

B”H

The Gap: Life in the Space Between the Ideal and the Real

The Supra-Rationalist, the Supra-Idealist, and the Compromiser

By Rabbi YY Jacobson

~*~

Dedicated by **David** and **Eda Schottenstein**
In the loving memory of
Rabbi **Gavriel Noach** and **Rivka Holtzberg**
And all of the Mumbai Kedoshim

And in the loving memory of a young soul
Alta Shula Swerdlov
Daughter of Rabbi **Yossi** and **Hindel Swerdlov**

~*~

Curriculum:

- 1. Class Summary**
- 2. Sources**
- 3. Bibliography**
- 4. Questions and Exercises**

1. Summary:

Korach—whose ill-fated challenge to Moses and Aaron's leadership is recounted in the 16th chapter of Numbers—has come to represent the very concept of conflict and discord. Thus the Talmud states: "Whoever engages in divisiveness transgresses a prohibition of the Torah, as it is written (Numbers 17:5): "And he shall not be like Korach and his company." When the Torah wishes to warn against the agitation of dispute and disunity, it does so by instructing, "Don't be like Korach."

The Talmud relates that the great sage Rabbi Meir would deduce a person's nature from his name. The same applies, say the Kabbalists, to every creature, object, and phenomenon. For the letters of the alef-bet are the building blocks of creation, meaning that the letters that make up a thing's name in Biblical Hebrew define the "shape" and character of its soul, its divine life-force which grants it existence and vitality.

The same is true of the name "Korach." The very three Hebrew letters that spell this word delineate the contours of conflict—the various ways in which the harmony of G-d's creation might be distorted and corrupted.

The three letters that comprise the name "Korach" - *kuf*, *reish*, *chet* - are all physically similar to another letter, the *hei*. The *kuf* is a *hei* whose left leg extends below; the *reish* is a *hei* that lacks a left leg altogether; and the *chet* is a *hei* whose left leg is joined to its roof. This is not by chance, but rather deeply meaningful and revealing.

Korach came with three complaints to Moses and Aaron: 1. about the priesthood, 2. About a cloak woven of turquoise wall, 3. and about a house filled with Torah scrolls. These three complaints represent three types of people: the supra rationalist, the supra idealist and the compromiser. They are embodied in the three letters of the name Korach.

Join us on a fascinating journey into the soul of a debate, its reflections in the narrative of history, and its ramifications on our lives today.

