



## **Parasha Korach**

**July 6, 2019**

*Torah:* Numbers 16:1-18:32

*Haftarah:* 1Samuel 11:14-12:22

*Shlichim:* Romans 13:1-7

*Shabbat Shalom Mishpocha!* Thousands of years ago, the five Books of Moses, the books of Genesis through Deuteronomy, were divided into portions. And, every portion, *parasha* or *parashat* in Hebrew, has a Scriptural message for us. There are 54 *parshiot*, 54 portions, in the Books of Moses and one or sometimes two are read each week. One of our most important prayers today should be that the larger body of Messiah, the Church, would learn about this and begin to read them. Many today are in the deception that the “New Testament” is all the Scripture which they need. But, in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible was all that there was. And, it was from those inspired words which Yeshua’s disciples all learned, including about Him, their Messiah. In 2Timothy 3:16, *Sha’ul* said: “All Scripture is inspired by G-d and is useful.” Today, when they read this verse, many in the larger body of Messiah just think of that as referring to the writings of the *Sh’lichim*, Yeshua’s followers, the New Testament. Many don’t even think that the Hebrew Bible is inspired at all. But, when *Sha’ul* wrote those words to Timothy, there was only the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible. That was all they had. Today we consider all of Scripture, Genesis to Revelation, as being inspired by G-d and useful, and look upon everything in all of these books as *Torah*, teaching and instruction, from ADONAI to us. It’s my prayer that all of Yeshua’s followers would learn of and return to a more Hebraic understanding of Scripture. That’s the way that ADONAI originally presented it to the world and the deeper underlying messages of faith and practice are to be found within that context. Pray for the Church to return to “all of Scripture.”

Today’s *parasha*, *Parasha Korach*, also has spiritual messages for us. The first story this week is a continuation of what Rabbi Herb spoke about last week. It was all about rebellion. The people refused to take Caleb’s recommendation to go and capture the land of Canaan and they rebelled against Moses and Aaron. What we see in today’s *parasha* is continuing animosity, animosity which had been developing for some time. And because of the growing rebellious spirit in the people begun by the events of the rebellion against ADONAI regarding the Land of Canaan, *Korach* seemed to have been motivated to act. I’m not going into the story any further today, except to say that it’s a lesson which we all need to learn. You have read the *parasha*, so you know the story. Rebellion against lawful authority is never a good thing except when people are oppressed by a cruel and godless master and have no other choice.

There are two other subjects in *Parasha Korach*. One is Aaron’s rod which budded, which is also a continuation of the authority issue which ADONAI dealt with in *Korach* and his followers. The second is about the duties and responsibilities of the *kohanim*, the priests, and also their benefits. I’m not speaking about either of these subjects today. That leaves one very short sentence in the middle of ADONAI’s words to the *kohanim*. That is where we

will begin today's message. ADONAI said: 7...*"I am giving you the ministry of the priesthood as a gift"* (Numbers 18:7b TLV). And then He said: 19 *"Whatever is set aside from the holy offerings which Bnei-Yisrael present to Adonai, I have given to you, your sons and your daughters with you as a permanent share"* (Numbers 18:19a TLV). The second half of verse 19 contains what we will talk about today: 19... *"It is an everlasting covenant of salt before Adonai for you and your offspring"* (Numbers 18:19b TLV).

What is an everlasting covenant of salt? We find a part of the answer in the sentence itself. It is an everlasting covenant, a perpetual covenant, an eternal covenant, a covenant which never ends. But, what about the salt? How does it fit in? One possible answer is that it lasts a very long time. I have also read that it was used in ancient times to seal a covenant. If two people entered into an agreement, they would eat salt together in the presence of witnesses and that would bind their contract, their covenant. If that is true, then an everlasting covenant of salt is a perpetually binding agreement based upon the properties of salt. We read that ADONAI gave these duties and privileges to the *kohenim* with a everlasting covenant of salt. That is not our subject today, it's just our beginning point. But, if it is an everlasting covenant, this covenant between ADONAI and the sons of Aaron is still in effect today, even though we have no Temple. What this means, we don't know. But, is it possible that ADONAI made this covenant with plans for a third Temple? It's an interesting thought.

We go now to the only other place in *Torah* where a Covenant of Salt is mentioned. King Abijah of Judah was at war with King Jeroboam of Israel. This was not too many years after the Kingdom of Israel divided into the southern Kingdom of Judah and the northern Kingdom of Israel. Abijah stood on a mountain top and called out to Jeroboam: 5 *"Don't you know that Adonai, God of Israel, has given kingship over Israel to David forever—to him and his sons by a covenant of salt"* (2Chronicles 13:5 TLV). By saying this, Abijah was telling Jeroboam that all of Israel, both the northern part and the southern part together, has been given as a kingdom to David and his descendants forever. That's the kingship which Abijah had at that time, even though he only reigned over Judah in the south and not all of Israel. Nevertheless, that was G-d's promise. All of David's descendants through his son *Shlomo*, Solomon, even though they ruled in Judah and didn't rule over it all, had kingship over all Israel.

