

CHIZUK AND IDUD

*Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra
with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael -
Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim*

This week we read the description of Korach's challenge to Moshe Rabeinu's leadership. Korach's populist clarion call is: Kol Ha'eida Kulam Kedoshim, "The entire congregation - they are all holy", and therefore: Madu'a Titnas'u Al K'hal Hashem, "Why then do you raise yourself above the congregation of Hashem?" (Bamidbar 16:3). Although this claim may sound convincing, and even appealing, to the modern-day democratically bred ear, Rav Soloveitchik suggests that this line of argument was the real spiritual source of Korach's downfall.

The Machloket between Korach and Moshe revolved around the question of how to best understand the nature of Kedushat Yisrael. For Korach, Kedushat Yisrael stems only from the Eida, the community. If one is a part of the community then one acquires the communal Kedusha inherent within it. Beginning with the Avot the kedusha is passed down through the generations, transmitted via the genes, or via the soul. In regards to this aspect of Kedusha, the Kedusha of Knesset Yisrael, all Jews are indeed on equal footing.

Moshe accepted this, and yet he knew that in addition to the Kedusha of the community - "Am Kadosh Ata Lashem Elokeicha" - there exists a second individual-based kedusha - U'becha Bachar Hashem". Here a person's level is determined by their behavior, their personal dedication and life choices.

The cry: 'Kulam Kedoshim' intimates

that there are no valid distinctions to be made. We are all the same, and therefore no one should lord himself over the rest of the People. What Korach failed to recognize, Rav Soloveitchik explains, is that very real gradations do exist within a community. A people is comprised of different groups: Only a relative few are genuine and deep scholars, (Talmidei Chachamim), while at the other extreme one may find many more who firmly fit into the category of Amei Ha'aretz. Furthermore, out of those who have achieved the level of a "Talmid Chacham", few can come near the spiritual level of Gedolei Hador. The same notion of distinguishing between higher and lower gradations applies to the Neviim, as well. Even amongst those who have attained Nevu'a, not all are equal. Moshe Rabeinu stands out heads and shoulders above all other Prophets. Bechol Beiti Ne'eman Hu. Korach, in bandying about the slogan "all the nation; they are all equal", failed to recognize that there are "Madreigot Bikdusha", differing levels in holiness amongst the People.

So, too, in regard to the many lands upon earth, where a Jew resides, in every land, every possible locale, there is holiness. Yet, there is only one Eretz HaKodesh. Yaakov Avinu dreamed of angels going up and down, to and from the heavens, and says "Mah Nora HaMakom Hazeh", "How awesome is this place and I knew it not". Didn't Yaakov know that the Almighty is everywhere? Yaakov knew that holiness can be found everywhere, and yet he realized that there are gradations in holiness, and some chosen places are more holy than others. Eretz Yisrael is holier than other lands; Jerusalem is holier than all the other cities within the holy land, the Mikdash

is holier yet, and within the Temple itself one can continue ascending to even higher additional levels of kedusha.

Some Chassidic Rabbonim told their followers "Mach du Eretz Yisrael", make this domicile, anywhere you may find yourself around the globe, as Eretz Yisrael. Surely this is true. Wherever we reside, we must strive to introduce new elements of holiness. It must be realized, though, that no other place on the globe can take the place of, or be mistaken for, the true Eretz Yisrael. Sure we can make believe that Brooklyn, Golders Green or even Berlin is Yerushalayim but that is only make believe. As my granddaughter wrote on our family WhatsApp group, welcoming my wife and me back from our trip to the Diaspora: "Welcome back to the Land of Israel, the only truly holy land known to man." I was proud to note that this young teenager recognizes that which so few of our fellow brethren fully acknowledge: There is only one Eretz Yisrael - this is where we should all be!

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