

In loving memory of Harav Yitzhak Yoel ben Shlomo Halevi

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5 Tammuz 5780

Shabbat ends:

London 10:28pm
Sheffield 11.01pm
Edinburgh 11.30pm
Birmingham 10.42pm
Jerusalem 8.31pm

Please look regularly at the social media and websites of the US, Tribe and your community for ongoing updates relating to Coronavirus as well as educational programming and community support.

You do not need to sign into Facebook to access the US Facebook page. The US Coronavirus Helpline is on 020 8343 5696.

May God bless us and the whole world.

Daf Hashavua

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Haftarah p.1186

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Haftarah p.649

Soncino p.879
Haftarah p.893

*"It will be that the staff of the man
I choose will blossom"
(Bemidbar 17:20)*

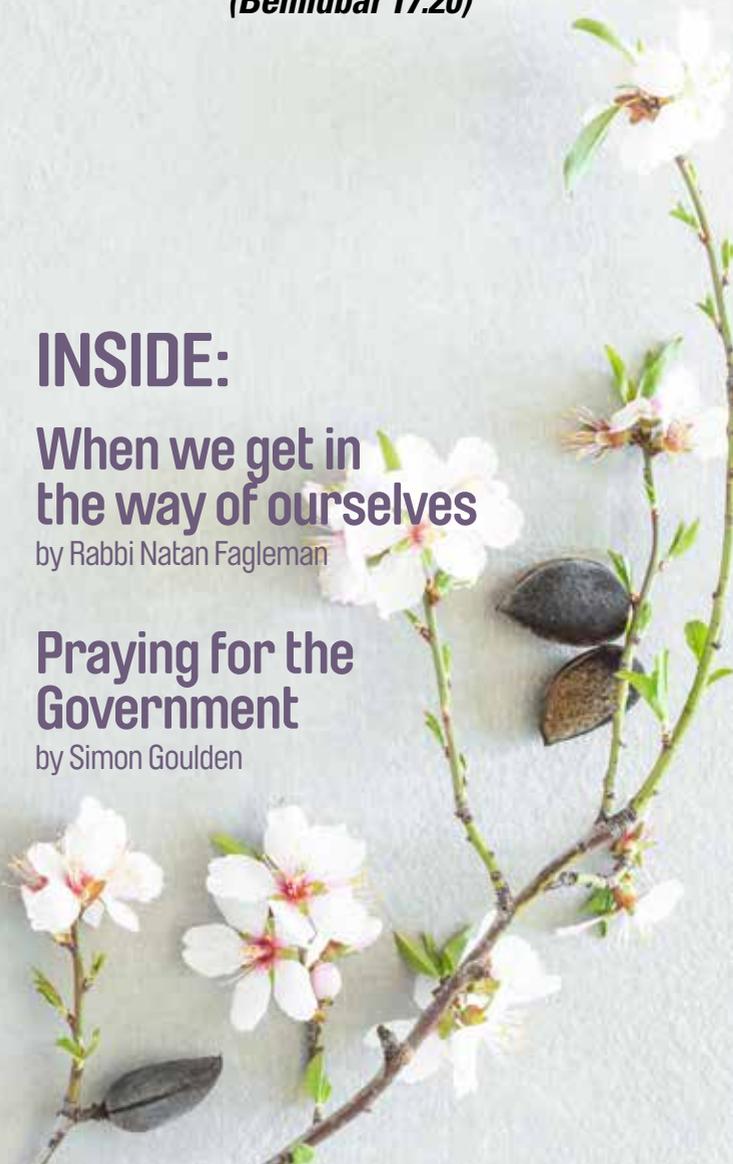
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Sidra breakdown

קרח

Korach

5th Sidra in:

בְּמִדְבָּר

Bemidbar

By Numbers:

95 verses

1,409 words

5,325 letters

Headlines:

Rebellion against Moshe



United Synagogue Daf Hashavua

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When we get in the way of ourselves

by Rabbi Natan Fagleman,
Allerton Hebrew Congregation



In the very first verse of the Book of Tehillim (Psalms) – ashrei ha-ish asher lo halach ba-atz-at reshaim, uvmoshav leitzim lo yashav - King David praises the person who does not go in the path of the wicked and does not sit in the company of scoffers.' 'Leitzanut' – jeering, mocking and ridiculing that which has value and ought to be respected - often ends in self-inflicted misery.

