

JUNE 12, 2010 30 Sivan 5770 Parshat Korach

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This week we read the parsha of Korach. Korach, who was jealous of Moshe and the positions of authority that he and others held, began a rebellion against Moshe.

"And they gathered against Moshe and Aharon and said: You have (taken) too much! The whole congregation is holy (they all stood at Sinai and heard the words of Hashem) so why have you lifted yourselves over the congregation of Hashem? [16:3]"

Korach's rebellion was an attempt to reform the Torah of Moshe. He and his followers didn't dare to try to challenge the divinity of the Torah--they themselves had stood at Sinai! Rather, they tried to cripple Moshe's authority by claiming that since the entire nation heard Hashem speak at Sinai, they had the authority to interpret the Torah according to their understanding and as they saw fit. This challenge to Moshe was actually an attempt to undermine the entire Torah and would have shattered its transmission throughout history.

Moshe's attempts to quell the rebellion through peaceful means were categorically rejected. Moshe then turned to Hashem with the following prayer: "Do not accept their mincha {offering}. [16:15]"

On a simple level, Rashi explains that this mincha is referring to the incense that they were planning to offer to Hashem the next day.

The Ramban explains that all sacrifices and prayers are called by the name mincha. As such, Moshe was asking Hashem not to accept their offerings or their prayers.

The Saba of Kelem zt"l makes a beautiful observation. Moshe was afraid of the prayers that Korach and his cohorts would offer for the success of their rebellion. Even though their success would have resulted in the ruination of the Torah, Moshe was still afraid of their prayers. From this, he points out, we see the incredible power that prayers contain.

On Yom Kippur the Kohen Gadol would enter the Kodesh Kadashim to perform a special service--the holiest man, on the holiest day, in the holiest place. He would then offer a short prayer in the Heichal {area before the Holy of Holies} before exiting.

The Talmud teaches that amongst the prayers for the entire nation's welfare, the Kohen Gadol would include a plea that Hashem should not listen to the prayers of the travelers [Yuma 53B]. Rashi explains that travelers would pray that there shouldn't be any rain.

This prayer was certainly motivated by selfish self-interests and was contrary to the needs of the nation at large. If so, why was it necessary for the Kohen Gadol in the Temple on Yom Kippur, to counter these prayers?

The Saba explains that traveler's prayers were fervent and heartfelt, based on the realization that only Hashem could help them. Such sincere prayers soar through the heavens and come right before Hashem's throne. That necessitated the Kohen Gadol's involvement.

In a similar vein, one who killed unintentionally would remain in a city of refuge until the death of the Kohen Gadol. The Mishna [Makkos 2:6] teaches that the Kohen Gadol's mother would supply food and clothing for the murderers residing in the cities of refuge in order that they wouldn't pray for the Kohen Gadol to die. "I really want to leave this city and go home but I don't want that sweet old lady who's knitting me a sweater to be sad..."

Once again we see that a heartfelt prayer, even for the death of a tzaddik like the Kohen Gadol, wields tremendous power.

If prayers that are meant to hurt Hashem, His Torah or his children are so potent, we can only imagine the power and energy contained within a prayer for the safety and welfare of Klal Yisroel.

We are living through a difficult time for Israel. There is an unprecedented degree of illegitimization. We must utilize all means to combat this. However, without minimizing the importance of all these activities, shouldn't we at least give equal time and effort to the most potent means at our disposal to help?

"The voice is the voice of Yaakov and the hands are the hands of Esav. [Breishis 27:22]" The power of Yaakov lies in our voices. Only Hashem can and will determine the outcome of these tumultuous times. He is waiting to hear those voices Let's do our part...

Good Shabbos,

**Rabbi Yisroel Ciner**  
*Beth Jacob Congregation of Irvine, CA*

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## UPCOMING EVENTS @ OU WEST COAST

➤OU Annual Awards Banquet  
**Tuesday, June 22**

*Honoring*

**David & Debbie Schultz  
Seth & Ruth Berkowitz  
Dr. Steve & Linda Tabak**

*and NCSY Awardees*

**Nissana Boxstein Perrie Lurie  
Noah Small Benny Statman**

**HAVE YOU MADE YOUR RESERVATION?**

**Community Wide**

**Shiva Asar B'Tammuz  
Mincha-Maariv**

**Tuesday JUNE 29, 7:30pm**

*Hosted by*

**Beth Jacob Cong.  
Beverly Hills**

**Coming in October**

**OU Weekend in La Jolla, CA**  
Info: [EstherR@ou.org](mailto:EstherR@ou.org)

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PHOTOSHOP for Beginners-VIA WEB CAST-May 25, JUNE 1,8,15,22,29. -11:45am- 1:25pm(EDT) or 16:45-18:25 (IT)

