai hashanah*, "these are the olah offerings of Rosh Chodesh for all the months of the year," as if it has completed the discussion of the Musaf for Rosh Chodesh. Only then does the Torah mention the chatas offering, implying that the chatas of Rosh Chodesh fulfills a unique purpose – almost as if it stands alone. More significantly, the wording of the chatas of Rosh Chodesh is different from that of the other chatas offerings. Whereas in reference to all the chatas of Yom Tov the Torah simply says that one should offer a chatas, on Rosh Chodesh the Torah says that one should offer a chatas to Hashem (Rav Hirsch's Commentary to Bamidbar 28).

The Gemara itself notes this last question and provides a very anomalous answer: Hashem said, this goat is atonement for My decreasing the size of the moon (Shevuos 9a). From here, Chazal derive that the sun and moon were originally created equal in size, and that later Hashem decreased the size of the moon.

This statement sounds sacrilegious – how can one imply that something Hashem did requires atonement?

Indeed, I have seen commentaries say that the explanation of this Gemara is kabbalistic and should be left for those who understand these ideas.

Others explain that the korban that the Jews offer on Rosh Chodesh appeases the moon for its stature being decreased (Ritva, Shevuos 9a). What does this mean?

#### Man's Relationship with G-d

This could be understood in the following way: Rav Hirsch (Commentary to Bamidbar 28) explains that the "atonement for decreasing the moon" means that Hashem created Man with the ability to sin, and thereby he can create evil and darkness. For, after all, sins committed by human beings are the only evil in the world. Thus, someone might "accuse" Hashem of creating evil, by creating Man with the ability to sin. This can be called "decreasing the size of the moon," since the moon's waning and waxing carries with it the meaning of the waning and waxing of the relationship of Man to Hashem.

However, the message of the chatas of Rosh Chodesh is that Man can return to serve Hashem, and that, on the contrary, this was the entire purpose of Creation. In error, someone might have accused Hashem of having brought sin into the world, and therefore decreasing the moon. In reality, Man's serving Hashem is the only true praise to Him. The offering of the korban chatas on Rosh Chodesh demonstrates this. Indeed, man is fallible, but when fallible man serves Hashem this demonstrates the truest praise in the world for Him.

#### Why Rosh Chodesh is not Yom Tov

According to a Midrash, prior to the debacle of the Jews worshipping the Golden Calf, the *eigel hazahav*, Rosh Chodesh was to have been made into a Yom Tov. Unfortunately, when the Jews worshipped the *eigel hazahav*, this Yom Tov was taken from them and presented exclusively to the women, who had not worshipped the *eigel* (Tur, Orach Chayim 417, and Mahalnach commentary ad loc.). The sin of the *eigel hazahav* demonstrates how low Man can fall. This is symbolically represented by the decrease of the moon. As a result of this sin, Rosh Chodesh could not become a Yom Tov, but had to remain a workday.

However, when Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh coincide, no *melacha* is performed on Rosh Chodesh, so that it can now achieve what it would have accomplished as a Yom Tov. This is the goal of a Shabbos Rosh Chodesh, and for this reason, we include a Yom Tov aspect to our davening.

And not only does Shabbos increase the sanctity of Rosh Chodesh, but Rosh Chodesh increases the sanctity of Shabbos. The Gemara conveys this idea by declaring that the korban Musaf of Shabbos has more sanctity when Shabbos falls on Rosh Chodesh (Zevachim 91a).

#### Conclusion

Shabbos is our acknowledgement of Hashem as Creator of the Universe, whereas Rosh Chodesh demonstrates the role of mankind as the purpose of the Creation of this world. Since Man is the only creation capable of sinning, he is the only one able to make a conscious choice to serve his Maker.

Based on this, we can understand why the coming of Shabbos, which demonstrates the Creation of the universe, together with Rosh Chodesh, which demonstrates Man's role in Creation warrant a special *beracha* and a special declaration *Ata Yatzarta, You created the world*.