

Commentaries on ויקח קרח

3a) Abrabanel

השאלה הא' באמרו ויקח קרח ולא פירש הפסוק מה לקח וחז"ל דרשו סנהדרין ק"י לקח מקח רע לעצמו. ובמדרש תנחומא במדבר טו לקח עצמו לצד אחד כמו שמפרש רש"י ואמנם הראב"ע פירש שלקח אנשי עמו. סוף דבר שלכל המפרשי הנה העיקר חסר מן הספר:

3b) Rashi

ויקח קרח lit., AND KORAH TOOK — He betook himself on one side with the view of separating himself from out of the community so that he might raise a protest regarding the priesthood to which Moses had appointed his brother. This is what Onkelos means when he renders it by ואתפלג — “he separated himself” from the rest of the community in order to maintain dissension. Similar is, (Job 15:12) “Why doth thy heart take thee aside (יקחך)”, meaning, it takes you aside to separate you from other people (Midrash Tanchuma, Korach 2). — Another explanation of ויקח קרח is: he attracted (won over) the chiefs of the Sanhedrin amongst them (the people) by fine words. The word is used here in a figurative sense just as in. (Leviticus 8:2) “Take (קח) Aaron”; (Hosea 14:3) “Take (קחו) words with you” (Midrash Tanchuma, Korach 1).

3c) Ibn Ezra

ויקח קרח. אנשים דרך קצרה
And Korach took...people

3d) Hizkuni

ויקח קרח לשון לקיחת אנשים ומי לקח דתן ואבירם בני אליאב ואון בן פלת בני ראובן, וי"ו דודתן יתירה היא וכמוה יש הרבה.

ויקח קרח, “Korach took, etc.” Korach acquired people, sympathisers; which people did he acquire specifically? Datan and Abiram, sons of Eliav, as well as On ben Pelet, members of the tribe of Reuven, other discontents. The letter ו in the word ודתן is superfluous, but there are numerous such letters ו in similar situations.

3e) Midrash Tanhuma

"וַיִּקַּח קֶרַח. "מה כתיב למעלה מן הענין במדבר טו, לח: דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם צִיצִית. "קפץ קרח ואמר למשה, אתה אומר "וְנָתַנּוּ עַל צִיצִית וְגו'. "טלית שכלה תכלת מה היא שיהא פטורה מן הציצית. אמר לו משה, חיבת בציצית. אמר לו קרח, טלית שכולה תכלת אינה פוטרת עצמה, וארבעה חוטין פוטר אותה..

בית מלא ספרים, מהו שתהא פטורה מן המזוזה. אמר לו, חיבת במזוזה. אמר לו, כל התורה כולה מאתים שבעים וחמש פרשיות שיש בה, כולן אין פוטרות את הבית, ושתי פרשיות שבמזוזה פוטרות את הבית. אמר לו, דברים אלו לא נצטוו עליהם, ומלבד אתה בודאם. הדא הוא דכתיב, "וַיִּקַּח קֶרַח."

"And Korach took'(16:1): What parsha precedes this episode? - 'Speak to the Israelites concerning the making of Tzitzit (fringes).'(15:34)

Korach stepped forward turning to Moses: 'You say, "Put on the fringe a thread of blue (Techelet) wool."(ibid.) What about a garment that is itself a blue colour (Techelet), would it not be exempt from the blue thread (on the Tzitzit)?'

Moses replied, 'It is obligatory to have the blue thread.'

Said Korach, 'A garment which is all blue is not exempt and four meagre threads do the trick!'

Korach attacked again: 'A room full of Sifrei Torah, would it need a Mezuzah?'

Moses answered in the affirmative.

Korach replied, 'The Torah contains 275 sections and they are not enough to fulfil the house's obligation to have a Mezuzah, but these two sections (written in the Mezuzah scroll) will fulfil the obligation for the entire house!

- Moses, you must be making this stuff up!"

R. Israel: What is Korach effectively saying to Moshe?

"You look only to the letter of the law, but what of the spirit?"

Why are you so weighed down by the detail and not by the larger picture?"

Inconsistencies in Halacha

Challenge to authoritative interpretation of Torah law

What do the two examples, the tekhelet and the mezuzah, have in common? **In each case a lone ritual act is considered unnecessary or superfluous in the presence of a much larger representative element.** Why have a single scroll if the entire room is Torah? Why have a single blue strand when the entire garment is woven from blue threads?

Maybe, this Midrash is hiding a deeper reading of the text:

וַיִּקְהָלוּ עַל־מֹשֶׁה וְעַל־אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם רַב־לָכֶם כִּי כָל־הָעֵדָה כִּלְמִם קִדְּשִׁים וּבְתוֹכָם יְהוָה וּמִדּוּעַ תִּתְנַשְּׂאוּ עַל־קְהַל יְהוָה:

They combined against Moses and Aaron and said to them, "You have gone too far! For all the community are holy, all of them, and the LORD is in their midst. Why then do you raise yourselves above the LORD's congregation?"

