

Korach

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The name itself has the same letters that spell “bald,” perhaps given to him at birth as a prophecy of how one day his being shaven bald would lead to his rebellion and demise. According to *Sba’ar HaGilgulim*, parents receive *Ruach HaKodesh*, Divine Inspiration, when naming their children because, who names their child Korach?

According to the *Gemora*, this is what happened:

“Korach’s wife said to him: ‘See what Moshe is doing. He is the king, he appointed his brother High Priest, and he appointed his brother’s sons deputy priests... Furthermore, he shears your hair and waves you as if you are as insignificant as excrement, as though he set his sights on your hair and wishes you to be shaven and unsightly.’” (*Sanbedrin* 110a)

It may have also been a warning to Korach about his way of thinking and, to all the generations that have since followed about such a way of thinking. To appreciate this, you have to first appreciate the spiritual meaning of hair. It is not a multi-billion-dollar industry for no reason...

The physical world is the way it is because of the spiritual world. Just like a child is a replication of its parents because of inherited genes, likewise the physical world is always just the physical actualization of spiritual potential. Everything begins with an abstract idea, and everything is made of Divine light, no matter how physical or profane it may seem to us.

Man, the centerpiece of God’s creating, has a head, torso, and legs, each with its own sub-parts. The spiritual world is made up countless systems of 10 *sefiros* each, the spiritual mechanism God created to filter and transfer His light around to make and

maintain Creation. The *sefiros*, we are told, are spiritually organized in the physical form of a man.

Actually, it's the other way around, since the *sefiros* came before man, and they gave rise to him. God may have had man in mind when He first created and laid out the *sefiros*, but they were already structured that way long before man came along. This also helps to create a more "intimate" bond between man and the spiritual world, from which he draws spiritual light to physically live.

Here's the reason for all of this. Just like humans have hair, so is there a reality of hair in the *sefiros*. And though hair performs an important physical function on a person, it performs an important spiritual function in the *sefiros*. The Hebrew word for hair is *sa'ar*, but its letters (*Shin-Ayin-Raish*) are the same as *sha'ar*, which means "gate," and that is obviously not a coincidence. The question is, how not?

Shabbos Day

PHYSICAL HAIR IS a protein filament that grows from follicles found in the dermis. Hair is one of the defining characteristics of mammals. The human body, apart from areas of glabrous skin, is covered in follicles which produce thick terminal and fine vellus hair." (Wikipedia)

"The center of the hair is called the medulla. It can be a hollow tube, or filled with cells. In some people the medulla is absent, in others it is fragmented, or segmented, and in others it is continuous or even doubled. The medulla can contain pigment granules or be unpigmented." (The Study of Hair, National Geographic Learning)

That's a little technical. In the *sefiros*, the hair is made from Divine light and it acts as pipelines for Divine light. But every time Divine light moves it tends to change levels, and that requires some constriction and filtering. In this way, *sa'ar* acts like a *sha'ar*, like a gate between two areas, in this case an upper level and the one below it.

Ultimately, Divine light is knowledge and awareness. Yes, it makes all of Creation and runs history, but the point of all of Creation and history is to know and be aware of God. In this respect, all that exists and all that occurs is really a message to be deciphered about God, as it says: "*God looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see whether there is a man of understanding, who seeks God*" (*Tehillim* 53:3).

On the level of *Arich Anpin*, the highest level of Creation, there are 13 hairs of light that come out from the top of the "head," and what is called the *Yud-Gimmel*

Tikunei Dikna, or the “13 Rectifications of the Beard.” Basically, there are 13 sections to a beard, some of which do not have hair, like the channel under the nose. They are two different means for delivering Divine light to lower levels, but since the beard is lower than the hair on top of the head, it is the main one.

It is said that a beard tends to reveal on the outside what is hidden on the inside of a person, which is why people who are spiritual tend to let their beards grow. It just seems more natural and less fashionable, very down to earth. In the *sefiros* this is definitely the case because until the beard, most of the light remained internal. The outer beard is the revelation of inner light.

