

# Korach 5772

## BS"D Parashat Korach 5772

Korach led a rebellion against HaShem's appointed hierarchy: Moshe as Chief Rabbi and King, Aharon as Moshe's brother and Kohen Gadol (High Priest), and Eli'tzafan ben Uziel as head of the Kahat family of Levites.

Korach succeeded in drawing to his side 250 of the leading personalities, including Ohn ben Pelet of the tribe of Re'uben.

At the end of the day, Korach and his inner circle were devoured when the earth opened under their feet and the other 250 rebels died by fire.

Of all the rebels, the only one to survive was Ohn ben Pelet, due to the wisdom of his wife.

She pointed out to him that he had nothing to gain by joining with Korach, "If Korach emerges victorious, what will you profit? And if he fails, you will pay the price".

Although Ohn recognized the truth in his wife's incisive logic, he claimed that he could not go back on his commitment because of the word that he had given to Korach.

In order to save the day – and Ohn's life – his wife decided on an unbelievable plan. When the Korachites came to fetch Ohn, he remained in the tent while she sat at the opening with her head covering removed. By doing so, these very religious people were repelled by her brazenness and nakedness and left. The plan worked and Ohn was saved.

What she did was un-halachic. She presented herself in public in an extremely inappropriate manner, which under normal circumstances would be grounds for divorce in disgrace for her and the entire family. But she saved her husband's body and

soul.

The Jewish nation is now witnessing a similar process, whereby inappropriate means produce desirable results.

Giulio Meotti, a well-known journalist with the Italian daily *Il Foglio*, recently posted an article titled "The Last Days of Jews in the Islamicized Europe."

Mr. Meotti quotes Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz who said, "The Jewish community in Europe is dying". The journalist points out the following:

1) "In the past few years, the number of French Jews immigrating to Israel has doubled. Hundreds of French Jews have bought apartments in Israel."

2) "A few years ago, the UK paper, *The Daily Telegraph*, ran a story under the title: "Is this the last generation of British Jews?". The Jewish population in the United Kingdom will decline to 240,000 by 2020."

3) "The President of Austria's Israelite Community, Ariel Muzicant, warns, "If a miracle doesn't happen soon, the Jewish community in Austria will no longer exist in the foreseeable future."

4) "In Sweden, Jews are leaving big cities such as Malmo due to security reasons, in order to escape anti-Semitic attacks."

5) "Sixty percent of Dutch Jews are ready to pack up and leave the country. Rabbi Benjamin Jacobs, the country's chief rabbi, declared to *Arutz Sheva* that the future for Dutch Jewry is moving to Israel".

6) "Jews are fleeing Antwerp, the city in Belgium once proudly called "the Northern Jerusalem." Last autumn, the ancient synagogue of Weesp became the first synagogue in Europe since the Second World War to cancel Shabbat services due to threats for the safety of the faithful."

7) "There are more than 1,000 Jews in Oslo, but you never see them. Not one. Today anti-Semitic inscriptions are being drawn on building walls in Marseille, Nottingham, Paris, Madrid, Amsterdam, Berlin, Kiev, Barcelona and Rome. Jewish cemeteries are daily ransacked and Jews are attacked on the streets if they wear their kippahs."

Every community has its time when HaShem "shakes" out its Jews, as one does when removing lint from a rug. It began 64 years ago with the Jews in North Africa, Iraq and Yemen, when they were forced to leave the countries where their families had lived for centuries and come home to Eretz Yisrael.

HaShem proclaimed a hiatus of several years to allow the infant Jewish State to absorb the more than one million olim who had arrived in such a short span of time, while concurrently fighting back the Arabs and building a stable economy.

During this time, there was a modest trickle of Olim; but the flow of history was restored again in the 1990s when the gates of the Soviet Union were torn down and Jews who suffered Communist oppression for over 70 years were free to leave. Over one million came to Eretz Yisrael in a relatively short period of time. Once again, the Medina became enveloped in the complex operation of absorbing such a large number of Jews – housing, work opportunities, health problems, and much more had to be accomplished. After another short hiatus, HaShem chose to arouse the Jews in Ethiopia to come home, and they had to be absorbed. And now the time has arrived for European Jewry to pack their bags and come home.

