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OHEL DAVID EASTERN SYNAGOGUE

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Shabbat Korach

Sat. 26 - 27 Jun. 2020 - 5th of Tamuz, 5780

ה' בתמוז תש"פ

שבת פ' קרח

Issue Number 958

Birkat Halevana.

ברכת הלבנה.

Can be recited tomorrow Sunday 28 June 2020

מחר יום ראשון 28 יוני 2020.

Shabbat Candles.

21:04

Latest Shema GRA.

8:51

Sunset.

21:09

Arbit Motzei Shabbat.

22:36

Next Friday: Candles. Shabbat. Chukat / Balak

20:58

THE SYNAGOGUE IS CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

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Shahrit Sunday to Friday on ZOOM at 07:30

Please call Ghassan to join the service

Daf Hayomi with Rabbi Asher Sebbag on ZOOM

Sunday to Thursday at 18:00, Friday at 17:00

Please call Ghassan or David to join the Shiur

Korach 5880 (Numbers 16-18)

Jun 21, 2020 | by [Rabbi Yitzchak Zweig](#)

GOOD MORNING! These past few weeks the nation has been rocked by the aftershocks resulting from the death of George Floyd and the civil unrest that followed. It seems almost unfair; just as our nation was beginning to slowly recover from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, we now find ourselves embroiled in controversy stemming from both real and perceived social injustice.

Times like these require perspective. In my opinion, the best

way to gain a true dispassionate perspective is by studying Judaism's teachings about past controversies and what our sages had to say about them. We find in *Pirkei Avot* – Ethics of Our Fathers – the following maxim:

“Any controversy that is for the sake of heaven will endure. A controversy that is not for the sake of Heaven shall not endure” (5:17).

This seems rather difficult to understand. Controversy is generally seen as a very negative state of affairs. Why is it that “any controversy for the sake of heaven shall endure?” Isn't peace the ultimate goal? It doesn't

seem that anyone should want a controversy to endure. What are our rabbis trying to teach us?

In order to understand this we have to examine the second half of the teaching. The *mishna* continues; “Which controversy was for the sake of heaven? [The controversy] between Hillel and Shammai. Which controversy was not for the sake of heaven? [The controversy] of Korach and his followers.”

In order to fully grasp the depth of the lesson that our sages are trying to convey it is necessary to be familiar with the examples cited in the *mishna*. Hillel and Shammai were the heads of two of the earliest schools that set about defining Jewish law, about two thousand years ago. Their disputes are legendary and the Talmud cites numerous examples of their disagreements. They are the prototypical representations for a “dispute for the sake of heaven.”

The archetypes of a dispute “not for the sake of heaven” is that of Korach and his followers. Not coincidentally, the story of Korach and his infamous dispute with Moses and Aaron appears in this week’s Torah reading. Who was Korach and what was the source of his issue with Moses and Aaron?

The full story of Korach and his followers taking on Moses and Aaron appears in *Numbers* (16:1-35), which is contained in this week’s Torah portion. I recommend that you read it

in its entirety to get the full picture of what happened.

A brief summarization; Korach challenges Moses’ authority of appointing his brother as the high priest. He manages to gain support from some of Moses’ prior antagonists and some 250 families. Moses is very disturbed to be accused of blatant nepotism (Aaron had been, in fact, appointed by Divine command) and grows angry (see *Numbers* 35:15) and challenges all the disputants to a showdown the next day with his brother Aaron.

The test consists of bringing the incense offering to the tabernacle and seeing whose offering God will choose to accept. Long story short, the following day God appears to the entire assemblage and destroys the 250 conspiratorial families with a heavenly fire and Korach and his family are swallowed alive as the earth opens up beneath them. Yay! Good guys win, bad guys lose. But what does it all mean?

Korach, in a superficial reading of the story, is generally seen as an ignorant and foolish rabble-rouser who had the gall to challenge Moses and Aaron. Modern “bible scholars” (who are, in general, oblivious to the analytics and conclusions of the authentic Torah scholars of the last two thousand years) have tried to reframe Korach as a revolutionary thinker who was challenging the paradigm and solely interested in

promoting democracy to supplant the dictatorial leadership of Moses and Aaron. Neither of these depictions are true.

My beloved friend and mentor Rabbi Kalman Packouz, of blessed memory, used to love listening to Paul Harvey – a radio personality who, for over fifty years, delighted in illuminating his tens of millions of weekly listeners with his famous tag line “and now for the rest of the story!” So here is “the rest of the story” as it relates to the saga of Korach and his band of not-so-merry men.

In truth, Korach is one of the most puzzling personalities in the entire Torah. He came from a very prominent family – he was actually a first cousin to Moses and Aaron, as their fathers were brothers. He was exceptionally bright and obviously charismatic enough to attract many followers who were willing to challenge the authority of Moses – the person who freed them from the slavery of Egypt – no small accomplishment. Obviously, Korach was a leader in his own right.

