

# O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT KORACH · 30 SIVAN 5777 · JUNE 24, 2017 · VOL. 24 NO. 35

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## THE POT CALLING THE KETTLE BLACK

***Korach said: It is too much from you! For the entire assembly – all of them – are holy, and G-d is among them; why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of G-d? Moshe heard and he fell on his face... (16:4)***

**T**he Talmud deduces that Moshe fell on his face because Korach was accusing him of adultery. (Sanhedrin 109)

It's difficult to see how Moshe recognized from Korach's words the slur of immorality.

The halacha states (*Choshen Mishpat 500*) that if in the

midst of an argument one says to the other, "I am not evil!", what he is really saying is: "I'm not evil — but you are!"

When Korach said, "*For the entire assembly – all of them – are holy...*" he meant "we are all holy but you are the antithesis of holiness — you are depraved!"

• Source: *Mishkanot Yaakov HaSefaradi*

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

**K**orach, Datan and Aviram and 250 leaders of Israel rebel against the authority of Moshe and Aharon. The rebellion results in their being swallowed by the earth. Many resent their death and blame Moshe. G-d's "anger" is manifested by a plague which besets the nation, and many thousands perish. Moshe intercedes once again for the people. He instructs Aharon to atone for them and the plague stops. Then G-d commands that staffs, each inscribed with the name of one of the tribes, be placed in the Mishkan. In the morning, the staff of Levi, bearing

Aharon's name, sprouts buds, blossoms and yields ripe almonds. This provides Divine confirmation that Levi's tribe is chosen for priesthood and verifies Aharon's position as Kohen Gadol, High Priest. The specific duties of the Levi'im and Kohanim are stated. The Kohanim were not to be landowners, but were to receive their sustenance from the tithes and other mandated gifts brought by the people. Also taught in this week's Parsha are laws of the first fruits, redemption of the firstborn, and other offerings.

## LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

## THE CHURVA — AN ARCH WORTH REMEMBERING

**V**isitors to the Old City of Jerusalem are always struck by the sight of a magnificent arch that marks the site upon which stood the synagogue of Rabbi Yehuda Hachassid.

This Polish-born kabbalist led a group of followers on *aliya* to Eretz Yisrael some 300 years ago. He bought a courtyard next to the Ramban Synagogue and initiated construction of his own synagogue. His sudden death slowed down this enterprise, but work went on. However, twenty years after its completion it was destroyed by Arabs, and the site stood desolate for



many years — hence the name *Churva*, which means "ruin".

