

IN HONOR OF
Rabbi & Mrs. **Menachem Mendel HaKohen** and **Chaya Mushka** שיחיו
Katz

On the occasion of their wedding,
First day of Rosh Chodesh Tammuz - 30 Sivan, 5776
"MAY THEY BUILD AN EVERLASTING JEWISH HOME,
BASED ON THE FOUNDATIONS OF TORAH AND *MITZVOS*, AS
THEY ARE ILLUMINATED IN THE TEACHINGS OF *CHASSIDUS*."

AND IN HONOR OF THEIR PARENTS
Rabbi & Mrs. **Mordechai Avrohom HaKohen**
and **Rivka Leah** שיחיו **Katz**
Rabbi Dr. & Mrs. **Meir** and **Chana Rivka** שיחיו
Lewin

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DEDICATED BY
Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y.** and **Gittel Rochel** שיחיו **Shagalov**

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Korach, 5776
(Vol. 6)



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VAAD L'HAFOTZAS SICHOS
788 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213
5770 • 2010

"5776 - YEAR OF HAKHEL"

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
 Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** ע"ה
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Shagalov
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 Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** ע"ה
Ekman
 Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765
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DEDICATED BY
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Printed in the U.S.A.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR PARENTS
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 Passed away on 19 Elul, 5771
 Mrs. **Chava** bas Reb **Chaim** ע"ה **Greenberg**
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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

RELATING TO THE WEEKLY SECTIONS OF THE TORAH AND
SPECIAL OCCASIONS IN THE JEWISH CALENDAR

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

•

Volume IX: *Bamidbar*

•

In English rendition
by
Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

KORACH

A CHRONOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Our Sages¹ relate that Korach's abortive uprising against Moshe and Aharon took place after the spies returned with their negative report. This is reflected in the complaint of Dasan and Aviram:² "You brought us out [of Egypt,] a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the desert... and you did not bring us to a land flowing with milk and honey." Obviously, they were speaking after the decree:³ "You will perish in this desert."

The question arises: Why did Korach wait until then to stage his revolt? G-d's commandment to transfer the sacrificial service from the firstborn to Aharon and his sons came at the time of the giving of the Torah, or before the dedication of the Sanctuary.⁴ By the time the Sanctuary was dedicated, Aharon was serving as High Priest. The giving of the Torah took place on the sixth of Sivan. The Sanctuary was completed the following year, on the twenty-third Adar and dedicated on the first of Nissan.⁵ The spies did not return until after the ninth of Av. Why then did Korach delay his mutiny until then?

Many say that Korach's rebellion was sparked by the appointment of Elitzafon ben Uziel as leader of the sons of

time has thus arrived, that notwithstanding the need for supernatural changes (the miracles and wonders of the true and complete Redemption), these supernatural energies permeate the nature of the world itself, so that the world itself assists in the blossoming of the Redemption.

(From the talk of Thursday, Parshas Korach, second day of Rosh Chodesh Tammuz and of Shabbos Parshas Korach, 3 Tammuz, 5751)

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1. *Seder Olam Rabbah*, ch. 8; cited by the *Rashbam* and *Tosafos*, *Bava Basra* 119a.
 2. *Bamidbar* 16:13-14.
 3. *Bamidbar* 14:35.
 4. *Zevachim* 115b; see the commentary of *Rabbeinu Bechaye* to *Shmos* 19:22.
 5. See the *Jerusalem Talmud*, *Yoma* 1:1.

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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One might still raise a question, as others have done. Even if one were to do one's work to perfection, even reaching the level of "dissemination" (which implies total commitment and self-abnegation), one might question to what avail is it considering the fact that "you are the least among the nations,"¹ and that there are the "seventy nations" who so outnumber the "one lamb"² -- Israel.

In other words, what will be the world's and the nation's response to the Jewish efforts at "disseminating the wellsprings to the remotest reaches," in an effort to hasten the true and complete Redemption, since they do not understand what all this means?! Granted, these efforts are noble and sublime, but one might object, we have to consider the world's reaction!