Rabbi Alex Israel:

The argument voiced here is not a discussion about Torah. It is a strident call for equality and democratization. Korach attempts to undermine Moses position on simple democratic grounds. All the people are holy and God is in their midst. **We don't need leaders or intermediaries.**

What is the goal of the tekhelet and Tzitzit?

The law of Tzitzit is to act as a "reminder" of God's presence within our lives. "The Techelet colour is similar to the sea which is similar to the sky which reminds us of God's Holy presence." (Rashi on 15:34). The special Techelet blue is supposed to direct the heart and mind heavenwards. Likewise we place the Mezuzah as a reminder so that "these words will be upon your heart" (The Shema - Deut 6:2) . These laws are not important in themselves, says Korach; they are simply legislated to lead a person to God. Logic would suggest that a Techelet garment, with a full blue color, is indicative of God in a more intense and powerful manner than the modest blue thread of the Tzitzit. Likewise, how can a Mezuzah replace the Torah scroll in its entirety? Moses stands by the letter of the law; a blue thread is a fundamental requirement, a Mezuzah scroll is essential to fulfil the dictates of the law. But Korah asks, Why is it necessary to limit the symbolic act to a single thread, to a small piece of parchment? Why not extend it to the entire garment, the whole house?

Source 4: Ibn Ezra

וַיִּקַּח קֹרַח. זה הדבר היה במדבר סיני כאשר נתחלפו הבכורים ונבדלו הלויים כי חשבו ישראל שמשא אדונינו עשה מדעתו לתת גדולה לאחיו גם לבני קהת שהם קרובים אליו ולכל בני לוי שהם ממשפחתו והלויים קשרו עליו בעבור היותם נתונים לאהרן ולבניו וקשר דתן ואבירם בעבור שהסיר הבכורה מראובן אביהם ונתנה ליוסף אולי חשדוהו בעבור יהושע משרתו גם קרח בכור היה כי כן כתוב. ודגל ראובן חונה בנגב וקרח בנגב המשכן כי הוא מבני קהת ואלה נשיאי העדה היו בכורים והם היו מקריבים את העולות על כן לקחו מחתות והראיה על זה הפירוש מופת המטה שראו כל ישראל כי השם בחר שבט לוי תחת הבכורים על כן כתוב ותכל תלונתם כי התלונה על זה היתה. גם אמר משה כי לא מלבי בעבור שחשדוהו

כי מלבו עשה ועוד לא ה' שלחני בשליחות הזה כי כבר האמינו בו כל ישראל ועוד ראייה גמורה כי כל העדה כלם קדושים וזה רמז לבכורים שהם קדושים כי כן כתוב קדש לי כל בכור והם היו הכהנים הנגשים אל ה' והם עיקר כל העדה

כי כל העדה כלם קדושים. כי כל העדה מיום מעמד הר סיני היו קדושים **ובתוכם ה'.** כי הלויים נבחרו אחרי היות הכבוד בתוך בני ישראל ואם ידע משה כאשר היה בהר סיני כי נבחר שבט לוי לא ידעו ישראל

Ibn Ezra suggests that it was the appointment of the Levi'im to the Mishkan service which precipitated the unrest. Who did the Levi'im replace, asks the Ibn Ezra. He tells us that the Levi'im took the place of the firstborn. Prior to the Mishkan, the firstborn acted as the religious representative. Now, after the Mishkan, only the Levites served in the Mishkan. But, we should realize, the firstborn system is more democratic; every family has a representative. The Levite system (and the Levites are Moshe's tribe!) is sectarian and aristocratic. It singles out a particular group thereby creating an elite system rather than a more egalitarian system.

Who is considered holy?

The argument is a moral, democratic one. This Midrash gives us a halakhic reading which supports this egalitarian line of argument.

Source 5: Bamidbar Ch. 16

ה וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל-קֹרַח וְאֶל-כָּל-עֲדֹתָו, לֵאמֹר, בֹּקֶר וַיֵּדַע יְהוָה אֶת-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ וְאֶת-הַקְּדוֹשׁ, וְהַקְּרִיב אֵלָיו; וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר-בוֹ, יִקְרִיב אֵלָיו. 5 And he spoke unto Korah and unto all his company, saying: 'In the morning the LORD will show who are His, and who is holy, and will cause him to come near unto Him; even him whom He may choose will He cause to come near unto Him.

