

Korach

Sam Katten, June 12, 2010

Shabbat Shalom,

My *parashah* is *Korach*. Two main characters in this *parashah* are Korach and Moses. Moses was the leader of the Israelites. Korach, with the support of 250 other leaders of the community, had the arrogance to challenge Moses' leadership and authority over the Israelites. Korach says to Moses, "You have gone too far . . . for all the community are holy, all of them, and Adonai is in their midst. Why then do you raise yourselves above Adonai's congregation?" Korach thinks he or other Israelites should be given the position of leadership instead of Moses. In the *parashah*, it says "And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face." My interpretation of this is that Moses was surprised that anybody would turn against him. Moses was a good man and great leader. He was appointed by Adonai to be the leader. He led the Israelites out of Egypt. He took them out of slavery and brought them into freedom. By the time of this *parashah*, Moses had already proved to be an effective leader, even though he had only been the leader for a short time - about two years. All of us can potentially be leaders and we all have the opportunity to develop leadership skills, but Korach is wrong in thinking that just because we are part of the community, we automatically can be a leader.

Adonai tells Moses to tell Korach and his followers to bring fire pans and incense the next morning to the Tabernacle. Aaron also brought his fire pan. This ritual was one of the most sacred of the services in the sanctuary and was permitted only to the high priest and only under special circumstances. If Aaron's incense was accepted, that would prove the worthiness for the leadership of the priesthood. If Adonai accepted Korach and his other followers' incense, then Korach would have won. Adonai chooses Aaron and Moses and the ground sucks up Korach. The fire from Adonai also consumes all of Korach's 250 followers. As a result, everyone knows Moses is the true leader and Aaron, the rightful Kohen.

One connection I have made with this *parashah* happened this year in my school. In the middle of the school year, I was chosen to attend a leadership conference held at Quinnipiac University. At the conference, I learned how to be an effective leader. One of the most important qualities I learned from the conference is team work; if you do not know how to work together with people you cannot accomplish anything. I learned a lot from that day. It helped

me understand my *parashah* better. I learned that Korach did not have many leadership qualities. He was not a team player. He was really looking out for Korach and the power he would have if he became the leader. His motives were self serving rather than serving the community. Moses had more leadership qualities than Korach did. I am glad that Moses stayed the leader of the Israelites.

Another connection that I made from this *parashah* is that jealousy is a dangerous feeling. I think that Korach was jealous of Moses. I sometimes feel jealous of others. When people are better than I am, I can be jealous. I am sometimes jealous of my friends that are more athletic than I am. At times, I also feel jealous of other families that do not have a child with autism. I feel this because I have to help my parents watch my brother and I have to go to places during the week that my brother has to go to get better at school, be more talkative and more social. I realize that everyone is jealous from time to time, so I am not alone in this feeling. Korach was jealous of Moses' control; so he attacked Moses' power in public. That was not a good idea to sabotage Moses like that. Korach did not know how to handle his feelings. Most people like to keep it inside and not tell others because they would be embarrassed to admit this feeling. Some ways I can help myself get over this feeling of jealousy are: to practice more at sports, not giving up, and by attending sibling support groups where I talk with other people like myself about having a brother or sister with special needs. By attending these groups, I realize I am not alone, and I help others deal with their feelings of jealousy and frustration. I also ask my friends for help. They encourage me and they practice with me.

My bar mitzvah project was to raise money for **Autism Speaks**. My idea was to have a Jelly Bean counting contest. I made a poster advertising the contest and announced the event over the loud speaker. At school, for the month of April, Autism Awareness Month, I went into the 6th grade cafeteria to sell guesses of how many jelly beans there were in the container. The winner won about 800 jelly beans. I raised over 100 dollars for Autism Speaks from this contest and I also collected money from people who just wanted to donate. I raised over 1,000 dollars all together for last year's **Greater Hartford Walk Now for Autism**. I did this project because I have a brother, Gary, who is affected by autism. I raised money so maybe one day a cure for autism might be discovered and so that my brother and others like him can live a better and more productive life. By raising this money, I am also helping the families, like mine, who have a

child with autism. Also, I acted like a leader in my school, by telling others at school about my brother and teaching them about autism.

I would like to thank my family for helping me prepare for this day:

- My Dad assisted me with my Hebrew, my Torah readings and prayers. He sometimes gets on my case, but I know that he wants me to do my best.
- My Mom helped me with my Bar Mitzvah project. She also guided me in writing and editing this D'var Torah and she helped me with my Hebrew.
- My brother Gary always attends Shabbat services with me and makes me a more patient and caring person.
- My grandparents for always being there for me. Everybody in my family has been very supportive.

In addition, I would like to thank:

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- Cantor Cohn for helping me learn *Shaharit*, my Torah portions and *Haftarah* and for having so much confidence in me.
- Anna Elfenbaum for aiding me in learning some of the *Shaharit* prayers and the Torah service when she led *Kahal Katan* when I was in Kindergarten through 2nd grade and *Kahal* when I was in 3rd through 5th grade.

Please turn to page 860 in the *Etz Hayim Chumash*, the big red book.