

The World's Greatest Mutiny

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Korach

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

40 Years: The Punishment Fits the Transgression

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The Source of Korach's Incredible Wealth

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Korach was Biding His Time Until the Perfect Moment

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The Most Serious Moment in the History of the Jewish People

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The influence of Exposure to One's Neighbor

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The Answer Will be Addressed in the Morning

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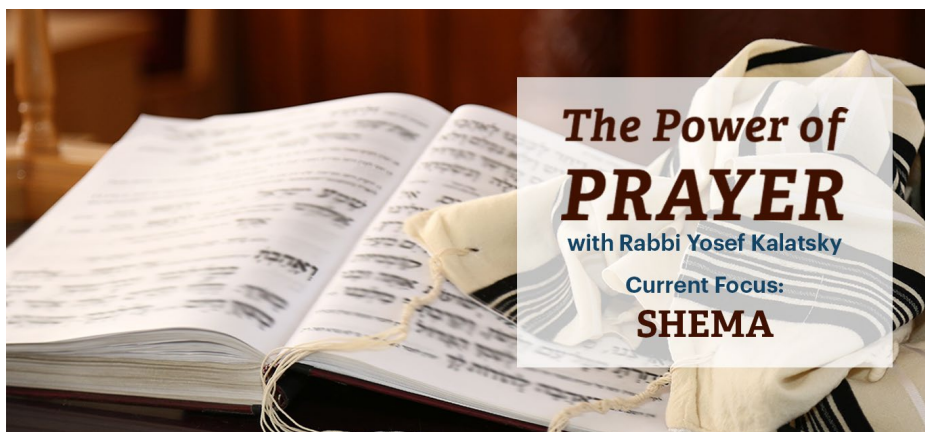
Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

What Appears Iniquitous Is In Fact Just

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1. Moshe attempted to defuse the opposition by approaching Dasan & Aviram to address the issues.
2. They rejected his overtures of concern.
3. Moshe realized there was no hope for reconciliation.
4. He supplicated G-d that their share in the communal offering that will be brought should be rejected.
5. He was concerned that the merit of the sacrifice would protect them from G-d's wrath, which they deserved.
6. Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh: If a person is truly evil, the devoutly righteous can decree that the small degree of merit that is on record should be revoked & annulled.
7. Moshe's evaluation of Korach and his community was truly evil therefore whatever good deeds they may have should be revoked.
8. King David's greatest antagonist was Doeg, whose envy of Dovid was all consuming.
9. His actions and ill speech brought havoc and great tragedy upon Dovid personally, King Saul and his family, and Nov the city of Kohanim.
10. He asked of G-d that the Torah of Doeg shouldn't be studied by Jews after he passes away so no merit should accrue to him.
11. Doeg shouldn't merit descendants who are Torah scholars.
12. Dovid's assessment of Doeg was that he epitomized evil therefore he can deny him all opportunities of mitzvah.



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Rejecting The Irrefutable When Ego Calls

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1. Korach attempted to usurp Moshe's authority.
2. Amrom, Moshe's father, was the eldest of Kahas' 4 sons.
3. Korach's father was the 2nd to the eldest.
4. Laws of Inheritance: The firstborn receives a double portion.
5. Moshe assumed the position of king, and Aharon as High Priest.
6. Korach felt he should receive the 3rd appointment.
7. Moshe, by Divine dictate, appointed Elitzaphon as Prince (family of Kahas).
8. Korach's claim: If appointment is based on inheritance he should be Prince; if on qualification—he should be High Priest.
9. Rambam: The authenticity of Moshe's prophecy is that every Jew at Sinai witnessed G-d speaking to Moshe.
10. After Sinai, Moshe's prophecy will not be questioned.
11. Korach and his cohorts were at Sinai, yet questioned his word.
12. Because of one's conflict of interest, one may reject something that is irrefutable.