EXCEL for Beginners-VIA WEB CAST -MAY 26, JUNE 2,9,16,23,30.- 12:00-1:30pm(EDT) or 17:00-18:30(IT)

WEB DEVELOPMENT Dreamweaver-VIA WEB CAST-MAY 26, JUNE 2,9,16,23,30. -2:00-3:30pm (EDT) or 21:00-22:30 (IT)

QUICKBOOKS for Beginners-VIA WEB CAST- May 27, JUNE 3,10,17,24, JULY 1. 1:30-3:00pm (EDT) or 20:30-22:00 (IT)

LIMITED SPACE-SIGN UP NOW! Go to [www.oujobs.org](http://www.oujobs.org) for time/date and more information + registration

**"Lone Jewish High School Student Faces Down Arab Mob in LA"**

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/137844>

## OU SYNAGOGUES AROUND THE REGION

### Beverly Hills: Cong. Beth Jacob (310) 278-1911

- **Shabbat JUNE 12, 6:45pm:** Rev. Robert Stearns of Eagles Wings --- "Evangelical Christian's Support for Israel: What is the Agenda?"
- **SUN Brunch, JUN 13, 10am:** Ernie Goldberger – "All in a Lifetime"
- **Women's Spring Seudah Shlisheit Series with the Rebbetzins:**  
**JULY 10, 6pm:** Rebbetzin/Dr. Hindy Posy @1531 Glenville

### Beverly Hills: Young Israel-North BH: (310) 276-7650 [info@YINBH.org](mailto:info@YINBH.org)

- **Shabbat JUNE 12:** Guest Rabbi Eliyahu Fink
- **Shabbat JUNE 19:** Guest Rabbi Dr. Daniel Lerner
- **Shabbat JUNE 26:** Guest Elliot Brandt, AIPAC – Graduates Shabbat
- **Shabbat JULY 3:** Guest, OU President Steve Savitsky
- **Shabbat JULY 16-17:** S-I-R Rabbi Natan Slifkin, 'The Zoo Rabbi'

Calabasas Shul: (818) 591-7485

Canada-Calgary: House of Jacob-Mikveh Israel (403) 259-3230

Canada-Edmonton: Beth Israel (780) 488-2840

Canada-Vancouver: Schara Tzedek (604) 736-7607

Denver, CO : BMH-BJ Cong (303) 388-4203

### Denver, CO: EDOS (303) 322-7943

- **SUN JUNE 27:** Fiesta Reception honoring Aniko & Dr. Miguel Mogyoros  
Irvine, CA: Beth Jacob (949) 786-5230

LA: Adas Torah (310) 203-9659 [www.adastorah.com](http://www.adastorah.com)

LA: Aish Hatorah (310) 278-8672 x 305 or [tsullivan@aishla.com](mailto:tsullivan@aishla.com)

LA: B'nai David-Judea (310)-276-9269 or [amram@bnaidavid.com](mailto:amram@bnaidavid.com)

- **SUN JUNE 13,** To schedule an appointment, sign up online at [www.givelifelife.org](http://www.givelifelife.org) (sponsor code: BnaiDavid) or send Carina Miller an email with your preferred time between 10am – 4pm, [atmillercj99@hotmail.com](mailto:atmillercj99@hotmail.com)

LA: Etz Jacob (323) 938-2619

LA: Mogen David Cong. (310) 556-5609

LA: Young Israel of Century City: (310) 273-6954

- **SUN JUNE 13, 10am:** Ariel Avrech Yahrzeit Lecture/Brunch w/Dennis Prager – "Happiness is a Mitzvah, Not an Emotion"

LA: Young Israel of Hancock Park: (323) 931-4030

LA: Yeshiva of LA (YOLA) 310-203-3197 [yeshivarabbi@juno.com](mailto:yeshivarabbi@juno.com)

MINCHA/MAARIV: SUN-THURS, 15 minutes before Shkiah;

LATE MAARIV: SUN-THUR 10pm. M-TH am/pm: adults/students chavrusas

Laguna Woods, CA: Beth Torah (949) 587-1967 (a retirement community)

La Jolla: Adat Yeshurun (858) 535-1196

- **SUN JUNE 13, 8:30am-2:30pm:** Blood Drive. [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org) Code: CAY  
Las Vegas, NV: Shaarei Tefila (702) 384-3565 (Mikva 384-3317)