In the middle of the 19th century the synagogue was rebuilt with the help of the Rothschild family, and served as an Ashkenazi synagogue and as home of the Eitz Chaim Yeshiva until its destruction by Arabs in the War of Independence. After Israel regained control of the site in 1967, the famous arch which distinguished the building was restored and stood in stark contrast to the ruined walls that remained from the building. Renovation of these has been an amazing feat of completion.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why did Datan and Aviram join Korach?
2. Why is Yaakov's name not mentioned in Korach's genealogy?
3. What motivated Korach to rebel?
4. What did Korach and company do when Moshe said that a *techelet* garment needs *tzizit*?
5. What warning did Moshe give the rebels regarding the offering of the incense?
6. Did Moshe want to be the *kohen gadol*?
7. What event did Korach not foresee?
8. What does the phrase *rav lachem* mean in this week's Parsha? (Give two answers.)
9. What lands are described in this week's Parsha as "flowing with milk and honey"?
10. When did Moshe have the right to take a donkey from the Jewish community?
11. What did Korach do the night before the final confrontation?
12. What sin did Datan and Aviram have in common specifically with Goliath?
13. Before what age is a person not punished by the Heavenly Court for his sins?
14. What happens to one who rebels against the institution of *kehuna*? Who suffered such a fate?
15. Why specifically was incense used to stop the plague?
16. Why was Aharon's staff placed in the middle of the other 11 staffs?
17. Aharon's staff was kept as a sign. What did it signify?
18. Why are the 24 gifts for the *kohanim* taught in this week's Parsha?
19. Who may eat the *kodshei kodashim* (most holy sacrifices) and where must they be eaten?
20. Why is G-d's covenant with the *kohanim* called "a covenant of salt"?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to This Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 16:1 - Because they were his neighbors.
2. 16:1 - Yaakov prayed that his name not be mentioned in connection with Korach's rebellion (*Bereishet* 49:6).
3. 16:1 - Korach was jealous that Elizafan ben Uziel was appointed as leader of the family of Kehat instead of himself.
4. 16:1 - They laughed.
5. 16:6 - Only one person would survive.
6. 16:6 - Yes.
7. 16:7 - That his sons would repent.
8. 16:7,3 - *Rav lachem* appears twice in this week's Parsha. It means "much more than enough greatness have you taken for yourself (16:3)" and "It is a great thing I have said to you (16:17)."
9. 16:12 - Egypt and Canaan.
10. 16:15 - When he traveled from Midian to Egypt.
11. 16:19 - Korach went from tribe to tribe in order to rally support for himself.
12. 16:27 - They all blasphemed.
13. 16:27 - Twenty years old.
14. 17:5 - He is stricken with *tzara'at*, as was King Uziyahu (*Divrei HaYamim* II 26:16-19).
15. 17:13 - Because the people were deprecating the incense offering, saying that it caused the death of two of Aharon's sons and also the death of 250 of Korach's followers. Therefore G-d demonstrated that the incense offering was able to avert death, and it is sin, not incense, which causes death.
16. 17:21 - So people would not say that Aharon's staff bloomed because Moshe placed it closer to the *Shechina*.
17. 17:25 - That only Aharon and his children were selected for the *kehuna*.
18. 18:8 - Since Korach claimed the *kehuna*, the Torah emphasizes Aharon's and his descendants' rights to *kehuna* by recording the gifts given to them.
19. 18:10 - Male *kohanim* may eat them and only in the *azara* (forecourt of the *Beit Hamikdash*).
20. 18:19 - Just as salt never spoils, so this covenant will never be rescinded.

**OHRNET** magazine is published by **OHR SOMAYACH** Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

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## BAVA BATRA 151 - 157

## WORDS REALLY MATTER

“To not open his mouth to the Satan.”

This means that one should not speak about events that he does not wish to transpire, such as disasters and catastrophes, since words have the power to cause these misfortunes to happen. This phrase is how the Rashbam explains an opinion in our *sugya*, and is codified in halacha by the Rema (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 376).

Here is how it applies to what we learn on our *daf*, and also how a person should follow this principle in everyday speech. This includes being careful to word certain statements in ways that require great care and sensitivity, instead of expressing the same ideas in ways that may seem to be acceptable and accepted as a “kosher” way to speak.

What is the context of this idea in our *gemara*, and what is an example of how this halacha should be moved to the forefront of one's mind and tongue when expressing certain thoughts?

The *gemara* deals with a gift given by a “*shchiv me'ra*” — a person “on his deathbed” and is facing death. When a healthy person gives a gift, the gift belongs to the intended recipient immediately, and the giver cannot change his mind to rescind the giving and take the given item back. The law regarding a gift made by a “*shchiv me'ra*”, however, is quite different. His intent is that the gift should pass to the recipient when he passes from this world, but should he somehow recover from his life-threatening status to good health his intent is that the gift giving was not final and he may retract the giving and keep the item for himself.

A dilemma is posed by the *gemara* if a “*shchiv me'ra*” has a document written for giving a gift, which contains two opposing words: “In life and in death” (the text of the Rashbam is “In my life and in my death”, which appears to have the same meaning in our case). He apparently cannot mean both “life and death”, because “life” would make it an immediate gift that is irreversible, even if he heals, whereas “death” would mean that it takes place when he dies and is therefore reversible and he may keep it if his good health is restored. So how is this baffling phrase to be interpreted?

The great Torah Sages named Rav and Shmuel dispute its meaning. Rav says that the person means to give it only when he dies, and the giver may retract the giving as long as he is alive. Rav argues that this is because he wrote in the document for the gift “in death”, meaning that it is only a gift when he dies. So why did he also write “in life” asks Rav rhetorically? “As a sign of life” he explains. The Rashbam explains that since his true intent is to give it only when he dies, and he truly meant the words “in death”, he adds the words “in life” as a “*siman tov*” (“good sign”) — in order not to “open his mouth to the Satan” — although he does *not* really mean that the gift is given now when he is alive.

