

# OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### CLIFFHANGER 1

**“For the entire assembly — all of them — are holy, and Hashem is among them.” (16:3)**

On Simchas Torah there is a widely-observed custom to jump up and down while singing “Moshe is true and his Torah is true!”

What is the source of this custom?

In this week’s *Parsha*, Korach and his cohorts were swallowed alive by the earth after Korach tried to supplant Moshe.

In the Talmud (*Bava Basra 73b*), an Arabian merchant takes Rabba bar Bar Chana to a place in the desert where there are fissures in the ground. Fierce heat pours from these cracks. They put wool that was soaked in water onto sticks, and hold them over the crevice. Immediately, the wool goes up in flames.

The Arabian merchant beckons Rabba bar Bar Chana closer. He motions to him to be silent and listen. From under the ground he hears voices saying “Moshe and his Torah are true and the others are liars!”

Korach and all his household went down into the abyss. However, his children were not consumed. At the last second, they repented and a small promontory jutting out of the rock was created for them. Onto this small ledge, they jumped.

When we jump up and down in *shul* on Simchas Torah, we are imitating Korach’s children, who leaped onto the ledge and were saved from the abyss.

Korach’s claim was that all Jews are equally holy. Therefore if we are all

equally holy, no one can be greater than anyone else. But as we dance in that circle on Simchas Torah, there can be both young students and great rabbis dancing together. In some ways, we are not all equal.

And in other ways, we are.

In the future, Hashem will make a circle-dance for the righteous and the Divine presence will be at its center. No one will be jealous of his neighbor, for everyone will see that he is

“One *mezuzah* on the door is what the Torah requires, no more and no less, even if a house full of Torah scrolls may look more Jewish.”

equidistant from the center — from Hashem. And those who saw themselves as diametrically opposed to each other will realize that they have always been equidistant from Hashem. “And Hashem is **among them...**”

### CLIFFHANGER 2

**“Korach, son of Yitzhar, son of Kehas, son of Levi...” (16:1)**

Only someone who knows what it means to be alone can really talk about loneliness.

Only someone who has walked through the darkest night, can talk about what it means to long for the day.

Yaakov Avinu was the Patriarch who is the model of the Jew in exile. He was forced to leave the holy soil of *Eretz Yisrael* and dwell with Lavan. Before he went into exile — an exile which was to last 20 years — he instituted the evening prayer that we say to this day — *Maariv*.

*Maariv* is the prayer of longing. It is the prayer of the night — when we feel most alone. It is then that we turn to G-d out of our very loneliness and we find that He has been there with us all along.

When the Torah delineates Korach’s ancestry, it traces him back only to his great-grandfather Levi, but it stops short of linking his name one generation further back to Yaakov himself.

Interestingly though, in the book of Chronicles, Heman, a descendent of Korach, and the main singer in the *Beis Hamikdash* of King Shlomo, is traced all the way back to Yaakov Avinu.

Why should it be that Heman was linked back to Yaakov through Korach, but Korach himself was not?

Korach’s sons had originally joined in their father’s plot. They realized the enormity of the schism that they were helping to create and they repented. When Korach was miraculously swallowed up by the earth, they were miraculously given a refuge within the cavern. Here, on the brink of oblivion, they sang. They sang songs of exquisite yearning for Hashem. Their songs bespeak the closeness that is borne of distance, of the longing to be close to G-d, that only someone who is very far away can adequately express.

*continued on page four*

# PARSHA OVERVIEW

**K**orach, Dasan and Aviram, and 250 of the leaders of Israel rebel against the authority of Moshe and Aaron. The rebellion results in their being swallowed up by the earth. Many people of the nation resent the death of Korach and his followers, holding Moshe responsible. Hashem's 'anger' is manifested by a plague which besets the nation, and many thousands perish. Moshe intercedes once again for the people, instructs Aaron to make atonement for them, and the plague is halted. Hashem then commands that a staff inscribed with the name of

each Tribe be placed in the *Mishkan*, the Tabernacle. In the morning, the staff of Levi, bearing Aaron's name, sprouts, buds, blossoms and yields ripe almonds. This provides Divine confirmation that the Tribe of Levi is selected for the Priesthood, and also verifies Aaron's position as the *Kohen Gadol*, the High Priest. The specific duties of the *Levi'im* and *Kohanim* are stated. The *Kohanim* were not to be landowners, but were to receive their sustenance from the tithes and other mandated gifts brought by the people. Also taught in this week's Parsha are laws concerning the first fruits, the redemption of the firstborn, and other offerings.