In addition, Korach was an accomplished scholar. Jewish tradition records his challenges and arguments with Moses related to different areas of Jewish law; Korach was in fact quite erudite. Lastly, Korach was fabulously wealthy. According to the Talmud (*Pesachim* 119a), while Joseph was

the minister of finance under Pharaoh he collected all the monies earned during the years of famine and divided it into three hidden treasure hoards. One of them was revealed to Korach and he took it when they left Egypt. So Korach had no money issues whatsoever.

This is probably why Rashi, the most well-known commentator on the Bible, asks “Korach, who was such a clever person, what caused him to descend into such foolishness?” The answer is, Korach was jealous and people do stupid things out of jealousy. In truth, he wasn’t annoyed about Aaron being the High Priest. He was upset at Moses for appointing a more junior cousin as head of the family (see Rashi on 16:1). He felt that he had been slighted by Moses and he was jealous of the appointment of Elizaphon ben Uziel as head of their family.

Thus, Korach’s dispute is categorized by the rabbis as not being “for the sake of heaven.” Even though superficially he can be depicted as being a freedom fighter for democracy in opposition of the tyrannical rule of Moses, he was in fact driven by his own hurt feelings and jealousy. This is why it is the paradigm example of a “controversy that will not endure,” because it was based on temporal issues.

Still, this lesson is difficult to apply to our everyday lives. Anyone who has ever experienced or been in a

community dispute, or for that matter even observed two rabbis who vehemently disagreed with each other, “*knows*” that everyone is only arguing “for the sake of heaven!” Who is ever going to admit to themselves that they are driven by petty jealousies and hurt feelings? Everyone always wants to believe that their motives are pure and altruistic. How are we to know when our disagreements are driven by pure motives?

This is where the incredible teaching of the *mishna* is put into effect. What was the example of an argument that was truly for the “sake of heaven?” That of the disputes of the schools of Hillel and Shammai. What made them so unique?

The Talmud records that even though there were constant and longstanding disagreements between the students of both schools, they still married into each other’s families. In other words, they had tremendous respect for one another, both in matters of Talmudic law and as people with whom they would want to be connected. Their disagreements came from different philosophical viewpoints, but it never effected how they felt about each other. Thus, they were happy to marry into each other’s families.

The next time you have a disagreement with someone and want to know if your motives are pure, just ask yourself the following questions: Do I like this person? Do I respect this

person? Could I see my child marrying their child? If the answers to those questions is a resounding “yes!” then you may just have a philosophical disagreement and perhaps you are arguing for the “sake of heaven.”

This is also why those disputes, the ones that are for “the sake of heaven” will endure. Different perspectives are important and in fact make up one of the most important learning experiences of our lives. We need other people’s viewpoints to both learn and clarify our own point of view. When we can learn and grow from everyone else’s perspective, we improve our life and the world at large.



TORAH PORTION OF THE WEEK

Korach, Numbers 16:1 - 18:32

There are two rebellions this week. First, Korach, a Levite, is passed over for the leadership of his tribe and challenges Moses over the position of High Priest. No good rebellion can be “sold” as a means for personal gain, so Korach convinces 250 men of renown that they must stand up for a matter of principle – that each and every one of them has the right to the office of High Priest (which Moses had announced that God had already designated his brother, Aaron, to serve).

Fascinatingly, all 250 followers of Korach accept Moses’ challenge to bring an offering of incense to see who

God will choose to fill the one position. This meant that every man figured he would be the one out of 250 to not only be chosen, but to survive the ordeal. Moses announces that if the earth splits and swallows up the rebels it is a sign that he (Moses) is acting on God's authority. And thus it happened!

The next day, the entire Israelite community rises in a second rebellion and complains to Moses, "You have killed God's people!" The Almighty brings a plague that kills 14,700 people and only stops when Aaron offers an incense offering.

To settle the question once and for all, Moses has the head of each tribe bring a staff with his name on it. The next morning only Aaron's staff had blossomed and brought forth almonds. The people were shown this sign. Aaron's staff was placed in front of the curtain of the ark as testimony for all time.

Candle Lighting Times



(or go

to <http://www.aish.com/sh/c/>)

Jerusalem	7:13
Miami 7:57 - Guatemala 6:16 - Hong Kong	6:54
Honolulu 6:59 - Johannesburg 5:07 - Los Angeles	7:50
London 9:06 - Melbourne 4:51 - Mexico City	8:00
New York 8:13 - Singapore 6:55 - Toronto	8:45
Moscow	9:00

“ Quote of the Week ”

You'll never learn anything while you're talking



In loving memory of
Rabbi Kalman Packouz
Kalman Moshe ben
Reuven Avigdor
1950-2019
Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Yitzchak Zweig

THE KEHILLA WISHES חיים ארוכים "LONG LIFE" TO THE FOLLOWING WHO HAVE YAHRZEIT

1 Tammuz Mr Sami Shemie	17 Tammuz Dr Y. Kelly Saltoun
7 Tammuz Mr Raphael Mansour	19 Tammuz Mr Moshe Moses
8 Tammuz Mr Fred Dalah	23 Tammuz Mr Charlie Morris
8 Tammuz Mr Andrew Dalah	27 Tammuz Mr Cesar Sassoon
12 Tammuz Mrs Mozel Gubbay	