The answer to these questions is:

The world is ready and completely receptive! When a Jew performs his work properly, transcending all limits and constraints, and simultaneously channeling these efforts within the parameters of nature, he will see how the world, nature and the nations of the world will assist him in his work.

...This is particularly true now that so many of the impediments are no longer here. (And as was noted earlier, even the Soviet Union has undergone significant changes for the better.) On the contrary, we are witness to the miracles and wonders that have occurred, specifically in the last two years (of "miracles" and of "wonders I shall show him, 5750 and 5751, respectively"). The

Kehos,⁶ but this appointment also took place previously, at the time of the Levite census in Iyar. The fact that Korach waited until after the ninth of Av leads to the conclusion that his attempt to seize power was related to the story of the spies.

KORACH'S CONNECTION TO THE SPIES

As mentioned,⁷ the spies wanted to avoid involvement in worldly matters. For this reason, they sought to remain in the desert so that worldly concerns would not disturb the nation's Torah study and connection with G-d. Moshe pointed out the flaw in this approach, for "deed is most essential,"⁸ and taught that the ultimate spiritual heights can be reached only through the observance of *mitzvos* on the material plane.

To develop this concept: The difference between the study of Torah and the observance of *mitzvos* is that Torah study centers on intellectual comprehension. In the realm of intellect, there are differences between individuals according to their level of comprehension. With regard to the observance of *mitzvos*, however, there is no distinction between one Jew and another. Moshe *Rabbeinu's* donning of *tefillin* is the same act as that performed by any simple person. Yes, there are differences with regard to the intent, but the actual deed is the same.

For this reason, Korach's challenge came after the return of the spies. For Korach realized that with regard to the study of Torah, Moshe and Aharon were on a higher level than other Jews. After all, Moshe was the one who received the Torah from G-d. He would study with Aharon, then with Aharon's sons, and only afterwards with the entire

1. *Vo'eschanan* 7:7.

2. *Tanchuma Toldos* 5. *Esther Rabbah*, 10:11. *Pesikta Rabbasi*, 9:2.

6. *Bamidbar Rabbah* and *Midrash Tanchuma*, the beginning of *Parshas Korach*, cited by *Rashi*.

7. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Shelach* in this series.

8. *Cf. Pirkei Avos* 1:17.

nation.⁹ Moreover, the intent is not merely to say that Moshe and Aharon studied before the rest of the Jewish people, but that their study was on a higher spiritual level.

Accordingly, as long as the Divine service required from the Jews centered on the study of Torah, Korach did not protest the supremacy of Moshe and Aharon. The report of the spies, however, made it clear that “deed is most essential,” i.e., that the observance of *mitzvos* on the material plane is of primary importance. Since in this context all Jews share a fundamental equality, Korach protested to Moshe and Aharon: “Why do you set yourselves up as supreme over G-d’s congregation?”¹⁰

To explain at greater length: The spies wanted the nation to remain in the desert, sequestered from involvement with material affairs so that the people could devote themselves to the study of Torah and the observance of *mitzvos*.

Moshe had responded in G-d’s name: The fundamental purpose of the exodus is to enter *Eretz Yisrael* and observe the *mitzvos* there on the material plane. For this reason, it is worthwhile to forgo the great spiritual heights that might be reached in the desert.

If so, Korach argued, “Why do you set yourself up as supreme?” The advantage possessed by Moshe and Aharon relates to spiritual matters. If, however, “deed is what is most essential,” and with regard to deed all are the same, why do Moshe and Aharon claim special distinction?¹¹

9. *Eruvin* 54b.

10. *Bamidbar* 16:3.

11. In the verse cited previously, Korach refers to the people as “the congregation of G-d” using the name *Havayah*, and in the same verse he states: “The people are all holy, and *Havayah* is among them.” He uses the name *Havayah* because it refers to G-d’s essence which is drawn down through the observance of *mitzvos*. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Shelach* in this series, where this concept is explained.