Dedicate an issue of

## OHRNET

in memory of a beloved one  
or in honor of a simcha

Call 02-581-0315  
for information

## FATHERLY ADVICE

*Tidbits From the 'Ethics of the Fathers'  
Traditionally Studied on Summer Sabbaths*

### THE WORLD STANDS ON THREE THINGS

— JUSTICE, TRUTH AND PEACE

Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel • Avos 1:18

**E**ven when no harm results from a distortion of the truth it must be avoided. There is a Talmudic tale (Yevamos 63a) of a problem which the Sage Rav had with his wife who consistently prepared a meal for him contrary to the order he conveyed to her. When Rav's son Chiya became old enough to realize what was happening he decided to solve the problem by conveying to his mother the opposite of what his father had asked him to order. When Rav surprisingly

found the meal he actually wanted and asked Chiya what had happened to his mother's contrariness he learned of the "white lie" which his son had told. Rav praised his cleverness but condemned his action, citing the warning issued by the Prophet Yirmiyahu (9:4) that lying is habit forming and one who tells "white lies" develops a tongue so addicted to distortion that he will find it difficult to tell the truth even when it really matters.

• *Rabbeinu Yonah*

## OHRNET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

Published by  
**OHR SOMAYACH**  
TANENBAUM COLLEGE  
POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • 02-581-0315

General Editor: **Rabbi Moshe Newman**  
Editorial & Web Advisor: **Rabbi Reuven Lauffer**  
Associate Editor: **Rabbi Mordechai Becher**  
Web Production: **Lev Seltzer**

Contributing Editors:  
*Weekly Daf, Fatherly Advice:*  
**Rav Mendel Weinbach**  
*Ask the Rabbi:*  
**Rabbi Moshe Lazerus,**  
**Rabbi Avrohom Lefkowitz,**  
**Rabbi Reuven Subar**  
*Insights, Overview, Haftorah:*  
**Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair**  
*Parsha Q&A*  
**Rabbi Reuven Subar**

Produced and Designed by the Office of Communications  
**Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro, Director**

© 1997 OHR SOMAYACH INSTITUTIONS - ALL RIGHTS RESERVED  
PRINTED IN ISRAEL AT OLD CITY PRESS 02-651-1529

• THIS PUBLICATION CONTAINS WORDS OF TORAH.  
PLEASE TREAT IT WITH DUE RESPECT.

OhrNet is available from several sources:  
• **E-MAIL VIA INTERNET:** Write to [ohr@virtual.co.il](mailto:ohr@virtual.co.il) for information.  
• **WORLD WIDE WEB:** Our address is: [www.ohr.org.il](http://www.ohr.org.il)  
• **FAX AND REGULAR MAIL WITHIN ISRAEL:**  
To subscribe, mail us a letter, or fax a request with your name & fax number to 02-581-2890.  
• **US-MAIL WITHIN NORTH AMERICA:**  
Call 1-800-431-2272 for subscription information.

• If you have a question about Judaism, you can submit it to **Ask The Rabbi**. Just send your question using E-Mail to [ohr@virtual.co.il](mailto:ohr@virtual.co.il) and set the subject to "Ask The Rabbi". We can't include all questions submitted in the column, but we do try to respond to everyone personally.

