

## HE WAS GREATER IN DEATH THAN IN LIFE!

### PARSHAS KORACH

On January 2, 2020 the Siyum Hashas, the 7-year cycle completing the Talmud, was celebrated by over 90,000 Jews, in MetLife Stadium. It was a source of a great kiddush Hashem, sanctification of Hashem. There were countless testimonials describing the respectful and courteous behavior of the thousands of Jews who attended. Non-Jewish workers at MetLife Stadium did not hear cursing and did not have to break up any fights which they typically had to do at other stadium events. So many Jews thanked the various workers. The workers were not accustomed to hearing such gratitude. They were stunned by the refined and dignified behavior of the Jewish crowd.

A Jew's actions are constantly under a microscope, more so than the actions of other people. Many recognize us as being part of the chosen nation and they expect more of us. When a Jew talks respectfully and when a Jew is honest in business, that sanctifies Hashem's name. When a Jew helps save a non-Jew who has a medical emergency on an airline, that sanctifies Hashem's name.

Korach initiated a terrible dispute. Moshe, acting on Hashem's instructions, had passed over Korach to choose another person to be the *nasi*, the head, of *shevet Levi*, the tribe of Levi. Korach became jealous that he was not chosen. Korach had the audacity to question Moshe's leadership and to suggest that Moshe made up some things on his own while claiming that they were from Hashem. Korach even said that Moshe's appointment of his brother, Aharon, to be the kohain gadol was Moshe's idea and not Hashem's. Korach was very persuasive and attracted a following.

Moshe had to stop this terrible argument before Korach led more people against Moshe and against Hashem. Moshe told Korach and his 250 followers who were members of the Sanhedrin, that Hashem would determine who the kohain gadol would be. Aharon, Korach and the 250 men would all bring a

*"Take, for yourselves, fire pans, Korach and his entire congregation, and place fire in them and put incense upon them before Hashem, tomorrow; and it will be that the man who will be chosen by Hashem, he is the holy one."  
(Bamidbar 16:5,6)*

korban of incense to Hashem. Hashem would only accept this korban from one person. That would prove who Hashem wants to be the kohain gadol. Everyone else who brought this sacrifice would die.

**Rashi** (16:7) says that Korach was a brilliant man. What led him to believe that he would emerge from this test while

Aharon and the other 250 men would perish? **Rashi** answers that Korach misunderstood a prophetic vision. Korach saw great men descending from him. Amongst them was the prophet Shmuel who was equal in importance to Moshe and Aharon together (see also Tehillim 99:6). Korach assumed that he would be saved in Shmuel's merit. Korach also saw twenty-four *mishmaros*, shifts of Leviim who would participate in the Bais Hamikdash service, from among his grandchildren. All of them would possess *Ruach HaKodesh*, prophetic spirit.

Korach concluded from this prophetic vision that he himself was a righteous individual and would be the one who would remain alive after the sacrifice of the incense.

**Rashi** says that Korach did not realize that he would die, his sons would repent, and that these great people would descend from his children. Korach made a fatal error that cost him his life.

**Rabbi Yissachor Frand** (Torah.org) asks a question from sefer **Zayis Ra'an** (cited in sefer Be'er Yosef). Why in fact didn't the merit of having such great descendants save Korach? Sefer **Zayis Ra'an** gives a fascinating answer. The reason why Korach merited such great descendants was because his death created a Kiddush Hashem. Theoretically, had Korach repented and not died in that miraculous fashion, these great people would not have descended from him.

The kiddush Hashem that came about from Korach was that he challenged the authority of Moshe Rabbeinu and caused a public validation of Moshe Rabbeinu's authenticity through a miracle. The entire nation saw the miracle and proclaimed, "*Moshe is true and his Torah is true.*" Korach caused all this to happen. Never again would anyone question the authenticity of Moshe Rabbeinu's leadership! Korach's intentions were wicked and he did what he did for the worst reasons in the world. However, it did create a kiddush Hashem of the highest magnitude.

He was rewarded for that by having special descendants. Hashem rewards anyone who participates in the sanctification of His Name.

One even gets reward for a passive participation in a kiddush Hashem. Firstborn Jewish males are considered sanctified to Hashem. The **Alter of Kelm** explains that the firstborn are sanctified because they passively participated in one of the greatest manifestations of Kiddush Hashem. During the last plague in Egypt, Hashem killed all the firstborn. Hashem passed-over the Jewish homes and saved the firstborn Jews. Because they were saved by Hashem, they became sanctified to Hashem (see Bamidbar 3:13). This showed Hashem's greatness and was a sanctification of Hashem's Name. Everyone saw that Hashem punished the firstborn while saving the firstborn Jews for Himself. Hashem rewards participation in a kiddush Hashem. The kiddush Hashem was brought about by Hashem's action. The Jewish firstborn were simply vehicles through whom Hashem's name was sanctified. Even passive participation in a Kiddush Hashem generates reward.

**When we are involved in a kiddush Hashem, even passively and certainly actively, we are rewarded greatly for it.**

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*Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.*

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