ו זֹאת, עֲשׂוּ: קַחוּ-לָכֶם מַחְתֹּת, קֹרַח וְכָל-עֲדֹתָו. 6 This do: take you censors, Korah, and all his company;

ז וַתֵּנוּ בָהֶן אֵשׁ וְשִׂימוּ עָלֵיהֶן קִטְרֹת לְפָנֵי יְהוָה, מָחָר, וְהָיָה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-יִבְחַר יְהוָה, הוּא הַקְּדוֹשׁ; רַב-לָכֶם, בְּנֵי לֵוִי. 7 and put fire therein, and put incense upon them before the LORD to-morrow; and it shall be that the man whom the LORD doth

choose, he shall be holy; ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.'

Moses offers the Korach clan to act as High Priest for a day. **They will perform the incense ritual, the most holy of rituals, which also carries a death penalty if abused. Moses' challenge to the Levite rebels is a direct response to their own argument.**

Korach, Datan and Aviram attack Moshe

ג וַיִּקְהָלוּ עַל-מֹשֶׁה וְעַל-
 אַהֲרֹן, וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם רַב-
 לָכֶם--כִּי כָל-הָעֵדָה כֹּהֲנִים
 קְדוֹשִׁים, וּבְתוֹכְכֶם יְהוָה;
 וּמִדּוּעַ תִּתְנַשְּׂאוּ, עַל-קְהַל
 יְהוָה. 3 and they assembled themselves together
 against Moses and against Aaron, and said
 unto them: '**Ye take too much upon you,**
 seeing all the congregation are holy, every
 one of them, and the LORD is among them;
 wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above
 the assembly of the LORD?'

Moshe's symmetrical response to the group:

ז וַתֵּנוּ בָהֶן אֵשׁ וְשִׂימוּ עֲלֵיהֶן
 קֶטֶר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה, מָחָר,
 וְהָיָה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-יִבְחַר
 יְהוָה, הוּא הַקָּדוֹשׁ; רַב-
 לָכֶם, בְּנֵי לֵוִי. 7 and put fire therein, and put incense
 upon them before the LORD to-morrow;
 and it shall be that the man whom the
 LORD doth choose, he shall be holy; **ye take**
too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.'

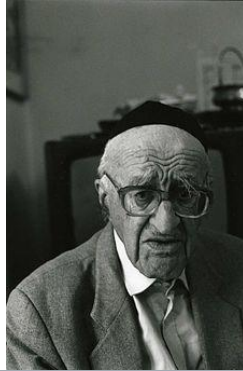
What is holiness? Who decides it ?

A reminder of Perashat Tzizit,

the tool Korach used to unseat Moshe and Aharon:

מ לִמְעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ, וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֶת-
 כָּל-מִצְוֹתַי; וְהֵייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים,
 לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם. 40 that ye may remember and do all My
 commandments, and be holy unto your
 God.

Yeshayahu Leibowitz



Yeshayahu Leibowitz (Hebrew: ישעיהו ליבוביץ; 29 January 1903 – 18 August 1994) was an Israeli Orthodox Jewish public intellectual, professor of biochemistry, organic chemistry, and neurophysiology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and a polymath known for his outspoken opinions on Judaism, ethics, religion, and politics.

Biography

Yeshayahu Leibowitz was born in Riga, Russian Empire (now in Latvia) in 1903, to a religious Zionist family. His father was a lumber trader, and his cousin was future chess grandmaster Aron Nimzowitsch. In 1919, he studied chemistry and philosophy at the University of Berlin. After completing his doctorate in 1924, he went on to study biochemistry and medicine, receiving an MD in 1934 from the University of Basel.

He migrated to Israel in 1935, and settled in Jerusalem. Leibowitz was married to Greta, with whom he had six children.^[1]

His son, Elia, was chairman of the Tel Aviv University astrophysics department, and the longest-serving director of the Wise Observatory.^[2] Another son, Uri, was a professor of medicine at Hadassah University Medical Center.^[1]

His daughter, Yiska, is a district prosecutor.^[1] His sister, Nechama Leibowitz, was a world-famous biblical scholar.

Leibowitz was active until his last day. He died in his sleep on 18 August 1994.^[3]

Leibowitz (third from left) with students at Tichon Beit Hakerem, 1947

Leibowitz joined the faculty of mathematics and natural science of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1936. He became a professor of biochemistry in 1941, and was promoted to the position of senior professor of organic chemistry and neurology in 1952. He taught at the Hebrew University for nearly six decades, lecturing in biochemistry, neurophysiology, philosophy, and the history of science.^[3]

Religious philosophy

Leibowitz was an Orthodox Jew who held some controversial views on the subject of *halakha*, or Jewish law. He wrote that the sole purpose of religious commandments was to obey God, and not to receive any kind of reward in this world or the world to come. He

maintained that the reasons for religious commandments were beyond man's understanding, as well as irrelevant, and any attempt to attribute emotional significance to the performance of *mitzvot* was misguided and akin to idolatry.