The Wealthy Strata Incites A Mutiny

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1. Dasan and Aviram were key players in the mutiny against Moshe.
2. Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh: Korach attempted to usurp Moshe's authority; Dasan and Aviram instigated the rebellion.
3. Four Fifths of the Jews died in the plague of darkness in Egypt; they were classified as evil.
4. Dason and Aviram continued their evil until they were destroyed with Korach.
5. They were the ones who informed that Moshe killed the Egyptian.
6. Their wealth enabled them to do so.
7. Moshe could return to Egypt as redeemer when they lost their wealth and no longer had relationships within government circles.
8. The Jews who perished during the days of darkness were the ones who had no interest in leaving.
9. Dasan and Aviram wanted to leave to go to a land flowing with milk & honey and the unlimited wealth they'd take out of Egypt.
10. As a result of the sin of the spies, it was decreed that they perish in the desert.
11. Dasan and Aviram's dream of renewed wealth & power was realized.
12. The intensity of hate for Moshe drove the mutiny and attempt to discredit him.

A Flash of Clarity Secures A Dynasty

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1. Chazal: How did Korach, renowned as wise, act so foolishly?
2. Moshe told Korach & his assembly of 250 to take firepans with incense to burn.
3. The one chosen to be High Priest would live, the others would die.
4. Korach's holy vision: Shmuel HaNavi, equal to Moshe, Aharon & 24 groups of Leviim, would descend from him.
5. This made it evidently clear he'd be the one to survive.
6. Actually, his sons would repent, thus being spared from destruction.
7. Midrash: Before the destruction of Korach and community, Moshe entered the tent of Dasan and Aviram; his sons sat alongside him.
8. His sons' quandary: If they stand for Moshe they'd disgrace their father; if not, they'd be violating the commandment to acknowledge a Torah Sage.
9. They chose to stand.
10. Because they stood for Moshe they had stirrings of repentance and repented.
11. In the merit of acknowledging Moshe they extricated themselves from evil.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Korach

The World's Greatest Mutiny

A photograph of a rugged, rocky landscape under a dramatic, cloudy sky. The rocks are light-colored and jagged, with some sparse vegetation. The sky is filled with dark, heavy clouds, creating a somber and intense atmosphere.

G-d Orchestrating Events Of History

Torah: Korach together with his community attempted to usurp Moshe's authority. This incident was one of the most serious moments in the history of the Jewish people. Korach questioned the authenticity of Torah by claiming the it was the word of Moshe and not the Word of G-d. Ultimately Korach's mutiny failed and he along with his community were swallowed up by the earth.

Gemara in Tractate *Bava Basra*: Korach and his followers in *geheim* proclaim on an ongoing basis, "Moshe is true and his Torah is true and we are liars."

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: During the famine that came upon Egypt, Yosef had collected all the wealth of the world in exchange for the grain that was purchased. Yosef had taken this wealth and hidden it away in three locations. When the Jewish people left Egypt with the borrowed wealth of their masters, it was not the wealth that Yosef had hidden away.

As the Jewish people were leaving Egypt, the earth had opened up in a particular location and Korach discovered one of these three storehouses of wealth that Yosef had hidden. Through this, he acquired a third of the wealth of the world.

Midrash: The wealthiest Jewish commoner to ever live was Korach and the wealthiest gentile commoner, was Haman, the evil one. The Roman Emperor Antoninus, who was a contemporary of Judah the Prince and who later converted to Judaism, had come upon the second location where Yosef had hidden the wealth. The third location of wealth will remain hidden until the coming of Moshiach so that the righteous at the end of time shall benefit from it. Why did G-d allow Korach to come upon such great wealth?

Although he had a special lineage, which was the same as Moshe and Aaron, and was uniquely wise, Korach would not have been able to garner as much support

to attempt to usurp *Moshe's* authority had he not had this dimension of wealth. When the spies returned with their slanderous reports regarding the Land, the Jewish people listened and *Moshe* and *Aaron* remained silent. Their silence was a desecration of G-d's Name because the spies at that moment were not being countered in defense of G-d's Promise.

It was only *Calev* who stood up and said that the land was "very very good." His proclamation was the ultimate sanctification of G-d's Name because it contrasted so greatly to the silence that was a desecration. Had *Korach* attempted to confront *Moshe* without the support of his followers, he would have failed from the very onset. The power of persuasion that he was able to wheeled was as a result of the enormous wealth that he possessed. The attempt to question the authenticity of *Torah* was destined to occur at some point in Jewish history. G-d endowed *Korach* with this wealth so allow him to attempt to usurp *Moshe* so that he and his community should be destroyed on the most miraculous level, thus establishing the eternal authenticity of *Torah*.