Shmuel rules in just the opposite manner and claims that the “*shchiv me'ra*” really meant to give it “in life” and he may not retract the giving. So why did he write “in death”? “In life and death” is a somewhat poetic way of saying that the gift is the recipient's “from now and forever” (in the giver's lifetime and also after his death).

One example of being careful not to “open one's mouth to the Satan” is that one who has not seen a specific person for a long time and that person has also not returned his communications should not say: “So-and-so must have died, since I haven't heard from him for so long.” Opening one's mouth with such “appalling” words as “He must have died” might be a negative factor regarding the other's well-being, due to the tremendous power of human speech.

Another, less obvious, example that was pointed out to me in my youth that falls into the category of “not opening one's mouth to the Satan” is the following type of sentence that a person might say when discussing even a theoretical situation. Reuven says to Shimon, “You know, the Torah says that if a person *kills you* unintentionally, then he can flee to an *ir hamiklat* (a “sanctuary city”), and live there in safety.” Or any variation where the speaker mentions a tragedy that happens to “you”. Instead he should say, “kills a *person*”, or whatever verb is appropriate to the case — but not speak to you and say “you”.

(By the way, who is this “Satan” that is mentioned by the Rashbam? Our Sages teach: “The Satan, the *yetzer hara* (the inclination in a person to act wrongly) and the angel of death are all one.” - *Bava Batra 16a*)

## BLESSING BROKERS

*What is the purpose of reciting a blessing? The words “Blessed are You” seem to suggest the impossible (that we are **giving** G-d a blessing), and how can that be? And if we are **receiving** a blessing, why are we the ones saying it?*

**H**ere are two answers to the above questions: 1) Though Mankind represents the pinnacle of Creation, he nonetheless is a part of Creation, and is therefore limited. As such, it is inconceivable that we can be giving G-d a blessing. The commentators thus explain that the phrase “Blessed are You” is an expression of *praise*. Through recognizing and praising G-d as the source of all blessing we gain merit resulting in more blessing in our lives. 2) Man, representing the pinnacle of Creation, was given the power to bless. When we recite a blessing we are thus activating the awesome power of blessing G-d invested in the world.

This can be compared to an investment broker. Though he may have no money of his own, he has the legal power to invest the money of his clients. When using this power wisely he can generate a great amount of profit. The same is true when we recite a blessing. We are G-d’s “Blessing Brokers” in this world. Though we have no “blessing power” of our own, as it were, the power to bless has indeed been placed

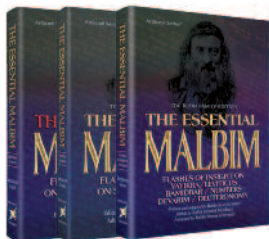
in our hands. We are not only authorized but even required to use G-d’s “blessing power”. Each time we recite a blessing we are activating that power, causing great benefit for us and the world. If we fail to exercise this power then both the world and its inhabitants lose out.

Now just like investment brokers are not all the same, “blessing brokers” are not all the same. When one recites a blessing with great concentration and a sincere heart, the power of that blessing can be ten or even a hundred fold in comparison to a blessing said without any concentration. However, it must be noted that even those blessings said on the lowest levels still have power, since even the most miniscule power that comes from G-d can have a great effect on the world, and so all blessings count. Accordingly, our Sages teach us that the world is sustained by the “breath” of young children who pray and recite blessings. They also instruct one not to take the blessing of a simple person lightly, since even his blessing can bring about wonders.

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## THE THREE DISPUTES WITH KORACH

Abarbanel is puzzled by the nature of the Torah's description of Korach's dispute with Moshe at the beginning of the *parsha*. First the Torah states that Korach, along with Datan, Abiram and On from the tribe of Reuven, separated himself. The Torah then states, in a seemingly repetitious manner, that they stood before Moshe with two hundred and fifty men, and that they gathered again together before Moshe and Aharon. The whole confrontation could have been reported in one sentence.