The essence of Leibowitz's religious outlook is that a person's faith is his commitment to obey God, meaning God's commandments, and this has nothing to do with a person's image of God. This must be so because Leibowitz thought that God cannot be described, that God's understanding is not man's understanding, and thus, all the questions asked of God are out of place.^[4] Leibowitz claimed that a person's decision to believe in God (in other words: to obey him) defines or describes that person, not God.

One result of this approach is that faith, which is a personal commitment to obey God, cannot be challenged by the usual philosophical problem of evil or by historical events that seemingly contradict a divine presence. When someone told Leibowitz that he stopped believing in God after the Holocaust, Leibowitz answered, "Then you never believed in God".^[5] If a person stops believing after an awful event, it shows that he only obeyed God because he thought he understood God's plan, or because he expected to see a reward. But "for Leibowitz, religious belief is not an explanation of life, nature, or history, or a promise of a future in this world or another, but a demand".^[6]

Source 6: Prof. Leibowitz's commentary on Korach

בפרשה הקודמת, פרשת 'שלח', ארבעה פסוקים בלבד לפני דבריו אלה של קרח למשה ואהרן: "רַב לָכֶם כִּי כָל הָעֵדָה כָּלֶם קְדוֹשִׁים וּבְתוֹכְכֶם ה' וּמִדּוּעַ תִּתְנַשְּׂאוּ עַל קֶהֱל ה' ", אנו מוצאים את פרשת מצוות ציצית, בה מנמק הקב"ה למשה את חשיבות המצווה ואומר "לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹתַי וְהֵייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם ."

אנו מוצאים כאן שני ביטויים דומים מאד, שבמבט ראשוני נראים זהים, כשההבדל ביניהם הוא אך ורק סמנטי. אך במבט מעמיק יותר ניתן לראות את ההבדל התהומי בין שני האמירות, שהוא ע"פ הטענה, מרכז חטאו של קרח. סמיכות הפרשיות בין שני הנושאים אינה מקרית, ומבטאת גישות הפוכות למהות מושג הקדושה.

קורח טוען "כָּל הָעֵדָה כָּלֶם קְדוֹשִׁים". כלומר הקדושה טבועה בעם ישראל מכורח העובדה ש"בתוכם ה'". עם ישראל נבחר ע"י הקב"ה להיות "עם סגולה, [2]" ולכן הוא קדוש, ללא תנאים נוספים. הוא רואה במעמד הר סיני ובבחירת עם ישראל מעין "זכות יתר" שניתנה לה בעצם בחירתה. כהמשך לקו זה בדבריו, את הכהונה רואה קרח כזכות יתר נוספת הניתנת לקבוצה מצומצמת בתוך עם ישראל, ולא כחובה דתית שהוטלה על בני לוי. ואכן, אם כל העם קדושים מדוע שלא יזכו כולם למעמד היתר של הכהונה?

לעומת גישתו הגאוותנית של קרח, התורה אינה מזכה את עם ישראל בתואר קדוש, אלא אומרת "וְהֵייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים" כלומר היא תובעת מעם ישראל להיות קדוש. הקדושה כאן היא לא סגולה טבעית הטבועה העם. קבלת התורה בהר סיני אינה מזכה אוטומטית את העם במעמד 'קדושים'. רק לאחר שאדם אכן עושה את הנדרש ממנו, ומקיים את הנתבע ממנו כאדם שקיבל עליו, ע"י קבלת עול תורה ומצוות, את האחריות לתיקון עצמו ולאחר מכן גם סביבתו, יכול הוא להגיע למעמד בו הוא מובדל ומופרש מסביבתו- "קדוש".

בעיון מהיר במקומות בהם מופיע בתורה המונח 'קדוש' לגבי עם ישראל, ניתן לראות שבכל המקרים הדבר אינו מוצג כנתון טבעי, אלא כתביעה בלשון עתיד, שאינה מגיעה לידי הגשמה עד שמולא התנאי. לדוגמא: "וְאַנְשֵׁי קֹדֶשׁ תִּהְיוּ לִי" (שמות כב'), "וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ לִי מִמְּלַכַת כְּהֻנִּים וְגוֹי קְדוֹשׁ" (שמות יט'), "וְהִיִּתֶם לִי קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי" (ויקרא כ') וישנם עוד מקורות רבים. גם בספר דברים כשהדברים נאמרים בלשון הווה "כִּי עִם קְדוֹשׁ אֶתָּה לִיקָחֶךָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ" (דברים יד), הדבר נאמר לא כנתון, אלא כנימוק לחובת עשיית המצוות, ולהתרחקות מעבודה זרה.

