

Parshas Korach

This week's Parsha, Korach, and the Parsha begins, Vayikach Korach and Korach took, Rashi explains that he separated himself (due to the conflict). But as Rabbi Yossi Holzberg explained in our Thursday night Shiur, Korach was a taker, not a giver. This is relevant as there is an explanation by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, which describes that fundamentally, Korach's questions related to an idealistic world that is not how the world is. Korach's questions were audacious to Hashem, but at their core, his questions related to a world in a purist and unrealistic form¹. His questions around hierarchy and whether tzitzis that are all blue require techeiles or a house full of seforim require a mezuzah. In truth, his questions have credibility but are not how things are supposed to be. It is easy to ask and sound logical and intelligent about how the world ought to be, but that isn't how it is because the change needed begins with you. We live in a world where all systems are criticized, and all should be given equality. These critiques stand to reason, but what change is being made toward the ideal on an individualistic level? Asking questions to criticize without embodying the change you want is brazen selfishness, termed virtue signaling in modern times. This is why the Parsha begins with Korach "taking." Meaning the Parsha could have said Vayipaleg Korach and Korach argued. But then one can look at the questions and say,

well, there is truth to his questions, but Korach didn't do anything to effect a change toward the ideal; he just took; he was a selfish representation of an existence that ought to be. Because in truth, and possibly when Mashiach arrives, the world will no longer have a hierarchy when in the revelation of Hashem's light.

Furthermore, the revelation of Mitzvos as we know them today will differ from when Mashiach arrives. It takes work to get to Mashiach, to live the life of a Jew that follows Torah and Mitzvos, which makes this world a dwelling place for Hashem. Korach wanted to skip the process (take) and not give, in the way the journey of Jew ebbs and flows (Ratzu Veshuv) and vacillates between spirituality and physicality and combining the two to make a Dira B'Tachtonim.

Korach's rebellion follows the incident of the Meraglim, where (according to the Rebbe), the Meraglim didn't want to leave the spiritual abode and protection that was the desert (they had their clothes grow on them, and their food made for them-the Manna.) They especially-mistakenly of course- didn't want to involve themselves in the physical world. Korach dovetailed off that and argued his questions. But Korach-answers the Rebbe, reduced the life of a Jew to emotionless actions, which is not what the Torah demands from us. We have to have life, interpretation, experience, and our worldview (based on Torah) that connects us to Hashem in this world as it was created.

¹ The Gemara in Pesach 119a explains that Korach was very wealthy and grew arrogant. Psychologically it is easy for a person to become disconnected from reality if they have the unencumbered time and privilege to think about how the world ought to be. It reminds me of the story of Mary Antoinette who said of peasants "Let them eat cake", she was completely

disconnected from the reality of the status of the poor people without bread. There is a French term called Noblesse Oblige where nobles expect others to act as they do, (even though they may be disconnected from the people whom they are expecting to act like them and their ability).

This past week, we marked the 29th Yahrzeit of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. None in our generation explained so clearly the mission of revealing the spirituality of Hashem that exists in the physical world in preparing for the ultimate redemption. Unlike Korach who wanted to upset the balance of the world as it was created by Hashem², we are to balance the spiritual and physical in a way that is not mutually exclusive of one another. But in a way the reveals the goodness in all, because all has Hashem in it. And to do so we follow the Torah and its precepts.

Good Shabbos.

² As we see in the letters of Korach's name