

Shabbat Shalom Pretoria

כ"ס ז'

Pretoria Hebrew Congregation

In loving memory of Oscar Sher - לעילוי נשמת ר' אשר שלמה ב"ר יהודה

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KORACH

3 TAMMUZ 5782 - 2 JULY 2022

KORACH NUMBERS 16:1 - 18:32

Hertz Pg 639; ArtScroll Pg 820

First Aliyah

Korach, Moshe's first cousin, stages a rebellion against Moshe and Aharon. Together with a few ringleaders, he gathers 250 men of renown and accuses Moshe and Aharon of power hoarding. "The entire congregation is holy, and the L-rd is in their midst. So why do you raise yourselves above the L-rd's assembly?" They took specific issue with the appointment of Aharon as High Priest. Moshe proposes that on the following day they all participate in a test which would determine who indeed was worthy of the mantle of High Priest. Everyone would bring an incense offering to the Tabernacle, and G-d would make known His choice for High Priest. Moshe then tries to placate the rebellious group, unsuccessfully attempting to dissuade them from participating in this suicidal test.

Second Aliyah

Moshe pleads with G-d not to accept the incense offering of the rebellious group. Korach spends the night inciting the Jews against Moshe, and gathers them all to the entrance of the Tabernacle to witness the grand spectacle. G-d's glory appears.

Third Aliyah

G-d is angered by the Jews' association with Korach, and wishes to destroy them. Moshe and Aharon pray on the Jews' behalf and the decree is averted. The earth opens up and swallows Korach and his family, and a heavenly fire consumes the rest of the 250 rebels. Moshe instructs Aharon's son Elazar to retrieve the frying pans which were used for the incense offering, to flatten them and plate the altar

with them—a visible deterrent for any individual who ever wishes to challenge Aharon's priesthood. The next day, the community complains that Moshe and Aharon are to be blamed for the deaths of "G-d's people."

Fourth Aliyah

G-d instructs Moshe and Aharon: "Separate yourselves from the community, and I will destroy them in an instant." And indeed, a plague struck the nation, and many thousands were dying. Moshe tells Aharon to quickly take a firepan with incense and go into the midst of the congregation and atone for their sin. Aharon does so. He stands "between the living and the dead," and the plague is halted.

Fifth Aliyah

This section describes the "test of the staffs." G-d tells Moshe to take a staff from each of the twelve tribes, with the name of each tribe's prince written upon their staff. Another staff was taken to represent the tribe of Levi, and Aharon's name was written on that staff. These staffs were placed overnight in the Holy of Holies chamber of the Tabernacle. Next morning they were removed, and miraculously Aharon's staff had budded with almond blossoms and almonds. This was further proof that Aharon was G-d's choice for High Priest.

Sixth Aliyah

G-d commands Moshe to return "Aharon's staff" to the Holy of Holies, where it is to remain for perpetuity. The Jews express to Moshe their fear of mistakenly entering a restricted area of the Tabernacle, and dying as a result. In response, G-d commands the priests and the Levites to carefully guard the Tabernacle, to prevent unauthorized entry by non-priests. The Torah then lists the various gifts to which the priests were

entitled. These include the privilege of eating certain sacrifices, as well as select portions of other sacrifices; receiving the five shekels for the redemption of Israelite firstborn sons; a portion of all grain, oil, and wine crops; the "first fruit"; and more. Aharon is informed that his descendents will not receive a portion in the land of Israel—instead, G-d is their inheritance and portion.

Seventh Aliyah

The Levites, too, will not receive a share of the land of Israel. Instead they are entitled to a tenth of all the Israelites' crops—this in return for the Tabernacle and Temple services which they render. Upon receiving this tithe, the Levites must, in turn, separate a tenth of this tithe and give it to the priests.

HAFTARAH: SAMUEL 1 11:14 – 12:22

Hertz Pg 649 ArtScroll Pg 1186

In this week's Haftarah we read how the prophet Shmuel tells the Jewish people that their request for a king was a terrible sin. He then performs a miracle to prove to the people G-d's anger with them. The Jewish people beg Shmuel to pray to G-d for forgiveness after which he reassures them that if they follow in G-d's ways they have nothing to fear despite the sin of asking for a king.

The problem with this whole story is the fact that one of the 613 mitzot is the mitzvah of appointing a king (Devarim 17:15), and so not only is it not a sin to have a king – it is actually a mitzvah. Therefore one needs an explanation as to why Shmuel told the Jewish people that they had sinned by asking for a king.

Maimonides [Kings 1:2] answers this question and says that the sin in this week's Haftarah was the fact that they did not ask for a king in order to fulfil G-d's mitzvah – rather they asked for a king because they wanted to mimic the nations around them. This, Shmuel says, angered G-d, because they could have achieved the very same goal of having a king by asking for it in the right way – but instead they did it the wrong way.

This concept, may happen many times in our lives where we can do the very same act and have it considered a mitzvah or the opposite. For example, we can have a meal on Friday night in honour of Shabbat and this is considered a mitzvah, or we can

eat the very same meal on Friday night yet not identify it with Shabbat and then not only is it not a Mizvah but it can anger G-d as it did in this week's Haftarah.

PIRKEI AVOT – CHAPTER 4

Renov Siddur 442, ArtScroll Siddur 564

JEWISH HISTORY

WITH THANKS TO CHABAD.ORG

Joshua Stops the Sun– 3 TAMMUZ

On the third of Tammuz of the year 2488 from creation (1273 BCE), Joshua was leading the Jewish people in one of the battles to conquer the Land of Israel. Victory was imminent, but darkness was about to fall. "Sun," proclaimed Joshua, "be still at Giv'on; moon, at the Ayalon valley" (Joshua 10:12). The heavenly bodies acquiesced, halting their progress through the sky until Israel's armies brought the battle to its successful conclusion.

PIRKEI AVOT

WITH THANKS TO SIE.ORG

"Ben Azzai would say: Run to pursue a minor mitzvah as if it were a major mitzvah and flee from a sin. For a mitzvah drags with it another mitzvah, and a sin drags with it another sin. For the reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah, and the reward of a sin is a sin." (4:2)

"the reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah.." - one who does a mitzva is helped and assisted from Heaven to do another one so that he receives reward for both. And likewise for the "reward" of sins, etc.

Another explanation: the reward of a mitzva is a mitzva. All that a person benefits and rejoices in doing a mitzvah, this is considered a mitzvah by itself. He will receive reward for the mitzvah he did and also for the joy and pleasure in performing it. (Bartenura – Both comments)

TEFILLA B'IYUN

The Portion of the Ketoret – Part of Sacrifices
(Shacharit Service)

The Zohar states that the chapter & laws of the Ketoret be recited, in the Shacharit service, "in order to remove impurity from the world prior to the prayers [i.e. the complete Shacharit service] that take the place of offerings."

(The Complete Artscroll Siddur)