אפשר לומר שמחלוקת זו היא לא רק פרטית למקרה זה אלא מייצגת תפיסה מוטעית רווחת לגבי עם ישראל. **אם אכן נטען שעם ישראל הוא קדוש מבחינת עצמיותו, ומבחינת זכותו הטבעית- הדבר מרוקן את פעילותו מידי משמעות. קריאתו של קרח היא קריאה לפסיביות של האדם. אין הוא נתבע לאחריות לתקן את עצמו ואת החברה הסובבת אותו. אין הוא מקבל על עצמו את המחויבות העצומה שבקיום חובותיו בעולם, אלא רואה הוא אך ורק את זכויותיו, את מה ש"מגיע לי".** יכול הוא לבוא ולטעון שבשל השתייכותו ל"קהל הקודש", ל"עם הסגולה"- זכאי הוא לקבל מבלי לתת מעצמו, ובשל זכויות היתר הטבעיות שלו, פטור הוא מכל פעולה ממשית לקידום הטוב והצדק בעולם.

"The difference between these two perceptions of 'holiness' is the distinction between religious faith and pagan worship. The holiness of Parshat Tzitzit is not a given assumption but a task. There we are not told, "You are holy", but a demand is made to "become holy." But in the religious consciousness of Korach and his followers, "The entire congregation is holy." Holiness is something bestowed upon one.

The distinction between the two concepts is deeper still: ... In Parshat Tzitzit, holiness is expressed in the most sublime aspect of the life of faith and the religious mindset of man; that he is required to accept upon himself a task. Nothing is promised or assured. He is simply charged with a demand ... **But, in the holiness of Korach and his group ... man frees himself from responsibility, from the mission with which he is charged and from the obligation to struggle."**

So, here is an argument that relates to democratization and Holiness. Is holiness a virtue that is innate within the Jewish nation [the garment of Techelet] or is it something that one must work towards, something to achieve? If it is the former, then there really is no good reason to accept Moses and Aharon over Korach as national leader. But if the latter is correct - that holiness is a product of years of self-refinement - then Korach's argument begins to look exceptionally weak.

Source 7a: Tehilim Ch. 1

א אֲשֶׁרִי הָאִישׁ-- אֲשֶׁר לֹא
 הִלְךְ, בְּעֵצַת רְשָׁעִים;
 וּבְדַרְךְ חַטָּאִים, לֹא
 עָמַד, וּבְמוֹשֵׁב לִצְיִם, לֹא יָשָׁב.

1 Happy is the man that hath not
 walked in the counsel of the
 wicked, {N}
 nor stood in the way of sinners, nor
 sat in the seat of the scornful.

7b) Midrash Tehilim Ch. 1

ובמושב לצים זה קרח שהיה מתלוצץ על משה ועל אהרן. מה עשה כינס כל הקהל שנאמר (שם טז יט) ויקהל עליהם קרח את כל העדה. התחיל לומר ליצנות ואומר להן אלמנה אחת היתה בשכונתי ועמה שתי נערות יתומות והיתה לה שדה אחת. באתה לחרוש אמר לה משה **דברים כב י** לא תחרוש בשור וחמור יחדו. באתה לזרוע אמר לה משה **ויקרא יט יט** שדך לא תזרע כלאים. באתה לקצור ולעשות ערימה אמר לה הניחי לקט שכחה ופאה. באתה לעשות גורן אמר לה תני תרומה ותרומת מעשר ומעשר ראשון ומעשר שני. הצדיקה עליה את הדין ונתנה לו. מה עשתה מכרה את השדה ולקחה שני כבשות ללבוש מגזותיהן וליהנות מפירותיהן. כיון שילדו בא אהרן ואמר לה תני לי את הבכורות שכך אמר לי הקב"ה **דברים טו יט** כל הבכור אשר יולד בבקרך ובצאנך הזכר. הצדיקה עליה את הדין ונתנה לו. הגיע זמן גיזה וגזזה אותן אמר לה תני לי ראשית הגז שכן אמר לי הקב"ה (שם יח ד) וראשית גז צאנך תתן לו. אמרה אין לי כח לעמוד באיש הזה הרי אני שוחט אותן ואוכלתן. כיון ששחטן אמר לה תני לי הזרוע והלחיים והקיבה. אמרה לו אפילו ששחטתי אותן לא נצלתי מידו. הן עלי חרם. אמר לה תנה לי שכך אמר הכתוב **במדבר יח יד** כל חרם בישראל לך יהיה. נטלה והלך לו. הניחה בוכה היא ושתי בנותיה. אריך כדן הא ביזתא עלובתא. כ"כ הם עושים ותולין בהקב"ה. מכאן שהיה ליצן. כי אם בתורת ה' חפצו אלו בניו שאמרו שירה ואמרו חייבין אנו בכבוד אבינו נחלוק כבוד למשה רבינו עמדו והכריעו עצמן בשביל כבודו של משה. ובתורתו יהגה אלו בניו של קרח.