The modern Nation of Israel, although it doesn't look very much like a kingdom today, is the kingdom to which Yeshua will return to rule and reign. It is a kingdom which He inherited from His ancestor David, a kingdom ADONAI promised David for his descendants through an everlasting Covenant of Salt. The promise was made to David through *Na'tan haNavi*, Nathan the Prophet, in 2Samuel 11. It is not described there as a Covenant of Salt. That is only found in the Scripture which we just read in 2Chronicles. The promise made to David through Nathan is the Davidic Covenant, a covenant between ADONAI and David and it is verified in 1Chronicles: 14 *I will appoint him over My House and My kingdom forever, and his throne will be established forever"* (1Chronicles 17:14 TLV).

There has not been a Davidic king on the throne in Israel since the time of the Babylonian captivity, but, there will be again. He is Yeshua whom the angel Gabriel spoke about to the virgin *Miryam*: 31 *"Behold, you will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you shall call His name Yeshua. 32 He will be great and will be called Ben-Elyon (Son of the Most High). Adonai Elohim (YHVH G-d) will give Him the throne of David, His father. 33 He shall reign over the house of Jacob for all eternity, and His kingdom will be without end"* (Luke

1:31-33 TLV). Many traditional Jews today believe in the coming of the Davidic king, but believe that he will be a human living on the earth who will be proclaimed King Messiah. Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rabbi of New York City, after encouragement by his followers, acknowledged that he was the *Mashiach*. Although, he died in June, 1994, his followers believe that he will rise and return as Messiah. When we were in Israel in October of 1994, there were a number of billboards with his picture and the message, "Prepare yourself for the coming of the Messiah." But, there is no direct evidence that he was a descendant of David, a necessary requirement for *Mashiach*. Today, there is another group which continues in the process of finding living descendants of David and they have identified quite a few. They believe that one of these will be the Messiah. But, neither the late Rabbi Schneerson, nor the living descendants of David, have the qualifications to be the King. Not only was Yeshua declared to be the coming King, but He has fulfilled all of the prophecies about David's descendant and about the Anointed One, the Messiah. He is the One in whom we believe, ADONAI's only Son, David's greater Son, who was given His Kingship by an everlasting Covenant of Salt.

But, ask yourself this question, how do you know that Yeshua is your coming King and that you yourself, are a part of His kingdom? The answer that many would give is that "I have confessed Him as my Savior and believe in Him." And, they would be correct if; if a lot of other things are true. Possibly you have heard the term, "cheap grace." It was first spoken about in a sermon by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian, in 1937. Here is a small quote from what was a lengthy message: "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate." Are we guilty of cheap grace? I don't think most of us are, but it does bring up this question, "What kind of grace have we received? If it's not cheap grace, then what are the spiritual characteristics of the grace which we have received?"

Let's go back to the Covenant of Salt. Yeshua is the coming King Messiah by an everlasting, an eternal, Covenant of Salt. As our coming King, what is our relationship to Him? Are we just followers; just believers there by agreement? Absolutely not! Our relationship is much more than just followers. We are in covenant with Yeshua Who is our Savior and our coming King. When we repent and confess our faith in Him, our covenant with Him is activated; we enter into covenant with Yeshua. What is a covenant? It is an agreement, but it is much more than just an agreement, although it is that too. Literally, a covenant is a contract. In our case, as followers of Yeshua, the covenant in which we are participants, is a covenant, a contract, between ADONAI and the people of Israel. *Yirmeyahu haNavi*, Jeremiah the Prophet, prophesied: 30 "*Behold, days are coming*"—*it is a declaration of Adonai*— "*when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah*"— (Jeremiah 31:30 TLV). A covenant is an agreement between G-d and His people in which He makes promises to His people and requires certain conduct from them. Blood is an important part of the covenant. The covenant between ADONAI and Abraham and his descendants after him was sealed by blood. The covenant between ADONAI and Israel at Sinai was sealed by blood. And, the New Covenant between ADONAI and Israel prophesied by Jeremiah was sealed with blood, the blood of its Mediator, Yeshua. If we are truly Yeshua's followers, we are bound to Him by a blood covenant. By becoming a participant in the New Covenant, Gentiles become a part of Israel, specifically, the commonwealth of Israel. Speaking to Gentiles, *Sha'ul* said: 11 "*Therefore, keep in mind that once you—Gentiles in the*

*flesh—were called “uncircumcision” by those called “circumcision” (which is performed on flesh by hand). 12 At that time you were separate from Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Messiah Yeshua, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of the Messiah”* (Ephesians 2:11-13 TLV). Jews who accept Yeshua as Messiah are already a part of Israel and already have the covenants of promise. Although, the New Covenant is not spoken of as a Covenant of Salt, it is an eternal blood covenant. As an eternal covenant, it should also have the characteristics of a salt covenant and we as participants in it, should also exhibit the characteristics of salt.

