

In this week's *Parashah*, we read about Korach's rebellion. Korach challenged Moshe's leadership and the appointment of Aharon as the *Kohen Gadol*, arguing (16:3), "The entire assembly--all of them--are holy and *Hashem* is among them; why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of *Hashem*?"

R' Yaakov Moshe Charlap z"l (1882-1951; rabbi of Yerushalayim's Sha'arei Chessed neighborhood and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Mercaz Harav) writes: The special nature of the Jewish People is not attributable only to our good deeds, but also--indeed, primarily--to our lineage as descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Anyone who denies this effectively lends support to those who assert that *Hashem* might reject us as His people when we sin.

Similarly, writes R' Charlap, it was not merely Aharon, the person, who was chosen to serve as *Kohen Gadol*; rather, *Hashem* decreed that all *Kohanim* would come from the lineage of Aharon. By arguing that someone else could be as worthy as Aharon of being *Kohen Gadol*, Korach was denying the role of lineage. By extension, he denied the specialness that we, the Jewish People, have because of our lineage.

In this light, concludes R' Charlap, we can understand Moshe's response (16:5), "In the morning, *Hashem* will make known the one who is His own." *Rashi* z"l explains: "Can you, Korach, turn morning into night? So, too, you cannot undo *Hashem*'s decree." This refers, explains R' Charlap, to the fact that the selection of Aharon is not based on his deeds, which could change, but rather on *Hashem*'s choice. Understanding *Hashem*'s choices, however, is beyond our grasp. (*Mei Marom: Nimukei Mikraot*)

Shabbat

"You are One and Your Name is One, and who is like Your people *Yisrael*, one nation on earth." (From the *Shabbat Mincha Amidah*)

R' Shraga Feivish Hager z"l (1958-2024; *Kosover Rebbe*; he passed away last *Shabbat*) writes: When *Hashem* made the heaven and earth, He intentionally did not perfect His creation. Rather, His plan was to remove His *Shechinah* / Presence from the world and to have mankind bring it back through their service to Him. We, the Jewish People, merited to be the ones given this task.

The *Kosover Rebbe* continues: By withdrawing His Presence from this world, *Hashem* created a vacuum that allows a person to think there is more than one divine power. Man's entire purpose in this world is to reveal the Oneness of the Creator and to cause this physical world to be a place where holiness resides. This is the meaning of the above prayer: "You are One and Your Name is One." That is a reality! But who will reveal that to the world? We will, for "who is like Your people *Yisrael*, one nation on earth."

The *Gemara* (*Berachot* 6a) states that *Hashem* dons *Tefilin*, so-to-speak (see below). The *Gemara* asks: "What is written in *Hashem*'s *Tefilin*?" and it answers: "And who is like Your people *Yisrael*, one nation on earth." [Until here from the *Gemara*.] The *Kosover Rebbe* quotes R' Zvi Hirsch Eichenstein z"l (1763-1831; *Zidachover Rebbe*) who asks: Who revealed to us what is written in *Hashem*'s *Tefilin*? The answer is that we, the Jewish People, make *Hashem*'s *Tefilin*; therefore, we know what is in them. As noted, what makes *Hashem* One? The fact that we, His people, reveal His Oneness through our acts of holiness. (*Shabbat Malka Kadisha* p.9)

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What does it mean that *Hashem* “dons *Tefilin*”? Of course, He has no body and does not literally wear *Tefilin*!

R’ Shlomo ibn Aderet z”l (*Rashba*; Barcelona, Spain; 1235-1310) writes: Know that among the *Aggadic* / non-legal teachings of our Sages are some that allude to deep secrets, with which I have no business. [It is noteworthy that this statement was made by someone universally considered to be among the greatest *Talmud* commentators.] However, *Rashba* continues, some *Aggadic* statements include a revealed aspect also. When I come to those teachings, I will hint to the hidden part and explain the revealed part as I understand it.

He continues: This teaching (regarding *Hashem*’s *Tefilin*) contains a lofty secret, but the revealed part is also as beloved as gold. We are commanded to place *Tefilin* on our arms, near our hearts, so that love of *Hashem* and an awareness of His power will be like a sign affixed to our arms. And, we are commanded to place *Tefilin* on our heads to implant the same ideas in our brains and intellects. The *Shel Yad* (*Tefilin* on the arm) has one compartment, alluding to the Oneness of *Hashem*, while the *Shel Rosh* (*Tefilin* on the head) has four compartments, alluding to the multiplicity of ways *Hashem* is manifested in this world. (Within these compartments are verses referring to the Oneness of *Hashem*, most notably, “*Shema*.”)