Repentance is Something that One Must Merit

Torah: "Moshe said to *Korach*... Let each man take his fire-pan and you shall place incense on them... two hundred and fifty fire-pans; and you (*Korach*) and *Aaron*..." In order to refute *Korach's* claim, *Moshe* presented him and the 250 members of his assembly, with a test that would determine the one who is chosen by G-d to be the High Priest. Only the one who was truly chosen by G-d to be the High Priest would survive the test of the burning of the incense and the others would die. Although, *Korach* should have understood that his chance of survival was nearly impossible, he nevertheless proceeded.

Rashi citing the *Midrash*: "*Korach* was a wise person. How did he allow himself to enter into such foolishness? It was because his eye had misled him. He saw that *Shmuel* the Prophet, who was the equivalent of *Moshe* and *Aaron* was to descend from him. He also saw that twenty-four families of Levites will descend from his children that will have prophetic abilities. *Korach* had said, 'Is it possible that all of this greatness will emanate from me and I should be destroyed?'

"However, *Korach's* eye misled him. He did not see accurately. In fact, *Shmuel* the Prophet and all of the great families that will descend from his progeny were only a result of *Korach's* sons repenting at the very last moment." Because of *Korach's* sense of self and egotism he would never consider the possibility that the reason he was not chosen to be the Prince of the family of *Kahas* was because he was not worthy. The *Torah* tells us that *Moshe* was willing, for the sake of peace, to forego his honor and approach *Korach* in a final effort to reason with him to understand that his appointment was by Divine Decree.

Midrash: "Because *Moshe* had gone to the entrance of the tent, he saved four *tzaddikim* from the judgment of *geheimom*. These four *tzaddikim* were the three sons of *Korach* and the son of *Peles*. What merit did the sons of *Korach* have that they should be saved? When *Moshe* entered into the tent of *Korach*, his sons were seated next to him. When his sons had seen *Moshe* they covered their faces with the ground (they were embarrassed to face him).

"They were in a quandary. If they were to stand for *Moshe* (as the law dictates that they should) they would disgrace their father because it would be a dishonor to him to acknowledge their father's adversary. However if they were to remain seated, they would be in violation of the *Torah* law which dictates that one must acknowledge the presence of a *Torah* sage by standing. They decided to stand for *Moshe* and acknowledge his presence despite the disgrace to their father. At that moment, they had stirrings of repentance in their heart."

In the merit of standing for *Moshe* they had merit the Divine Assistance to have the capacity to repent and thus were able to extricate themselves from the congregation of *Korach*. In order for one to repent, especially when one is deeply entrenched sin, one must have special merit. One must very often take the initiative regardless of how difficult it may be to do what G-d dictates. Had it not been for their decision to stand for *Moshe*, the sons of *Korach* would not have merited to repent. By fulfilling the *mitzvah* of acknowledging the presence of a *Torah* Sage, they were saved from the judgment of *geheimom*.

Chazal: *Korach* and his assembly have no share in the world to come. However, because the sons of *Korach*

were able to extricate themselves, they are part of the eternity of the Jewish people. It is because of their momentary decision to stand for *Moshe* that *Shmuel* the Prophet, who is the equivalent of *Moshe* and *Aaron*, came to being and twenty-four special families of Levites. We can now appreciate the *Mishna* in *Ethics of our Fathers* that tells us, one should never underestimate the value of performing even the most minor *mitzvah* because one cannot fathom its true value.

A Time to Take Action

Based on the laws of inheritance, *Korach* should have received the next official appointment as the leader of the family of *Kahas*; however, that position was given to *Elitzafon Ben Uziel* (the son of the youngest brother) rather than *Korach* the son of *Yitzhar* (who was the second brother). As a result of his not being chosen, *Korach* understood that he was denied something that was rightfully his. He had decided to undermine and usurp *Moshe's* authority. However, *Korach* did not attempt to incite the mutiny against *Moshe* immediately after the appointment of *Elitzafon Ben Uziel*.

