



The Torah is a big Jewish scroll. It contains the first five books of the Bible. At synagogue, which we go to weekly, we read from the Torah and whenever someone has a Bar Mitzvah (which is like a Jewish person's 13th birthday – but much more complicated) they study and read from the portion of the week. The portion that I am reading comes from the fourth book of the Torah called, Bamidbar which is its Hebrew name and it means "in the desert." That makes sense, because the story in my portion is about the time in the desert. Earlier in the story, Moses took the Jews out of Egypt and away from Pharaoh's reign. They finally made it into freedom to wander in the desert. Now, they have to find a home away from Egypt. Apparently, it took them 40 years to find one.

They were walking day after day, year after year, step after burning step in the hot desert. After 38 years of slowly wandering, they were probably feeling completely stressed and extremely mad with craziness. It is around that time that we hear of a certain rebel named Korach. Every day he was wandering, plotting, scheming. What was he thinking? Let's look into his brain and find out. His brain might be thinking, "Maybe it was Moses' fault for our suffering." Korach and his friends, Dathan, Aviram and On, knew that G-d chose Moses as leader. Korach became envious. He said to Moses, "Why did G-d make you more holy than everyone?" Moses tried to explain to him but Korach's envy was too great. You see, Korach actually wanted to be leader himself. G-d told Moses that G-d would kill Korach and his followers. Moses pleaded to G-d not to kill them all. Instead G-d opened the earth and sucked in Korach and his followers and they smushed into a billion tiny atoms.

We've learned a lot about Korach, Moses and their lives in this story in many ways. The one thing I was surprised was that Moses wasn't killed when he talked back to G-d and told G-d that G-d was wrong. Talking to G-d is one thing, arguing is another. Talking to G-d is kind of easy, all you have to do is pray and hope. Now arguing with, you know Who takes courage and guts. Also it takes the right mind to try to forget what might happen if you argue with G-d. While studying my portion I wondered, "Is arguing with adult the same as arguing with G-d?" Well, one thing for sure, adults won't open the earth and swallow you if you argue with them!

Moses taught us a little bit about bravery, courage and relationships with G-d. Korach taught us stuff too. Like don't let envy turn you into a power mad man. Think over your choices before you do it. For one thing, Korach should have listened to Moses and talked it through more. At time when this has worked for me is when I am at school. Sometimes people were getting on my nerves. First, I calmly tell them to stop. If that does not work I ignore them and maybe they will go away. But if that fails, I will tell a teacher and ask for help to resolve the problem. Korach should have done that but I'm afraid his envy got to him first and his envy was stronger than his reasoning.

Moses pleaded with G-d to save Korach. He was not alone. There have been other times in Jewish history when G-d wanted to destroy people and someone else had a chance to stand up to G-d. Abraham, who was trying to save the towns of Sodom and Gomorra, stood up to G-d. In the end, G-d agreed not to destroy the city if he could find 10 good people. Unfortunately, he could not even find that.

The other person who could have stood up to G-d was Noah. The Torah tells us that Noah was "righteous in his generation" but he didn't even argue with G-d when G-d wanted to flood the whole world. It seems like I was named after a man who is kind of like an obedient dog that is more spineless than a jelly fish! I think maybe Noah didn't argue with G-d because he knew that G-d was doing the right thing, even through it sounded bad. Another reason why Noah might not have argued is that he was probably intimidated by G-d.

So, I have learned that there is a time for arguing and questioning and there is a time for obedience and listening. Knowing the difference is sometimes hard. I would step up if I was being blamed for something I did not do or if someone else was in trouble. I think all people should step up for telling when something is wrong and helping others and of course to make people feel better.

As I become a bar mitzvah, I hope that I have learned to never be as self-centered as Korach. I want to have the wisdom of Moses, the kindness of Abraham and the faith of Noah. Shabbat Shalom.

I would like to thank all of my family and friends for coming today. Many of you came from far away to be here. I'd like to thank my cousins, Josh and Shayna, my Hebrew school classmates, and all my friends from Crossroads for helping me by being my friends. I want to thank Josh Sidell for being my best friend. I also want to thank Rabbi Teller and Cantor Waghalter for helping me study and my teachers Mrs. Blumberg and Mrs. Karny. I also thank my Mom and Dad and my sister Dorie.