לע"נ  
ר' יצחק אייזיק בן ר' אליעזר דב ז"ל הי"ד  
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. According to Rashi, where can you look to find a nice explanation of this week's *Parasha*?
2. What did Korach 'take'?
3. Why is Yaakov's name not mentioned in Korach's genealogy?
4. What motivated Korach to rebel?
5. What warning did Moshe give the rebels regarding the offering of the incense?
6. Who was as great as Moshe and Aharon?
7. What event did Korach not foresee?
8. What lands are described in this week's *Parsha* as 'flowing with milk and honey'?
9. What did Korach do the night before the final confrontation?
10. Before what age is a person not punished by the Heavenly Tribunal for his sins?
11. The censers used by Korach's assembly were made into an overlay for the *mizbe'ach*. This was to serve as a warning. What was the purpose of the sign?
12. What happens to one who rebels against the institution of *kehuna*? Who suffered such a fate?
13. Why *specifically* was incense used to stop the plague?
14. Why was Aaron's staff placed in the middle of the other eleven staffs?
15. Aaron's staff was kept as a sign. What did it signify?
16. Why are the 24 gifts for the *kohanim* taught in this week's *Parsha*?
17. Who may eat the *kodshei kodashim* (most holy sacrifices), and where must they be eaten?
18. Why is Hashem's covenant with the *kohanim* called 'a covenant of salt'?
19. What is a 'yekev'?
20. If a *levi* comes to the pile of grain on the threshing floor before *terumah gedolah* has been separated, what must he do before receiving his own tithe?

## BONUS QUESTION?

"But if Hashem creates a new phenomenon, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them... then you'll know that these people have rebelled against Hashem." (16:30) What was so unusual about the ground opening up and destroying Korach's followers? Aren't earthquakes somewhat common?

## I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

Korach's followers attacked Moshe with their mouths by making fun of him and provoking rebellion against him. Their sin was compounded by their lowly spiritual stature compared to that of Moshe. Therefore, they were punished measure for measure: The 'lowly of lowlies' — the ground — opened its mouth and swallowed them.

• Abarbanel

## HAFTORAH: YISHAYAHU 66:1-24

### SHABBOS-ROSH CHODESH

When Rosh Chodesh fall on Shabbos, the regular Haftorah is replaced by a special Haftorah — the last chapter of the Book of Yishayahu (Isaiah).

This chapter was chosen because of its penultimate verse which links Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh: "*And it shall be that, from New Moon to New Moon, and from Shabbos to Shabbos, all flesh shall come and prostrate themselves before Me, said Hashem.*" (66:23) This verse is also repeated after the end of the reading.

### HAPPY BIRTH DAY

"*Shall I bring (a woman) to the birth stool and not have her give birth?*" (66:9)

When we look at the situation today, it's easy to despair. The strident metallic clang of materialism and selfishness seem to swamp out the message of the Torah and its People. The sensuous siren call of the media surrounds us all with a CD world of illusion. Virtual Reality masquerades as the real thing.

The world seems to be deaf to morality, to modesty, of the values that are rooted in the Torah. The motto of the time is "Let it all hang out." In a world where there is nothing to be ashamed of, nothing brings shame, and thus anything is possible. And what is possible — happens.

Those who stand for the eternal values of our people are despised as fundamentalists and violent barbarians. Everything has been turned upside down.

The prophets speak in many places about the coming of *Mashiach* in terms of childbirth.

Someone ignorant of the process of childbirth who sees for the first time a woman in labor would be convinced that she is about to die. And the closer the actual moment of the birth, the stronger that impression would become.

Then, within a couple of minutes, seeming tragedy has turned into the greatest joy. A new life has entered the world.

This is exactly the way *Mashiach* will come. The worse things become, the more painful the birth-pangs, the nearer is his coming. Until, like a mother who had delivered, all the tears and pain will be forgotten in the great joy of a new life.

## WEEKLY DAF

### ME'ILAH 19 - KINNIM 25

## MOUNTAINS AND HAIRS

“Like mountains hanging upon a hair.”

This is the description of the laws of *me'ilah* (misuse of sacred property for secular purpose, which if done unintentionally requires a sacrifice for atonement) that the Mishnah offers in *Mesechta Chagigah* (10a). There are laws we have encountered in *Mesechta Me'ilah*, which we are now concluding, that are only vaguely hinted at in the Written Law of Torah and which seem to sometimes defy a simple understanding, so that they can be compared to “mountains hanging on a hair.”

