

Singer-Jordan Edition

Korach

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The brain is a most wonderful and awesome creation, capable of more things than we know or use it for. It is one of my greatest fascinations in life, which some have told me in the past is because I was missing mine. They have even credited me with first using artificial intelligence. And those are my close friends.

But like a fine and expensive car, a brain is only “safe” when properly maintained. The brain has to be exercised like a muscle, and fed good information. Like any computer, a brain is only as good as the data it computes. Most of the brains on the planet are basically the same. All the diverse opinions, some deadly, are the result of the data being stored and processed differently.

But there is something about humans, not brains per se, that makes their level of thinking more spectacular, and why AI will always only be artificial intelligence and, not even that. Computers can only detect and work with “physical” knowledge, whereas humans seem to be able to access higher, more spiritual levels of it. This often impacts the final conclusion in ways that computers can never comprehend.

Take prophecy, for example. Prophecy is knowledge beyond what the person knows, and often beyond what the world knows. It might even be knowledge that we could never know without being told, which sums up most of the *Zobar* and the teachings of the *Arizal*. A *chok*—statute, like the *Parab Adumab*—Red Heifer, or *Sbatnez*, not mixing wool and linen, is this type of knowledge as well.

We saw in *Parashas BeHa'alozecha* how God gave the seventy elders a tremendous amount of knowledge on the spot. Yosef was gifted the knowledge of the languages of the 70 nations the night before he met with Pharaoh for the first time. Very often what we call an insight is really God just answering a question our brain had. We are promised that in the Messianic Era, God will fill the world with *Da'as*, and just like that, everything will seem so very different even while remaining the same.

We were clued into this in the very first story in the Torah. It wasn't just a tree, and it

wasn't just any fruit with which the first man and woman were tested. It was an *Aitz HaDa'as Tov v'Ra*, a tree of KNOWLEDGE of good and evil. From the beginning there has been *da'as tov*—good knowledge, and *da'as ra*—evil knowledge, good data and bad data.

But how can any knowledge be either? It can't be. Rather, it is knowledge that can lead a person to do good by God, or knowledge that can lead a person to do the opposite. As we have seen throughout history and very much so today, the same information can have dramatically different effects on different people. Does something that tastes sweet to one person taste bitter to another?

It can. It is amazing how taste can vary from one person to another. This is largely due to a person's chemical reaction to what they are eating, which is not the same from person to person. The same is true about people's spiritual make-up, which affects the way they perceive reality and respond to it.

The Torah hints at the beginning of the *parsha* as to what was wrong with Korach. The *Arizal* explains what it means:

"Korach, the son of Yitzbar, the son of Kehas, the son of Levi, took" (*Bamidbar* 16:1): It was also explained on the verse, *"If Kayin will be avenged sevenfold"* (*Bereishis* 4:24) how the evil of the *Ruach* of Kayin reincarnated into Korach. . . After that, the evil of the *Ruach* of Kayin combined within him (Korach) too as an *ibur* and he became lost to the world, since evil was added to his evil. This is the *sod* of, *"And Korach. . . took"*. . . He "took" the evil of the *Ruach* of Kayin from the evil side. This is what our rabbis, *z"l*, alluded to with their words that he took a "bad acquisition" for himself. (*Sba'ar HaPesukim, Korach*)

As to just how culpable Korach was for his behavior, given his propensity for wrong, is up to God. Some sources say that he will have an elevated status later on in history, while others are less favorable about his future outcome. But one important lesson derived from this week's *parsha* is, how easy it is to delude oneself into believing that they are justified in going against Torah authority. The boldness to do so might be coming from a good place, but it also might be coming from a bad one, something that might only be clear over time.

But by then, the damage might be irreversible. It is wiser to check out the situation before it becomes a Korach-like fiasco, as has already happened many times already in Jewish history.

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