2. Sources:

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Korach</p> <p>16:3</p> <p>They assembled against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for the entire congregation are all holy, and the Lord is in their midst. So why do raise yourselves above the Lord's assembly?"</p> | <p>1. קרח</p> <p>טז, ג</p> <p>וַיִּקְהֻלוּ עַל מֹשֶׁה וְעַל אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם רַב לָכֶם כִּי כָל הָעֵדָה כֻּלָּם קֹדְשִׁים וּבְתוֹכְכֶם ה' וּמִדּוּעַ תִּתְנַשְּׂאוּ עַל קֹהֵל ה'.</p> |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><u>2. Bamidbar Rabbah</u></p> <p>18:3</p> <p><i>“And Korach took,”</i> what is written just prior to this? <i>“You shall make for yourselves tzitzis”</i> Korach jumped in and asked Moses, ‘A Tallis that is entirely made of techelis, turquoise wool, is it exempt from tzitzis?’ Moses replied, ‘It still requires tzitis.’ Korach said, ‘If the entire garment is techelis, and even this does not exempt it, will four strings exempt it?’</p> <p>[Korach continued:] ‘Does a house full of Torahs require a mezuzah?’ Moses replied: ‘It still requires a mezuzah.’ Korach said: ‘The Torah contains 275 sections, and yet it does not exempt the house, can one mezuzah, in which is written merely one section, exempt the house? You Moses, were not commanded these laws! You made them up yourself!’</p> | <p><u>2. במדבר רבה</u></p> <p>יח, ג</p> <p>ויקח קרח מה כתיב למעלה מן הענין (במדבר טו) ועשו להם ציצית קפץ קרח ואמר למשה טלית שכולה תכלת מהו שתהא פטורה מן הציצית א"ל חייבת בציצית. א"ל קרח טלית שכולה תכלת אין פוטרת עצמה ארבע חוטין פוטרות אותה?</p> <p>בית מלא ספרים מהו שיהא פטור מן המזוזה? אמר לו חייב במזוזה א"ל כל התורה כולה רע"ה פרשיות אינה פוטרת את הבית פרשה אחת שבמזוזה פוטרת את הבית.</p> <p>אמר לו דברים אלו לא נצטויות עליהן ומלבד אתה בודאן.</p> |
| <p><u>3. Talmud Sanhedrin</u></p> <p>110a</p> <p>Anyone who sustains an argument transgresses a Biblical prohibition, as it is written, “Do not be like Korach and his assembly.” (Numbers 17:5)</p> | <p><u>3. סנהדרין</u></p> <p>קי, א</p> <p>כל המחזיק במחלוקת עובר בלאו שנאמר (במדבר יז, ה) ולא יהיה כקרח וכעדתו.</p> |
| <p><u>4. Bereishis Rabbah</u></p> <p>4:6</p> <p>Why does the Torah omit on the Monday of creation the words: “And it was good”?</p> <p>R. Chanina said: Because on that day division was created, as it is written, “And [the firmament] divided between the waters.”</p> <p>R. Tavyumi said: If even this division—whose purpose was to fix and stabilize the world—is negative, how much more so division and argument which is purely destructive.</p> <p>R. Shmuel said: G-d’s work with the water was not completed on Monday [but on Tuesday], therefore on Tuesday it is written “it was good” twice, once for the work with the waters, and once for itself.</p> | <p><u>4. בראשית רבה</u></p> <p>ד, ו</p> <p>למה אין כתיב בשני כי טוב?... רבי חנינא אומר שבו נבראת מחלוקת שנאמר ויהי מבדיל בין מים למים. א"ר טביומי אם מחלוקת שהיא לתקונו של עולם ולישובו אין בה כי טוב מחלוקת שהיא לערבובו על אחת כמה וכמה. א"ר שמואל לפי שלא נגמרה מלאכת המים לפיכך כתוב בשלישי כי טוב שני פעמים אחד למלאכת המים וא' למלאכתו של יום.</p> |
| <p><u>5. Shemos Rabbah</u></p> <p>12:3</p> <p>To what is this matter compared?</p> <p>To a king who decreed: “The residents of Rome may not descend to Syria, and the residents of Syria may not</p> | <p><u>5. שמות רבה</u></p> <p>יב, ג</p> <p>משל למה הדבר דומה? למלך שגזר ואמר בני רומי לא ירדו לסוריא</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>ascend to Rome.”</p> <p>Likewise, when G-d created the world He decreed and said, “The heavens are heavens of Hashem, but the earth He gave to the children of men.”</p> <p>When he wished to give the Torah, He nullified the decree and said “The lower realms may ascend on high, and the upper realms may descend below.”</p> | <p>ובני סוריא לא יעלו לרומי.</p> <p>כך כשברא הקדוש ברוך הוא את העולם גזר ואמר השמים שמים להי והארץ נתן לבני אדם.</p> <p>כשבקש ליתן התורה בטל גזירה ראשונה ואמר התחתונים יעלו לעליונים והעליונים ירדו לתחתונים.</p> |
| <p>6. The letter <i>Hey</i> and letters of ‘<i>Korach</i>’</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ה</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ק ר ח</p> | <p>.6</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ה</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ק ר ח</p> |
| <p>7. Talmud Menachos</p> <p>29b</p> <p>It is written (Genesis 2:4): “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, on the day that the Lord God made—בהראם—earth and heaven.” It is as if it is written בהי בראם, which means with the letter ה, <i>hey</i>, G-d created.</p> <p>Why was this world created with the letter <i>hey</i>? Because like the letter hey, the world resembles an open corridor, whoever wishes to leave may do so.</p> <p>And why is the leg of the <i>hey</i> hanging? Because if one does repent, he is forgiven.</p> | <p>7. מנחות</p> <p>כט, ב</p> <p>אומר (בראשית ב, ד) אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם אל תקרי בהבראם אלא בהי בראם.</p> <p>ומפני מה נברא העולם הזה בהי [ה] מפני שדומה לאכסדרה שכל הרוצה לצאת יצא. ומיט תליא כרעיה? דאי הדר בתשובה מעיילי ליה.</p> |

3. מקורות:

נועם אלימלך (להרה"ק ר' אלימלך מליזענסק זי"ע) פרשת קרח.
 שיחת שבת פרשת קרח (לכ"ק אדמו"ר מליובאוויטש) תשכ"ד, תשכ"ז, תשמ"ח.

B”H

4. Questions and Exercises

1. What were Korach’s three arguments against Moses? What is the deeper meaning behind all three of them? Why the need for all three?
2. Why does Korach embody the essence of all division?
3. Explain the design of the letter “*hey*” and why it depicts our world.
4. Explain how the letters *Kuf*, *Reish*, and *Ches* distort the *Hey*.
5. Do you compromise your truest standards and highest aspirations in the real world?
6. Do you shun away from action and implementation so as not to get your hands dirty?
7. Do you recognize that there is dissonance and tension between the worlds of thought vs. action, vision vs. implementation? Or do you see no tension?
8. If yes, what is the solution?
9. Are you a cynic, an idealist, or a compromiser? What is the alternative to ending up in one of these three traps?

Curriculum designed and prepared by Rabbi Avi Shlomo