Abarbanel explains that there were actually *three* separate disputes. First, Korach claimed that the office of the *Kohen Gadol* should have gone to himself, not to Aharon. Leadership went to Moshe, as he was the son of Levi's first-born, Amram. The office of *Kohen Gadol* should have then gone to Korach, the son of Levi's second-born, Yitzhar. The second dispute was between the first-born from all the tribes and the tribe of Levi. At least some of them were angered by the fact that the privilege of serving in the Tabernacle was taken away from the first-born and given to the tribe of Levi. The third dispute involved the tribe of Reuven, as represented by Datan, Abiram and On, who claimed that the privilege of royalty should have gone to them as offspring of Yaakov's first-born, and not to the tribe of Yehuda. This analysis explains a difficulty in the simple translation of the opening verse of the *parsha*, which states simply, "And Korach took", without explaining just exactly what he took. The Aramaic translation of Onkelos takes this to mean that "he separated himself". However, with

Abarbanel's analysis we can now understand the simple meaning as well — that Korach took along with him representatives from the tribe of Levi and the first-born from the rest of the tribes to strengthen his own challenge, by demonstrating that others had a problem with Moshe and Aharon as well.

Abarbanel is also puzzled by Moshe's immediate response to the challenge. Rather than admonishing them first for their brazen disrespect, he tells them that G-d will be the one to choose who is correct. He tells them to take the special utensils known as "fire-pans", place incense in them, and bring them the following morning. Either G-d will accept their offering, or will accept the offering of the Levites, by bringing down a fire to ignite the incense. Abarbanel points out that they were coming to Moshe with their challenge in the afternoon at the time of the *Mincha* offering, and that their irrational behavior could be attributed to intoxication. Perhaps by the following morning they would realize the folly of challenging what Moshe knew was G-d's will. Moshe also realized that it would be useless, and even counter-productive, to immediately criticize them at a time when they were clearly angry. He would probably only make the situation worse. Only after deflecting the challenge away from himself and Aharon, and making it clear that G-d would be the one to decide, Moshe goes on to admonish directly by telling them, "You and your entire assembly who are joining together are against G-d!"

### PLEASE JOIN US...

...in saying Tehillim/Psalms and a special prayer to G-d for the safety and security of all of Klal Yisrael in these times of conflict and conclude with the following special prayer:

אחינו כל בית ישראל

*"Our brothers, the entire family of Israel, who are delivered into distress and captivity, whether they are on sea or dry land – may G-d have mercy on them and remove them from stress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption now, speedily and soon."*

## DEFLECTING DISCORD

**From: David**

*Dear Rabbi,  
I am involved in shidduch dating. Recently I went out with a girl who I thought was amazing and so talented and entertaining. This was a first for me since I am more on the serious side and this seemed like a really good match for me. Anyway, after a few dates, she called it off. I got really upset because I feel like I would have wanted to marry this person. Can you help me make sense of this?*

Dear David,

Despite the adage that “opposites attract”, in the long-term such relationships often don’t remain intact.

Of course, when we meet someone new, it is usually interesting and appealing, if only because it is new. This is all the more so when the person is significantly different from us. For one, because of that difference, such a person is usually not the type that we’re used to having in our regular set of friends. In addition, the fact that the person is so different from us makes us see and experience things in a refreshing, novel way.

This is generally a good thing, and could be the basis for a long-lasting, mutually beneficial friendship – at a distance.

However, notwithstanding the centrality of love in a marriage, regarding the day-to-day practical aspect of marriage for a lifetime, having fundamentally compatible personalities is more important than the often misleading, possibly short-lived, and usually impractical attraction of opposites.

While two people who have different personalities could certainly benefit and learn from each other’s differences as

long as they are not bound together for life, spouses who are too different are likely to think, view, communicate and act in ways so divergent that the marriage might result in disharmony, paralysis, and contradiction regarding the smallest and largest aspects of their own lives, and those of their in-laws, children and friends. There are enough growth-stimulating differences between married people who are basically similar that one need not celebrate opposites and risk eternalizing opposition.