Ramban: The reason *Korach* chose to launch his mutiny at a later time is that if *Korach* had attempted to usurp *Moshe's* authority at that time, people would have risen up against him because of their special love and reverence for *Moshe*. The Jewish people understood that after they had sinned with the Golden Calf, they deserved to be destroyed by G-d. It was only *Moshe's* beseeching G-d that the decree was annulled and they were spared from destruction.

However, after the incident of the quail during which many Jewish people had died by the wrath of G-d and the decree upon the generation of the spies (who were between the ages of 20 and 60) that they should die in the desert over a forty year period; the Jewish people had become embittered with *Moshe*. They had said, "When we had sinned with the Golden Calf *Moshe* prayed on our behalf and we were spared; however, after the incident of the spies, he did not pray for us. Perhaps he is no longer the leader that he once had been."

Korach, understanding the vulnerability of *Moshe* at that moment, saw it as an opportunity to usurp his authority. Seemingly, the Jewish people had a

reasonable question regarding *Moshe's* leadership. Why did *Moshe* not pray for them after the incident of the spies as he had done after the sin of the Golden Calf?

Torah: When the Jewish people were caught between the Sea and the Egyptian army, some of them along with *Moshe* began to pray for G-d to save them. G-d, however said to *Moshe*, "Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the Children of Israel and let them journey forth!"

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: If one is in a situation in which he can take the initiative in order to be saved, he should do so rather than remaining passive and beseeching G-d for Assistance. However, if one's predicament is of such a nature that it is clear that only G-d can help, it is not the time to take initiative, but rather it is time to pray. Seemingly, this was the situation of the Jewish people at the Sea. It was time to pray and not take an initiative. Why did G-d say to *Moshe* that it is not a time to pray but rather a time to travel into the Sea. When the Jewish people found themselves at the Sea, they said to *Moshe*, "Were there no graves in Egypt that you took us to die in the Wilderness?"

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: At the moment the Jewish people had made this statement, it aroused intense prosecution upon them. It was seen as a lack of trust in G-d after what they had witnessed in Egypt. It was because of this intense prosecution that their prayers would not arouse G-d's Mercy. G-d said to *Moshe* that the only thing that could quell the prosecution against them is for them to demonstrate their trust in Him by traveling into the Sea. The sin of the spies was considered to be a public desecration of G-d's Name. As G-d had said to *Moshe*, "After all the miracles that they had witnessed how could the Jewish people believe the slanderous reports of the spies? How is it possible to have such a level of distrust in Me?"

Because of this serious breach of faith, an intense level of prosecution came upon them. *Moshe's* supplications would have been rejected. They could not evoke G-d's Mercy. The sin of the Golden Calf was not as a result of a lack of faith but rather because of their miscalculation of *Moshe's* return, they believed that *Moshe* had died. They felt abandoned by *Moshe* and stranded in the desert with out a leader. They

thus returned to their idolatrous ways from Egypt. This is the reason *Moshe* was able to pray on behalf of the Jewish people after the sin of the Golden Calf to annul the decree.

Korach saw that the Jewish people did not make any distinction between the failing of the spies and the sin of the Golden Calf. All they understood was that *Moshe* did not pray on their behalf as he had done earlier. Thus causing an embitterment towards *Moshe*, which *Korach* took advantage of. We learn from this that there are times that when prayer will be meaningful and effective; however, there are times when one needs to take the initiative to demonstrate one's unwavering faith in G-d to quell the prosecution. One must take the initiative despite the seeming ineffectiveness of that initiative.

We live in time that there is great prosecution upon the world and the Jewish people because G-d's Name is being continuously desecrated. The Jew must take the initiative to do His Will at all costs, despite the position of humanity and remain steadfast in his commitment to *Torah* to bring about the ultimate Redemption.

Wisely Choosing One's Location

Midrash: "Our Rabbis of blessed memory said, 'Woe to the evil person (*rasha*) and woe to his neighbor. It is good for the devoutly righteous and it is good for his neighbor.' Where do we see this? *Dasan* and *Aviram* were destroyed because of the dissension of *Korach*. They were his neighbors and thus influenced by him. His location was in the south...The location of the camp of *Reuvain* was juxtaposed to the family *Korach*...It is because of their proximity to him that they joined with him in the mutiny against *Moshe*.

