

Shabbos Table Sparks

Practical Parsha Insights for Family Discussion



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Bereishis

Eretz Yisrael: Inspiring Jewish Courage and Conviction

The Torah begins with the story of the creation of the world. *Rashi* quotes the *midrash* which asks: Since the primary purpose of the Torah is to teach Hashem's commandments to the Jewish people, why does the Torah begin with the story of creation? Wouldn't it make more sense to start off by teaching the *mitzvos*?

The *midrash* answers: There may come a time in the future when the Jewish people will conquer Eretz Yisrael and the nations of the world will accuse them of stealing the land. In response, the Jewish people should state: *Bereishis Bara Elokim* - Hashem created this world and owns it, and He gave Eretz Yisrael to the Jewish people.

The words of the *midrash* are somewhat bothersome. What good is our statement for people who don't believe in Hashem? How will our words defuse their anger over the Jewish nation's control of Eretz Yisrael?

As G-d fearing Jews, our behavior is based on our belief in Hashem. When one questions why we act in certain ways, the truthful answer is that we are doing so because that is what Hashem asks of us. An answer doesn't always have to appeal to the questioner; it needs to explain our actions. When we explain that we conquered Eretz Yisrael because Hashem gifted it to the Jewish nation, that is 100% true, and **that** is the message which we need to convey. When we act with faith and honesty, we don't need to concern ourselves with what people think and say. Furthermore, when a questioner or critic feels

that we are answering with truthfulness and conviction, even though they may not share our beliefs, they often walk away impressed by our honesty and with a clearer understanding of why we believe and act as we do.

Korach's Misstep: The Inability To See Another Perspective

Korach's revolt against the leadership of Moshe is recorded in this week's *parsha*. Korach was jealous of his younger cousin, who was appointed by Moshe to a leadership position within *Shevet Levi* while Korach was skipped over. The Torah begins the episode with the words "ויקה קרח - *and Korach took*". *Rashi* interprets the word "took" to imply that Korach separated himself from the unity of the Jewish people to challenge Moshe's leadership.

One can ask why the Torah wrote that Korach "took" himself. Had the Torah written that Korach challenged Moshe's leadership, would we have thought differently about what happened? What lesson can we learn from the words "*and Korach took*"?

I suggest that the Torah is hinting at one of the character traits that Korach had trouble overcoming. When a person feels that someone has treated them wrongfully, very often their first reaction is to blame and find fault with the person who treated them badly. It's easiest for the "victim" to think that the "perpetrator" doesn't care about them and therefore acted in such an insensitive way.

However, the Torah encourages the "victim" to take a less reactive and more meaningful approach. The "victim" should take the time to think about the situation from the perspective of the "perpetrator". Perhaps the reason behind the way the "perpetrator" acted was beyond their control. Maybe the "perpetrator" acted inadvertently. There are endless possibilities. If a "victim" worked on seeing the situation from the perspective of the "perpetrator," in many instances discord could be averted.

Korach was a person of great stature, who no doubt was capable of preserving unity among the people by joining Moshe and seeing the situation from Moshe's perspective. Instead, Korach chose not to do so. By causing a break and "taking himself" away from the unity of the Jewish people, he started a massive and purposeless *machlokes*.

קרח
Korach