This is the path which my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, blazed for all who desire to follow him. Both thrusts are important. Just as we must realize that “deed is most essential,” we must also realize that our performance of the *mitzvos* must be refined and pure. This is accomplished through the study of *P’nimiyus HaTorah*, and through prayerful service within our hearts.

Through these twofold efforts, we will fashion a dwelling for G-d in this lower realm, and His essence will shine therein.

(Adapted from *Sichos Shabbos Parshas Korach*, 5722)



what's most important is having a Jewish heart. And they bring proof from our Sages, who say:⁴³ "G-d desires the heart."

In contrast, there are those who say that all that matters is the actual performance of *mitzvos*; that the study of *Chassidus* and the pursuit of inner refinement is not critical; after all, "deed is most essential."

With these two *parshiyos*, the Torah refutes the narrowness in both approaches. *Parshas Shelach* stresses that the approach of the spies, who sought to remain isolated within the spiritual realm, is undesirable. And *Parshas Korach* shows that the performance of *mitzvos* in and of itself is also insufficient.

A fusion of both approaches is necessary. This was epitomized in the conduct of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, who dedicated himself to both purposes. On one hand, he devoted his greatest energies, even risking his life, to ensure that a Jewish child should study the *alef-beis*, that another Jew should observe even one *mitzvah*. This applies even to Jews who were far from appreciating the intent of the *mitzvos* or the inner refinement which they are intended to achieve.

Even so, my revered father-in-law sacrificed himself so that such people would observe even one *mitzvah*. Simultaneously, however, he sacrificed himself to spread the study of Torah, and particularly the study of *P'nimiyus HaTorah*, the Torah's mystic secrets. Furthermore, he encouraged his followers to devote themselves to prayer.

RELATIVE AND ABSOLUTE LEADERSHIP

Based on the above, it is possible to answer another question: How was it possible for Korach and "the 250 princes of the people" who followed him to protest against Moshe and Aharon holding positions of leadership? They held positions of leadership themselves, being "princes of the people." Similarly, the entire tribe of Levi was given an elevated status, one which Korach and his followers were not willing to relinquish. (For nowhere does it say that Korach was prepared to give up his position. On the contrary, as evident from Moshe's reply to him, he was seeking priesthood — an even *greater* position.¹²)

How then could Korach make a claim which contradicted his own position?

We must conclude that Korach did not want to destroy the concept of leadership entirely; he was merely opposed to the type of leadership manifested by Moshe, who was equivalent to a king.¹³

Korach claimed: It is true that there are different levels among the Jewish people, and those on a higher level can — and should — employ their superior potential in positions of leadership. Nevertheless, since "the entire congregation is holy," all these levels are comparable. Moreover, as explained above, the differences between one person and another apply only with regard to their spiritual comprehension, which is secondary to the actual performance of the *mitzvos*, in which all Jews are equal. Therefore Korach's group objected to Moshe *Rabbeinu* serving with the absolute authority of a king.¹⁴

43. *Sanhedrin* 106b. That source, however, uses the term "the Holy One, blessed be He" for G-d. *Chassidus* always quotes this statement referring to G-d as *Rachmana*, "the Merciful One." This name for G-d is used when quoting this expression by *Rashi*, *Sanhedrin*, *op. cit.*; the *Zohar*, Vol. II, p. 162b, Vol. III, p. 281b, *Yesod Moreh* by Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra, *Shaar 7*; *Sefer HaChassidim*, sec. 590, and the introduction to *Chovos HaLevevos*.

12. *Bamidbar* 16:10.

13. *Zevachim* 102a; *Shmos Rabbah* 2:6, *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Parshas Behaalos'cha*, sec. 9, *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 83a. See also the sources mentioned in note 6.

14. Aharon's position as High Priest also aroused controversy, for it also is of singular uniqueness. See the *maamar* entitled *Ko Sivorchu*, 5654.