What should be our relationship with Yeshua through the New Covenant? It is not just a relationship of words. It’s not just saying I love you to Yeshua. It’s much more; it’s about obeying Him. Even as far back as the days of Yeshua’s disciples, there were those who thought they knew more and proposed their own theology. In Revelation 2, Yeshua spoke about the deeds of the Nicolaitans to the Congregation at Ephesus. Tradition says that the Nicolaitans were the followers of one of the first *shamashim*, one of the first deacons appointed by the disciples in Acts 6. Nicholas, a Gentile, a proselyte from Antioch, is presumed to be the one who veered from the true way of discipleship. The Nicolaitans bought into some of the Hellenistic philosophy which was going around during that time. These people were gnostics, proponents of a theology which supposes that personal salvation through our Messiah is gained through having special knowledge or gnosis. We won’t go into the details of their theology, but their bottom line was: “it’s what you believe that counts.” And, that philosophy is widespread in Yeshua’s Body today. One of the “grace” movements of today teaches that G-d’s grace through Jesus is so great that once you have trusted in Him, you never have to repent of sins again. According to them, they’ve all already been forgiven and all you have to do is live in this grace. Just believe the right thing. What would Dietrich Bonhoeffer say if he was alive today? But, the opposite view, the view taught by Yeshua and His disciples is “discipleship.” It is not just believing the right things, but is a way of life, a way of living. Yes, we do have to be correct in what we believe in order to be in right standing with Yeshua. But, that’s not where it ends. There is more, the walk of discipleship. After our initial confession of belief in Yeshua by faith through grace, it’s then by continuing to walk with our Messiah that we obtain eternal life. This statement may make some uncomfortable, but it is true. The only way that we can obtain eternal life immediately after trusting in Yeshua is to be struck by a bolt of lightening or hit by a speeding truck. The real way is that we serve Him until we die or He comes back, whichever is first. That will do it. But, if we continue living on the earth after our confession of faith, there is much more that we must do. *Sha’ul* said: 12 *“Therefore, my loved ones, just as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now even more in my absence—work out your salvation with fear and trembling”* (Philippians 2:12 TLV). You can rationalize that if you wish. But, it is clear that after salvation, work is required to reach the final goal of salvation. But, it is definitely not salvation through doing works. Salvation came first; now come the works. What kind of work? It is ADONAI’s work, the work specified by Yeshua our Messiah: 13 *“For the One working in you is God—both to will and to work for His good pleasure”* (Philippians 2:13 TLV). Yeshua said: 21 *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord!’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven”* (Matthew 7:21 TLV). What is the will of our Father in heaven? It seems clear from Yeshua’s words that it is not saying, Lord, Lord! It’s not about having the right belief and calling Him Lord. Yeshua said it: not everyone who confesses trust in Him will enter the kingdom of heaven. This is not a judgment of anyone, but a warning to us all.

Yeshua said: 13 “*You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt should lose its flavor, how shall it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men*”. (Matthew 5:13 TLV). The Greek word translating “earth” is *ge*,’ spelled *ge*,’ but pronounced “ghay.” It also means “land” or a specific location on the earth. In the *p’shat*, the plain meaning of His words when Yeshua initially spoke them, He was very likely referring to *eretz Yisra’el*, the Land of Israel. His three and one-half years on earth were spent in Israel teaching and training His disciples. If you read the Sermon on the Mount closely, you find that Yeshua was speaking to His disciples. 1 *Now when Yeshua saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain. And after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. 2 And He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying,..* (Matthew 5:1-2 TLV). The crowds around Him also heard Yeshua’s words, but His focus at that time was on teaching His disciples. In the Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua referred to His disciples as “salt for the land.” Just as salt adds flavor to food, his disciples were to add flavor to the situation in the Land of Israel, and then after he sent them out in Matthew 28, they were to be salt to the whole earth. But while Yeshua was still with them, they were to be salt in Israel. They were to be a force for good and righteousness, balancing it against the bitterness and ugliness and that which was evil, wicked and wrong. In Yeshua’s day, salt was also used as a preservative. Just as salt both flavors and preserves, Yeshua’s disciples were to be the force that corrected problems in their world, preserving the good. As Yeshua’s modern disciples, we have also been given that responsibility. In Judaism the concept of preserving the world is referred to as *Tikkun Olam*, “repairing the world.” We can also embrace that concept as disciples of Yeshua. We are to be about our Master’s business repairing the world. It is not something we can do just by believing. Both as individual disciples and also as members of the whole Body of Messiah, we follow Yeshua’s teaching and instruction and take part in preserving and repairing a broken and hurting world.