Oakland, CA: Beth Jacob (510) 482-1147

Palm Springs, CA: The Desert Synagogue (760) 327-4848

Palo Alto, CA: Emek Beracha (650) 857-1800 (Mikva 493-5555)

Phoenix, AZ: Beth Joseph (602) 277-8858

Portland, OR: Kesser Israel (503) 222-1239

Sacramento, CA: Keneset Israel Torah Center (916) 481-1159

San Diego, CA: Cong. Beth Jacob (619) 287-9890

San Diego, CA: Kehillat Ahavat Yisrael-KAY (858) 633-0181

San Francisco, CA: Adath Israel (415) 564-5665

Seattle: Bikur Cholim Machzikay Hadath (206) 721-0970

• **Shabbat JUNE 19-20:** S-I-R Rabbi Dovid Katz

• **SUN JUNE 27:** Gala honoring Elaine/Marshal Hartholz & Joe/Julie Greene

Seattle: Ezra Bessaro (206) 722-5500

Seattle: Sephardic Bikur Holim (206) 723-3028

Valley Village, CA: Shaarey Zedek Cong. (818) 763-0560

Venice, Pacific Jewish Center-The Shul on the Beach: (310) 392-8749

Washington-Mercer Island: Shevet Achim (206) 275-1539

Woodland Hills: Beit HaMidrash (818) 999-2059 (5850 Fallbrook Ave.)

SUNs @ 8:30am: following 8am minyan-Shiur-Baba Kama w/Rabbi Yaakov Rechinitz

West LA: Westwood Kehilla (310) 441-5288x2 [director@kehilla.org](mailto:director@kehilla.org)

## NCSY-JSU-YACHAD ANNOUNCEMENTS/EVENTS



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**CITY NCSY:** Call Solly @ 310-557-6582 or [Shess@westcoastnscy.com](mailto:Shess@westcoastnscy.com)

**DNL--MONs 7-8pm:** @ Pizza World 365 S. Fairfax Ave.

**Latte&Learning-TUES 7:30pm:** @CB&T-233 S. Beverly Dr. w/R' Josh Horwitz

**JR. NCSY:** (6-8 grade) Call Josh 310-694-2976 or [ncsyjosh@gmail.com](mailto:ncsyjosh@gmail.com)

... **NCSY Bar/Bat Mitzvah** tutoring available. **Talmud Torah** classes.

**YACHAD:** Call Perri @323-228-4191.

## B'NEI AKIVA OF LA ANNOUNCEMENTS

→ **Office:** 310-248-2450 [bneiakivaLA@gmail.com](mailto:bneiakivaLA@gmail.com)

→ **Upcoming Events:**

**June 12, 6-7:30pm:** Bat Ami Farewell @ the Mirvis's

**June 13, 3:30-6:30pm:** FINAL Za'ach Event! (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Graders)

Mini Golf and Arcades @ Sherman Oaks Castle Park!

**June 17:** Jewish Agency's Israel Planning Expo



## COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

▶ **ONGOING: OU'S WOMEN'S TORAH NETWORK (WTN)**

**Classes with Geri Wiener--Summer sessions start June 21 & 23**

→ **MONs-Valley (private home):** → **WEDs-City (OU Hdqtrs):**

▶ **For Sale by Owner:** 2 bedroom plus den at end of cul-de-sac on Kirkside Drive in Beverlywood. \$1,300,000.  
email: [KirksideDrive@gmail.com](mailto:KirksideDrive@gmail.com)

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▶ **Shidduch Vision – SUN JUN 13, 3-5pm:** All interested in helping shidduchim. Live vision demonstration. Free. 231 S. Highland Ave.

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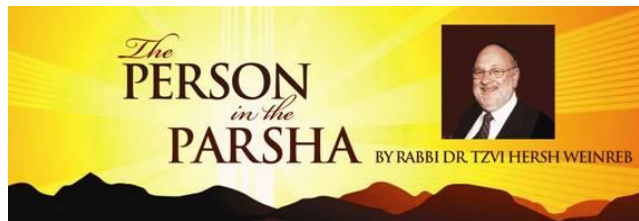
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[www.Israel21c.org](http://www.Israel21c.org)



## Parshat Korach

June 12, 2010 – 30 Sivan 5770

To read more articles and essays by Rabbi Weinreb, visit his blog at [www.ou.org/rabbi\\_weinreb](http://www.ou.org/rabbi_weinreb)

### "Is Everybody Somebody?"

The Jewish community in the United States of America is pleased and proud to live in a democracy. What is a democracy? It is often described as a society in which all are equal. But this description falls short of the mark. Because obviously we all are not equal. Some of us are stronger, some wiser, some wealthier than others. We are not equally endowed with talents at birth, nor do we all partake in equal sets of circumstances as we grow and develop.