Korach understood that all Jews are not the same, and that these differences would manifest themselves in different levels of authority. He objected, however, to one person (Moshe) being incomparably higher than all others.¹⁵

THE CORE OF KINGSHIP

Korach had another motive for challenging Moshe's sovereignty. For the bond between a king and his subjects is different from other relationships such as that between student and master. The connection a student shares with his master concerns only the teachings which he receives from him. The connection between subjects and their king, by contrast, involves the totality of their being; their *entire existence* is dependent on the king.¹⁶

See also *Tosefta*, the conclusion of *Kerisus*; *Or HaTorah*, *Parshas Va'eira*, on the verse (*Shmos* 6:26): "They were Aharon and Moshe."

15. See *Tanya*, ch. 44, which states: "Although who is he who would — and how could one — dare to attempt to grasp even one fraction of a thousandth of the level of love of the faithful shepherd, [Moshe]...."

The literal meaning of the Hebrew words translated as "dare" is "whose heart conspires." Thus the choice of language is precise. For in *Tanya* ch. 20, the Alter Rebbe explains that the desire and yearning in the heart is above conscious thought, and is a source for conscious thought (which begins as the desire "rises from the heart to the mind"). The implication is that the possibility of approaching Moshe's level is something which our consciousness would never consider.

16. For this reason, "whenever anyone rebels against a king of Israel, the king has permission to kill him" (*Rambam*, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Melachim* 3:8). According to Torah law, punishments are meted out according to the nature of the blemish caused by the unbefitting deed (*Tanya*, ch. 24). The death penalty is given because kingship (and the rebellion against it) affects the very essence of a subject's existence.

On this basis, we can also explain a narrative from the *Tanach*. A king who is the son of a king must be anointed when there is a controversy over his succession (*Rambam*, *loc. cit.*, 1:12). Nevertheless, Rechavam was not anointed despite the fact that Yerovam ben Nevat contested his sovereignty (and moreover, Yerovam was supported by the prophet, Achiyah of Shilo). The reason is that Yerovam's challenge came after Rechavam had already assumed the throne, at which point he no longer needed anointment. For with the assumption of his throne, a king acquires the essence of all of his subjects. The controversy affects only their revealed powers. (To cite a parallel: *Tanya*, ch. 2,

creations of G-d, and a complete day includes them both,⁴¹ the night is dark, and the day, bright.

Similarly, whether or not one has the proper intent, the *mitzvos* one performs are G-dly acts. Nevertheless, with the proper intent, these acts radiate light; without the proper intent, they are dark.

This also lets us appreciate Moshe's response to Korach's claims: "Why do you hold yourself supreme, [since] the entire congregation is holy, and G-d is in their midst." Every Jew is holy. Moreover, this holiness affects not only the souls of the people, but also their bodies. As a result, they have the ability to draw down G-d's essence through the physical observance of *mitzvos*.

The intent of the *mitzvos* is that they produce light. In this context, there is a great — indeed, an incomparable — advantage to the observance of the *mitzvos* by Moshe over their observance by the Jewish people as a whole.

Moshe's Divine service, however, is not insular. We receive all our influence from Moshe — and "the extension of Moshe in every generation." This applies not only to our intellectual and emotional service, but also to our observance of the *mitzvos*.⁴² In particular, the connection to Moshe enables our deeds to radiate light.

A TWOFOLD MISSION

On this basis, we can derive a lesson from the *parshiyos Shelach* and *Korach*. There are those who think that the actual observance of *mitzvos* is not that important; that

41. Commenting on the verse (*Bereishis* 1:5): "And there was evening, there was morning, one day," *Bereishis Rabbah* 3:8 associates "evening" with the deeds of the wicked and "morning" with the deeds of the righteous. Their inclusion together as a single day refers to Yom Kippur, when, through *teshuvah*, the wicked and the righteous are joined together (Rabbi Zaev Einhorn).

