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ב' תמוז תשפ"ה

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## A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

### מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

#### פרשת קרח

וַיְהִי מִמָּחֳרָת וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה אֶל אֹהֶל הָעֵדוּת, וַהֲגִה פָּרַח מִטֶּה אֶהָרֹן לְבֵית לֵוִי, וַיֵּצֵא פָּרַח וַיֵּצֵץ צִיץ וַיִּגְמַל שְׂקָדִים.  
(במדבר יז, כג)

*On the next day, Moshe came to the Ohel Moed and behold! The staff of Aharon of the house of Levi had blossomed; it brought forth a blossom, sprouted a bud, and almonds ripened. (Bamidbar 16:23)*

In this week's *Sidrah*, we learn about the rebellion against Moshe led by Korach and his followers, resulting in the earth swallowing up Korach, Dasan, and Aviram. Additionally, the 250 men who challenged Aharon's position as Kohen Gadol were consumed by fire while offering *ketores*.

The Ramban explains that while Klal Yisroel were now convinced that Moshe was the Divinely chosen leader and Aharon was the rightful Kohen Gadol, some people still believed that the firstborns should not have been disqualified from performing the *avodah*. They desired for all the *shevatim* to participate and have a share in the service of the Mishkan through their firstborns. To address this, Hashem performed a miracle that clearly demonstrated His selection of the tribe of Levi, effectively ending their claims. This miracle also reaffirmed Aharon's Divine appointment as Kohen Gadol.

Hashem commanded Moshe to take one staff from each *shevet*, inscribed with the name of its *nasi*. On the staff of Levi, Aharon's name was inscribed. Moshe was instructed to place all the staffs in the Ohel Moed, the designated place for the *avodah*. The staff that would blossom would symbolise which *shevet* was chosen to perform the *avodah* in the Ohel Moed. The next morning, when Moshe entered the Ohel Moed, he found that Aharon's staff had blossomed. Furthermore, as the *possuk* describes, it also sprouted a bud and produced ripened almonds.

The Rashbam comments on an interesting aspect of how the staff blossomed and produced fruit. When Moshe first took the staff, it had already blossomed but had not yet progressed further. It wasn't until he showed the staff to Klal Yisroel that it sprouted a bud. Shortly thereafter, almonds grew and ripened. The Rashbam explains that this sequence must be so, for if the almonds had ripened while in the Ohel Moed, there would have been no evidence of the earlier stages mentioned in the *possuk*. (For more insight, see Parshas Korach 5783 for the Rosh Yeshiva's explanation of what this symbolises.)

However, the Meforshim challenge the interpretation of the Rashbam based on a Gemara that suggests a different understanding. The Gemara (*Yoma* 52b) states: מִשְׁנֵגְבֵי אֶרֶון נִגְנְזָה עִמּוֹ וכו', וּמִקְלֹו נִשְׁלַח אֶהָרֹן וּשְׂקָדֵיהָ וּפְרֻחֶיהָ, *When the Aron was hidden away, (other things) were hidden with it... and the staff of Aharon along with its almonds and blossoms*. This implies that both the blossoms and almonds were present on the staff, even at a later stage.

Therefore, the Malbim presents an alternative interpretation that indeed the entire process took place in the Ohel Moed. However, this miracle contained another remarkable aspect. Contrary to the

normal growth cycle, the blossoms did not fall off after the buds began to sprout; even after the fruit had ripened, the blossoms and buds remained intact.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* explains that this additional miracle conveys an important lesson for generations. The journey to greatness involves many stages, with the path to perfection analogous to a ladder rooted in the ground and reaching to the Heavens. Each individual must continually progress in their spiritual journey, as described in the Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 20b) by R' Pinchos ben Yair: תוֹרָה מְבִיאָה לְיָדֵי זְהִירוּת, זְהִירוּת מְבִיאָה לְיָדֵי זְרִיזוּת, זְרִיזוּת מְבִיאָה לְיָדֵי נְקִיּוּת וכו' *Torah brings to heedfulness, heedfulness brings to diligence, diligence brings to cleanliness and so on.*

However, there are times when a person may struggle with feelings of despair, as illustrated in the following anecdote. The Mashgiach of Lakewood, Rav Nosson Wachtfogel *zatzal*, once shared that in his youth, he began to learn the classic Mussar work, *Mesilas Yeshtarim*. When he started with the first step of זְהִירוּת, he worked hard to master that level but felt unworthy to progress to the next stage of זְרִיזוּת because he was unable to achieve full completion in the first *madreigah*. He felt distressed, realising that he had difficulty getting through the first few pages while the full *sefer* lay ahead of him.

In desperation, R' Nosson turned to R' Elchonon Wasserman *zatzal* for guidance. R' Elchonon advised him that even if he had only internalised a small part of the first stage, he should still move on and try to make some progress in the next stage. Even while striving to advance, he should continue to work on improving himself in the earlier *madreigos* as well.

The development of Aharon's staff can serve as a metaphor for this lesson. Even when there were ripe almonds, the buds and blossoms were still present. This symbolises that a person should work on multiple stages of Avodas Hashem simultaneously. Even when there are blossoms, representing the earlier stages, there should still be buds sprouting and fruits ripening, meaning one should strive to continue progressing. Thus, even when one is focused on higher *madreigos*, it is essential to also work on improving oneself at the more basic levels. This is symbolised by the idea that, despite the presence of ripe fruit, the blossoms and buds did not fall away but remained intact.

We learn from the miraculous growth and development of Aharon's staff an essential lesson about serving Hashem. Advancing to the next level of spiritual growth does not depend on completing the earlier level. Once a person has achieved a certain level of accomplishment in the basics, he should continue progressing to the next level whilst still striving to improve in the earlier level. May we be *zoche* to embrace this ideal and allow ourselves to reach great heights in our Avodas Hashem!