This, adds *Rashba*, is why we always don the *Shel Yad* first and take it off last. Without a trunk, there can be no branches, but there can be a trunk with no branches. Likewise, without *Hashem*’s Oneness, there cannot be any manifestation of the Divine in this world, but even without this world, *Hashem* remains One.

Rashba concludes: Just as *Hashem* is One, so He created the world for the sake of a unique nation--the Jewish People. Of all His creations, we, the Jewish People, are the one in which He takes a unique degree of pride. This is what we mean when we say that *Hashem* “dons *Tefilin*”: Just as our *Tefilin* declare His Oneness and our awareness of, and loyalty to, Him, so He keeps in the forefront of His “Mind” our uniqueness and His desire to give us His attention and loyalty.

(*Be’ur Ha’Rashba Al Ha’aggadot*)

A related thought:

R’ Moshe Isserles z”l (“*Rema*”; 1530-1572; rabbi of Cracow, Poland, and author of the glosses on *Shulchan Aruch* that adapt that work for *Ashkenazim*) writes: The one compartment of the *Shel Yad* alludes to the Oneness of *Hashem*. This is placed near the heart, which is the source of life, just as *Hashem* is the source of everything. The four compartments of the *Shel Rosh* allude to four “ingredients” that make up every thing: material, form, a maker, and a purpose. This explains why the *Shel Rosh* is considered to have greater holiness than the *Shel Yad*, even though the latter alludes to the Oneness of *Hashem*. *Hashem* is too abstract for us to perceive directly, but through His creations we can do so to some degree.

(*Torat Ha’olah* II ch.2)

“Moreover, you did not bring us to a land flowing with milk and honey nor give us a heritage of field and vineyard!” (16:14)

R’ Yehonatan Eybeschütz z”l (Central Europe; 1690-1764) writes that Datan and Aviram argued as follows: Perhaps you will say that thanks to Moshe we left Egypt with great wealth. However, we, Datan and Aviram, were wealthy in Egypt, and we lost that wealth (see *Rashi* to *Shmot* 4:19). We, Datan and Aviram, know that only real estate--“fields and vineyards”--gives a person true wealth. And that, Moshe has not given us.

(*Tiferet Yehonatan*)



“The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households . . .” (16:32)

Why was this form of death appropriate for Korach? R’ Shlomo Alkabetz z”l (1505-1584; author of the Friday night hymn *Lecha Dodi*, among other works) answers:

The world exists in the merit of the Torah, as we read (*Yirmiyah* 33:25), “So says *Hashem*, ‘Were it not for My covenant day and night, I would not have established the laws of heaven and earth.’” (In other words, if man would not in the future study Torah day and night, *Hashem* would not have established the laws of nature that govern the heavens and the earth.) By denying Moshe Rabbeinu’s unique role and accusing Moshe of nepotism, Korach effectively denied the Divine origin of the Torah. Therefore, Korach deserved to disappear from the face of the earth in the fastest and most complete way possible.

(*Perushei U’derushei R’ Shlomo Alkabetz*)

R’ Eliyahu Ha’Tzarfati z”l (1715-1805; rabbi of Fes, Morocco) offers another explanation: Korach’s death was meant to serve as a reminder to those who seek leadership positions that (in the words of *Pesachim* 87b) “Leadership positions bury those who hold them.”

(*Aderet Eliyahu*)



“For the *Ma’aser* / tithe of *Bnei Yisrael* that they raise up to *Hashem* as a gift . . .” (18:24)

R’ Yitzchak Weiss z”l *Hy”d* (rabbi of Verbau, Slovakia; killed in the Holocaust) writes: The initials of the Hebrew words for “the tithe of *Bnei Yisrael*” (“את מעשר בני ישראל”) are also the initials of the phrase (*Mishlei* 21:14), “An anonymous gift will cover up anger.” (“מתן בסתר יכפה אף,” teaching that by giving charity anonymously so as not to embarrass the recipient or receive glory for oneself, one quiets *Hashem*’s anger.) Those same letters also are the initials of the four kingdoms that oppressed the Jewish People: Edom (Rome), Media (Persia), Babylon, and Yavan (Greece). This teaches, writes R’ Weiss, that even when we are downtrodden in exile, we should take care to give a tithe from our income as charity, and, in that merit, we will be saved from our oppressors.

(*Si’ach Yitzchak*)