
Korach and the Missing 38 Years of the Torah

Author : Meiliken

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This shabbat is the bar mitzvah of my son David, in the portion of Korach. A note of caution; the insights in today's article may take you far from what you thought you knew about the Torah. According to chazal and just about every commentator on the Torah, Korach was not a very positive person and they are correct. They are also correct that this portion teaches us the extremely important concept of appreciation and also what happens when we are ruled by greed and jealousy. Though it may be not greed so much, because Korach, having obtained the treasures of Joseph, was already the richest man in the world by far. He did well by greed, until of course he foolishly challenged Moshe and Aaron. It is said he had 300 donkeys just to carry the keys to his treasure chests. Though this saying may be hyperbole, the point of it is that Korach was an extremely wealthy man. The Midrash tells us his wife pushed him to want it all. However, it is odd because it is rare to find someone wise enough to amass and keep such wealth and so foolish to challenge his cousins whom he has witnessed wielding such might powers as the chosen channels of the Almighty. He had seen them defeat Pharaoh and his armies, split seas, wreak havoc with nature and reality, all with the raising of an arm or a few chosen words—so why would he think he had a chance? He had seen G-d's wrath against anyone who spoke against Moses, even Moses' own sister Miriam, which may be the reason why that particular incident happened only two portions earlier.

Those very same sages who elucidated the appreciative aspects of the Korach portion, also have told us that the Torah has many layers—all true and beautiful—and the deeper layers are where the strongest secrets lay. According to Rav Abulafia, the most concealed is that which most needs to be revealed, and not only does everything get revealed in its time, but nothing gets revealed without permission from Above. It is also Rav Abulafia who tells us that the deepest Torah secrets are revealed through the understanding of gematria, the science of reading the underlying energies of the Hebrew letters and Torah passages.

Using gematria and searching the Torah for clues, we see that Korach (???) has the numerical value of 308 and because in Kabbalah the spiritual gematria-related understanding of the number "0" is that it is often just a place holder and becomes nullified. Hence 308 can also be seen as 38, which is relevant because Korach is the 38th portion of the Torah. This is significant because the portion of Korach immediately follows the portion of Shlach, where G-d decreed that the Israelites were to wander in the desert for 40 years. It immediately precedes the portion of Chukath, where the red heifer is utilized and 38 of those 40 years vanish. Without missing a beat the journey of 42 places continues from Korach into Chukath with no time or space for

those derived 38 years.

In the fourth Book of the Torah, *Bamidbar*, Korach is indeed the 38th parasha. 33 of those portions are in the first three books and five of them are found in *Bamidbar*. It is known from chazal that 3 of the Patriarchs gave of their lifespans to King David so that he may live.

Abraham, whose numerical gematria value is 248, the same as *Bamidbar*, gave 5 years. Jacob, representing the 3 columns of the Tree-of-Life gave 28 years and together with Abraham, they gave 33 years. Joseph gave 37 years. We can see these as coincidences or as hints after hints that there may be something here in the number 14,700, which is the number of people who died in the aftermath of the Korach rebellion, because Jacob lived 147 (!) years.

Speaking of Jacob, he fought and defeated the dark angel in the river Yabok the night before he reunited with his brother. As it just so happens, Korach's name as written in the Torah is: Korach Ben Yitzhar (???) whose initials (???) spell Yabok (???) backwards. Yabok, or numerical value 112, represents two powerful unifications to the kabbalists. The first is Elohim (?????) with the ineffable Name of G-d (????) or 86 and 26 energetically, fusing the heavenly world with the natural one. The second represents the passage from Malchut through Zeir Anpin to the 3 upper worlds : ?????+????+????

Nevertheless Korach's full name is Korach Ben Yzhar Ben Kohoth Ben Levi, as I know so well from listening to my son diligently practice reciting his portion. Those initials spell Yabok (???) backwards, then forwards, Yabok (???), then a permutation of the name, Balak (???). Balak is the name of one of three Torah portions named after three powerful individuals. In Yitro (????), named after Moses' father-in-law, we find the 10 Commandments. Two of these men were not-so nice; Balak (???), Moses' nemesis, and Korach (???), Moses' cousin. Together, their initials spell Yabok (???) once again.

The multiple hints tying Korach to Jacob and the conquering of the dark angel are extensive and even the numerical values of their names tell us that more than what meets the eye is going on. Yitro has a numerical value of 616, the same as "the Torah (?????)," while Korach's numerical value of 308 is exactly half of 616 and half a Torah is the same as a whole Torah.

While Yitro is the 17th portion of the Torah and 17 is the numerical value of *Tov* (good), it is also the 5th portion of the Book of *Shmot*, and since *Korach* is the 5th portion of *Bamidbar* and Balak is the 7th portion, likewise of *Bamidbar*, 5 plus 5 plus 7 is also 17, *Tov* (good). Yet another hint. Moreover, Korach is the 38th portion, Balak the 40th and Yitro the 17th, together they sum (38+40+17) to 95 and there are 95 verses in the portion of Korach. While 95 is the numerical value of *H'Melech*. "the King," it is also the value of Haman and of Daniel from the Scroll of Esther. We might posit that the evil aspects within Korach ended up in Haman and the positive in Daniel and they are both under the King (G-d).

