

## How To Set Proper Priorities Numbers, Ch. 16

1. Korach the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi took [himself to one side] along with Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, descendants of Reuben.
2. They confronted Moses together with two hundred and fifty men from the children of Israel, chieftains of the congregation, representatives of the assembly, men of repute.
3. They assembled against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for the entire congregation are all holy, and the L-rd is in their midst. So why do raise yourselves above the L-rd's assembly?"
4. Moses heard and fell on his face.
5. He spoke to Korach and to all his company, saying, "In the morning, the L-rd will make known who is His, and who is holy, and He will draw [them] near to Him, and the one He chooses, He will draw near to Him.
6. Do this, Korach and his company: Take for yourselves censers.
7. Place fire into them and put incense upon them before the L-rd tomorrow, and the man whom the L-rd chooses he is the holy one; you have taken too much upon yourselves, sons of Levi."

*Korach the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi took himself to one side*

### Rashi, Midrash

What did he do? He went and assembled 250 men, heads of Sanhedrin, most of them from the tribe of Reuben, his neighbors. These were Elitzur the son of Shedeur and his colleagues, and others like him, as it says, "chieftains of the congregation, those called to the assembly." And further it states, "These were the chosen ones of the congregation". He dressed them with cloaks made entirely of blue wool. They came and stood before Moses and asked him, "Does a cloak made entirely of blue wool require fringes [tzitzith], or is it exempt?" He replied, "It does require [fringes]." They began laughing at him saying, "Is it possible that a cloak of another colored material, one string of blue wool exempts it and this one, which is made entirely of blue wool, should not exempt itself?"

Korach further challenged Moses: "If a house is full of Torah scrolls, what is the law? Does it need a mezuzah on its doorpost or not?" Replied Moses, "It is obligated." Said Korach: "The entire Torah, consisting of 275 chapters, does not absolve this house, and the [two] chapters in the mezuzah absolve it? G-d did not command you these laws -- you have invented them yourself."

*You take too much upon yourselves*

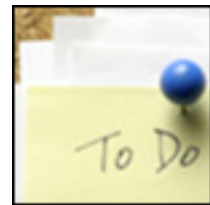
### Rashi

You took by far too much greatness for yourselves.

*For the entire congregation are all holy, and the L-rd is in their midst. So why do raise yourselves above the L-rd's assembly?*

### Rashi

Korach said to them: "All heard at Sinai the commandment, 'I am the L-rd your G-d!' If you alone had



### פרק טז

א. ויקח קרח בן יצהר בן קהת בן לוי ודתן ואבירם בני אליאב ואון בן פלת בני ראובן: ב. ויקמו לפני משה ואנשים מבני ישראל חמשים ומאתים נשיאי עדה קראי מועד אנשי שם: ג. ויקהלו על משה ועל אהרן ויאמרו אליהם רב לכם פי כל העדה כלם קדשים ובתוכם ה' ומדוע תתנשאו על קהל ה': ד. וישמע משה ויפל על פניו: ה. וינדבר אל קרח ואל כל עדתו לאמר בקר וידע ה' את אשר לו ואת הקדוש והקריב אליו ואת אשר יבחר בו יקריב אליו: ו. זאת עשו קחו לכם מחותות קרח וכל עדתו: ז. והגו בהן אש ושימו עליהן קטרת לפני ה' מחר והיה האיש אשר יבחר ה' הוא הקדוש רב לכם בני לוי:

heard it while they had not, you could have claimed superiority. But now that they have all heard it, Why do you raise yourselves above the congregation of G-d?"

*In the morning, the L-rd will make known who is His*

## Rashi

The Midrashic interpretation of בִּקְרָא, morning, [rather than מָחָר, tomorrow] is: Moses said to him [Korach]: "The Holy One, blessed is He, assigned boundaries to His world. Are you able to transform morning into evening? That is how possible it is for you to undo this, as it says, 'It was evening and it was morning... and He separated...' ; similarly, ' Aaron was set apart to sanctify him... '"

## The Lubavitcher Rebbe

Korach argued why must the layman look up to the priest? Why must he look at the few hours of his day spent in priest-like activity—study and prayer—as the highlight of his day? Is G-d closer to heaven than to earth? Is serving Him by transcending the material a more important part of humanity's mission than utilizing the material existence to fulfill His will? G-d created a physical world because He wanted us to use the physical realities of our world and thereby uplift the mundane.

If anything, Korach argued, the simple Jew and his consecrated mundane life are holier than the priest since it is he who fulfills G-d's purpose in creation. All our activities, spiritual and mundane, should be considered equal though separate activities, neither one better or holier.

To this Moses answered, "in the morning G-d will make known..." Korach erred, in not realizing that while holiness exists in potential, it must constantly be directed and elevated for it to be holy in practice. Inherently, there is goodness in all people and in all parts of creation, but only when we live a material life in the service of a higher, spiritual goal have we actualized this goodness. When the average man on the street fulfills G-d's commandments in the trivial aspects of his life, he is fulfilling G-d's desire for creation, a desire that the lofty priest cannot achieve. But he must constantly keep his eyes on the priest, on those transcendent, holy moments of his day, so that he keeps a clear awareness of his priorities.

Even if we spend ninety percent of our day eating drinking and earning a living, we need to do so in a way that shows that this is only in order to enable us to spend the small part of our day devoted to prayer, study, acts of charity and other G-dly pursuits. Only then does the physical reality become a partner to the divine.

## SUMMARY

- G-d created our world because He desired a physical reality where mankind is involved with the material existence. By doing so we uplift it to a higher service.
- Even if we spend most of our day on mundane realities like eating or earning a living, we need to keep an eye on the priest--i.e. realize that this is only in order to enable us to spend the small part of our day devoted to holy pursuits.
- Moses teaches us: Live a material life, but in the service of a higher spiritual goal.
- Schedule your day to reflect your true priorities and values. Meaningful and quality moments spent in deep connection with our loved ones and with our creator imbue the mundane parts of our lives with meaning and keep us focused on a right order of priorities.

