

Zera Shimshon

Profound Divrei Torah culled from the writings of the Gaon and Mekubal Rav Shimshon Chaim ben Rav Nachman Michael Nachmani zy" a, author of Sefer Zera Shimshon on Chumash and Toldos Shimshon on Pirkei Avos, who promised that all who study his words will be blessed with an abundance of good, wealth and honor, and will merit to see children and grandchildren thriving around their table.



אמרות שמשון

El Sol y la Luna no quisieron ejercer su Explanation of Moshe's Response to Korach's Congregation

“And he spoke to Korach and to all his congregation, saying: ‘In the morning Hashem will make known who is His and who is the holy one, and He will bring him near to Himself; and the one whom He chooses, He will bring near to Himself.’” (Bamidbar 16:5)

The Midrash (Tanchuma 5) explains that Moshe said to them: “HaKadosh Baruch Hu established boundaries in His world. Are you able to mix day and night?”

We must understand what kind of answer this was to their claims and arguments. Why did Moshe choose specifically this argument: “Are you able to mix day and night?” Where do we find that Korach and his congregation claimed that they could mix day and night, such that Moshe would respond to them in this manner?

This may be explained based on what is found in the Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 6:6) regarding the verse, “[E]lokim made the two great luminaries... and the stars” (Bereishit 1:16). HaKadosh Baruch Hu said: “Since this Moon diminished itself in order to rule at night, I decree that when it rises, the stars shall rise with it, and when it sets, the stars shall set with it.”

The root of Korach's dispute was that he was jealous of Elitzaphan ben Uziel, who was younger than he was and whom Moshe had appointed as prince, the leader of the families of Kehat. His argument was that since he was the elder, greatness and leadership rightfully belonged to him.

Accordingly, Moshe Rabbeinu's response to Korach and his followers becomes very clear: “Are you able to mix day and night?” In other words, “Can you make the stars appear during the day together with the Sun? If you can, that would be clear proof that greatness must always accompany the greatest individual.

”But since you certainly cannot make the stars appear during the day together with the Sun, this is a clear sign that Korach's argument has no foundation. On the contrary, greatness belongs to the one who diminishes himself. Just as the Moon, which diminished itself, merited the distinction that the stars accompany it, so too Elitzaphan, who humbled himself, merited leadership.” Korach, however, who demanded greatness for himself, was not worthy of the position of prince.

(Zera Shimshon, Parashat Korach, Art. 4)

Moshe Called Only Korach's Congregation to Peace

“And Moshe said to Korach: ‘Hear now, sons of Levi...’” (Bamidbar 16:8).

The Yalkut (Parashat Korach, remez 750) asks regarding this verse: “Is there ever a person who addresses Yosef, but while doing so turns to Shimon and says, ‘Listen...’? Likewise, here Moshe is speaking to Korach; how can he say, ‘Sons of Levi, listen...’?”

This may be explained based on what we find in the Yalkut Reuveni (Parashat Korach, under “Korach lo hayah”):

“If you ask: Did Moshe not learn directly from HaKadosh Baruch Hu that Korach and his followers were destined to be consumed by fire? We know this from the fact that immediately after hearing their claims, Moshe fell on his face and immediately told them, ‘In the morning Hashem will make known...,’ and certainly Hashem had revealed this to him. If so, how could he afterward mislead the people by publicly appearing to call Korach and his followers to peace, while knowing that they would not make peace and would ultimately be punished and consumed by fire?

”The answer is that Moshe indeed knew that Korach—and Korach alone—would no longer succeed in repenting and was destined for punishment. However, the members of his group were not necessarily destined to be destroyed if they ceased sin upon sin by continuing to support Korach, and this detail remained hidden from Moshe; he did not know that they too were destined to receive punishment. Therefore, he called them to peace.”

Accordingly, it may be explained that after Moshe told them, “This is what you shall do [...] Korach and all his congregation [...] take fire pans and place fire in them,” and immediately afterward the Torah states, “And Moshe said to Korach...”, Moshe was saying to Korach's followers: “This decree of destruction by fire, which Hashem has shown me, applies only to Korach, who will no longer have the opportunity to repent. But you, the members of his congregation, ‘Hear now, sons of Levi...’”