It is similar with respect to hair on the head. How a person wears their hair is often an indication of their level of spirituality. Modest people wear their hair modestly. People who want to attract attention spend a lot of time and money on their hair to help them do that. Their *yetzer bara* makes them do that. We can size a person up somewhat before even meeting them just by the look of their hair.

Seudas Shlishis

THE LONG AND short of it is that, conceptually hair is a holy thing, not so much because of what it is, but because of what it represents. Practically speaking, hair can be the way a person reveals their spiritual inside to the outside world, or it can be a stumbling block for the person themselves and others.

Kabbalistically, *sa'ar* is a *sha'ar* between two realms to increase the revelation of Divine light. Conceptually, it represents a gateway between two approaches to life, one that leads to increased Divine light and understanding, or one that leads away from it. It is one thing to look presentable, but something very different to purposely draw attention to your physical appearance.

This story in the *Gemora* makes this point:

“One time, a man who was a *nazir* came from the south and I saw that he had beautiful eyes and was handsome, and the fringes of his hair were arranged in curls. I asked him: ‘My son, what did you see [that made you decide] to destroy this beautiful hair of yours by becoming a *nazir*?’

He told me: ‘I was a shepherd for my father in my city, and I went to draw water from the spring, and I looked at my reflection [in the water] and my *yetzer* quickly overcame me and sought to expel me from the world. I said: “Wicked one! Why do you pride yourself in a world that is not yours. . . in someone who will eventually be for worms and maggots? By the [Temple] service, I will shave you for [the sake of]

Heaven!”

I immediately arose and kissed him on his head, and said: ‘My son, may there be more who take vows to be a *nazir* like you among the Jewish people. . .’” (*Nedarim* 9b)

If Korach had seen this *Gemora* he might have avoided his catastrophic rebellion and lived to tell the story. But then again, being Korach, he probably would not have taken it to heart.

Ain Od Milvado, Part 54

THE VILNA GAON explains that while the Jewish people are in exile by Divine will, they have a *mitzvab* to accept it with love. But he adds that once God has shown signs that He is initiating redemption, we have a *mitzvab* to do whatever we can to leave exile for *Eretz Yisroel*. Prolonging an exile is not an option and only leads to eventual calamity.

It was for this that the Jews in Ezra’s time were faulted. They may have accepted exile to Bavel with love as they were supposed to, but failed to acknowledge Koresh’s invitation to return to *Eretz Yisroel* and rebuild the *Bais HaMikdosh* as a sign that God had remembered them. Only 42,000 heeded the call to end the exile while the rest of the nation chose to prolong it by staying put in Bavel.

In last week’s *parsha*, God equated rejection of the land by the generation of the spies as a rejection of Him and Torah, even though they claimed to want to stay in exile to strengthen their connection to both. When God said that He took us out of Egypt to be bring us to *Eretz Yisroel* to be our God (*Vayikra* 25:37), He wasn’t being metaphorical.

By choosing to extend exile longer than it has to go is a blemish in the *mitzvab* of *Ain Od Milvado*. It’s acting as if the signs that exile is ending aren’t really from Him, or they’d be no excuse to ignore them. Should one say that we lack the prophets of that time to tell us today that what we see are in fact signs of redemption, the *Gemora* answers that by showing us how to interpret the prophecies for today.

And if the signs were good enough for the Vilna *Gaon*, they are good enough for us. And the *GR”A* didn’t even have nearly as many signs of redemption as we have today. So if we ignore them, aren’t we kind of being like Korach, thinking that we are dissenting on behalf of God and the Jewish people when in fact we are dissenting against both? It’s the difference between what the *mishnab* calls a *machlokes*—argument—*L’Shem Shamayim*—for the sake of Heaven, like those of Hillel and

Shammai, and an argument of Korach and his followers that was in their own personal interest (*Pirkei Avos* 5:17). It is the difference between someone for whom *ain od Milvado* is an everyday reality, and someone for whom it is only an idea.