In your specific case you describe yourself as being naturally serious. For that reason you found it refreshing to be around this exciting girl. But eventually, being constantly around someone whose natural state is not like your own is likely to become frustrating and tedious. Furthermore, just as you were very attracted to her energetic, charismatic nature, so will other people (including other men). How would you feel if your wife was constantly in the lime-light of society while your more serious nature would tend to leave you on the sidelines?

So for all these reasons and more, you shouldn’t be upset that this *shidduch* didn’t work. Rather, realize that everything is from G-d who does everything for the best. In fact, I know of a situation where a fellow became enamored of a girl who also had a great personality. But in the end the *shidduch* didn’t work out and he became very upset. However, eventually, he found out that he had been enthralled by her “manic” state, being unaware at the time that she was alternately deeply “depressive” as well. I don’t at all intend to suggest that this is the case here. I only bring it as an example to illustrate to you that, as great a person as the girl you met is, G-d has in mind someone “better”, i.e. more compatible, for you.

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## THE LAND DOWN UNDER

When relating the story of Korach and his household being miraculously swallowed into the ground, the Torah (Numbers 16:30-34) employs an interesting word-switch that we will closely examine. In response to Korach's rebellion, Moshe warned that G-d will implement a supernatural phenomenon whereby the land (*adamah*) will open its mouth and swallow Korach's household. As Moses finished uttering these words, the ground (*adamah*) that was under them split open, and the land (*eretz*) opened its mouth and swallowed them. Then, all the Jews who were present fled because they feared being swallowed by the land (*eretz*). In other places where the Torah recalls this episode, Korach and his household were said to have been swallowed by the *eretz* (Numbers 26:10 and Deuteronomy 11:6). Why does the Torah switch between two seemingly synonymous words for "land" and what is the difference between them?

The Vilna Gaon (1720-1797) explains that the word *eretz* (or *aretz*) connotes the national settlement of land, and can be used in the construct form to denote the land of a specific nation. In this way, *eretz* can be aptly translated as "country". In many instances, an unspecified *eretz* refers especially to the Land of Israel. The word *adamah*, on the other hand, specifically denotes uninhabited lands set aside for agrarian purposes.

Similarly, Malbim (1809-1879) explains that *eretz* includes the entire earth, from the surface of the planet to its innermost core, while the word *adamah* generally refers to only the surface layer of the earth's crust, whose dirt is used for agriculture.

The difference between the words *eretz* and *adamah* is accentuated by their respective appearances in ritual blessings over food. Before eating bread, one blesses G-d as the One "who brings forth bread from the land (*eretz*)", while the blessing recited over vegetables blesses G-d as He "who creates the fruit of the ground (*adamah*)." For some reason, bread is more associated with *eretz* and vegetables are more associated with *adamah*.

Rabbeinu Bachaya (1255-1340) and the Ritva (1250-1330) note that the blessing over bread should have used the more specific word *adamah* (which refers to a field), but instead uses the vague word *eretz*. They explain that this is because the Rabbis decided that the wording of the blessing should mirror the terminology of the Bible (Psalms 104:14), which explicitly says that G-d brings forth bread "from the *eretz*".

Rabbi Yechiel Michel Moravsky (Morafschik) of Lublin (d. 1593) writes that the word *eretz* is more encompassing than the word *adamah* because *adamah* is limited to the immediate top level of dirt, while *eretz* can mean even that which lies underground. As a result, because the grain needed for making bread develops roots which descend deep underground

(see, for example, *Yerushalmi Ta'anit* 1:3 which asserts that the roots of wheat penetrate fifty handbreadths into the ground), bread is said to come from the *eretz*. Other vegetables, on the other hand, do not necessarily require such deep roots, and so they are called fruits of the *adamah*. Rabbi Yisrael Lipschitz (1782-1860) offers a similar explanation.

In light of this distinction between the words *eretz* and *adamah*, Rabbi Yaakov Chaim Sofer (Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Kaf HaChaim in Jerusalem) explains the passages concerning the ground swallowing up Korach. He argues that the opening of the ground transpired in two stages: first the uppermost layer of the ground opened up and then the deeper layers of the ground opened up. These two stages are reflected in the word change found in the Bible, as first the Bible uses the word *adamah* to describe the surface-level opening of the ground, and then it uses the word *eretz* to record the opening of the subterranean depths.