In the portion and rebellion of Korach, the Torah makes a point of repeatedly telling us that there were 250 Israelites participating with 250 incense pans etc., and the Torah does not make a point of anything haphazardly. 250 is the value of the Hebrew word for *candle*, *Ner* (??), and when we spell out these two letters utilizing gematria *milui* (??? ???), we get (106 + 510) = 616, once again the numerical equivalent of "the Torah (?????)."

A closer look at the portion shows us that contrary to popular belief, Korach was never swallowed alive by the earth, only his men, along with Dathan and Aviram ended up as such. Korach and the 250 incense lighters were actually devoured by fire, which is interesting because Aaron's sons Nadav and Avihu were also devoured by fire when they made an unauthorized incense offering. Again, Korach knew this—they were his cousins—why would he have agreed to Moses' contest of lighting the incense when he well knew what G-d had decreed and had done regarding anyone that makes an unauthorized offering of the incense. A sin offering would perhaps have been more appropriate.

Moreover, we see that Korach's sons were spared, supposedly because they repented. G-d did

not show that kind of mercy elsewhere when his laws were challenged. Why did he do so in this case?

It is said that Korach had a vision that Samuel Hanavi would be his descendant and it is assumed that he misinterpreted the vision to mean that he would become the Cohen Hagadol, which is why some say Korach thought he would be successful in challenging Moses.

Yet another clue into Korach (???) is that the value of his name in gematria *atbash* (???), (a cipher whereby the alphabet is reversed), is 67, the numerical value of the *sefira* (dimension) of Binah, the level at which Moses was.

Immediately before the portion of Korach, G-d decreed that the Israelites would wander in the desert for 40 years and we know that those 40 years are very much part of G-d's Divine Calendar. While His word must be done, He is nevertheless all merciful and we know from the kabbalists and our own experiences with the kabbalistic tools, (such as the 42-Letter Name), that time and distance are elastic. 40 years can pass in 40 days—as it would seem to have happened in this case. Nevertheless, such a significant change in the course of history and reality would necessitate certain tools, like the red heifer, and a huge action or sacrifice on the part of man. Could the richest man in the world giving up all his wealth, his legacy and his life, be such a sacrifice?

What if that vision of Samuel Hanavi gave solace to Korach that his sacrifice would be successful? What if G-d was not only fulfilling the vision he gave to Korach, but was also acknowledging Korach's sacrifice by allowing his sons to live. It is notable that Aaron's sons perished after igniting the unauthorized incense, while Korach's sons survived. Wasn't Korach the notorious one?

And why did Moses choose an incense offering as the contest and not a sin offering? Was Korach and the 250 men the actual sin offering? Was Moses aware of the sacrifice and was going along with it in order to spare the Israelites? We can ponder that Moses, who consulted G-d on most matters, why did he not consult G-d before choosing the incense offering?

So the main question is, "Did Korach sacrifice himself so that the 38 years would pass with mercy, as if the Israelites slept through it?" There is no doubt that the revolt existed, but, "Was Korach divinely inspired to revolt?" The Arizal tells us that even the most negatively inclined people in the Torah can deliver blessings, since all the words of the Torah are G-ds. He gives the example of Laban, who inadvertently blessed Elazar and thus ended the curse of Canaan for him. There is also the example of Bilaam, who blessed the Israelites every time he tried to curse them.

If indeed G-d wanted a huge sacrifice to ignite the mercy from above, what greater one would there have been than Korach, the richest man in the world... perhaps no one else had more to sacrifice.

In Bamidbar 26:10, the Torah states that when Korach died and fire annihilated the 250, it involved a divine miracle.

Sacrificing all that one owns is the highest form of appreciation when one understands that the altruistic actions of a single person can change the course of history for the betterment of humanity. We are not talking about crazed suicide bombers who have nothing to lose, but about the deliberate and divinely inspired actions of someone with literally everything to lose. That is the ultimate message of the portion.

In the troubling times ahead, great sacrifices are going to be called for and we must ask ourselves who will step up; who will sacrifice everything for the sake of mankind? It will take certainty, extraordinary certainty. Whether Korach sacrificed everything for the sake of mankind or for the sake of his vision, it does not matter. The point is he was willing to risk everything with his certainty.

Once again the Torah is providing us with the clues and the means to overcome all obstacles,

and it is doing so in the appropriate time. Being appreciative has always been extremely important, but the message to be ready to sacrifice everything is now of the utmost importance as we strive to close the final gap toward Moshiach consciousness. The earth opening up and swallowing Korach's followers was a true earthquake. It is also a metaphor for how easily a gap can close and the warning point that if we are not careful to be in the right consciousness it can close in on us.

We can wonder where those 38 years went which deprived us of Moses' physical presence for 38 years. Perhaps they were granted to the Arizal, who lived 38 extraordinary years, a peerless fountain of knowledge and beacon of light. Wherever the years disappeared, rest assured it was meant to happen from the very beginning of time.

Shabbat Shalom,
Ezra