



GROWTH

At The

SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT KORACH

The Price of Discord

The town of Ishpitzin, Poland, was once a typical pre-war Jewish community — modest in size, only a few hours from Warsaw. It was a close-knit small town where everyone knew everyone, and Jewish life, though simple, was filled with joy and tradition. But everything changed with a tragic incident that would reverberate far beyond the town's borders.

One day, the town's rabbi took issue with the behavior of the local shochet [1] and publicly declared his shechita to be unreliable. This proclamation sent shockwaves through the community. At first, there were murmurs in the taverns and quiet discussions in the back rows of the synagogue. But soon, the whispers grew into arguments, and the town became divided — some defending the rabbi, others standing by the shochet.

Tensions mounted until they exploded on Rosh Hashanah. Just as the rabbi rose to call out the tekiot for the shofar blowing, a man from the back of the shul shouted, "Who do you think you are to destroy a simple man's life? And now you think you can lead us in prayer? Get out of town!"

Chaos erupted. Heated words turned to physical blows. Fists flew, benches overturned, and the sanctuary became a battlefield. The violence escalated so intensely that the police had to be called to restore order. Immediately afterwards, the rav ran to his house, packed a small suitcase, and left the town, only to collapse dead on the road from a heart attack.

Most people have never heard of this town, but everyone knows what it became. A few months later, the town of Ishpitzin was overtaken by the Nazis. Electric fences were erected, railroads were built, and the name of the town was changed from Ishpitzin to Auschwitz. The sleepy little town ravaged by *machloket* became the largest death factory in human history. The gas chambers — the very site where millions of Jewish souls were extinguished — were built on the exact spot where the *shul* stood just a few months prior. [2]

Of course, no one can draw any definitive conclusions or point fingers but one thing we can take to heart is certain: *machloket* tears us apart and destroys everything in its path. So often, people allow fuming emotions such as rage, jealousy, and pain to blind them and act in the heat of the moment. Similar to the outcome of Korach, who tried stirring up a national strife, people who fall prey to the sharp clutches of *machloket* sadly end up being consumed by the poisonous fruits of bitter fights. Arguments and discord are devastating; wise is the person who avoids the drama and lives in simplicity and tranquility. Conflicts may begin with words, but they can end in unthinkable tragedy.

In a time when Israel's enemies continue to spew hatred and seek our annihilation, let us overcome our natural tendencies by finding the best in one another and fostering peaceful, kind, and positive relationships. It's far from easy and undoubtedly presents as a challenge, but making the effort couldn't be more rewarding.

[1] Butcher / ritual slaughterer [2] Story shared by R' Hillel Eisenberg

Reaffirmed

In this week's Parsha, G-d addresses Aharon and commands the responsibility of safeguarding the Tabernacle to the Levites (Numbers 18:1-7).

However, this has already been stated previously a few times (1:50-53, 2:6, 8:9). Why is the Torah repeating this yet again?

According to Abarbanel, the Levites' duties are reiterated to emphasize that Korach's rebellion did not undermine the tribe's legitimacy or strip them of their divine appointment. Such a notion had presumably been permeating the air, as Korach was a leading Levite. The Torah went out of its way in being 'repetitious' just to dispel this perception and reassure hope.

Many times, after we make mistakes or are put into difficult circumstances, we allow excessive shame and despondence to fill our minds and disable us. We begin to think that we, too, aren't worthy of our own divine spark, not good enough for our Heavenly mission. However, G-d Himself dispels this notion. In such moments, we need to heed the very same call as the Levites to *strengthen* our commitment and renew our resolve.

Refuah Sheleima, b'toch she'ar cholei Yisrael:

Ariel Ben Frida Rachamim Ben Shifra Yitzchak
Ben Naama Frida Bat Yaffa Miriam Bat Bakol
Dov Ber Ben Devora Riva Revital Bat Adina

*Dedicated in Loving Memory of
Shimon Aryeh ben Rivka*