Moshe called them to peace so that they would abandon their rebellion. But they refused.

Therefore, later, after those challengers had been punished, when Hashem instructed Moshe to command Elazar, the son of Aharon HaKohen, to collect the fire pans, the verse refers to them as “these sinful men who sinned against their own souls”—referring to the followers and not to Korach—because they sinned against themselves, since they could have repented but chose not to do so.

(Zera Shimshon, Parashat Korach, Art. 3)

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לשיר ואשרי ורעודו נכני כל השקים



Chapter 4 Mishna 13

“Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov says: ‘One who performs a single mitzvah acquires for himself one praklit (defender), and one who transgresses a single transgression acquires for himself one katorgor (accuser).’”

Explaining the Difference in the Tanna’s Choice of Expressions

It is worth considering why the Tanna changed his wording. Regarding a *mitzvah* he said *ha’oseh* (“one who performs”), whereas regarding a transgression he said *ha’over* (“one who transgresses”), instead of using the same expression in both cases. He could have said, “one who **fulfills** a *mitzvah* and one who **commits** a transgression,” or “one who **performs** a *mitzvah* and one who **performs** a transgression.”

It is also necessary to understand why he said, “acquires for himself a *praklit* (defender),” rather than, “acquires for himself a *sanegor* (defense advocate).”

One may explain that a person can indeed fulfill many *mitzvot* without thereby acquiring defenders (*praklitim*). For example, there are *mitzvot* that are not applicable nowadays, such as those related to eating *piggul* (a sacrificial offering that became invalid and is forbidden to eat), or prohibitions that never presented themselves as opportunities to be violated. Although a person fulfills those *mitzvot* by not transgressing them, he receives no reward for that alone.

For this reason, regarding a *mitzvah*, the Tanna was careful to say “one who **performs** a *mitzvah*,” because only when a person actively performs the *mitzvah*, or when he is presented with an opportunity to violate a prohibition and refrains from

doing so, does he acquire a defender. He did not say “one who fulfills,” because that expression would also include someone who simply never transgressed without ever having faced a practical test. Merely refraining from action can constitute fulfillment of the *mitzvah*, but it does not earn him a defender.

Regarding a transgression, he could not say “one who performs a transgression,” because there are situations in which a person may need to commit a transgression *leshem Shamayim* (for the sake of Heaven, with a holy and selfless purpose), as the Sages taught in the *Gemara* (*Nazir* 23b). Therefore he said “one who transgresses” (*ha’over*), for only when his intention is to violate Hashem’s will does he acquire an accuser.

And he said *praklit* rather than *sanegor*, because the word *praklit* may be interpreted as a contraction of the expression *porek lit* (פּוֹרֵק לִיטָא) meaning “one who removes a curse.” The Aramaic word for “cursed” is *lit*. Thus, the defender created by the *mitzvah* removes the curse from the person. Even if there is a transgression that the person committed and which harms him, the *praklit* created by the *mitzvah* protects him from punishment even when he is not actively engaged in that *mitzvah*, as our Sages taught (*Sotah* 21a).

The Allusion Contained in the Word Praklit

One may explain why the Tanna chose to say “acquires for himself a *praklit* (defender)” rather than “a *sanegor* (defense advocate).” The word *praklit* may be understood as a contraction of *porek lit* (פּוֹרֵק לִיטָא) meaning “one who removes a curse,” since the Aramaic translation of the word “cursed” is *lit*. This means that the *praklit* created by the *mitzvah*

removes the curse from upon the person.

Thus, even if a person committed a transgression and thereby brought a curse upon himself, the *mitzvah* protects him from misfortune, as our Sages taught in the *Gemara* (*Sotah* 21a): “A *mitzvah*, whether one is engaged in it or not engaged in it, protects a person from misfortune.”

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Translated and written by Rabbi Moshe Spira - yomospira@gmail.com

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USA - Rabbi Menachem Binyomin Paskesz 347-496-5657 mbpaskesz@gmail.com
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Eretz Yisroel - Rabbi Yisroel Silberberg
052-716-6450 zera277@gmail.com



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