A more precise and useful definition is this one from the Webster's dictionary: "Democracy is the principle of equality of rights, opportunity, and treatment, or the practice of this principle." The dictionary makes it quite clear. We are not equal, but we are entitled to equal treatment and to equal opportunities. Whether we take advantage of these opportunities is a matter of personal will, and not a reflection of the justice or injustice of the society at large.

The above definition helps us understand that while we are all equally entitled to be members of a democratic society, we are not all equally qualified to fill all of the roles necessary for that society to function. We are not all qualified to be leaders, we are not all qualified to be teachers, we are not even all qualified to be soldiers.

In the Torah portions which we have been reading the past several weeks, we have been observing a society in the making. Not a democratic society in the contemporary sense, but one which was designed to be fair and equitable and to allow for the fullest possible spiritual expression of every individual within it.

In this week's Torah portion, Korach, we learn of the first challenge to this society in formation. Korach, a close relative of Moses and Aaron, challenges their roles as leader and high priest. He also advocates what might be mistaken for a democracy, if we are to understand democracy in the fashion outlined in the first few sentences of this essay.

This is Korach's understanding of the nature of the Jewish community in the desert: "All of the congregation is holy, and God is in their midst." Korach is, in the eyes of some, the arch democrat. He sees all in the community as being holy. All are equal in holiness, and all are equal in the eyes of God.

He is thus protesting the hierarchy represented by a tribe of priests, a tribe of Levites, a group of elders. He is calling for radical equality, for utter sameness.

There is a line from Gilbert and Sullivan's "The Gondoliers" which is never far from my mind and lips. It reads:

***"When everyone is somebody,  
Then no one's anybody!"***

Korach is advocating a society in which everybody is somebody. Can that work?

I will not even attempt to answer that question in terms of political philosophy. But I will venture to speculate about the possibility of a society in which all are equally spiritual, in which everyone is a spiritual somebody.

For you see, much earlier in the Torah, such a society was indeed foreseen. Back in the Torah portion of Kedoshim (Leviticus 19:2), the entire nation was told, "You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy." We were enjoined to be a "kingdom of priests". Is Korach so far off, then, with his claim that all of the congregation is holy?

It is as an answer to this question that the dictionary definition of democracy is so helpful. We are not all equal; we are certainly not all holy. But we all have the opportunity, the equal opportunity, to become holy through our actions and the way we live our lives.

Sociologists draw a distinction between two types of status, "ascribed" and "achieved". Ascribed status comes with birth. Achieved status must be earned. There is no doubt that ascribed status plays a role in the biblical community, if not in a modern democracy.

Let us translate the biblical term "kedusha", usually rendered "holiness", as "spirituality", often a more apt definition and certainly a more acceptable one to the contemporary reader. Then, we must argue that "kedusha" must be "achieved", not merely "ascribed".

The "kingdom of priests" ideal is to be the product of our spiritual endeavors; not a hereditary honor. No person, in this sense, is born "spiritual". We are not equally holy from birth. But we all have the equal opportunity to dedicate our lives to the achievement of holiness, to the attainment of spirituality.

Korach is wrong when he proclaims that the entire community is holy. He would have been correct to say that we all can achieve holiness.

Judaism teaches us that although we are all equally endowed with the capacity for holiness, with the potential for spirituality, the achievement of those objectives is not easy. Spirituality is not obtained by a moment on a mountaintop, or by fleeting inspirational experiences. Spirituality, Jewish spirituality, can only be attained by hard work and painful self-sacrifice.

The leadership positions of Moses and Aaron were earned by the virtue of their life-long dedication to the Jewish people. Korach is indeed wrong when he says that we are all equally capable of supplanting Moses and Aaron. We are all potentially leaders, we all have the opportunity to develop leadership skills, but we are not automatically leaders just because we are part of the community.

The mitzvah back in Parshat Kedoshim does not imply, as Korach does, that we all are kedoshim. Rather, it calls upon us to do what we can to become kedoshim.

And so, this week's Torah portion teaches us an important personal lesson; one of special relevance to those of us who have absorbed a deep belief in democracy. We are not all spiritually equal. There are those of us who are more spiritual, and those who are less so. But we all have equal opportunities and equal possibilities to develop the levels of spirituality, which God himself foresaw when He asked us to become a "kingdom of priests."