42. See *Tanya*, ch. 42, which describes the fear of G-d which leads to the observance of the *mitzvos* as "a small matter" with regard to Moshe.

must shine. In this manner, “G-d will make known,” and the world will be permeated by the knowledge³⁹ and revelation of G-dliness. It is possible for *mitzvos* to be observed without the proper intent, but then they do not shine, nor do they lead the world to the knowledge of G-dliness.

Allusion to this concept is found in the two reasons *Rashi* gives for postponing the confrontation with Korach.

The first reason is that Moshe wanted to provide Korach and his followers with the opportunity to repent. Waiting until morning was not necessary, for as mentioned above, one can turn to G-d in a moment. Instead, Moshe was alluding to the idea that their *teshuvah* should shine with G-dly light. *Teshuvah* of this nature adds light to one’s observance of the *mitzvos*.

Even when *teshuvah* is motivated by fear of punishment, the person’s sins are wiped away; the sinner, however, remains unrefined, for his fundamental self-concern persists. For *teshuvah* to be complete, it has to be permeated by light.

When *teshuvah* is motivated by love for G-d, one’s willful transgressions are transformed into merits.⁴⁰ Surely such *teshuvah* has an effect on one’s good deeds as well, enabling the positive nature of those good deeds which were exiled in the realm of *kelipah* to be revealed and shine forth.

The second reason *Rashi* gives is that Moshe was alluding to the fact that G-d had established fixed distinctions within the world. By mentioning the distinction between morning and evening, Moshe was also alluding to the advantage of *mitzvos* which shine over *mitzvos* which are in exile in *kelipah*. For although both day and night are

39. See *Tanya*, the conclusion of ch. 3.

40. *Yoma* 86b; see *Tanya*, ch. 7.

To illustrate this concept: Our Sages teach that if a person makes a gesture to a colleague in the presence of the king, he is liable to death for rebelling against the sovereign.¹⁷

Why? Because he thereby shows that he has remained conscious of his individual identity. Though such consciousness may not affect the functioning of the kingdom or undermine the king’s authority, it is considered rebellious.

On the surface, this is a far lesser crime than a student rendering a *halachic* decision in the presence of his teacher, for the student is dealing in an area in which he has received direct influence from his teacher. And yet making a gesture is considered a more serious act because the king’s sovereignty should encompass the entire existence of his subjects, including even the casual motion of their hands.

The same concept applies with regard to Moshe our teacher. His supreme authority was the source, not only of the Jews’ appreciation of elevated spiritual ideas, but of even the most simple matters.¹⁸ The same concept applies with

states that those who rebel against the Torah sages still receive their vitality from those sages.)

For these reasons, when a person rebels against a king and rejects his yoke, the king has the authority to kill him, because his kingship affects the essence of the subject’s being.

17. *Chagigah* 5b.

The *Talmud* concludes by mentioning that the person executed did not know the meaning of the gesture given by Rabbi Yehoshua in response, and that is why he was executed. This is, however, no contradiction to the concept that the very gesture represented a rebellion against the king. For if the person had understood the gesture, his interaction with Rabbi Yehoshua would have been an expression of service to the king (as we find in many instances in the *Talmud* and in the *Midrash*, where Rabbi Yehoshua entered into philosophical discussions with the Roman authorities). This also explains why Rabbi Yehoshua was not punished for making a gesture in the presence of the king.

18. Indeed, we find that Moshe was the source [for even] the Jews’ material sustenance. For this reason, when Moshe protested (*Bamidbar* 11:13): “From where will I bring meat?...”, i.e., he could not constrict his spiritual influence to provide the people with meat (see *Likkutei Torah, Behaalos’cha* 31d), G-d told him

regard to “the extension of Moshe in every generation,”¹⁹ the *Nesi'im*, or heads of the Jewish people.²⁰ Every Jew²¹ receives his vitality from the *Nassi* of that generation.²²

(*Bamidbar* 11:16-17): “Gather together 70 of the elders of Israel... and I will cause some of the spirit which rests upon you to emanate and I will grant it to them.”