The Sage Rava (*Chagigah* 10b) cites as the prime example of such complexity a law mentioned in our Gemara. A person sends an agent to spend some Sanctuary funds whose sacred nature is unknown to both of them. If the sender does not become aware that these funds belong to the Sanctuary before the agent spends them, then he is guilty of *me'ilah*. Although this runs counter to the general rule that one cannot be an agent for another in regard to responsibility for sin, the Gemara points out that the Torah made *me'ilah* an exception to this rule. But, if the sender becomes aware that these are Sanctuary funds and the agent does not, then the agent is guilty of *me'ilah*.

It is understandable why the sender is not guilty. Since he is now aware that this

is sacred money he no longer wants the agent to spend it, so that person is no longer considered his agent. But the poor agent, asks Rava, why should he be held responsible for something in which he is so blameless?

The Gemara attempts to reduce the enormity of Rava's wonder by comparing this case to the classic situation of *me'ilah* in which a person unknowingly misappropriates sacred funds which he assumed to be his own and must bring a sacrifice to atone for his error. Rava, however, distinguishes between the two situations. The classic case of *me'ilah* is where the offender is aware that he has Sanctuary property in his possession, and is therefore held responsible for not being sufficiently careful in not mistaking it for his own. The agent, however, has no knowledge that the sender has any sacred property in his possession, and appears to be completely blameless. It is therefore an exercise of “hanging mountains on a hair” to compare his responsibility to the classical case with its greater negligence.

• *Me'ilah* 21a

## OLD AGE BENEFITS

As ignorant people grow older their thinking becomes more confused. But as Torah scholars age their thinking becomes more settled.

This remarkable observation on age and wisdom made by Rabbi Shimon ben Akashya on the basis of two conflicting passages in *Iyov* (12:12,20) has been

placed at the conclusion of *Mesechta Kinnim*, which is probably the most complex section of the entire Talmud and requires the greatest measure of wisdom to master it.

An eloquent explanation of the aging process of the Torah scholar is offered by Tiferes Yisrael in his commentary on *Mishnayot*:

“As the Torah scholar grows old and his physical strength seems to wane, his mental strength increases and adds perfection to his soul. Now that his passions have become subdued and he is free from having to expend so much energy on bodily needs, his mental power spreads its wings and enables him to fully attach himself to Torah.”

Age brings to every person a substantial measure of worldly wisdom based on human experience, a wisdom which is cited by Rabbi Yochanan (*Kiddushin* 33a) as a reason for showing any elderly person respect. But if this wisdom is not utilized for learning Torah it can end up being lost as a victim to the aging process affecting the body.

This idea of Torah prosperity in advanced age may also be found in the words of Rabbi Nehorai (*Kiddushin* 82b) who declared that he preferred to train his son as a Torah scholar rather than any other profession, for only Torah provides for a person even in his old age, as King David declares (*Tehillim* 92:15): “Even in old age shall they blossom and they shall be wholesome and fresh.”

• *Kinnim* 25a

continued from page one

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

In this, they were reflecting the very essence of their forefather Yaakov, who had himself stood on the edge of the precipice of exile and prayed to G-d the prayer of the evening. *Maariv*. The prayer of exile. The prayer of longing.

## KOSHER STYLE

“And Korach took...” (16:1)

“\$500 for a pair of *tefillin*! You must be joking! \$500 for a couple of leather boxes with some Hebrew writing in them! Why, for a fraction of the price I could get something almost identical! If the whole point of *tefillin* is to be a reminder, what do I need all this crazy quasi-scientific precision for? What does it matter if there's a hairline crack in one letter? It's so small you can hardly see it! It's a typical exam-

ple of the sort of nit-picking legalism that I hate in organized religion!”

“Open up your computer. What would happen if I took a very sharp *x-acto* blade and cut one of the wires here in the modem?”

“Well of course, it wouldn't work. The modem won't receive anything.”

“It's exactly the same with *tefillin*. If there's the tiniest break in a letter, then the **spiritual modem** called *tefillin* won't receive anything.”