Yeshua warned His disciples at the Sermon on the Mount, and also warns us today, that we are not to lose our saltiness. But, the question is, can salt actually lose its saltiness? Regarding this question, the *Talmud* records a debate between *Rabbi Yehoshua* and a school of Greek philosophers from Athens. We are not looking at this interchange as anything other than what it is; a good answer to the question we have asked about salt. The philosophers attempted to stump *Rabbi Yehoshua* with a series of riddles. One of them was: “When salt becomes unsavory, how can it be made salty again?” *Rabbi Yehoshua* answered the riddle with another riddle. He said: “Salt may be made salty again with the afterbirth of a mule.” Stop at this point and think about everything that you know about mules. The philosophers responded to the rabbi’s statement by asking: “Does a mule have an afterbirth?” If you know anything about mules, you know that mules are born sterile. They can’t reproduce and therefore, don’t have afterbirth. Incidentally, ADONAI told us not to do it: 19 “*You must keep My statutes. You are not to crossbreed different kinds of animals*” (Leviticus 19:19 TLV). A mule, the progeny of a horse and a donkey, are born sterile and don’t reproduce and don’t have an afterbirth. And, that was *Rabbi Yehoshua*’s point. His reply to their question, “do mules have an afterbirth” was: “And, can salt lose its saltiness?” His answer was clear. Salt can’t lose its saltiness and remain as salt. That was Yeshua’s point. He warned us not to lose our saltiness. If we do, we are no longer salt. Just as a mule cannot have afterbirth, the laws of chemistry, which *Rabbi Yehoshua* had never heard of, make it impossible for salt to lose its saltiness. You can’t make salt flavorless. Yeshua was playing on the absurdity that salt could lose its flavor. His point was not that salt can lose its saltiness, but that just as salt without saltiness would serve no purpose, so too would disciples who fail to live according to his teachings and *Torah* no longer serve their purpose. That’s the saltiness

which we are called to have; that we live according to His teachings and in accordance with *Torah*, which as you know, He said would not pass away until heaven and earth pass away (Matthew 5:17-19).

In Matthew 24, verses 32 to 43, Yeshua described the things which will be happening just before His return and then said this: 44 “*So you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect*” (Matthew 24:44 TLV). He follows that with these words: 45 “*Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master put in charge of his household to give them food at the proper time?* 46 *Blessed is that servant whose master finds him so doing when he comes*” (Matthew 24:45-46 TLV). We have been called to provide spiritual food to our Master’s household, the people of the earth. How salty is your salt? Are you just believing the right things or are you putting your faith in action? Yeshua’s brother Ya’acov, James, told us how to “work out our salvation:” 14 “*What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone says he has faith, but does not have works? Can such faith save him?* 15 *If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food,* 16 *and one of you says to them, “Go in shalom, keep warm and well fed,” but you do not give them what the body needs, what good is that?* 17 *So also faith, if it does not have works, is dead by itself.* 18 *But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith without works and I will show you faith by my works*” (James 2:14-18 TLV). Brothers and sisters, do not be deceived by the teaching of false shepherds. Many are being led astray by deceptive doctrines. But you, those of you whom have been called into a Messianic Jewish understanding of *Torah* know that it’s not just saying the words, but also walking the talk. Works for us is every legal command given to us, both through the *Torah* and through the writings of Yeshua’s disciples. That’s what true saltiness is for us; that we would live according to His teachings and in accordance with the written *Torah*, the author of which is Yeshua, the living *Torah*. *Sha’ul* said that we will all stand before His judgment seat (2Corinthians 5:10). Even Yeshua’s followers will have to stand before Him. But, fear is not our reason for living according to His teachings and the *Torah*. It’s not that we have to, but we get to. We want to! Those who say you don’t have to, don’t get it. We get to do it, but we don’t do it grudgingly. We do it joyfully.

Yeshua was given a Kingship by His Father through an eternal Covenant of Salt. His kingdom will never end. Through our covenant relationship with Him, we are in relationship with Him now and future citizens of His kingdom. He has called us to be the “salt of the earth.” Work out your salvation before Him with fear and trembling! *Shabbat shalom!*