

רש"י במדבר פרק טז:

"ויקח קרח" - פרשה זו יפה נדרשת במדרש רבי תנחומא.
"ויקח קרח" - לקח את עצמו לצד אחד להיות נחלק מתוך העדה לעורר על הכהונה,
וזהו שתרגם אונקלוס "ואתפלג" - נחלק משאר העדה להחזיק במחלוקת,
וכן (איוב טו, יב) "מה יקחך לבך" - לקח אותך להפליגך משאר בני אדם.
דבר אחר:
"ויקח קרח" - משך ראשי סנהדראות שבהם בדברים,
כמו שנאמר (במדבר כ, כה) "קח את אהרן", (הושע יד, ג) "קחו עמכם דברים":

מה עשה? עמד וכנס מאתים חמישים ראשי סנהדראות, רובן משבט ראובן שכיניו, והם אליצור בן שדיאור
וחביריו וכיוצא בו,
שנאמר "נשיאי עדה קריאי מועד", ולהלן הוא אומר (במדבר א, טז) "אלה קרואי העדה",
והלבישן טליתות שכולן תכלת. באו ועמדו לפני משה. אמרו לו: טלית שכולה של תכלת, חייבת בציצית או
פטורה?
אמר להם: חייבת.
התחילו לשחק עליו: אפשר טלית של מין אחר חוט אחד של תכלת פטורה, זו שכולה תכלת לא תפטור את
עצמה?!

ספר הזכרון

כלומר: כל ענין קרח, לפי שכל מה שכתב בה הרב ז"ל רובו בתנחומא

גור אריה

מפני שקשה לו לשון "ויקח" שלא היה לו לכתוב כאן
ומתרגם: פרשה זו יפה נדרשת וכו', ואגב דרשה דהתם נדרש לשון ויקח כמו שמפרש אחריו . . .

מזרחי

כלומר: שהוא קרוב לפשוטו של מקרא, ולא נצטרך לפרשו לפי פשוטו כמנהגו בשאר מקומות.

לבוש האורה

נ"ל דה"פ: קשה לרש"י "ויקח קרח" ולא כתיב את מי לקח או מה לקח . . .
ומתרגם: על כרחך אין המקרא הזה אומר אלא דרשני, ועל זה אמר רש"י ויפה דרשהו במדרש ר' תנחומא -
בדרש שהוא קרוב לפשוטו. ואומר אח"כ: ומהו הדרש? . . .

מהרש"א

ואיכא למידק: וכי לא ראה רש"י שום דרש יפה כי אם זה?
ובשפתי דעת תירץ דכך פרושו:
לפי שכל דרש צריך שיהיה לו שום רמז בפסוק בפ' המלות, חוץ מדרש זה, לפי שסתם הפסוק לקיחתו,
כי אמר "ויקח קרח" ולא פירש מה לקח,
אם כן מסתמא דעת הפסוק לומר לך שכל הדברים השייכים אל המחלוקת, את כלם לקח לסעד,
וא"כ מעתה הרשות נתונה לכל דורש לומר את זה לקח או את זה - אע"פ שאין הדבר מפרש בקרא, מ"מ נקרא
יפה נדרש, כי בזה רצה הכתוב.
ומטעם זה רבו הפירושים בלקיחה זו:
כי יש אומרים לקח את עצמו לצד אחר, ויש אומרים לקח ראשי סנהדראות, ויש אומרים לקח טליתות,
כמבואר כל זה במדרשות. וק"ל.

Rashi

“And Korach took” – This parshah is *darshened* well in the midrash of Rabbi Tanchuma.

“And Korach took” – he took himself to one side, to be separated out from the midst of the congregation so as to raise a challenge to the kehunah,

And this is the meaning of Onkelos’ translation “and he separated” – he separated from the rest of the congregation to be firm in dissension,

And similarly “why does your heart take you” – take you to separate from the rest of humanity.

Another interpretation:

“And Korach took” – he drew along the heads of Sanhedrins among them with words, as Scripture says: “Take Aharon”, and “Take words with you”.

...

What did Korach do? He caused to enter 250 heads of Sanhedrin, mostly from his neighbors the Tribe of Reuven, namely Elitzur ben Shdeir and his peers and the like, as Scripture says here “*nesiei eidah kri’ei moed*”, and there “*eileh kruei haeidah*”, and dressed them in tallitot all of tchelet. They came and stood before Mosheh. They said to him: A tallit all of tchelet, does it require tzitzit or not?

He said to them: It requires tzitzit.

They began mocking him: Is it possible that for a tallit of a different color, one thread of tchelet suffices, but this which is all of tchelet is not sufficient for itself?

