

## Elijah Rassoul's Dvar Torah

### Parshat Korach

In this week's parsha, or Torah portion, we talk about Korach. If you recall from the story, the reason Korach started this whole rebellion was because he wanted to be a big shot like Moses and Aaron. Korach also said that it was unfair that the tribe of Levi (the tribe set aside to be the priests of Israel) got so much better stuff than the other tribes. I mean, they got extra food, they got all the sacrificial meat and other offerings, and of course, they were the only ones allowed into the 'Holy of Holies' in the temple. The Holy of Holies is a very, you guessed it, holy place. In both the tabernacle (the traveling temple used at the time of Korach) and in the regular temple, the 'Holy of Holies' was where they kept the ten commandments and other very holy things. Well, doesn't this sound a little unfair? I mean, if Israel is so holy then shouldn't everyone in Israel be equally holy? Let's talk about what 'equal' and 'holy' really mean.

First off, I'm not trying to be "tribist" or anything like that, but the real reason that the priests and Levites were the only ones allowed into the temple was because they had a special job from G-d. And they got all that food because they did not have any land to farm on. They were the ones who were trained and conditioned to respect and worship G-d in the temple, and at the time of Korach, the tabernacle. They were in charge of the offerings that the Israelites were commanded to give, such as grain, animal, oil, fruit etc. This was a lot of work for the Levites.

When we think of something or someone as holy, we think of them as unusually good. Well, you might be thinking not every single Levite was holy in that way. That would be impossible! You are completely right if you're thinking that because we see many cases throughout the Bible of corrupt and disobedient priests, and some of them paid for it with their lives.

We see in one example when Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, who was the brother of Moses and the first high priest, are consumed with fire, which is a fancier way of saying 'cooked alive'. This happened because they offered up what the Bible terms "strange fire". People are not sure what the Bible means by 'strange fire'. Some people believe that they used fire from their home, not from the temple while others believe that they were drunk, or it could be both. Either way, they did something that deviated from G-d's intentions.

If you think this sounds overly picky remember that this place was so powerful that they literally tied a rope to any high priests who went in so the other priests could pull their bodies out if they died in there. That was because if there was a single sin the high priest had not ritually cleansed himself of, he would drop dead. Think "Raiders of the Lost Ark". So considering that kind of power, it's honestly not that surprising that you could die.

But back to the question. Really what Korach was trying to say was that the priests are not any better than the average Israelite. I mean, let's get real here. There must have been TONS of Israelites who would have made better priests than Aaron's sons.

So is Korach actually right? I'll bet there are some people in this room who think he was.

But the truth is G-d has a plan. This year in school we learned about HTML, a computer language for webpages. And one thing I learned is that if you even do the tiniest thing wrong, then the entire page looks very strange. Well this whole 'strange fire' fiasco is very similar to that. We see that G-d has a system, a code really. And when people go around messing with it then things do not go right. What I learned is that when it comes to HTML, every part of the web page is important, but each part has its own job.

In Western society we think of equality as everyone being able to get or do the same things. But would anyone really want to live in a world where everyone did and had the same things? I don't think anyone would, which is why we all have different jobs and functions and gifts. But we are all still equal in our value as people.

So what kind of equality was Korach really looking for? None. He was probably just jealous because he wanted to be the high priest. We don't know for sure. But it seems that he decided to use this whole equality ruse to get backing from the people. How does G-d respond to this "code violation"? He hits the delete button.

What about equality outside of Israel? Is Israel more valuable to G-d than other nations because it's set aside for a special purpose? No. As I said before we all have different tasks and

assignments but we are all equal in value. This also applies to nations. Every nation plays a part in the big nation ecosystem. Israel has the job of sharing G-d's law and bringing the messiah into the world. The other nations have the job of accepting the messiah and helping to heal the world through Him using their unique gifts .

This also applies to individuals. Take my BarMitzvah, for example. It may appear like I did all the work but there are a lot of people who helped and who I would like to thank.

1. Thank you to my parents who supported me and helped along the way.
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7. Thank to Mrs. Franklin for making my yarmulkes.
8. Finally thank you to all of you for coming today to celebrate with me.