"In contrast, the camp of *Yehudah* which included *Yissachar* and *Zevulun* was on the east...They were neighbors of *Moshe*, *Aaron* and his children...Because they were in close proximity to *Torah*, they merited to become *Torah* Sages. As it states in *Psalms*, 'Yehudah the legislator of law...' The children of *Yissachar* were 'yodei binah' (those who possessed special insight and clarity)... Even the tribe of *Zevulun* was also endowed with a special level of *Torah*."

Although the tribes that were included within the camp of *Yehudah* did not engage with *Moshe* to a greater degree than any of the other tribes, they

nevertheless achieved a unique dimension of *Torah* scholarship. This is attributed to the fact that they were in the proximity of *Moshe* who was the *tzaddik*. Being a neighbor alone, is sufficient cause to be the beneficiary of the *tzaddik's* presence. It is not necessarily determined by one's degree of interaction with the *tzaddik*, but rather being in his proximity. If one is within the proximity of an evil person, he will become diminished because of the spiritual void and vacuum that is associated with the *rasha*. Because the *rasha* represents and pursues ideals that are contrary to the Will of G-d, the Divine Presence is not associated with him.

Mishna in *Ethics of our Fathers*: "Rabbi Chalafta Ben Dosa Of Kfar Chananya said: "If ten people sit together and occupy themselves with *Torah*, the Divine Presence rests among them, As it states, 'G-d stands in the Assembly of the L'rd what is the source that teaches us that the same is true if even five sit together? It states, 'He has founded His band upon the earth.' What is the source that teaches us that the same is true even if three sit together? It states, 'Among the judges He renders judgment.' What is the source that teaches us that the same is true even if two sit together? It states, 'Then the G-d fearing conversed with one another, and the L'rd hearkened and heard.' What is the source that teaches us that the same is true if even one Jew sits and learns *Torah*? It states, 'In every place where I have My Name mentioned I will come to you and bless you.'"

Maharal of Prague: "The *Mishna* cites verses to indicate that the Divine Presence is associated with various settings of Jews who engage in *Torah* study, including the individual who studies alone. Evidently, there must be a difference regarding each of these settings, since the *Mishna* cites various verses to establish the value of each situation. What is the difference?"

Maharal of Prague: Although it is true that the Divine Presence rests even upon the one Jew if he is engaged in *Torah* study, the intensity of His Presence is not the same as that of more than one. Thus, if ten Jews, which is a quorum, are studying *Torah*, the intensity of Divine Presence is much greater than if only five engage in *Torah* study because ten Jews represent a microcosm of the entire Jewish people. This will bring about the most advanced level of attachment to the Divine Presence.

Midrash: Regarding the holy Patriarchs, “*Hein, hein haMerkava* – they are the Chariot (of the Divine Presence).” *Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov* because of their dimension of spirituality and accomplishments were the location for the Divine Presence in this existence. In this way they were the equivalent of the Holy of Holies in the Temple. If one were to be exposed to that level of intensity of spirituality, one would be positively impacted and influenced.

Moshe, being the pillar and conduit of *Torah* was the location of G-d’s Presence. In addition, he was the spiritual equivalent of the entire Jewish people. *Aaron*, the High Priest was to a degree the spiritual equivalent of his brother *Moshe*. His sons, the Priests (*Kohanim*) were the ones responsible for the service of G-d. Therefore, the fact that the camp of *Yehudah* was in their proximity, they were influenced to become some of the most advanced *Torah* sages of the Jewish people. The basis for their spiritual capacity was their proximity to G-d’s Presence.

In contrast, if one were in the proximity of an evil person such as *Korach* who was self-absorbed and envious of *Moshe*, one would be spiritually diminished. The Divine Presence had no relevance to *Korach* because of what he represented. His objective was to usurp *Moshe*’s authority and thus undermine the credibility of *Torah*. Because *Dasan* and *Aviram*’s location was juxtaposed to the location of *Korach*, although they may not have initially interacted with him, they were negatively affected because of the lack of holiness. This is the understanding of “Woe to the *rasha* and woe to his neighbor.”

Mishna in *Pirkei Avos*: “You should distance yourself from a bad neighbor...” It is not necessarily because of the subtle influences of the evil neighbor that one must be careful, but rather simply by being in the proximity of an evil neighbor one will be denied a relationship with G-d.