*Korach asked Moshe if a house full of Torah scrolls still needed a mezuzah on the door frame. Moshe said “Yes.” Korach started to mock him saying “If a single mezuzah affixed to the door frame of a house is enough to remind us of Hashem, surely a house full of Torah scrolls will do the job!” (Midrash)*

In a way, Korach was the first non-

halachic rabbi. The first proponent of ‘Kosher-Style *Glatt Treif*.’ “As long as it looks Jewish from the outside it's fine.” In other words, according to Korach the *mitzvos* are only symbolic, devoid of absolute performance parameters. Moshe Rabbeinu's answer was that the *mitzvos* of the Torah function within strict operational criteria: One *mezuzah* on the door is what the Torah requires, no more and no less, even if a house full of Torah scrolls may look more Jewish.

Sources:

**Cliffhanger 1** - Rabbi C.J. Senter, Rabbi Zev Leff

**Cliffhanger 2** - Rabbi Moshe Eismann, heard from Rabbi Moshe Zauderer

**Kosher Style** - Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz, heard from Rabbi Mordechai Perlman

## How Now RED COW?

Here are but a sample of many questions that our readers have recently sent to "Ask the Rabbi" about the apparent discovery of a Red Heifer in Israel:

**B. H. Moore <jayne@ieway.com> from Spokane Washington wrote:**

*The National news media reported that a red heifer was born in Israel which has some bearing on the future Temple. Could you explain the significance of this?*

**Fábio, Alexandre, Juliano, Rafael & Mariângela <rachel.santos@merconet.com.br> from Brazil wrote:**

*Please, we want to know about the red cow that was born in Kfar Hassidim, and the connection with the restoration of the Temple and the Mashiach. Thank you.*

**David Waysman <dwaysman@melbpc.org.au> from Australia wrote:**

*We have seen reports of what may be a Para Aduma. Is there any basis to this claim, & if yes, what may be the implications of the existence of a Red Heifer?*

**Peter Crowson <pcrowson@succeed.net> from Live Oak, California wrote:**

*What is the significance of the red heifer? How was it different from all the other sacrifices?*

**Mitch Klausner <mklausner@juno.com> wrote:**

*In the Boston Globe a few weeks ago, on the front page of the Sunday edition was a picture of a red heifer found in Israel. Apparently it is very rare to find such an animal. The*

*article said that some believe this means Mashiach is coming soon. Is there any reason to believe this? Thank you in advance.*

**Lou Brifman**

**<lbrifm02@sprynet.com> wrote:**  
*Dear Rabbi,  
Please discuss the Parah Adumah and its significance today.*

**The Farber Family <farberj@thrasher.co.za> from South Africa wrote:**

*Would you please explain to us the significance of a "Red Heifer" born in Yerushalayim?*

**Lester <lester@pan-tex.net> from Pampa, Texas wrote:**

*Dear Rabbi,  
What about the flawless Red Heifer?*

Dear Readers,

As rare as it may be, the birth of a red heifer is nothing more than a curiosity. There is no source in Jewish tradition that sees the birth of a red heifer as a sign of the arrival of the *Mashiach*.

According to the Torah, someone who comes into contact with a dead body becomes halachically 'impure.' The Torah describes a very specific process that enables a person to purify himself. This process involves slaughtering a heifer which is completely red, burning it and mixing its ashes with water. Some of this 'purifying water' is sprinkled on the impure person twice over a seven-day period.

This had great practical importance during Temple times, because all participants in the Temple service needed to be ritually pure, and the entire nation needed to purify themselves for the Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot festivals. It will have practical significance again when the Temple is rebuilt.

Maimonides writes that from the time

of Moses until the destruction of the Second Temple, only nine red heifers have been used to prepare the 'purifying waters.' The tenth red heifer, says Maimonides, will be prepared by the *Mashiach*.

This can be easily misunderstood. It does not mean that there existed only nine red heifers in history, and that the tenth one to be born will be used by the *Mashiach*. It simply means that the ashes from each heifer lasted a long time, and there was never a *need* to prepare more than nine. The tenth red heifer *process* will take place in the times of the *Mashiach*.

