


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

Friday 22 June 2012 - 2 Tammuz 5772
 Sedra Korach


DOUBLE PERCEPTION

HOW DO WE PERCEIVE PEOPLE? AS PART OF A STRUCTURE, LIKE OUR FAMILY, the staff of our school, college or work-place, the Jewish community, the police-force, parking meter attendants? Or do we see people as *individuals*?

Of course, everyone would like to say *both*. That would be wonderful, but it does not always work that way. We tend either to categorise a person by their role in a structure, or to look at them as a real individual. At that point the lines of the general structure dissolve, and we suddenly see the parking-meter attendant as a unique and very specific human being.

Some people are able to perceive both perspectives at the same time, in a remarkable way. Moses, leader of the Jewish people, had this quality. We see this in the layers of discussion which surround our Sedra ¹.

Korach, an infamous Levite, was attempting to harm the Jewish people by attacking Moses and Aaron, so that he could have power for himself. The attempt was foiled, and Korach's children became loyal supporters of Moses and their descendants served in the Temple in Jerusalem. Moses could see the danger posed by Korach and he called to G-d to help him. The visible events in the Sedra depict the sudden



Yahrzeit of the Lubavitcher Rebbe ז"ל - 3rd Tammuz
May the Rebbe's Torah teachings help each of us to
bring Goodness to the World

physical destruction of Korach and his followers: the ground opened up and swallowed them. Rashi hints at more subtle elements as well.

Earlier in the Torah each Jewish male had given a half-shekel donation. The total sum of money provided for the daily offerings which were brought in the Sanctuary, in expression of a bond between the Jewish people and G-d. Korach, too, had given a half shekel. He too was therefore part of the general structure of the Jewish people, bringing a daily offering to G-d, in a way which empowered him. Yet now he was trying to misuse this power.

Moses could see Korach's role in the daily offerings in two ways: as an anonymous member of the entire Jewish nation, and also as a particular (and in this case dangerous) individual. Rashi tells us that Moses asked G-d to disenfranchise Korach's particular, individual source of power from the daily offerings². This was in order to weaken Korach, and was part of the process of saving the Jewish people from Korach's attack. It was as if Moses could see the lines of energy which Korach and each other individual person drew from the daily offerings.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe points out the importance of this ability of Moses to perceive the individual within his or her wider framework. Korach was a dangerous person, as are some others in our own time. However, most people are not: they are fundamentally good, although sometimes 'difficult'. One's parent is a *person*, an individual, as well as a parent; so too is the teacher, college lecturer, the boss and the parking meter attendant. At the same time they also have their wider role, and one needs to treat them accordingly.

This double perception, says the Rebbe, is the mark of Moses, and of all true leadership. It is also bequeathed to everyone who has a sense of responsibility in life. It enables us to see the role of the person in their general context, and at the same time to perceive that person as he or she really is, as a unique individual. Through this kind of double perception, and then acting carefully and responsibly, each one of us can help to make a better world³.

1. Numbers chs.16-18. 2. See Rashi to 16:15, explaining "do not turn to his offering". 3. Based freely on *Likkutei Sichot* vol.33, pp. 110-112.

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SEDRA KORACH

REBELLION

It was Thursday evening and David, Lisa and Chava were sitting on the couch in their living room. It was after dinner and they were all playing a game of Risk

'World domination!' shouted Lisa as she conquered Western United States, the step needed to complete her third continent on the map. She already occupied South America and entire Asia,

'Just you wait and see', said David, her older brother, who now occupied Europe and Africa and was building up troops to break into Asia. 'Soon I will wipe you off the map!' he said in a deep, demonic voice. 'Ha!' she replied.

'Neither of you can touch me', said Chava - she was safely tucked away in Australia with at least fifty troops guarding her continent. 'Yes, yes,' said David, 'we know, but all you need is a little rebellion from the inside and who knows what will happen...!'

'But there aren't any possibilities for a rebellion, she argued. 'True', said Lisa, 'not in Risk - but this week I learned about one of the most exciting rebellions that ever took place - catastrophic', she added, in a sinister voice.

'Really?' asked Chava, 'do tell us, it sounds exciting.' Lisa always made anything sound exciting

'Don't you know what I'm talking about?' asked Lisa. 'I learned about this in school, you should have too.'

'Except that I was sick all week', Chava said, reminding her sister of the cough that had kept her bedridden since Monday.

'True', said Lisa, 'anyways', she said, 'it was all about this guy called Korach, Moses' cousin, and he was a very jealous man indeed. He saw how Moses *was* leader of the Jewish people and Aaron, Moses' brother, was the high priest, and he felt pretty left out. He was also a relative, and he wanted power. So he got a group of followers together, 250 in all, and together they offered up incense to G-d believing that G-d would accept Korach as a new leader for the Jewish people....'

'Gosh,' Chava interjected, 'Moses was a very great man who got the Torah from G-d, how did Korach think he could compete?'

Well, I suppose that's a good question,' said Lisa. 'Anyway, next thing we know,' she continued, 'is that G-d makes the ground open up like a gulf in the middle of the desert - right underneath where Korach is standing. Korach and all his supporters disappear.....'

'Wow!' exclaimed Chava in awe, 'the people around the hole must have been terrified!'

'They were!' said David, 'Trust, no one ever tried to take away the leadership from Moses after that incident. Not ever again'

'I suppose,' said Lisa, 'they learned their lesson.'

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'On that note,' said David, 'let's get back to *world domination!*'

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