

Subduing Korah's Rebellion, Justifying His Concerns: Divine Ideals of Government
Rabbi Ira Rohde

The reading chosen for the haftarah of a particular Parasha is usually one which parallels, extends and reinforces its salient themes, and this week's haftarah follows that structure. There are indeed many parallels between the stories. However, there are also a number of contrasts between them, leaving the reader in ambiguity and no small perplexity about the conclusions to be drawn. At first glance, it would seem that the parallel is between Moses and Samuel, both prophets who exert a Divinely-ordained spiritual leadership, and both of whose leadership is challenged. In the end, both rebellions are quieted and the prophet's authority is restored. The rebellion against the prophet's leadership is considered a rebellion against G-d. Both rebellions are seen as a usurping by the people of an authority which properly accrues to God and His prophetic servant. The people assert that they ought to be able to name their own leader.

But the rebellion of Korah seems to be a rebellion of the people against the centralized prophetic priestly and political authority of the brothers Moses and Aaron. The "rebellion" of the people in the Prophet Samuel's time consists in their wanting to have a king, a separate political/military leader, apart from Samuel, who at that point had combined prophetic and priestly authority (perhaps due to the corruption of the priesthood of his day) and was the successor to the Judges' political leadership. They don't really want to depose Samuel, but want him to confirm their choice of Saul as king. Korah's rebellion is decisively put down, and, after that climactic rebellion, Moses' authority is finally firmly established. The Samuel story, on the other hand, is all about Samuel conceding, however reluctantly, to anoint Saul as the first Israelite king. Samuel concedes political power to the people, at the same time that he retains spiritual leadership. Samuel does so even though, in his concessionary speech, he says that the political/military authority of kingship leads to idolatry and straying from the rule of God and His Law. In conceding the people a king, Samuel insists that the king's power and authority is not his own, but properly belongs to God and the people. And indeed, in later stories, Samuel effectively deposes Saul. No such caveats, by contrast, are placed upon Moses' authority.

Samuel emerges as the more populist leader: He concedes power to the people even when the people want to express that power in a form of government he doesn't like and which he feels is likely to usurp more power from both the people and from God. No wonder that Rashi on our parasha says that the Prophet Samuel is a descendant of Korah! Samuel even earlier had abjured military/political power, finding young heroes like Saul and David to lead the people in battle rather than leading the people into battle himself as Moses, Joshua, and the Judges had. Korah's basic concerns, then, that political authority should belong to the people as a whole, that they should not arbitrarily be tyrannized, that political and spiritual authority needs to be Divinely justified and exercised justly, fairly, and only with just cause – all these concerns are, indeed, justified. This is, perhaps, why Moses in the Torah goes to such lengths to refute Korah's claims: It must be demonstrated, once and for all, that Moses' and Aaron's assumption of spiritual, priestly, and political power are fully justified.

All of this seems to show, then, how complex the Torah's view of leadership is. Our American system of government attempted to incorporate elements of that complexity in its splitting of branches of leadership, church from state and branches of state from each other, and various systems of checks and balances. Political leadership is not justified unless it is endowed with spirit. But dovetailing spiritual and practical leadership together as well as getting the acquiescence, consent, and finally allegiance of the people is quite tricky, and requires great skills as well as a Divine spirit and Divine gifts. Every leader, every judge, over another human being, is, in a sense, taking on an authority due properly only to God, since each of us is made in the Divine Image. Human leadership must, then, live up to Divine ideals, and must be scrutinized in accordance with them. Korah's concerns, then, if not his rebellion, are ultimately justified.



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

June 19-20, 2015
Shabbat Korah

Hertz Pentateuch: p. 639; Haftarah p. 649
Kaplan Living Torah: p. 740; Haftarah p. 1196

CANDLE LIGHTING | 8:12 pm

MINHAH | 6:45 pm

ZEMIROT | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary

SHAHARIT (NISHMAT) | 9:00 am

TOT SHABBAT | Ages 0-4 | 10:00 am | Levy Auditorium

YOUTH GROUPS | Ages 5-12 | 10:00 am | Children's Library

JR. CONGREGATION Ages 5-12 | 10:30 am | Little Synagogue

SPECIAL PROGRAM HONORING HAZZAN RABBI IRA ROHDE
Main Sanctuary

KIDDUSH LUNCHEON AND PRESENTATION IN HONOR OF HAZZAN RABBI IRA ROHDE AND OUR 2015 GRADUATES | Levy Auditorium | *We thank the many sponsors of today's events. Please refer to the dedicated handouts.*