About twenty years ago, a red heifer born in Israel caused a similar stir. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, the noted halachic authority of the time, was unmoved. "One of the requirements of the red heifer is that it be at least two years old. What if the *Mashiach* were to come tomorrow? Would we have to wait two years in order to become pure? When *Mashiach* comes, they'll find a red heifer that's two-years old."

The reason for the commandment of the red heifer is considered the deepest secret in the Torah. So much so that even King Solomon, the wisest scholar who ever lived, was unable to fathom its deep meaning. According to the Midrash, its meaning will be revealed in the era of the *Mashiach*.

### Sources:

- Bamidbar (Numbers) 19
- Mishna Parah 3:5
- Rambam, *ibid.* 3:4
- Bamidbar Rabba 19:4

## YIDDLE RIDDLE

How can you have a mixture which is dairy, and when meat accidentally falls in, the mixture becomes parve (neither meat nor dairy)?

Answer next week...

# GET CONNECTED

To OHR SOMAYACH on the WEB  
OVER A BILLION BYTES OF TORAH LITERATURE AND INFORMATION

# www.ohr.org.il

# PARSHA Q&A!

## Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 16:1 - Midrash Rabbi Tanchuma.
2. 16:1 - He 'took himself' out of the community in order to incite dissension.
3. 16:1 - Yaakov prayed that his name would not be mentioned in connection with Korach's rebellion (*Bereshtis* 49:6).
4. 16:1 - He was jealous that Elzaphan ben Uziel was appointed as leader of the family of Kehas instead of himself.
5. 16:6 - Only one person would survive.
6. 16:7 - Shmuel *HaNavi*.
7. 16:7 - That his sons would repent. (Shmuel and the 24 groups of *Levi'im* were their descendants.)
8. 16:12 - Egypt and Canaan.
9. 16:19 - He went from tribe to tribe in order to rally support for himself.
10. 16:27 - Twenty years old.
11. 17:3 - To serve as a remembrance of the challenge to the *kehuna* and that the rebels were burned.
12. 17:5 - He is stricken with *tzara'as*, as was King Uziyahu (*Divrei HaYamim* II 26:16-19).
13. 17:13 - Because the people were deprecating the incense offering, saying that it caused the death of two of Aharon's sons and also the death of 250 of Korach's followers. Therefore, Hashem demonstrated that the incense offering was able to avert death, and that sin, not incense, causes death.
14. 17:21 - So that people would not say that Aaron's staff bloomed because Moshe placed it closer to the *Shechina*.
15. 17:25 - That only Aaron and his children were selected for the *kehuna*.
16. 18:8 - Since Korach claimed the *kehuna*, the Torah emphasizes Aaron's and his descendants' rights to *Kehuna* by recording the gifts given to them.
17. 18:10 - Male *kohanim* may eat them and only in the *azara* (fore-court of the *Beis Hamikdash*).
18. 18:19 - Just as salt never spoils, so this covenant will never be rescinded.
19. 18:27 - The vat in front of the wine press into which the wine flows.
20. 18:29 - He must first set aside 1/50th of the pile — the average amount given as *terumah gedolah* — before taking his tenth from the pile.

## BONUS ANSWER!

In the case of Korach's followers, "the land covered them up and they were lost from among the community (16:33)." Usually an earthquake results in a gaping chasm, but here the earth opened like a mouth, swallowed them, and closed again, leaving no trace of the people.

• Abarbanel

## RECOMMENDED READING LIST

RAMBAN		SEFER HACHINUCH		SFORNO	
16:21	The Sin of the Congregation	389	Defined Roles	16:15	Nullifying Atonement
16:29	The Sin of Dasan and Aviram	394	Service of the <i>Levi'im</i>	16:32	Why Also Their Possessions
16:30	A New Creation	395	<i>Ma'aser Rishon</i> (The First Tithe)		
18:7	The Gifts of the <i>Kehuna</i>				
18:20	Inheritance of the <i>Kehuna</i>				

**WELCOME**  
to israel

**Jewish Learning Exchange**  
United States and Canada groups

**summer 97**