"What did Korach do? He gathered the entire congregation and began to tell stories: "There was once a widow in my neighborhood who had two little girls, orphans. She owned a modest field (from which they made their living.) She began to plough the field; Moses told her 'Do not plough with an ox and a donkey together'(Deut. 22:10). She began to sow the field, He said 'Do not sow the field with mixtures of seeds (Lev. 19:19). She began to harvest the crop; he said, 'leave the gleanings, and the edge of your field for the poor'. She gathered the harvest; he said "Give the tithes to the Priest and the Levite'. She gave it all to him. She sold her field and bought two sheep in order to clothe her children from their fleece and to gain profit from their offspring and milk. They gave birth; Aaron came and demanded the firstborns, as it states: 'Every firstborn.... you must sanctify to God.'(Deut. 15:19) She gave him the lambs. Then she came to shear the sheep. Aaron came, 'Give me the first of the fleece,' he said. "God gave it to me, as it states, "The first of the fleece give to him."(Deut. 18:14)' she

stood there crying with her two daughters. That is what they did to this desperate woman. This is what they do and they pin it all on the word of God."

Where did Chazal get this midrash from ?

Source 8: Bamidbar Ch. 16

יב וַיִּשְׁלַח מֹשֶׁה, לְקָרָא לְדָתָן וְלֵאבִירָם בְּנֵי אֱלִיָּאָב; וַיֹּאמְרוּ, לֹא נֵעֲלֶה. 12 And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab; and they said: 'We will not come up;

יג הֲמַעַט, כִּי הֶעֱלִיתָנוּ מֵאֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבָשׁ, לְהַמִּיתָנוּ, בְּמִדְבָּר: כִּי-תִשְׁתַּרֵּר עָלֵינוּ, גַּם-הַשְּׂתַרֵּר. 13 is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, but thou must needs make thyself also a prince over us?

יד אַף לֹא אָל-אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבָשׁ, הֵבִיאָתָנוּ, וַתִּתֵּן-לָנוּ, נַחֲלֹת שָׂדֵה וְכַרְם; הֲעֵינִי הָאֲנָשִׁים הֵהֵם, תִּנְקֹר--לֹא נֵעֲלֶה. 14 Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards; wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up.'

טו וַיַּחַר לְמֹשֶׁה, מְאֹד, וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-יְהוָה, אֵל-תִּפְּן אֶל-מִנְחָתָם; לֹא חָמַר אֶחָד מֵהֶם, נִשְׂאתִי, וְלֹא הִרְעֵתִי, אֶת-אֶחָד מֵהֶם. 15 And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the LORD: 'Respect not Thou their offering; I have not taken one donkey from them, neither have I hurt one of them.'

Are Moshe's statements in verse 15 consistent with the accusations of Korach, Datan and Aviram?

Another example of סמיכות פרשיות/juxtaposition of perashiyot

Source 9: Bamidbar Ch. 18

- א** וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה, אֶל-אַהֲרֹן, אַתָּה וּבְנֵיךָ וּבֵית-אָבִיךָ אַתָּה, תִּשָּׂאוּ אֶת-עֹון הַמִּקְדָּשׁ; וְאַתָּה וּבְנֵיךָ אַתָּה, תִּשָּׂאוּ אֶת-עֹון כְּהֹנְתְּכֶם.
- 1 And the LORD said unto Aaron: 'Thou and thy sons and thy fathers' house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary; and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood.
- ב** וְגַם אֶת-אַחֶיךָ מִטֵּה לְוֵי שִׁבְט־אָבִיךָ, הַקָּרֵב אַתָּה, וְיָלוּ עִלֶיךָ, וַיִּשְׁרְתוּךָ; וְאַתָּה וּבְנֵיךָ אַתָּה, לְפָנַי אֲהַל הָעֵדוּת.
- 2 And thy brethren also, the tribe of Levi, the tribe of thy father, bring thou near with thee, that they may be joined unto thee, and minister unto thee, thou and thy sons with thee being before the tent of the testimony.
- ג** וַשְּׁמְרוּ, מִשְׁמֶרְתְּךָ, וּמִשְׁמֶרֶת, כָּל-הָאֲהָל: אֵךְ אֶל-כָּל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְאֶל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא יִקְרְבוּ, וְלֹא-יָמִתּוּ גַם-הֵם גַּם-אַתֶּם.
- 3 And they shall keep thy charge, and the charge of all the Tent; only they shall not come nigh unto the holy furniture and unto the altar, that they die not, neither they, nor ye.
- ד** וְיָלוּ עִלֶיךָ--וַשְּׁמְרוּ אֶת-מִשְׁמֶרֶת אֲהַל מוֹעֵד, לְכָל עֲבֹדַת הָאֲהָל; וְזָר, לֹא-יִקְרַב אֵלֵיכֶם.
- 4 And they shall be joined unto thee, and keep the charge of the tent of meeting, whatsoever the service of the Tent may be; but a common man shall not draw nigh unto you.
- ה** וַשְּׁמֶרְתֶּם, אֶת מִשְׁמֶרֶת הַקֹּדֶשׁ, וְאֶת, מִשְׁמֶרֶת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ; וְלֹא-יִהְיֶה עוֹד קֶצֶף, עַל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.
- 5 And ye shall keep the charge of the holy things, and the charge of the altar, that there be wrath no more upon the children of Israel.
- ו** וַאֲנִי, הִנֵּה לָקַחְתִּי אֶת-אַחֵיכֶם הַלְוִיִּם, מִתּוֹךְ, בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל--לְכֶם מִתְּנָה נְתֻנִים, לִיהוָה, לְעֵבֶד, אֶת-עֲבֹדַת אֲהַל מוֹעֵד.
- 6 And I, behold, I have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel; for you they are given as a gift unto the LORD, to do the service of the tent of meeting.

