

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

When The Heart Attacks

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR
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People often view Hebrew *dikduk*, linguistic rules and structure, as a very dry and unfulfilling subject. Yes, we all should know it, but nobody is interested in learning it. But knowing the rules and the language that our holy Torah uses can often lead to a deep discovery in the Torah's lessons for us. This week's *parasha* is a perfect example.

There are many *midrashim* on the first *passuk* in this week's *parasha*. This is because it is a very confusing sentence, seemingly unfinished. The words "Vayikach Korach" are generally translated as "and Korach took." However, the *passuk* does not specify what he took.

There are numerous explanations and *midrashim* that fill in for us what exactly did Korach take. Rashi (in his first explanation quoting the *Midrash Tanchuma*) however, explains that the Torah is not telling us what Korach took, but rather conveying to us that Korach started a division in Bnei Yisroel, openly challenging the leadership of the Jewish nation and their decisions. This explanation, though, is slightly difficult to understand, as it does not fit into the words of the Torah. The Torah clearly states that Korach took, using the verb *kacha* (and no, that's not a mistake, as that is indeed the root form of the word and not *lokach*), which means to take, as opposed to the verb *peleg* which means to split. In defending Rashi, the *Sifsei Chachamim* explains that the classic translation of this *passuk* is not the correct one. Korach is not the person in the story taking an object, but rather is the object being taken – that a different force is taking Korach. He therefore reads the *passuk* as, "and it took Korach." What is this object or force taking Korach? He explains that it was Korach's heart; his emotions were causing him to react and openly challenge our great leader, Moshe Rabbeinu. The *Midrash* tells us elsewhere that Korach was insulted and jealous of the fact he was overlooked and the job of overseeing the work of the *Levi'im* carrying the vessels of the *mishkan* was given to somebody else. These feelings of insult and jealousy, which come from the heart, were the catalyst of Korach's subsequent actions.

What is interesting to note is that the Torah purposely leaves this out, keeping the force unnamed that lead to Korach's behavior. I think this was done to teach a lesson. Korach may have thought that he was justified, but if he had realized what was really motivating him to take action, perhaps he would have desisted and saved himself and his followers from destruction.

There are times when a person can be behaving and acting in certain ways, thinking the whole time he is justified in his actions as his cause is a worthy one. But if he were to probe more deeply into his thoughts, he may come to realize that it is not coming from a rational place, a place where intellect is the driving force. Rather, the person's own feelings and emotions are causing him to do what he feels is right. Knowing what is really driving a person may cause him to take a second look at his actions and, perhaps, reevaluate them to ensure they are coming from a correct place. A true lesson in *dikduk* indeed! 🤖

THE RABBI WAS ASKED
ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH
RABBI MEIR MINSTER

Last Week's *Parasha*:

Q) It seems that *tzitzis* has an element of choice whether or not to fulfill it, in that one only is required to have *tzitzis* if one has a four-cornered garment. Why would a *mitzvah* that seems so seminal to Judaism be optional?

A) The Talmud (*Menachos* 43b) says that the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis* is of equal weight to all the 613 *mitzvos*. Rashi there cites two sources for this idea: the words "all the *mitzvos*" that are found in connection with the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis* and a complicated mathematical allusion – the number of strings and knots of the *tzitzis* combined with the numerical value of the word *tzitzis* equals 613. Rashi here in *Parshas Shalach* also brings both of these sources, this time the numerology to explain how the *tzitzis*, as stated in the verse, remind us to keep all the *mitzvos*, and the sense of equality seen in the words "all the *mitzvos*" to explain why the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis* is found here in the context of keeping Shabbos and the prohibition against idol worship, two other *mitzvos* that are also equated to all the other *mitzvos*. Interestingly, the Seforno also uses the words "all the *mitzvos*" and the idea that the *tzitzis* are a seal of our servitude to Hashem to explain how the *tzitzis* remind us to keep all the *mitzvos*.

R. Moshe Feinstein, *zt"l*, and many other commentators explain, however, that it is the voluntary nature of the *mitzvah* itself that serves to remind us. According to R. Feinstein, it is the love and attention that we express in

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

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taking on this *mitzvah* that reminds us to keep all the other *mitzvos*. In fact, the Bais Yosef in his *drashos* says that any *mitzvah* that we take on with that same sense of love and inspired commitment will help us remember all the other *mitzvos* in the same way. The Alshich sees this in the words themselves, “they should make for themselves *tzitzis* ... and it will be for you as *tzitzis*.” We are to make them in a way that they serve as a reminder. As R. Yochanan Zweig explains further, if this *mitzvah* was given as an obligation in the same manner as the other *mitzvos*, why would it be singled out as being a reminder more than any other *mitzvah*. The Torah is giving us the opportunity to take on this *mitzvah* ourselves, and to delve into it, so that we create the reminder to ensure that we keep all the *mitzvos*. Finding the allusions in this *mitzvah* to all the 613 *mitzvos* is really a part of what the Torah is telling us to do. 🕒

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! If you would like to submit a question on the parasha, please email it to parasha@cincykollel.org. Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.

