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בשבת



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS
KORACH

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS
RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN

A PAN, A PRAYER, AND A PLEA

Parshas Korach informs us of the unfortunate rebellion led by Korach, in which he challenges Moshe's authority over *Klal Yisrael*.

In response to Korach's challenge, Moshe prepared a test. *Ketores* - incense - would bring the penalty of death if brought improperly. Moshe, Aharon, and the members of the rebellion would each take a pan filled with incense, and burn it. Those that were chosen by Hashem would survive, and the others risked death.¹

The stage was set for a showdown between Korach's faction, and Moshe and Aharon. Yet, we find an interesting sentence in the middle of the narrative. The night before the final confrontation, Moshe offered a prayer to Hashem. "Please don't accept their offering!" pleaded Moshe.²

Moshe knew that Hashem had appointed him as leader, and had told him to make Aharon the *Kohen Gadol*. Why does it seem that Moshe was afraid that Korach's offering would be accepted?

The *Alter* of Kelm,³ (R' Simcha Zissel Ziv, 1824–1898) explains that this question is based on a misunderstanding of how *tefillah* operates. We think that sometimes a *tefillah* is accepted, and sometimes it is not. This is incorrect. Much like it's natural and expected that a hammer will break glass, so too, *tefillah* works, and it *will* affect the world around us. Thus, Moshe had to *daven* that the offering of Korach and his congregation not be accepted, as perhaps they would pray that it should be accepted, and since *tefillah* works, the *ketores* would indeed be accepted.

What a wild idea! The terrible calamity that would have occurred had Korach 'won' cannot be described. They weren't simply rebelling against Moshe, they were rebelling against the Torah and Hashem Himself! Yet, even under such circumstances, *tefillah* works! Thus, Moshe had to counteract their prayers with his own.

We can sometimes get discouraged when we don't see an obvious answer to our prayers. We may think "What's the point?" It is important to remember, *tefillah* works. We might not see how or where, but prayer having an affect is as natural as gravity making things fall. There is no *tefillah* that is returned empty-handed.

1 *Bamidbar* 16:1-7, *Daas Zekanim* s.v. והיה האיש on *Bamidbar* 16:7

2 *Bamidbar* 16:15

3 Cited in *Darchoi Mussar*, pg. 194

Prayer having an affect is as natural as gravity making things fall.

Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Besides concentrating during our prayer, are there any other techniques that can be used to augment our *davening*?

The *Ohr Hachaim*¹ writes four steps one can take to boost one's *tefillah*.

1. One should view oneself as a 'pauper knocking on the door,' not demanding service, but rather, approaching Hashem with the humility and sincerity that comes from recognizing that we have no other source for blessing.

2. One should recognize that Hashem is the Most Merciful, and that He will do the best for us.

3. Timing. Chazal determined the proper times for *tefillah*. Additionally, a person may recognize that this is an opportune time to *daven*; for example, they see that things are working out well in other areas.

4. One should be detailed in their *tefillah*. This is to help our appreciation when our request is granted. When we recognize all the details of Hashem's kindness, we are that much more grateful.²

1 *Devarim* 3:23, s.v. ואתחנן

2 As explained by R' Eliezer Abish, *Portraits of Prayer*, pg. 432

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The performance of any and all mitzvos is completely built upon Tikkun HaMiddos.

- Chazon Ish zt"l, *Sefer Emunah U'Bitachon*, Chapter 4, Section 7

MOVED TO TEARS

At long last the day had arrived. The Rosensons* were finally moving out of their two-bedroom apartment into a home that could more adequately suit the needs of their growing family. As moving day approached, the small apartment only felt smaller and more cramped as new towers of boxes filled any remaining open areas. When the toys and kid's books got packed away, the children were left with nothing to do and nowhere to go, which only increased the delicate atmosphere. As always, Mrs. Shoshana Rosenson did her best to keep everyone upbeat and positive despite the challenges of their cramped living space.

But perhaps the biggest challenge was felt by Mr. David Rosenson. Although the apartment was spacious and roomy ten years prior when the young couple moved in, seven children later, David now felt like the walls of his home were caving in on him. There was nowhere to put anything, the children got into any personal space he used to have, and the cleanups were around the clock in an effort to maintain any sense of tidiness. Plus, as a person who craved quiet and introspection, David now felt like he could no longer hear himself think.

Over the last several years, he had many heartfelt *tefillos* asking Hashem to lead his family to the right home and community. And now those *tefillos* had been answered. The movers showed up on time and the flurry of purposeful activity was in full swing. As the last box was loaded onto the truck, David and Shoshana decided that she would drive ahead to their new home in order to be there when the truck arrived, while David would stay behind to do the final sweep and close up the apartment.

When the loose ends had been tied up, David reached for his apartment keys and approached the front door, ready to leave the apartment for the last time. And then, standing alone in the empty apartment, it hit him. A wave of emotion washed over David, his eyes welled up with tears and he began to cry. He thought about the countless times he and his children had walked in and out of this door in the past ten years. In tears, he turned around and looked back at the bare home, he looked at the spot where his daughter had colored (with markers) on the walls, another spot where the outline of his son's Aleph-Beis chart could still be discerned, at the floor where it was rubbed out by the baby's highchair moving back and forth. Ten years of memories rushed through his mind.

Suddenly David heard a new *tefillah* escape his lips. "Thank you Hashem. Thank you for all the blessings and precious gifts that you have given me in this home." Walking from room to room, David repeated his new *tefillah* with deep feelings of appreciation. Yes, living in cramped quarters had been difficult, but now David was able to offer a *tefillah* of gratitude to Hashem for all that He had given him. "Thank you. Thank you..."

**Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- Some prayers are answered after one hundred years, and some prayers are answered before the speaker finishes his sentence.¹
- Even the *tefillah* of the wicked is answered, but, as always, the prayer must be sincere.²

¹ *Medrash Aggadah Bereishis 41:1*

² *Medrash Tehillim 4:3*