- ז וְאַתָּה וּבְנֵיךָ אֲתָדָה תִּשְׁמְרוּ אֶת-
 כְּהֹנֵתְכֶם לְכָל-דְּבַר הַמִּזְבֵּחַ, וּלְמִבֵּית
 לְפָרֹכֶת--וְעַבְדְתֶם; עַבְדַת מִתְנָה, אֲתָנוּ
 אֶת-כְּהֹנֵתְכֶם, וְהִזָּר הַקָּרֵב,
 יוֹמֵת. {פ}
- 7 And thou and thy sons with thee shall
 keep your priesthood in everything that
 pertaineth to the altar, and to that within
 the veil; and ye shall serve; I give you the
 priesthood as a service of gift; and the
 common man that draweth nigh shall be
 put to death.' {P}
- ח וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה, אֶל-אַהֲרֹן, וַאֲנִי הִנֵּה
 נֹתַתִּי לְךָ, אֶת-מִשְׁמֶרֶת
 תְּרוֹמֹתַי: לְכָל-קֹדֶשׁ בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לְךָ
 נֹתַתִּים לְמִשְׁחָה, וּלְבָנֶיךָ--לְחֶק-עוֹלָם.
- 8 And the LORD spoke unto Aaron: 'And I,
 behold, I have given thee the charge of My
 heave-offerings; even of all the hallowed
 things of the children of Israel unto thee
 have I given them for a consecrated
 portion, and to thy sons, as a due for ever.
- ט זֶה-יְהִיָּה לְךָ מִקֹּדֶשׁ הַקֹּדְשִׁים, מִן-
 הָאֵשׁ: כָּל-קָרְבָּנִים לְכָל-מִנְחָתָם וּלְכָל-
 חֲטָאתָם, וּלְכָל-אֲשָׁמָם אֲשֶׁר יָשִׁיבוּ
 לִי--קֹדֶשׁ קֹדְשִׁים לְךָ הוּא, וּלְבָנֶיךָ.
- 9 This shall be thine of the most holy
 things, reserved from the fire: every
 offering of theirs, even every meal-
 offering of theirs, and every sin-offering of
 theirs, and every guilt-offering of theirs,
 which they may render unto Me, shall be
 most holy for thee and for thy sons.
- י בְּקֹדֶשׁ הַקֹּדְשִׁים, תֹּאכְלֶנּוּ; כָּל-זָכָר
 יֹאכַל אֹתוֹ, קֹדֶשׁ יְהִיָּה-לְךָ.
- 10 In a most holy place shalt thou eat
 thereof; every male may eat thereof; it
 shall be holy unto thee.
- יא וְזֶה-לְךָ תְּרוֹמַת מִתְנָם, לְכָל-
 תְּנוּפֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל--לְךָ נֹתַתִּים וּלְבָנֶיךָ
 וּלְבָנֹתֶיךָ אֲתָדָה, לְחֶק-עוֹלָם: כָּל-טָהוֹר
 בְּבֵיתְךָ, יֹאכַל תּוֹ.
- 11 And this is thine: the heave-offering of
 their gift, even all the wave-offerings of
 the children of Israel; I have given them
 unto thee, and to thy sons and to thy
 daughters with thee, as a due for ever;
 every one that is clean in thy house may
 eat thereof.

**Source 10: Rabbi Alan Wilkinson:
Rav Soloveitchik and
“the Common-Sense Rebellion against Torah Authority”**

This week I was asked to run a training session on Orthodox Judaism for a group of specialist consultants, nurses, social workers and play workers at Great Ormond Street. Having encountered some orthodox patients they had several questions and they wanted assistance to ensure that they treated the patients and the families appropriately. One of the questions was about a perceived inconsistency- that the staff and family could ‘break shabbos’ for the patient but not for the visitors. I hope they understood my explanation of ‘cholim’ and ‘pikuach nefesh’. They did say that it made sense.