A SHINING EXAMPLE

Mr. Hollander was on his way to Israel from England for Yom Kippur and settled into his seat on the plane. A little while later he struck up a conversation with the man next to him, whose name he found out was Gerald Silver. As they conversed, eventually Mr. Hollander extended an invitation to Gerald to visit his house for a Shabbos when they were all back in England. “I’m done with doing anything Jewish. My wife died young and I was left with one son. When the Nazis took him from me, I was left alone, bereft of anyone, and then I had to survive the concentration camps. I’m done with it all.” Mr. Hollander moved the conversation on to other places and hoped to get Gerald’s number before they took their leave of each other, hoping to connect with him again in England and at least invite him to his home. During all the hubbub of deplaning, customs, and looking for bags, Mr. Hollander lost sight of Gerald and did not get his number. Yom Kippur arrived and during the Yizkor service, Mr. Hollander took a stroll along the block of the synagogue to get some fresh air. As he walked along, he noticed there was a man on a bench eating a sandwich. Looking closer, he saw it was Gerald! “Gerald,

A BA’AL HATURIM FOR YOU

The Torah describes the men who joined Korach as “*anshei sheim*,” men of renown, because of their wisdom and wealth. The Torah uses this phrase as well to describe the people of the world at the time of the flood. Yet we see each group was found to be guilty before Hashem. 🕒

it’s Yom Kippur! Put down the sandwich and come with me to shul!” “I told you I’m done with all that!” “At least come say Yizkor!” “I told you I don’t do any of that.” “Forget you, do it for your son!” The last argument finally moved Gerald to follow Mr. Hollander back into shul. Mr. Hollander guided Gerald up to the chazzan to say the prayer for the departed for his son. “What is the name?” asked the chazzan. “Yaakov,” answered Gerald. “Ben what?” “Gerald” “No, I mean the Hebrew name.” “Oh, Yerachmiel,” answered Gerald. Instead of continuing the prayer, the chazzan asked Gerald, “Who is this for?” “My son,” answered Gerald. “What’s your last name?” “Silver.” “Papa! I’m your son! I’m Yaakov ben Yerachmiel, I’ve been looking for you for so long!” They embraced, and needless to say, they were not the only ones that had tears streaming down their face. 🕒

THE FALSE MESSIAHS OF JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

FALSE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST RAMCHAL (PART III)

Recap: *Ramchal’s celestial revelations remained secretive until one of the members of the group – Rabbi Yekuitel Gordon – revealed the ongoing in a letter penned to an acquaintance in Vienna.*

Who was Rabbi Yekutiel Gordon of Vilna? This young *ashkenazic* fellow originally moved to Padua to pursue a medical degree at the University of Padua. Yekutiel entered the medical field but soon became acquainted with Ramchal and his students. Yekutiel eagerly joined Ramchal’s *kabbalah* circle and completely abandoned his studies at the university. In 1730, Rabbi Yekutiel Gordon penned a letter to Rabbi Mordechai Jaffe of Vienna in which he describes in much detail the activities which transpired in Ramchal’s *beis midrash*, including the visiting *maggid*, the compilation of *Zohar Tinyana*, and the mission to repair the Divine Presence as the way to bring about the ultimate redemption. Divine Providence decreed that this letter, which was mailed to Vienna, would subsequently reach the hands of the great pursuer of heresy – Rabbi Moshe Chagiz – in Altona, Germany. Rabbi Chagiz’s partner in the pursuit of crypto-Sabbatians, Chacham Tzvi, had since passed away in 1718, but Rabbi Chagiz, who had relocated to Altona, Germany, following his confrontation with Nechemyah Chiyun in Amsterdam, was still quite active in his mission. Rabbi Chagiz was obviously highly alarmed when informed of Ramchal’s *kabbala* study circle and its messianic pretensions.

Rabbi Chagiz, who was too far away to pursue the matter personally (a distance of nearly 1,200 kilometers separates Altona from Padua), immediately wrote to the rabbinate of Venice and instructed them to eradicate the study hall of the mystics in the neighboring city of Padua on account of heresy. But the rabbinate of Venice acted with patience and privacy, and instead of publicizing Rabbi Chagiz’s harsh accusation, they wrote to Rabbi Bassan, the former rabbi of Padua and teacher of Ramchal who then lived in Reggio, asking him to verify if the allegations against Ramchal were indeed true. Rabbi Bassan, who left Padua several years earlier, was unaware of Ramchal’s activities and therefore instructed the Venice rabbinate to give his cherished and saintly student the benefit of the doubt and promised to look into the matter. 🕒