Nonetheless, in contrast to the explanations above, Rabbi Shlomo Luria (1510-1573) understands that *eretz* is limited to the surface of the earth, while the word *adamah* also includes the depths of the land. He explains that bread is said to come forth from the *eretz* because the word *eretz* is limited to the surface of the earth and up to three cubits of topsoil (see Rashi to Genesis 6:13). Therefore, when the grains used to make bread shoot forth from the land, they are said to be coming forth from the *eretz*. However, since vegetables receive their nourishment from the depths of the soil, they are said to be created from the more general word for land, *adamah*, which includes the *eretz* and more. These assumptions about the meanings of *eretz* and *adamah* are also adopted by the illustrious Wurzbberger Rav, Rabbi Yitzchok Dov Bamberger (1807-1878).

Rabbi Yosef Teomim-Frankel (1727-1792), author of the *Pri Megadim*, writes that the word *eretz* refers to land in its supernal, unblemished state. (It is therefore appropriately associated with the Holy Land which is viewed as the terrestrial epitome of good). In contrast, the word *adamah* focuses on the stained and imperfect land which G-d cursed in response to Adam's sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge (Genesis 3:17). The blessing for vegetables thus uses the word *adamah* because it recalls G-d's benevolence in contemporary times, whereby He forms vegetables which grow from the cursed land below. However, the blessing over bread conjures the period before Adam's sin, when complete loaves of bread would rise from the ground, just as they will do in the Messianic Era (see *Shabbat* 30b). Accordingly, the blessing for bread uses the word *eretz* to describe the land from whence it comes — which will by then break free from its curse and return to its pure, unblemished state.

*Author's note: Le'Zechut Refuah Shleimah for Bracha bat Chaya Rachel*



BY RABBI SHLOMO SIMON

## GOINGS ON ABOUT OHR SOMAYACH

The past few weeks, leading up to and including *Shavuot*, have been a momentous time here in the Yeshiva. The dominant theme of introspection and spiritual growth during the *Sefirah* period, which had been a subject of *mussar shmuzzen* (ethical talks) throughout, became physically manifest in the days leading up to the Festival commemorating “The Receiving of the Torah”. As you may know, the Yeshiva is composed of a multitude of programs, each one tailored to a specific group of students to enable maximizing their growth in learning and *midot* (character traits). They include the *Mechina*, which is our introductory program; the *Center*, for students who are already *ba’alei teshuvah* and more independent in their learning; the Intermediate Program for college age young men from religious homes; the *Beit Midrash Program* for the advanced students; the *Kollel* of Rabbi Reisman for our advanced married students; and the *Derech Program*, our largest single department, which caters to post-high school students who mostly come from religious backgrounds.

On the night of the 48th day of the *Sefirah* the various programs which make up the Yeshiva came together for learning in the main *Beit Midrash*. The atmosphere was electric, and the build-

ing was shaking with the “*kol Torah*” (sound and “voice” of the Torah) of hundreds of students learning Torah with great diligence and devotion. Late that evening there was a festive *seudah* (meal) in the dining hall. It was quite a memorable evening.



pointed out that like on the British Empire at its zenith, “the sun never sets”, so too is it on the “Ohr Somayach Empire”.



Three days later was the culmination of *Sefirah* — the 50th day after Pesach — the night of *Shavuot*. Not only was the entire Yeshiva learning all night, but with lectures for men and women, people flocked from all over the Holy City to Ohr Somayach to receive the Torah anew, and be infused with the holiness of Torah *and mitzvot*, which we will draw on throughout the year. The Rosh Yeshiva, HaRav Nota Schiller, *shlita*, British Empire at its zenith, is it on the “Ohr Somayach Empire”.

While we were learning in *Yerushalayim*, our emissaries were teaching that night in different parts of the world: Rabbi Gottlieb was in Johannesburg, Rabbi Breitowitz was in London and we had other *Shavuot* events in New York, Toronto and in Sydney, Australia. Unlike the British Empire, however, the sun will *never* set on *Malchut Shamayim* — “the Kingdom of Heaven”.

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