This reminded me of an article written by Rabbi Yosef Soloveitchik entitled, “The Common-Sense” Rebellion Against Torah Authority.” In this article, The Rav uses the paradigm of Korach to decry a phenomenon: people using their own common sense to contradict Halakha. In Rav Soloveitchik’s retelling of the Korach story the nature of the Korach rebellion is that Korach thought that Moshe’s laws simply did not make sense. Because Korach thought that his approach made more sense, he concluded that he should just discard the teachings of Moshe. As a prime example of the Rav cites the way Rashi tells how Korach tried to inspire his followers:

What did Korach do? He assembled two hundred and fifty distinguished men and women ... and he attired them in robes of pure blue wool. They came and stood before Moshe and said to him: “Does a garment that is entirely blue still require tzitzit (ritual fringes) or is it exempt?” Moshe replied that it did require tzitzit. Whereupon they began to jeer at him: “Is that logical? A robe of any other colour fulfills the tzitzit requirement merely by having one of its threads blue. Such a garment which is entirely blue should not require an additional blue thread!” (Rashi, Bmidbar 16:1).

Rav Soloveitchik continues: “The rallying cry which Korach chose was ‘common sense.’ He proclaimed that all reasonable people have the right to interpret Jewish law according to their best understanding: ‘For all the community are holy’ (Numbers 16:3).”

Korach was an intelligent man, pike'ah hayah (Rashi, 16: 7). He would certainly concede that there were specialized fields in which only experts who have studied extensively over many years are entitled to be recognized as authorities. The intrusion of common-sense judgments in these areas by unlearned laymen would be both presumptuous and misleading. Korach would not have dared to interfere with Bezalel's architectural and engineering expertise in the construction of the Tabernacle, the Mishkan, because construction skills were dearly beyond his competence. Today, reasonable people concede the authority of mathematicians, physicists, and physicians in their areas of expertise, and would not think of challenging them merely based on common sense. Why, asks Rav Soloveitchik, are so many well-intentioned people ready to question the authority of the Torah scholar, in his area of specialized knowledge?

The appeal to common sense, which at first glance seems so logical is in this context spiritually dangerous because it is basically an appeal to “the doctrine of religious subjectivism, which regards ones’ personal feelings as primary in the religious experience.” Because of this distorted spirituality the value of the mitzvah is not in the performance of the mitzvah but in how the mitzvah subjectively makes us feel. Rabbi Soloveitchik goes so far as to compare this approach to idolatry.

Rabbi Soloveitchik continues with his description of the dangers of this approach. Such a person mistakenly thinks that: The value of the mitzvah is to be found not in its performance, but in its subjective impact upon the person, its ability to arouse a devotional state of mind. Tefillin would be justified, according to Korach's theory, only for their elevating and inspirational quality. The mitzvah of shofar on Rosh Hashanah would be of value only if it succeeded in arousing the Jew to repentance. If these mitzvot ceased having this impact upon people, their observance would be open to question and new rituals, more responsive to changing sensitivities, should perhaps be enacted. What follows from his reasoning is that the mitzvah may be modified according to changing times or even according to the individual temperaments of different people. There is, to him, no inherent redemptive power in the mitzvah beyond its therapeutic effects, its capacity to evoke a subjective experience.

Rav Soloveitchik argues that there are three fundamental shortcomings to making our performance of mitzvot dependent upon the subjective emotion one feels:

First, since our religious moods are often shifting, if we wanted to truly match our ritual performances to our religious emotions it would require a constant tinkering with our rituals. This would result in no continuity or uniformity of practice, both of which are traditionally hallmarks of the Jewish faith.

Second, if rituals were dependent upon how each person felt then no community service would be possible, since each person would have a different emotional reaction to the mitzvah and would therefore change it to suit their own personal and emotional needs. But one of the central pillars of a spiritual and religious experience is to have your spirituality and religiosity within the framework of a communal setting so that you can reach out to others as part of your attempt to come closer to Hashem.

Thirdly, left to our own devices and without the guidance of the Torah and our tradition we would have no way of determining which experience is truly a transcendental spiritual experience that will inspire us to help others and connect us with Hashem and which experience is as false and misleading as those who were attracted to the orgiastic pagan gods of the ancient world and the cult of transcendental drugs in the modern era.

With respect to the performance of mitzvot our common sense is not enough: we need a literal devotion to the performance of the mitzvah (which we should of course combine with sensitivity to the emotional religious experience that we are attempting to induce).

The approach of Moshe prevailed. The survivors of the catastrophe which befell Korach's group later conceded that, in the words of our Sages. "Moshe emes, v'torâso emes- Moshe is truth and his interpretation of Torah is truth" (Bava Basra 74a). This judgment says the Rav is still valid. In our day, we are witnessing a resurgence of strength among those religious groups that are committed to the Oral Law as a hokhmah, and who therefore recognize Torah scholars, Gedolei Yisrael, as the legitimate teachers of Israel. Common sense can only spread confusion and havoc when applied to the Halakhah, as it does with all specialized disciplines.