Sefer HaZikaron

As if to say: the entire matter of Korach, since of all that Rashi wrote, most is in the Tanchuma

Gur Aryeh (Maharal of Prague)

Because he was bothered by the word “and he took”, which it should not have written here, and he responds: “This parshah was *darshened* well etc.”, and following the derashah there, the word “and he took” is *darshened* as he explains afterward

Mizrachi

As if to say: that is close to the *peshat* of Scripture, and we will not need to explain it in accordance with its *peshat*, as is Rashi’s custom in other places

Levush haOrah

It seems to me that it should be explained thus: Rashi finds “and Korach took” difficult, when it does not write who or what he took . . .

And he responds: You are compelled to concede that “this verse says nothing other than *darshen* me”, and it is in this context that Rashi says “and they *darshened* it well in the midrash of R. Tanchuma” – with a *derash* that is close to its *peshat*. And he says afterward: And what is the

derash? . . .

Maharsha (citing, with some omissions near the end, from [Sifte Daat](#))

One might ask on close reading: Has Rashi seen no well-done derash other than this?

In Sifte Da’at he answered that it should be interpreted thus:

Since all derash needs to have some hint in the verse at the level of translation, other than this derash, since the verse made Korach’s taking unspecified,

Since it says “and Korach took” and did not specify what he took,

Therefore presumably the intent of the verse is to say to you that all things relevant to the dispute – he talk all of them for support,

Therefore now that permission has been granted to each doresh to say that he took this or took that - even though the matter is not explicit in the text, it is called well-done derash, because this is what Scripture wished.

For this reason interpretations of this taking have become numerous:

For some say that he took himself to one side, and others say that he took the heads of Sanhedrins, and others say that he took tallitot,

as is all explained in the midrashot, and this can be easily understood.

How should one parse a professed pashtan's praise of a particular derash? In the case of Rashi's introduction to Parashat Korach, Mizrahi argues that one should understand it as a statement that this midrash reads the text more like pshat than usual, so much so that it makes a separate pshat-commentary unnecessary. Levush HaOrah takes a somewhat different tack, suggesting that the verse invites derash, which here was done in the right way, i.e. a way close to peshat. But I will focus this week on the relationship between peshat and derash in the interpretation cited by Maharsha from Sifte Da'at.

Sifte Da'at suggests that the verse, by saying that "Korach took" but leaving what he took unspecified, implies at the level of peshat that Korach took everything relevant. This, he says, means that the derash, when supplying concrete details of what Korach took, is not bound by the constraint of evidence – anything that plausibly would have supported Koach's aim is legitimately included, even if it is nowhere hinted in the text.

It's not clear to me how radically Sifte Da'at intends this statement. But it seems clear to me

- a) that he sees midrash as a creative act of exegesis rather than as the transmission of an oral tradition that exists independently of the text, and
- b) that he does not require midrashim to be historically true, or at the least that he understands at least some midrashim as speculations about the past based on purely textual, often slim, evidence.

I wonder to what extent he, and by extension Maharsha, would have been disturbed by anachronisms in Biblical interpretation. Must Korach have taken with him only crowd-control items that were available in the Wilderness back then, or could a contemporary doresh include a megaphone on the list? Did he carry his shtreimel with him, or his kippah srugah?

Also - does Sifte Daat require a specific positive statement of broad inclusion to legitimate speculative derash about details, or is license granted to provide via derash any details not spelled out in the text?

All this adds up to the question of whether, granting that chumash is historically accurate, it is important for us to experience it in that way, or whether we can even seek out ahistorical understandings, such as children's editions in which the Patriarchs and Matriarchs wear clothes that mark them as members of particular contemporary Jewish circles.

Modern Orthodoxy tends to insist

- a) that preserving historical context is crucial to properly understanding chumash;
- b) that peshat and derash use different modes of reading narrative, and
- c) that peshat is more congenial to Modern Orthodoxy.

I suggest that we instead see peshat and derash as different expressions of the same mode of reading narrative, with derash concretizing its speculations into specific narrative claims; that historical context is often useful, but absolutely necessary only when making historical claims; and that a confident Modern Orthodoxy would be engaged in developing its own derash-interpretation.

It is probably necessary to add that I sharply distinguish derash, a mode of close reading, from derush, which often involves forcing complicated texts into a limited set of preapproved slogans. Derush has its place as well, and Modern Orthodoxy needs to develop its set of slogans and associated texts, so that, for example, everyone knows that the story of Moshe saving Yitro's daughters teaches us that Jews must stand up against any injustice perpetrated against anyone anywhere. There is also a mode of derush, such as that of R. Yitzchak Hutner in Pachad Yitzchak, which develops very complicated and sophisticated lessons by seeing the rabbinic corpus, halakhic and nonhalakhic, as a coherent whole within which abstract contradictions can be resolved casuistically. My comments above relate only to derash.

In that context, I welcome suggestions as to what Korach took along with him. Perhaps highlights of responses will be included in next week's dvar Torah.

Shabbat shalom!

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