Korach, the protagonist in our sidra today, led a rebellion against Moshe and Aaron. He argued that Moshe had taken the best job,

that of leader, for himself and had appointed those whom he favoured into positions of power. What had irked Korach in particular was that he personally had been overlooked for the position of Nasi – Prince of the Tribe of Levi. As the leader of the house of Kehat, the most senior of the three houses of Levi, Korach assumed that he would be given the honour of leading his tribe. When this honour was given to his younger cousin Eltzafan, Korach was incensed. Rather than wishing to accept that these were the instructions of the Almighty he turned on Moshe to accuse him of

In loving memory of Chaya Rachel bat Moshe Ben-tzion

Sidra Summary

1st Aliya (Kohen) – Bemidbar 16:1-13

Korach, from the tribe of Levi, conspires with Datan, Aviram and On from the tribe of Reuven. They gather together 250 leading Israelites and challenge Moshe and Aharon's rights to leadership (see p.3 article). Moshe tells Korach and his assembly to prepare an incense offering in a fire-pan to bring the next morning. Aharon will do the same; whoever's offering is received by God will indicate the rightful leadership (see p.4 article). Moshe tries to dissuade the rebels. Datan and Aviram refuse to speak with Moshe, accusing him of "bringing the nation out of the land of Egypt in order to kill them in the desert".

Point to Consider: Why is Korach's lineage only listed three generations back and not more? (see Rashi to 16:1)

nepotism and favouritism (Rashi 16:1).

How did Korach manage to persuade others to join his rebellion? How did he turn his personal vendetta into a national revolt?

He used the power of letzanut. He undermined the authority of Moshe with contorted questions to denigrate the Torah's laws such as the mitzva of Tzitzit. The Torah requires 'techeilet' for Tzitzit, that one of the strings on each corner is dyed a particular form of turquoise blue.

Korach, explains the Midrash, dressed his supporters in garments that had been dyed completely blue. He then asked Moshe whether such a garment still needed fringes on its corners! Moshe answered in the affirmative. 'It is clear' Korach argued in reply, 'that Moshe has made all of this up and that none of this ever came from God. What right does Moshe have to force his leadership upon us?' (Rashi ibid)

Korach's entire strategy was based on delegitimising Moshe's authority. Of course his questions and his logic were flawed. We accept the authority of the Torah and believe that its absolute rationale is beyond human



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comprehension. Korach, however, was not interested in the truth; he desired only to garner support for his uprising. The consequences for him and his followers were disastrous; they were swallowed alive!

It is easy to be cynical and pessimistic about the world we live

in. Some people, like Korach, are more than happy to judge and point out the negatives in others, rather than looking at themselves to see how they can improve. They are likely to thereby encourage discord and conflict in their own lives.

When people do good to others, we should praise them; when people are generous, we should emulate them. Scoffing, through assuming that they are simply doing it for their own self-interest, can be a way for us to soothe our consciences and relieve ourselves of the burden of having to live up to their higher standards. Korach's rebellion reminds us how much better we would do if we look for the good in others and how much damage can be caused by selfish actions which only aim to serve oneself.

2nd Aliya (Levi) – 16:14-19

Datan and Aviram continue their tirade against Moshe, who is angered. He declares to God that he has received no personal gain from his leadership. The next morning, Korach and his assembly arrive with their incense offerings at the entrance to the Ohel Moed (Tent of Meeting), as does Aharon, accompanied by Moshe.

3rd Aliya (Shlishi) – 16:20-17:8

God tells Moshe and Aharon to separate themselves from the rest of the nation, as God will immediately destroy Korach and all those people who have been drawn after him, including many of the Israelites (Rashi). Moshe and Aharon plead for mercy. God relents, telling Moshe to instruct the nation to distance themselves from Korach,

Datan and Aviram in order to prove their allegiance to Moshe. Datan and Aviram remain defiant. Moshe announces that if Korach and his followers die a normal death, then he, Moshe, is not God's rightful appointee. Yet if the ground swallows them up miraculously, then Moshe's leadership is legitimate. As Moshe finishes speaking, the ground opens up, consuming Korach, some of his followers and all of their property. A fire then consumes Korach's 250 men whom he had incited to join in the rebellion. Moshe commands Aharon's son Elazar to gather up the copper fire pans of those who died in order to make them into a covering for the Mizbeach (Altar). The next day, the people complain to Moshe and Aharon for 'causing' so many deaths.

Tehillim (Psalm 126)

by Rabbi Yehudah Black, Kenton United Synagogue



This psalm, which is sung before Bircat HaMazon (Grace after Meals) on

festive occasions, was made even more famous by Chazan Yossele Rosenblatt's (d. 1933) composition. It is also recited as part of the Bar'chi Nafshi series recited on Shabbat afternoons in the winter. In certain communities, it has been added to the Yom Ha'atzmaut prayers and was one of the early suggestions for Israel's national anthem.

Psalm 126 is divided into two sections:

1. Verses 1-3 are in the past tense.

When did God 'bring back the exiles of Zion'? Most commentaries agree that this refers to the return of Jews from Babylonia at the beginning of the Second Temple. Interestingly, this return was never completed. A majority of the people who had been led into exile 70 years earlier decided to stay in Babylonia.

