

# Parsha Ponders

Korach | June 11, 2021 | 1 Tammuz 5781

## Eyes to see<sup>1</sup>

ויקח קרח וגו' ודתן ואבירם וגו' ואון וגו' ויקמו לפני משה ואנשים מבני-ישראל חמשים ומאתים וגו'  
Korach took [his *tallis*]<sup>2</sup> ...and Dasan and Aviram...and Ohn...they and two-hundred and fifty men from  
the Jewish people confronted Moshe...<sup>3</sup>

This week's parsha details the rebellion of Korach. He challenged the leadership of Moshe and Aharon, convincing a group of the greatest sages of Israel to join his cause. Rashi asks<sup>4</sup>, how could Korach ever conceive that his rebellion would be successful? Moshe clearly was a miracle performer. He produced the Ten Plagues, and split the sea. He obviously had a relationship with Hashem. Rashi says<sup>5</sup> that Korach's eye misled him. He saw a prophecy that his future descendant would be the prophet Shmuel, who *Chazal* say was of equal prominence to Moshe and Aharon<sup>6</sup>. Korach figured there is no way he would merit this great descendant unless he took action<sup>7</sup>. He would have to usurp Moshe and Aharon and become the leader. In the end his rebellion proved unsuccessful, removing all doubt to Moshe's authority. The commentaries<sup>8</sup> are bothered with Rashi's<sup>9</sup> phraseology. Why did Rashi say that Korach's eye misled him, instead of a more normal expression Korach's eyes misled him?

The Shem MiShmuel suggests<sup>10</sup> an answer based off an innovation of the Noam Elimelech<sup>11</sup>. There's a *mitzvah* for all men to go to the Temple during the three pilgrimage festivals<sup>12</sup>. Our Sages derive<sup>13</sup> that only someone who is able to see with both of their eyes is obligated. Someone who is blind in one eye is exempt. The Noam Elimelech suggested that the reason is related to the rationale behind the *mitzvah*. A person has two eyes, each with their own purpose. One eye is to be able to see the loftiness of Hashem, to see His majesty. The other is to see one's own lowliness. The purpose of going to the Temple, where Hashem's presence is the most potent, was to be inspired by Hashem's exaltedness. This could only be

<sup>1</sup> Based on [Pardes Yosef HaChadash Korach § 58](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Targum "Yonasan"](#) and [Rabbeinu Bachaye ad. loc.](#) The verse doesn't specify what Korach took. There are various explanations given, and this one is based on the implication of [Bamidbar Rabbah 18:3,4](#), and [Midrash Tanchuma Korach § 3](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Numbers 16:1,2](#)

<sup>4</sup> To v. 7

<sup>5</sup> His source being [Bamidbar Rabbah 18:8](#), [Midrash Tanchuma Korach § 5](#), and [Tanchuma Yashan Korach § 12](#)

<sup>6</sup> The *Midrashim loc. cit.* deduce this from the verse in [Psalms 99:6](#): משה ואהרן בכהניו ושמואל בקוראי שמו

<sup>7</sup> The phraseology between the *Midrashim* differs slightly. [Midrash Tanchuma](#) has אפשר הגדולה הזו עתידה לעמוד ממני ואני אובד, is it possible that this greatness will come from me and I'll let myself lose it? [Rashi](#) cites the version from [Bamidbar Rabbah](#) which has אפשר כל הגדולה הזאת עתידה לעמוד ממני ואני אדום, ending with "and I will be silent?"

<sup>8</sup> The [Pardes Yosef](#) cites this question from "the *mefarshim*", but to be honest I didn't see this question in any of the standard commentaries on the *Midrash* or [Rashi](#)

<sup>9</sup> Really, he's simply quoting the *Midrashim*, so the question isn't on him

<sup>10</sup> While the [Pardes Yosef](#) brings this from the [Shem MiShmuel](#), I was unable to find it. The [Shem MiShmuel 5672 s.v.](#) [והיה מדי חודש](#) does bring the [Noam Elimelech](#) in this week's parsha, but not to answer this question. He merely brings it to explain why Korach was unfit to be the Kohen Gadol; see there. See [Pardes Yosef](#), who brings more sources who say such an explanation to this question

<sup>11</sup> I was unable to locate this teaching of the [Noam Elimelech](#). It is cited in his name not only by the [Shem MiShmuel](#) but also the [Yismach Moshe Korach § 4](#) and [Shir HaShirim s.v.](#) [לבבתי](#). I found that the [Avodas Yisroel](#), beginning of *parshas Shoftim*, says the exact same idea, and cites it from the end of the [Tikkunei Zohar](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Deuteronomy 16:16](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Chagigah 2a](#)

truly appreciated by someone with both of their eyes. The contrast of experiencing Hashem's presence with an understanding of one's own meekness was tremendous. Someone with only one eye misses out on that contrast, and is thus exempt from the *mitzvah*.

The Shem MiShmuel suggests<sup>14</sup> that this is why Rashi mentioned that Korach's eye misled him. Korach was able to see the grandeur of Hashem. He had one eye. However, he was unable to see his own faults. He was extremely arrogant, as he didn't see his own lowliness. As a result, he not only knew how important it was to serve Hashem, he thought he was the perfect person to lead the pack. He felt his rebellion was justified, and also felt it was destined for success. His eye misled him because knowing Hashem's greatness isn't enough. One also has to realize they're not in charge. Having a healthy dose of humility is the only way not to be led astray.

Good Shabbos

---

<sup>14</sup> See note 10. I did find this in the Yismach Moshe *Korach* § 4