

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Korach	27 June 2020	5 Tammuz 5780	Num. 16:1-18:32	1Sam. 11:14-12:22	John 19:1-17

There are seven keys to life fulfillment. Love is one of such fulfillments. It also is one of the greatest mysteries. What does the Scripture say about love? According to the Scripture, love is an obligation, a duty, a responsibility, and a requirement. It is written, “Love your neighbor as yourself, I am YHWH.” (Lev. 19:18) Even our Messiah, Yahushua said, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mark 12:31) The Hebrew word *וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ* (*ve·'a·hav·ta le·re·'a·cha*), which most often are translated in English as “love your neighbor,” should really be translated, “love your friend.” Why does the Scripture refer to our neighbor as our “friend”?

It is written, “Qorah, son of Yitshar, son of Qehath, son of Lěwi” (Num. 16:1). It was he who carried the Ark of Covenant. It was he who stood with Moshe when he said, “Who is for YHWH? Come to me.” And all the sons of Lewi gathered themselves to him” when the Yisraelites sinned with the Golden Calf. (Exod. 32:26) So, what made Qorah turn against Moshe in Sefer Bemidbar?

The sages teach that Qorach found one of the hidden treasures of Yosef that made him rich. He was intelligent, and had great influence over the people because of his richness, that eventually led him to a rebellion.

It is written, “You take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and YHWH is among them; why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of Hashem.” (Num. 16:3) There are two parts: “You take too much upon you” – you (Moshe and Aharon) have taken for yourselves a greater position of power than is appropriate. And if you say, what position of power have we taken? Then I (Korach) answer you that “all the congregation are holy.” As such, they all have the distinction that Hashem is among them, and yet you are acting as leaders over them.” Korach and his accomplices were saying that it might have been warranted for Moshe and Aharon to appoint themselves leaders over an ordinary nation, but to have done so over such a holy and lofty congregation was going too far. The very fact that they acted as leaders was inappropriate. They meant to suggest: that since the Shechinah dwelled in the Mishkan in honor of the Yisraelites as a whole, and not in honor of Aharon specifically by saying “YHWH is among them.”

Second part: “Why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of Hashem?” Korach is implying: Is it not enough that you take for yourselves these exalted positions? Why do you make an additional demonstration of your superiority over the people? Meaning, they (Korach and his accomplices) were referring to which Moshe and Aharon said that a non-kohen Yisrael who approaches to perform the services, which is Aharon’s domain, is liable to death. Korach argued that this is improper and demeaning to a holy congregation as “YHWH is among them”, but you declared them unfit to come close to serve Hashem, their Elohim.

It is written, “And when Moshe heard, he fell on his face.” (Num. 16:4) “When Moshe heard,” meaning he understood their underlying argument that they desired to be appointed Kohen Gadol. Even though Korah did not explain themselves, the Torah tells us that Moshe understood their true intent of their words. That is why Moshe suggested that they perform the test described in the following verses to determine who was truly fit to be Kohen Gadol.

“He fell on his face” – Moshe responds to second charge, “why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of Hashem?”, by “fell[ing] on his face” to display utmost submissiveness, and to show that

he considered himself equal to the dust of the earth, as in the manner of a servant who prostrates himself before someone in a position of authority. Since they accused him of elevating himself over the congregation, he wished to demonstrate that on the contrary, he considered himself insignificant in relation to them.

For the allegation of Aharon's elevated status, Moshe said, "to Korach...in the morning" since the afternoon incense had already been offered, they would have to wait until the morning. Moshe is saying that since you (Korach) will not acknowledge the truth of my words until you see for yourselves whether the matter originated from me or Hashem. Therefore, we shall conduct a test to determine whom Hashem has chosen to be Kohen Gadol. The test was to involve the offering of incense (*ketores*), which takes place twice daily: once in the morning and once in the afternoon (Exod. 30:7-8).

Moshe wanted to ensure that they (Korach) would not suspect him of having deliberately conduct the test at an inopportune time, that is in the afternoon, which is generally not a time of Divine favor, as stated in the Zohar¹ that it is a time when strict justice prevails. Moshe feared that if the test would be conducted at a time of Divine Judgment, he might be accused of arranging it that way so that Korach and his assembly would be punished. Furthermore, Moshe wanted to give them time to contemplate their actions during the night, in the hope that perhaps they would realize that they were acting improperly, and would repent.

It is written, "In the morning YHWH will show who are His, and who is holy." (v. 5) The Zohar² explains, "who are His" means the one who is designated for the Leviim's service. "Who is holy" means the one who is designated for the priesthood. Why did Moshe mention the subject of the Leviim's service, since Korach was objecting only regarding the priesthood? As mentioned in verse 1, Korach took the sons from the tribe of Reuben (i.e., Dathan and Abiram), the firstborn can claim also the right to the Leviim's service, and Moshe was compelled to respond to this aspect of their dispute as well. Since, Dathan and Abiram's claim was based on the fact that Reuben was the firstborn, it is reasonable to assume that they demanded that all appointments to the Divine service be awarded to their tribe. They (Dathan and Abiram) had forgotten that Reuben as the firstborn lost his place because he "went up to [his] father's bed" (Gen. 49:4; 35:22).

"And he spoke to Korach and to all his company, saying: 'In the morning YHWH will show who are His, and who is holy, and will cause him to come near to Him; even him whom He may choose will He cause to come near to Him.'" (v. 5) A question is raised, "why did Moshe repeat himself at the end of the verse by saying, 'whom He may choose will He cause to come near to Him' after he had already said earlier 'and will cause him to come near to Him'?" The sages respond: (1) They claimed that Aharon was not all that worthy of the priesthood as there were others among the people who were greater and better than him, as such they should be awarded the priesthood (*kehunah*). (2) Even if Aharon was worthy of the Kehunah, there were others like him among the people who were worthy of standing and serving with him other than his offspring.

Thus, Moshe addressed each of these complaints: With regard to their claim concerning the awarding of the Kehunah to Aharon, Moshe said, "In the morning, Hashem will make known the one who is His own" – meaning, the one that was designated for His service from the beginning of Creation as "Before I formed you in the belly I knew you, and before you left the womb I sanctified you" (Jer. 1:5). And "the one", in addition to having been designated for the Kehunah from the time of Creation, Aharon had proven himself

¹ Zohar, Vol. II, 21a

² Ibid., Vol. III, 176b

worthy of the position, for after he emerged on the world, he sanctified himself and made himself into a vessel fit to serve in the Miskhan.

Moshe said, “and [He] will cause (draw) him to come near to Him.” Moshe used the Hebrew word וְהִקְרִיב (ve-hik-riv) in the past tense. According to the rules of Hebrew grammar, the prefix ו (vav) changes its meaning to “and He will draw close.” However, by wording it this way, the Torah alludes to us that it can also be interpreted in the past tense, to indicate that Hashem had already drawn him close and demonstrated that he was worthy of the Kehunah by making His Shechinah dwell among the Yisraelites through his service in the Mishkahn.

And with regard to the implication of their words, that they wanted to appoint kohanim in addition to Aharon, Moshe said, “and whom He may choose will He cause to come near to Him.” Meaning, If there are indeed others that are also fit to stand and to serve in the Mishkan like Aharon, will be determined through the test of the *ketores*. Surely Hashem will draw them close to Himself as well, and they will merit to serve with Aharon.