"...we were like dreamers" (Verse 1)

The experience of a semi-

redemption for the returnees made the past seem a distant memory. The exile was now like a bad dream (chalom is a dream). Alternatively, the Targum Onkelos's translation reads the verse as 'Ke'cholim' – we were like sick people who became healed from illness through the redemption.

"Then it will be said among the nations: 'The Lord has done great things for them.'" (Verse 2-3)

The effect of redemption had such an impact that even the nations of the world exclaimed in wonderment that a nation exiled from its Land – the Jewish people - could find its way home.

2. In contrast, verses 3-6 seem to be referring to a future redemption:

"Bring back our exiles, like rivulets in the Negev." (Verse 4)

The uniqueness of the Negev desert is that most of the time it

is completely devoid of rain. Yet during the rainy season, the gullies fill to overflowing. So too the future redemption will be accompanied by a population rebirth like the streams in the Negev.

"May those who sowed in tears, reap in joy." (Verse 5)

Here we see a connection with Bircat HaMazon. The agricultural blessing of the Land is felt more if one has put extra toil into its preparation. We acknowledge God's blessings when we see the miracle of the food we receive on our tables.

In memory of Yisrael Shmuel ben Yirmaya Yehoshuah

4th Aliya (Revi'i) – 17:9-15

In response to the complaints, God threatens to wipe out the people. As a fatal plague breaks out, Moshe tells Aharon to place incense in a fire-pan to gain atonement for the complainers. Aharon does so, managing to stop the plague, but not before it kills 14,700 people.

5th Aliya (Chamishi) – 17:16-24

God tells Moshe to gather a staff from each tribe's leader, with the name of the tribe written on the staff. Aharon's name is to be written on the staff of Levi. The staffs are to be left in the Ohel Moed; whichever

tribe's staff miraculously blossoms is the rightful leader. The leaders do as instructed. The following morning Aharon's staff has blossoms with a bud and almonds.

6th Aliya (Shishi) – 17:25-18:20

God tells Moshe to preserve Aharon's staff as a reminder that he was chosen, lest the people rebel in the future. God reiterates Aharon's duties and the need for the Levi'im to assist him and the other Kohanim. The Kohanim have the privilege of eating certain parts of offerings and certain tithes. The laws of redeeming firstborn male children and bringing firstborn animals as offerings are stated.

Praying for the Government; it sounds familiar

by Simon Goulden, Education Consultant to the United Synagogue



One of the most distinctive features of a United Synagogue community, even before the first edition of the Singer's Prayer Book, is that every Shabbat and Yomtov in shul, after the haftarah is read, we say a specific prayer for the welfare of the monarch and the government (green siddur, pp. 420/422). You might have thought that this prayer was a) a modern invention, b) as old as the British Jewish community or c) an ancient part of our ritual. Looking at the words we still use, you would be partially right if you answered 'yes' to any of these questions.

Yet some 2,500 years ago the prophet Jeremiah (29:7) was already exhorting the captives in Babylon: "Work to see that the city where I sent you as exiles enjoys peace and prosperity. Pray to the Lord for it. For as it prospers you will prosper."

About 400 years later, the Mishna (Avot 3:2, p. 536 in the green siddur) goes even further when it says: "Pray for the welfare of the government, for if it was not for the fear of it, people would swallow one another alive".

We know that prayers for the government were certainly said in the Middle Ages and can be found

Lacking a central government with the authority to enforce the rule of law, society would sink into a "war of every man against every man"

throughout the centuries in every country and under every government, even when said under duress for oppressive regimes. In 1930s Germany, for example, there was a prayer for the Nazi government. Nevertheless, the text which we use today is not quite the one which Rev Simeon Singer printed in early editions of his eponymous prayer book. Rev Singer used a text which was actually far closer to one written by Menasseh Ben Israel to be read for Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector, in 1656, as the Jews were readmitted to England! Nonetheless, you will perhaps be surprised that a few of the phrases he penned, some 350 years ago, are familiar today. This is what he wrote:

He that giveth salvation unto Kings and dominion unto Lords, He that delivereth His servant David, from the sword of the enemy, He that make a way in the sea and a

path in the strange waters, bless and keep, preserve and rescue, exalt and magnify and lift up higher and higher, our Lord [add the ruler's name]. The King of kings defend him in his mercy, making him joyful, and free him from all dangers and distress. The King of kings, for his goodness sake, raise up and exalt his planetary star and multiply his days over his kingdom. The King of kings, for his mercies sake, put into his heart and into the hearts of all his Counsellors, and those who attend and minister to him, that he may show mercy to us and unto all the people of Israel. In his days and in ours, let Judah be safe and Israel dwell securely, and let the Redeemer come to Israel and so may it please God, Amen.

