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Parshah

The rebellion led by Korach and his following is fascinating. It seems incredible that someone could have the audacity to challenge a leader appointed by none other than Hashem Himself! The *pasuk* describes Korach's fundamental complaint with Moshe:

”ויקהלו על משה ועל אהרן ויאמרו אלהם רב
לכם כי כל העדה כלם קדשים ובתוכם ה' ומדוע
תתנשאו על קהל ה'?”

“They assembled against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, “You take too much upon yourselves, for the entire congregation are all holy, and Hashem is in their midst. So why do you raise yourselves above the Hashem’s assembly?”

The central thrust of Korach’s rebellion is based on principles of equality. Everyone had the same level of prophecy at Sinai and no one should be singled out as being more qualified to lead the nation than any other.

Rashi quotes the Medrash Tanchuma which describes in more details some of the dialogue that took place between Moshe and Korach:

הלבישן טליתות שכולן תכלת. באו ועמדו לפני משה.
אמרו לו טלית שכולה של תכלת חייבת בציצית או פטורה.
אמר להם חייבת. התחילו לשחק עליו, אפשר טלית של
מין אחר חוט אחד של תכלת פטורה, זו שכולה תכלת לא
תפטור את עצמה:

He dressed them with cloaks made entirely of blue wool. They came and stood before Moses and asked him, “Does a cloak made entirely of blue wool require *tzitzis*, or is it exempt?” He replied, “It does require.” They began laughing at him, saying, “Is it possible that a cloak of another coloured material, one string of blue wool exempts it [from the obligation of *techeles*], and this one, which is made entirely of blue wool, should not exempt itself?!”

Though Rashi only quotes thus far in the medrash – there is more.

”בית מלא ספרים, מהו שתהא פטורה מן המזווה.
אמר לו, חייבת במזווה. אמר לו, כל התורה כולה
מאתים שבעים וחמש פרשיות שיש בה, כולן אין

פטורות את הבית, ושתי פרשיות שבמזווה פטורות
את הבית:”

[Korach said to Moshe], “A house full of Torah scrolls, would it not be logical that it should be exempt from the mitzvah of *mezuzah*?” Moshe replied, “It would nevertheless require a *mezuzah*.” Korach said, “If the 275 sections of the Torah are not sufficient to fulfil the mitzvah of *mezuzah* for this house, how then can it be that the two sections included in a *mezuzah* are able to do so?!”

There are several questions raised by the *meforshim*, including the Maharal in his work, Gur Aryeh, who gives this whole medrash an extensive and beautiful treatment.

The first question is, how did the medrash know that Korach’s challenge involved a reference to the case of a *tallis* made purely of *techeles*? The answer given by the Maharal as well as the Sfas Emes, is that the last topic mentioned at the end of last week’s *sedra* was the *mitzva* of *tzitzis*. Now, at the very beginning of this week’s *sedra* the *pasuk* says, “*vayikach Korach...*”, meaning, “Korach took etc.” What exactly was it that he took? The answer, explain the *meforshim*, is that he took the topic of *tzitzis* and he brought it to Moshe’s attention.

In other words, the *medrash* uses the juxtaposition of the two episodes, coupled with the word *vayikach*, to explain what must have been Korach’s challenge.

However, this still sheds no light on the origins of Korach’s second question, regarding a house with Torah scrolls, and the question of whether such a house requires a *mezuzah*. How did Chazal know that this was one of Korach’s challenges to Moshe?

The answer to this is given by the Maharal, and can be understood by first understanding

the relevance of these two issues, to the matter at hand, namely, rejecting Moshe and Aharon as the leaders of *Klal Yisrael*.

The Maharal explains that the leadership of Moshe and Aharon represented the two fundamental aspects of *yiddishkeit*. Moshe represents Torah, clearly expressed in his being the one to bring Torah from Heaven down to Earth. Aharon represents *mitzvos*, demonstrated through his service in the *mishkan*. Korach’s fundamental assertion was that we are all equally enlightened and need no ambassador for either of these two aspects.

The two challenges he posed to Moshe and Aharon each focused on these two things. The question about the logic that a piece of clothing made solely of *techeles* should be exempt from the mitzvah of *tzitzis* was the challenge on the concept of a leader in terms of *mitzvos*. The assertion that a house filled with Torah scrolls should not need a *mezuzah*, was the attack on the concept of a leadership in terms of Torah.

But Korach was wrong. One of the most fundamental principles of *yiddishkeit* is the need for guidance from the generation’s Torah leaders, coupled with an inherent commitment to tradition.

From the inception of the Jewish nation as a People of Torah and *mitzvos*, the need for Torah leadership has been ever-present. We look to the leaders of our generation to guide us in terms of how to apply Torah to modern life. It may sometimes be difficult to put aside our own biases and opinions, but the willingness to do so ensures we can serve Hashem with integrity and bring authentic Torah *yiddishkeit* to the world.

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