This will be followed by the Jewish community of the United States, whose return will bring down the curtain on the tragic drama of the 2000-year Jewish exile from the Holy Land.

The story of Korach and his followers serves as a blueprint for Hashem's plan to bring about the demise of the galut when

faced with Jews who refuse to heed Hashem's call to abide by the teachings of Moshe and Aharon, who longed for nothing else than to enter the Holy Land.

Korach and his inner circle were devoured without a trace, while the others perished by fire. But one man and his family escaped, albeit in a less than admirable fashion.

Those who intermarry rather than maintaining Jewish identity are devoured, never to be seen again. Not in this world nor in the world to come.

Others who remain affiliated with Judaism but refuse to come home, will attain their destiny in one of the many ways that HaShem deals with people who resist the dynamic flow of Jewish history.

The third group, who like Ohn ben Pelet wish to escape the galut but find themselves entrapped and enmeshed in the cobwebs of their lives, will be freed by less-than-appropriate means but with desirable results. These means have a generic name called anti-Semitism. Just like Ohn ben Pelet's wife who uncovered her nakedness, the Moslems and Christians of Europe – and eventually the countries in North and South America – will reveal their naked, true feeling regarding their Jewish neighbors by forcing them to return to Eretz Yisrael.

The parasha states (26,11)



The literal meaning is that the sons (children) of Korach did not die (because they did not participate in their father's rebellion). But in its wider sense, the Torah is informing us of two things:

1) In every generation there will be Jews, even influential ones, who will be the ideological "sons" of Korach and create their own brand of Judaism while denying the holy Torah.

2) Some will be devoured by assimilation. Some will die. Some will be driven home by the naked hatred of anti-Semitism.

It is within the realm of each person's free will to choose. He can distance himself from the various contemporary Korachs and escape the galut with honor and pride, or he can join with them and hope that in the best case he will come home because of anti-Semitism.

### **Part B:**

Our parasha relates that Moshe sought, once and for all, to quell the residual rumblings of dissatisfaction emerging from the Korach fiasco. He directed the tribal leaders, including Aharon the Kohen Gadol, to bring their personal staffs (staves) which would be placed in the Holy Sanctuary overnight. In the morning Moshe removed the staffs and everyone saw that Aharon's staff had brought forth flowers and fruit buds, while the other staffs remained unchanged.

Ask a chareidi, righteous religious leader in the galut, or some chassideshe or yeshiveshe person, who makes leaves fall from the trees? He will certainly answer "HaShem". And ask him who turns liquid gasoline into gas to run a car motor? He will again answer "HaShem". Ask him who makes water go downstream? And he will once again answer "HaShem". And, lastly, ask him who established Medinat Yisrael? Chances are that he will answer, "Hertzl and Ben Gurion". Then you will immediately know that he is neither righteous nor religious, but no doubt intellectually dishonest.

No matter what the differences of opinion were 100 years ago, the proof that the Medina was established and thrives through the direct personal interaction of Hashem are the flowers and fruit that are brought forth by the 6 million Jews in the Holy Land.

Parashat Korach lives on with us, and the rebels of those times appear to be far more righteous than many of the leaders

in today's galut.

### **Part C:**

Several weeks ago, my wife was part of a group that visited the death camps in Poland: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Maidanek and others. While standing at the train station in the Auschwitz camp, the group leader gave my wife a letter from one of our sons and another from one of our daughters, who had requested that he do just so.

The letters are very personal, from loving children to a mother, and not for publication. But I translated part of the last paragraph that tells it all.

After describing the horrors that our brothers and sisters underwent, our son writes:

*"I am writing this on the eve of Memorial Day to the fallen soldiers of Tzahal and victims of Arab terror, and think of the light years of Jewish experience spanning where you will be when you read this and where I am now in Medinat Yisrael.*

*HaShem has granted us to establish the Jewish State in Eretz Yisrael with a Jewish army, industry and Jewish religious life that permeates every centimeter of the land. Here we live without fear, for there is God-given courage in all of us."*

I would not be exaggerating to say that the essence of my ten years of writing these weekly divrei Torah are contained in this short paragraph.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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