This implies that even the physical food granted to the Jewish people had its source in Moshe’s spirit, for he was the source of all influence for his generation. (See the *maamar* entitled *B’reish Horminisa*, 5695, sec. 19).

19. See *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 69 (p. 114a). See also *Bereishis Rabbah* 56:7, and *Tanya*, ch. 42.
20. For the entire Jewish people can be described with the analogy of a human body. Just as the head contains the life-energy for all the limbs (*Tanya*, ch. 51), so too the “heads of the Jewish people” guide all the souls of their generation.

For this reason, the influences of these “head” souls encompasses every aspect of the existence of the people of their generation, even their most mundane affairs. All the life-energy of the body, even the vitality of the fingernails, stems from the brain. See *Tanya*, ch. 2, *Likkutei Torah*, *Shir HaShirim* 35d.

21. This includes even those who “willfully sin and rebel against the sages” (*Tanya*, ch. 2). To refer to the analogy mentioned previously: since the leaders are the “heads of the Jewish people,” they are the source of vitality for all the limbs.

Similar concepts apply with regard to kingship. The sovereignty of the king encompasses not only all the humans in his kingdom (even the most simple), but also the animals, plants, and inanimate objects in the nation. To cite a parallel: Our people were commanded to wipe out every tree and every beast belonging to Amalek (*Mechilta*, the conclusion of *Parshas Beshallah*; *Midrash Tehillim* 9:7). The fact that a particular tree or beast belonged to Amalek affected the essence of its being, and therefore it had to be destroyed.

If this concept applies with regard to Amalek, which is associated with the quality of *chutzpah*, brashness, described as (*Sanhedrin* 105a): “sovereignty, lacking only a crown,” it surely applies in the realm of holiness. (Indeed, the “attribute of beneficence surpasses the attribute of retribution” (*Sotah* 11a).) And thus the positive dimensions of a king radiate forth and affect every element of his subjects’ lives.

22. On this basis, we can explain a citation from the *Kehilas Yaakov* (authored by the writer of *Milo HaRoyim*), entry *Rebbe*, that the word *Nassi* (נָסִיאַ) is an acronym for the Hebrew words אֲבִינוּ שֶׁל יַעֲקֹב אֲבִינוּ meaning “the spark of Yaakov our Patriarch.”

The advantage of Yaakov over Avraham and Yitzchak is that the influence of Avraham and Yitzchak was not extended to all their descendants. For Avraham gave birth to Yishmael, and Yitzchak sired Esav. With regard to Yaakov, however, “his posterity was perfect” (*Vayikra Rabbah* 36:5). And our Sages declared (*Bava Metzria* 84a; *Zohar*, Vol. I, p. 35b): “The beauty of Yaakov resembled the beauty of Adam, the first man,” for like Adam’s, Yaakov’s was a

estranged from You”³⁶ — the sparks of holiness created by his observance will be liberated from *kelipah*, and will begin to produce light. Until then, however, his study and observance is like a gem covered in mud.

A person might think: What difference does it make whether my *mitzvos* produce light immediately? Darkness and light apply only to the revealed dimensions of G-dliness. By performing the *mitzvos*, G-d’s essence is drawn down, making this world His dwelling. Torah law requires a Jew to observe the *mitzvos* whatever his present state. Therefore, such a person will continue his observance. The fact that he is temporarily augmenting the forces of *kelipah* is not of importance to him. He has one purpose, as the *Mishnah* teaches:³⁷ “I was created solely to serve my Creator,” to carry out G-d’s will. And G-d’s will is for him to observe the Torah and its *mitzvos*, regardless of the immediate outcome.

The response is that G-d desires not only the actual observance of the *mitzvos*, but that the *mitzvos* be observed with the proper intent. There are two elements to the mission of making a dwelling for G-d in this world:³⁸ a) that it become a dwelling for G-d’s essence, and b) that G-d’s essence be revealed, causing the dwelling to shine brightly.

