



GROWTH

At The

SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT KORACH

Power of Perception

This week, we read the dramatic and tragic story of Korach. There is obviously much to expound upon and learn from, among which is the power of perspective. Korach could perhaps have looked at things with an *ayin tov* and have contented himself with all the blessings he already had, but instead allowed jealousy to consume him. All it took was just a small adjustment in mindset which would have prevented hundreds of casualties and allowed him to live in material and spiritual bliss, but unfortunately, that wasn't the route he took.

R' Ari Neuwirth recounted an unbelievable story that highlights the impact of outlook:

Bernard Hillstein (or 'Bernie,' as he's called), a man who resided in Passaic, NJ, was going through a tough time in life. His wife had died six years earlier, and his eyesight had then started to diminish. He didn't have any children; he was all alone. His friends had recommended that he should move into an assisted living complex, as it was unsafe for him to live alone. Finally, after much cajoling, he agreed, and found a beautiful assisted living complex in Florida, where he had always wanted to go. It was the perfect package: shomer Shabbat, loaded with amenities, and a shul included. He signed up, gave a deposit, and even gave the owner of his house, from whom he had been renting in Passaic, a notice that in a month's time he would be terminating his lease.

In the meantime, he had adopted a service dog, a German Shepherd, because of his dimmed eyesight. A few weeks after having put the deposit down, he was reading the contract and this time noticed a sentence in the fine print that he had missed earlier: "No pets allowed – not even a service dog." Bernie was livid. 'How did I not see that before?' he annoyingly thought to himself. 'But more importantly, I cannot go to this care center without my dog, Oakley! Oakley is my best friend! I need Oakley! If he doesn't go, I don't go either!' The problem was that he had already gave a deposit, and had terminated his contract for his current home. He didn't know what to do. He called the assisted living complex, and they told him, "Rules are rules. No pets allowed." He called the clergyman of the center, and pleaded with him, "Please, I need this dog. I cannot see. This dog is all I have..." The clergyman replied, "I'm so sorry Bernie, but this is the policy of the center. I can't change it; it's not even my policy. It's part of the ownership... there's nothing I can do." Bernie saw that this wasn't working, so he went to his rabbi, R' Eisenman, and explained to him his dilemma. R' Eisenman told him that he'd try to help, and called the clergyman, explaining the predicament of his congregant. "There's nothing I can do; my hands are tied," responded the clergyman. "If you want, you can call the owner yourself. He's the only

one who can change the policy. He's an older Jew, a Holocaust survivor; his name is Mr. Hertz. Give him a call." R' Eisenman thanked the clergyman, and dialed Mr. Hertz's number. "I need to meet with you," the rabbi asked. Mr. Hertz answered: "You're very lucky. As it so happens, although I live in Florida, I'm coming to Boro Park for a wedding next week. If you want, you can meet me at my grandchildren's home in Boro Park, and we can talk there." He gave the address and they wished one another a nice day.

The next week, R' Eisenman made his way to Boro Park. He knocked on the door, and the 95-year-old Mr. Hertz opened the door and invited him in, extending his hand and giving him a warm "shalom aleichem." As he extended his hand, the rabbi noticed the infamous numbers tattooed on Mr. Hertz's arm. R' Eisenman now realized that he didn't stand a chance in convincing him to allow a German Shepherd in his complex. 'However,' he thought, 'I'm here already, let me just give it a shot. At least I tried, and I can go back to Bernie and explain that I really tried...' He was welcomed into the living room, with the coffee table covered with cakes and sweets. Mr. Hertz finally asked him, "So tell me, rabbi, how can I help you?" The rabbi took a breath, and began to explain, "I have a congregant; he can barely see. He has a German Shepherd service dog, and he can only come with this dog. Could he have permission...?"

Mr. Hertz looked down, and after a few moments answered: לא "לך חורף כלב לשון". The rabbi was dumbfounded. 'Why is he responding with a pasuk in Parshat Bo, describing that no dog barked as the Jews left Egypt?' he thought to himself. "What do you mean?" asked R' Eisenman, confused. Mr. Hertz explained: "78 years ago, in 1945, we all knew that the war was over. The Germans, y'sh, knew that the war was over. We knew that we were being liberated. At that point, the Germans just had one mission left: kill every single Jew. I went and hid under a bunker. The Nazis came with German Shepherd dogs, sniffing for bodies to kill. I lay under the bunker, and heard the Nazi and his dog raiding through the bunker with his boots. It was about to be all over, and I was trembling, muttering to myself the words of the pasuk לא יחרף כלב לשון, over and over again. As I begged Hashem to save me, the German Shepherd just walked right over me, not even sniffing that I was there, and I was saved. At that moment, I made a decision – I want to pay back a German Shepherd."

"R' Eisenman!" exclaimed Mr. Hertz, "I've been waiting 78 years for you to come! Of course Bernie can bring his dog to my assisted living complex. It's my token of appreciation..."

His reaction was beyond incredible. Who thinks like that?? Only someone who chooses to see the positive over the negative...

"Don't pray to get, pray to connect." (Gedale Fenster)

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

Ariel Ben Frida Miriam Bat Bakol Chana Bat Malka Heleni Orna Bat Chen Chana Rahamim Ben Shifra Yitzchak Ben Naama
Frida Bat Yaffa Liron Ben Chava Roi Ben Louise Ron Ben Avishag Elkana Yitzchak Ben Ronit Noah Yisrael Ben Victoria Yaffa