Torah in *Vayeitzei*, “*Yaakov* departed from *Beersheva* and went toward *Charan*.”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: “Why is it important for the *Torah* to tell us from where *Yaakov* departed, it would have been sufficient to tell us that *Yaakov* was going to *Charan*.”

Midrash: The *Torah* is teaching us that when a *tzaddik* leaves a location it loses its radiance, beauty and splendor. Thus, although *Yitzchak* and *Rivka*

remained in *Beersheva*, the level of intensity of the Divine Presence was diminished because of *Yaakov*’s departure. Wherever *Yaakov* went, the Divine Presence followed because he himself was the receptacle of His Presence.

It was known that the *Chazon Ish* only remained in Europe as long as the *Chofetz Chaim* was alive. After the *Chofetz Chaim* had passed away he moved to the Holy Land. This was because he believed that as long as the *Chofetz Chaim* was alive, his dimension of spirituality brought about a level of sanctity upon Europe that was similar to that of the Holy Land. However, upon the passing of the *Chofetz Chaim*, when that special level of sanctity no longer existed, *Chazon Ish* chose to depart.

The Magnitude of G-d’s Glory Coming into Focus is Determined by the Void

Midrash citing *Psalms*: “Those with strong hearts have become unstable. It is as if they have gone to sleep. Those who are strong soldiers were not able to correct the situation.’ This is similar to the actions of *Moshe* and *Aaron*. The spies had returned with their slanderous reports about the Land and *Moshe* and *Aaron* did not know how to respond. They were weakened.

“However, *Calev* stood up and silenced the masses despite their murmurings. He stood on a bench and silenced them saying, ‘Remain silent! The Land is very very good.’ G-d said to *Moshe*, ‘I have a great debt of gratitude to *Calev*.’ As it states, ‘If it not were for *Calev*...’ Meaning, he is more valuable to G-d than the 600,000 Jewish people. Even *Moshe* and *Aaron* were not able to respond properly when they were confronted with the reports of the spies. Only *Calev ben Yefuna* responded and restored the Honor of G-d.”

When the spies returned with their slanderous reports, they had desecrated G-d’s Name on a most profound level. This was especially the case because *Moshe* and *Aaron* remained silent because they did not know how to respond. *Calev*, through his interjection and statement performed a sanctification of G-d’s Name. It is similar to the act of zealotry done by *Pinchas* when he had seen *Zimri* desecrating the Name of G-d in a public context when he had cohabited with *Cosbi* the Midianite princess. *Pinchas* took the initiative and killed *Zimri*, despite the risk to his own life. G-d

said, "Because you made My Wrath your own wrath (demonstrated through his zealousness), I will not destroy the Jewish people." While the entire Jewish people remained silent, including *Moshe* and *Aaron*, *Pinchas*' act of sanctification of G-d's Name saved the Jewish people. His act of zealotry was paramount and the ultimate sanctification of G-d's Name.

Rambam in *Laws of Repentance*: Only through death is one fully atoned for the desecration of G-d's Name. Just as the consequence of the desecration of G-d's Name brings about the most profound level of spiritual deficiency, sanctifying G-d's Name, which is multiple times greater, advances spirituality to the ultimate level. Because *Calev* sanctified G-d's Name at a moment that there was an extreme level of desecration of G-d's Name, his action of sanctification was magnified to a greater level. Because the void of spirituality was so great the value of his contribution was unprecedented.

Prophet: "For My Glory I have created it." G-d created existence only for His Glory. Thus, when *Calev* silenced the Jewish people and sanctified His Name by saying that the Land was "very very good" he fulfilled the objective of creation. His momentary statement, although it did not impact upon the Jewish people, it was nevertheless valued as the ultimate accomplishment.

The world continuously exists within the context of G-d's Name being desecrated. When the Jew is committed to the observance of *mitzvos* and the study of the *Torah*, despite the world's purview of spirituality, it is a sanctification of His Name. It is a statement by those who are observant and committed to G-d's Will and Ideals that it is irrelevant what the world values and understands. All that matters is the Will of G-d. This presence of sanctification of G-d's Name will bring unlimited Divine Assistance and protection upon the Jewish people.



Yad Avraham Institute