PARASHAT HASHABUA: THE PARTS THEY SKIP IN HIGH SCHOOL
Rabbi Hiday | 7:05 pm | For high school students | Held at the Hiday's home, 1 W 85th St., Apartment 6A

RABBI SOLOVEICHIK'S PIRKEI ABOT CLASS & SEUDAH SHELISHIT

Rabbi Soloveichik | 7:05 pm | Elias Room

MINHAH/ARBIT | 8:05 pm

KETER SHEM TOB | Rabbi Hiday | Main Sanctuary

HABDALAH | 9:12 pm

UPCOMING EVENTS AND INITIATIVES

Weekday Toddler Summer 'Camp'

June 23rd - August 20th

Tuesdays and Thursday | 9:30-11:30 am

For children aged 16-33 months.

Includes outdoor play and a wading pool. Adult caregiver presence is required.

Register online at

shearthisrael.org/content/summer-toddler-program-2015

Register now for PTTS Hebrew School

Registration for the 2015-2016 year is now open! Our Hebrew School, the Polonies Talmud Torah School, provides children and teens, ages 3-16, with a substantive Jewish education in a positive and engaging environment. Our educated, trained and enthusiastic staff create an enjoyable and warm learning environment in which children are motivated to learn and grow. Students develop Hebrew language skills (reading, writing and comprehension), learn the major portions of the Tanakh, Jewish holiday rituals, Jewish history, and how Jewish ideas inform our values in modern times. Register at shearthisrael.org/hebrewschool

Lecture Series for the Three Weeks

Rabbi Richard Hidary | Mondays | 7:15 pm

July 6 - What Did the Romans Think of the Jews?: Ancient Anti-Semitism

July 13 - What Did the Romans Think of the Jews?: Ancient Philo-Semitism

July 20 - What Did the Jews Think of the Romans?: Attraction and Revolution

This series reviews the relationship between the Romans and the Jews during the end of the Second Temple Period. Many Roman writers lavished praise upon the Jews as a nation of philosophers while others perverted biblical stories about the Israelites in order to denigrate the Jews. On the other side, Jews-including rabbis, priests, and other sectarians-express appreciation for Roman culture as well as hated for Roman domination. Was the clash of civilization that led to the Great Revolt of 70CE inevitable or could it have been avoided?

One-On-One Tour of the UWS Mikvah

If any of our members is interested in learning more about Taharat Hamishpacha, the Laws of Family Purity, please contact Layalza Soloveichik at layaliza@gmail.com for a private, one-on-one tour of the facilities at the local UWS Mikvah. To maximize confidentiality, these personal tours will take place at times during which the Mikvah is ordinarily closed to the public.

WEEKDAY JUDAIC EDUCATION

View all our spring classes at shearthisrael.org/education

Monday

◇ **YL Monday Night Learning *** | 7:15 pm

◇ **Hebruta Program*** | 7:15 pm

**In partnership with JICNY*

Tuesday

◇ **Shulhan Arukh** | Rabbi Hidary | 7:45 am Last Class June 23

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal Tob to Richard and Paola Kulp upon the upcoming Bar Mitzvah of their grandson, Ethan Kulp.

Condolences to Naftali Friedman on the passing of his father, Alexander Friedman.

Thank You!

The congregation expresses its sincere gratitude to Camilla Pinto, of blessed memory, and to her family for the bequest recently received from her estate.

The congregation expresses its sincere gratitude to Myron Habib, of blessed memory, and to his family for the bequest recently received from his estate.

Summer Shabbat Schedule

Starting Saturday, June 27, Shabbat morning services will be held in Levy Auditorium.

Our Next Public Tour is:
Tuesday, July 14 at 11:00 am

Parnas Office Hours

Louis Solomon would be delighted to meet with you. Please schedule a visit at parnas@shearthisrael.org.