For the dwelling to be “bright,” it must be fashioned with shining *mitzvos*, *mitzvos* that refine both the person who observes them and his environment.

WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR MITZVOS TO SHINE

This was the answer which Moshe gave Korach and his followers: Yes, “deed is most essential.” But one’s deeds must be permeated by the glow of morning; the *mitzvos*

36. Cf. *II Shmuel* 14:14.

37. *Kiddushin* 82a.

38. See the *sichah* for *Shabbos HaGadol* in this series, where this concept is also explained.

Similarly, the purpose of the *mitzvos* is to increase G-dly light in the world. There are times, however, when they serve an opposite end. When a wicked person studies Torah or performs *mitzvos*, not only does he not add light to the world, he increases its darkness; his deeds augment the forces of *kelipah*.³⁰ Moreover, this applies not only to the Torah and *mitzvos* of a wicked person, but to *any* observance of the Torah and its *mitzvos* performed without the proper intent, or for one's own motives.³¹

As we can see, when the proper motives are lacking, observance can lead to self-concern and pride.³² A person may feel haughty because he was able to overcome the difficulties preventing him from observing the *mitzvos*. This is especially true if he observes the *mitzvos behiddur*, in a beautiful and careful manner.

These feelings of self-concern are the direct opposite of what a *mitzvah* is intended to evoke. The very word *mitzvah* relates to the word *tzavsa*, meaning “connection” or “bond,”³³ for the *mitzvos* enable us to establish a connection with G-d. Self-concern and pride, by contrast, tear one away from G-d. For with regard to a haughty person, it is said:³⁴ “He and I (G-d) cannot dwell in the same place.”

With regard to the inner spiritual nature of the person and the world at large, the positive dimension of the Torah and its *mitzvos* always retains its integrity. Therefore Torah law³⁵ requires even a wicked person to study and observe, although the immediate effect of his deeds will be to augment the forces of *kelipah*. Ultimately, when he repents — and he will certainly repent, for “none will remain

30. *Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Hilchos Talmud Torah* 4:3.

31. See *Tanya*, ch. 39.

32. Indeed, it is possible that a person will observe a *mitzvah* to deceive other people with regard to his character. See *Tosafos, Shabbos* 49a, entry *Elisha*.

33. *Likkutei Torah, Vayikra* 45c.

34. *Sotah* 5a.

35. *Shulchan Aruch HaRav, loc. cit.*

On this basis, we can understand Korach's challenge: “The entire congregation is holy;” i.e., with regard to the observance of *mitzvos*, in which the holiness of the Jewish people is expressed without distinction. And so, “Why do you set yourselves up as supreme?”²³ Why with regard to such matters must the Jews be dependent on Moshe's influence?

WAITING FOR DAYBREAK

To Korach's challenge, Moshe answered:²⁴ “In the morning, G-d will make known who is His, and who is holy, and He will bring him close.” *Rashi* explains that “who is His” refers to those chosen for service as Levites, while “who is holy,” refers to those chosen for the priesthood.

comprehensive soul, encompassing all the souls which would later exist. (See the *sichah* to *Parshas Vayeitzei* in this series, where this concept is discussed and sources are provided.)

Similarly with regard to the *Nesi'im* of the Jewish people: Their qualities are drawn down and affect all matters of the people of their generation. Moreover, just as the influence affects every aspect of the lives of the members of their generation, so too, it affects every aspect of the *Nesi'im*. There is nothing left for them alone. Even the highest of the qualities they possess as *Nesi'im* are drawn down and have an effect on all the members of their generation.

Here also Moshe serves as the paradigm. On one hand, he was superior to all others (see *Tanya*, ch. 44, and see above note 15), and yet as *Tanya* continues “Nevertheless, a minute portion and a fragment of his great goodness and light radiates forth to the Jewish people as a whole.”

