

Parshat Korach 5776

In parshat Korach we learn about the rebellion of Korach and his followers, and at the end of the parsha we read about a second rebellion where the people rebelled against the kehuna of Aaron.

וַיְהִי וַיִּלְלוּ כָּל עֲדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמֹּשֶׁה וְעַל אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר אַתָּם הִמַּתְתֶּם אֶת עַם הַ: פָּרָק יִזְ פָּסוּק ו
וַיָּבֵא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֵי הַעֲדָה עַל מִשְׁחָה וְעַל אַהֲרֹן וַיִּפְּנוּ אֶל אֱלֹהֵי מוֹעֵד וַהֲנִיחָהוּ כַּסְּהוּ הַעֲבָנוּ וַיֵּרָא כְבוֹד הַ
אֱלֹהֵי מוֹעֵד

“The following day, the entire congregation of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron saying, “You have killed the people of the Lord.” It came to pass while the congregation was assembled against Moses and Aaron that they turned to the Tent of Meeting, and behold, the cloud had covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared. Moses and Aaron came to the front of the Tent of Meeting.” In response to the effects of Korachs' rebellion, Bnei Yisrael claim that it was Moshe who killed G-ds people and so they demonstrate against Moshe and Aaron. Hashem wishes to destroy the people but Aaron and Moshe beseech Hashem not to do so and Aaron intercedes and stops the plague before more people died.

Hashem also gives another proof that Aaron is supposed to be in charge; the test of the 'Match' – the staff. Each Nasi was to write their name on a staff and place it in the Ohel Moed before the Aron. The staff which blossomed was to indicate the Nasi that Hashem had chosen to lead the Bnei Yisrael. The pasuk states:

וַיְהִי מִמִּתְחַרְתּוֹ וַיָּבֵא מֹשֶׁה אֶל אֱלֹהֵי הַעֲדוּת וַהֲנִיחָהוּ פָּרַח מִטֵּה אַהֲרֹן לְבֵית לְוִי וַיֵּצֵא פָּרַח וַיִּצֵּץ צִיץ וַיִּגְמַל שְׂקָדִים
'And on the following day Moses came to the Tent of Testimony, and behold, Aaron's staff for the house of Levi had blossomed! **It gave forth blossoms, sprouted buds, and produced ripe almonds.**' Moshe takes Aaron's staff to show everyone and it was clear that Aaron was supposed to be the Kohen. This staff was to become a sign for anyone who wanted to rebel; this was a divine indication as to who was supposed to be in charge.

Rashi understands the pasuk as follows: The staff of Aaron had 1)flowers 2) buds 3)almonds. There is something interesting about the way almonds grow, they bud very early and they ripen very late. They have a long process of development and growth - it takes time. The noun שקדים, almonds, is related to the verb שקד, to be diligent; almonds represent diligence, and the staff reminded the Jews that is what Aaron

represented - hard work, commitment and the investment of time; and thus he was a person worthy of being a leader of Bnei Yisrael.

The pasuk and Gemara Yuma state that the almonds and flowers were on the staff at the same time. The Gemara tells us that when the Aron Hakodesh was hidden before the destruction of the second Temple it was put away with a few things, one of which was **the staff of Aaron with almonds and flowers.**

The Rosh asks why the Torah and the Gemara specifically mention flowers. Normally, the flowers grow then drop off and the fruit follows after. Why would they be present on the staff at the same time? The Rosh says it's possible that some of the flowers fell off and became almonds and some stayed on. Why would this be the case? What message does it send us?

The Malbim says the flowers should have fallen off but in this situation a miracle needed to occur so the flowers had to be there. The people's faith in Aaron and Moshe was so low that if the people did not see the flowers and almonds together their fears would not be put to rest. They would think that Moshe had cheated. Therefore a neis had to occur to make sure no one questioned Aaron's legitimacy or Moshe's honesty.

Rav Moshe Feinstein asks why the flowers stayed on the staff. Why was the miracle necessary? He answers that the flowers represent the hard-work and preparation that go into doing a mitzva and the fruit is the doing of the mitzva itself. He says that Hashem cares about the effort and work that is invested into doing a mitzva as well as the action of the mitzva itself. The ground work that leads to a mitzva is just as important and meaningful to Hashem. Therefore the flowers remained on the branch to teach us that even when the fruits develop, the importance of the hard work and preparation remains and a reward is given for that as well as a for the mitzva itself. In the Hadran Alach at a siyum we say:

וְהֵם עֲמֵלִים וְאֵינָם מְקַבְּלִים שְׂכָר, אֲנִי עֲמֵלִים וְקַבְּלִים שְׂכָר, אֲנִי עֲמֵלִים וְהֵם עֲמֵלִים

“we work hard and they work hard, we work hard and get rewarded, they work hard and don't get rewarded.” What does this mean? In gashmius we only get rewarded at the end when there is a result. If there is no result then there is no reward. There is no such thing in Torah - even if there is no outcome we will still get rewarded for the work we do and the effort we make. **Based on a shiur given by Rav Yamin Goldsmith**