Just four years before Menasseh ben Israel wrote this prayer, philosopher Thomas Hobbes famously wrote that, lacking a central government with the authority to enforce the rule of law, society would sink into a "war of every man against every man" in which life would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short". Especially when considering the lessons of Parashat Korach this week, we can reflect on how fortunate we are to live in Britain today, with its religious freedoms enshrined in law.

In memory of Yehuda ben Yaakov HaCohen

7th Aliya (Shevi'i) – 18:21-32

The 'first tithe' (ma'aser rishon) taken from crops is given to the Levi'im. They need to separate a portion of this tithe to give to the Kohanim.

Haftarah

From the Book of Shmuel, the haftarah describes the day on which Shmuel appoints Shaul as the first king of Israel. Shmuel rebukes the nation for demanding a king and emphasises that they still need to fear God and obey His commandments. The righteous Shmuel was descended from Korach (see p.4 article) and he, like Moshe, declares that he has never taken anything from the people.

Sefer Yehoshua

Chapter 17, the division of the Land (continued)

by Rabbi Michael Laitner US Jewish Living Division and Finchley Synagogue



Chapter Overview

Chapter 17 covers areas allocated to the tribes of Menashe (Menasseh) and Ephraim, both descended from Yosef (Joseph). There are several geographical references, some of which link back to episodes in the Torah about allocation of land. Others are familiar names today, such as Beit She'an.

Menashe's territory was split into two sections. The first was west of the River Jordan, including areas in Shomron (Samaria) and isolated cities in other parts of the county. The second, smaller section was east of the Jordan together with the tribes of Reuven and Gad. These two latter tribes had requested land east of the Jordan, to gain ample space for their large numbers of cattle, as recorded in the Torah (Bemidbar ch.32).

When Moshe granted this request, he also gave some of this area to a group from Menashe. Having Menashe on both sides of the Jordan may have been intended to keep strong lines of communication between east and west. Additionally, the family of Machir, the firstborn of Menashe, were strong warriors whose presence east of the Jordan would have provided extra protection. Rashi (1040-1105), on Yehoshua, 17:1, noted that Menashe's area east of the Jordan was in Gilad and Bashan which included the Golan Heights.

The Torah (Bemidbar ch.27) relates the story of the daughters of Tzelophchad, from the tribe of Menashe, and taught about their inheritance of their deceased father's portion in the Land.

In our chapter, the daughters came to Yehoshua and Elazar HaCohen to now receive their inheritance. Yehoshua and Elazar assigned them land, following the ruling of the Torah.

The tribe of Ephraim had land adjacent to that of Menashe as well as some of its own cities in the area of Menashe, as recorded initially in ch.16. These isolated cities appeared to arise through a failure to drive out the idolatrous Canaanite tribes as had been stipulated by the Torah. This failure led to a joint petition by both Ephraim and Menashe to increase their allocation.



Could Menashe change its allocation? (Verses 14-18)

In verse 14, Ephraim and Menashe together ask for a greater allocation than originally made for the latter, "since I [now] have a greater population as God has blessed me to a great extent." The Talmud (Bava Batra 118a-b), in analysing the large population growth of Menashe during the 40 years of wandering in the desert, notes that many younger people, not counted originally for these purposes, were now old enough to have their own allocation.

Yehoshua, himself from the tribe of Ephraim, could not change the territorial boundaries, since these were set by Divine command (see the commentary of Radak, Rabbi David Kimche, 1160-1235). Instead, Yehoshua challenged these tribes to complete their task of taking areas remaining under Canaanite control, particularly the forest controlled by the Perizi and Refaim tribes.

Despite their strength and military prowess, Ephraim and Menashe claimed that they could not defeat the Perizi and Refaim as those tribes had iron chariots. Yehoshua rejected this claim and encouraged them to complete the conquest, as mandated by the Torah. Fighting together, they would, with Divine assistance, overcome their foes. Unfortunately, 'iron chariots' were seen as a formidable deterrent to the remaining conquest, as recounted numerous times subsequently in the next book of the Tanach, Sefer Shofetim (the Book of Judges).

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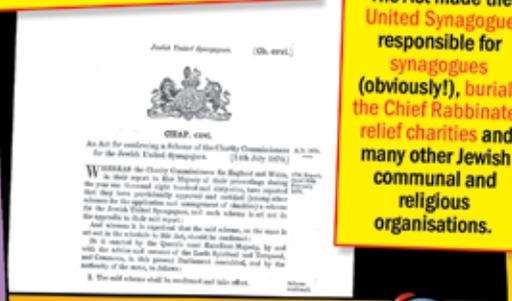
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