23. To cite a parallel: In his gloss to the Torah (*Tzofnas Paneach, Bamidbar* 16:3), the Rogatchover Gaon explains that the priests had supremacy even with regard to those matters which they shared with the Levites. For example, with regard to guarding the *Beis HaMikdash*, there were places which were guarded both by Levites and priests, but in these places the Levites guarded the lower storey, and the priests the upper storey.

With this, the Rogatchover wished to emphasize that Korach's mistake was his failure to realize that even in the matters in which there is similarity, those who are supreme possess an advantage. The above explanation goes deeper, explaining that those on the lower level receive the positive virtues they possess from those on the higher level.

24. *Bamidbar* 16:5.

*Rashi*²⁵ explains further that Moshe had two reasons for postponing the trial until morning:

a) so that Korach and his followers could do *teshuvah*;

b) to show that just as the distinction G-d established between day and night cannot be nullified, so too one cannot nullify the distinction conveyed upon Aharon, as it is written:²⁶ “And Aharon was distinguished, to be sanctified as most holy.”

Both rationales require explanation: According to the first, it is necessary to explain why the nation had to wait an entire night. *Teshuvah*, after all, requires only a moment. If the only intent was to grant a greater opportunity for repentance, there is no end to the matter; some are capable of *teshuvah* immediately. Others will need to wait until morning, and still others will require even more time.

Even according to the second rationale, it remains difficult to understand why it was necessary to wait. The confrontation could have occurred after sunset,²⁷ at which time the division between day and night is also apparent.

25. *Op. cit.*, based on *Bamidbar Rabbah* and *Midrash Tanchuma*.

26. *I Divrei HaYomim* 23:13.

27. Korach’s mutiny began during the day, as reflected in our Sages’ comments (*Sanhedrin* 109b) regarding the wife of On, the son of Peles: “She sat at the entrance to the tent.... All those who saw...,” implying that the events took place at a time when one could see.

Similarly, this can be understood from the *Midrash*’s statements that Korach came to Moshe with the question: “Are *tzitzis* required for a garment that is all purple?” For Moshe received the people “from the morning *until* the evening” (*Shmos* 18:13).

On the surface, one might say that it would not have been possible to carry out the confrontation at night, because it involved bringing an incense offering, and that is permitted only during the day.

It is, however, impossible to say that this is *Rashi*’s intent, because a) this concept is not mentioned in *Rashi* at all, and b) *Rashi* mentions other reasons which are unnecessary if the confrontation had to be postponed because of the incense offering.

Therefore we are forced to say that, because of the emphasis the verse places on the word “morning,” *Rashi* maintains that the confrontation had to

Also, we must understand how Moshe’s instructions to “Take incense-burners” serves as a reply to Korach’s claim: “Why set yourselves up as supreme [since] the entire congregation is holy.”

Through the confrontation, Moshe proved that Korach was wrong, and that everything Moshe had done was in response to G-d’s command. The confrontation did not, however, show *why* Korach was wrong.

(Moreover, the use of an incense offering related more directly to Korach’s objection to Aharon’s High Priesthood, and not to his claim against Moshe’s assumption of absolute authority.)

Thus we may infer that by saying the confrontation would take place in the morning, Moshe was alluding to an explanation which refutes the basis for Korach’s argument.

POLISHING GEMS

Our Sages use the expression:²⁸ “*Teshuvah* and good deeds” and not “*teshuvah* and *mitzvos*.” In explanation, the Alter Rebbe states²⁹ that it is possible that a person will perform *mitzvos*, but that their light will not shine forth. *Teshuvah*, however, transforms *mitzvos* into “good deeds which shine.”

To illustrate with an analogy: There are times when a person possesses gems, but the gems are dirty. The stones remain gems, and have the potential to shine. Nevertheless, as long as they are covered with grime, this potential remains hidden.

be held at that time for the reasons he mentioned. Were these reasons not significant, the confrontation would have been held at night, using a medium other than the incense offering.

28. *Avos* 4:17, *et al.*

29. *Likkutei Torah, Devarim* 85a, *Shir HaShirim* 17c.