



Parasha Korach

June 27, 2020

Torah: Numbers 16:1-18:32

Haftarah: 1Samuel 11:14-12:22

Shlichim: 2Timothy 2:8-21

Shabbat Shalom Mishpacha! Today's *parasha*, *Parasha Korach*, as every *parasha* does, has spiritual messages for us. Many times, the *mitzvot*, the commands, are no longer directly applicable because either they require a Temple and an Aaronic priesthood in order to be carried out or if they can be obeyed today, according to ADONAI's direction, are only to be obeyed in *eretz Yisra'el*, the Land of Israel. That's the case in today's *parasha*. Regarding the name, *Korach* is spelled in Hebrew with the letter *chet*, a guttural ch sound rather than a *heh*, the simple h sound and is sometimes anglicized as *Korah* for simplicity. What is in it is not directly applicable to us today in Thomasville, Georgia for obedience, but it does contain mountains of spiritual application. There are three different subjects, three different sub-stories, found here. The first is a continuation of what Rabbi Herb spoke about last week - rebellion. The people refused to take Caleb's recommendation to go and capture the land of Canaan and rebelled against Moses and Aaron and ADONAI. What we see in today's *parasha* is continuing animosity against Moses and Aaron, animosity which had been growing for some time. And because of the growing rebellious spirit in the people, *Korach* seems to have been motivated to act. This is my belief: rebellion against lawful authority from ADONAI is never right. There is no way that *Korach's* actions could be justified. The situation is different when people are oppressed by a cruel and godless master. They have no other choice. That's a civil thing, but in an individual Judeo-Christian or Messianic congregational setting with a leader who has been ordained and consecrated by overseeing spiritual authority who themselves are fully submitted to ADONAI, I would say that rebellion is never right. There is always room for question and discussion if necessary in these congregations and a wise leader allows it. These situations can be resolved. But, if the individuals cannot be satisfied, their only other choice under Scriptural guidelines, is to leave. Even though they may think they are right, ADONAI has not given them authority in the congregation. *Sha'ul*, a leader called and authorized by Yeshua Himself, was challenged a number of times by rebellious congregants. In a denominational split such as we have seen in several major denominations in recent years, it gets a little more complicated. The argument there seems to have been over interpretation of Scripture by equal authorities; bishop against bishop or legally authorized lay groups against bishops or against other lay groups with the same authority. But, that's not our discussion today. We are focusing on what has happened and is continuing to happen in individual congregations today. Rebellion and division is a major obstacle to unity in the body of Messiah today. But, when these things happen, the goal is *shalom*, peace, among all who have been called to be a part of the congregation.

There are two other subjects in *Parasha Korach*. One is Aaron's rod which budded, which itself is a continuation of the authority issue in which ADONAI dealt with in *Korach* and his followers. And, the second is about the duties and responsibilities of the *kohanim*,

the priests and their benefits, the distribution of the tithe. But, our subject today is rebellion. If you would like to hear or read about the *kohanim*, you may go to our message archives on our website. In *Parasha Korach*, on July 6, 2019, the focus was on the priesthood, and especially from the standpoint of this verse: Speaking of the priesthood, ADONAI said: 19... “*It is an everlasting covenant of salt before Adonai for you and your offspring*” (Numbers 18:19b TLV). That’s a great subject too!

But, we’ll speak about the rebellion of *Korach* today. Here’s his story in a nutshell. *Korach, Datan, Abiram* and *On* rebelled against Moses and brought with them 250 Israelite leaders who accused Moses and Aaron of exalting themselves above the other members of the congregation. *Korach* was the ringleader, a Levite from the Kohathite group which had the task of carrying the holy vessels and furniture of the Tabernacle. They carried the Ark of the Covenant, the Table of the Bread of the Presence, the Menorah, the Golden Altar of Incense and all the utensils used in the ministry of the sanctuary. But this wasn’t enough for *Korach*. He wanted more. *Korach* was a first cousin of Moses and Aaron. All three were a part of the Kohathite clan. Moses and Aaron were born of the first-born son, *Amram*, and *Korach* was born of the second-born son, *Izhar*. *Korach* possibly had additional dissatisfaction and jealousy because of his position in the Kohathite clan. He may have thought that he should have been the head of the Kohathite clan, which he wasn’t. Instead, his first cousin *Elzaphan* who was not even a firstborn son, was the leader. *Elzaphan* was the second-born son of the fourth-born son of *Kohath, Uzziel*. So, at the very least we can understand that these men had dissatisfaction with their position, jealousy of Moses and Aaron, and open rebellion against ADONAI. *Korach’s* co-conspirators *Dathan* and *Abiram* were brothers from the Tribe of Reuben and the other rebel, *On*, was their relative from that tribe. Their dissatisfaction may have been that because Reuben was the firstborn of Jacob’s sons, that they should have the authority. Together, these men led an angry rebellion against Moses and Aaron.

Moses proposed a test and told them to bring their incense burners the next morning and ADONAI would reveal who was to serve Him in the Tabernacle, either Aaron or these men. Moses said to *Korach*: 8.....“*Listen now, sons of Levi! 9 Isn’t it enough that the God of Israel has set you apart from the community of Israel to bring you near to Him to do the work of the Tabernacle of Adonai and to stand before the community to minister to them? 10 So He brought you close, along with all your fellow sons of Levi. But you are seeking the priesthood, too* (Numbers 16:8-10 TLV)! In saying this, Moses essentially said: “Your rebellion is really against ADONAI.” *Dathan* and *Abiram* were ordered to come to the Tabernacle, but they wouldn’t come. Moses again told *Korach* to appear the next day with all his followers with incense in their censers to present incense to ADONAI and Aaron would also present incense to Him. The next morning *Korach* and his followers gathered at the entrance to the Tabernacle and the glory of ADONAI appeared to the whole group. ADONAI was very angry with the rebels and told Moses and Aaron to move away from them so that He could consume them all at once. But Moses and Aaron interceded for Him not to do this. ADONAI told Moses to tell the whole congregation to move away from the tents of *Korah, Dathan, and Abiram*. Going to their tents, Moses told them that what was about to happen would prove that ADONAI had sent him to lead Israel and that the things which he said and did were not from him, Moses, but from ADONAI. Then the ground split and swallowed them, their families and all their possessions. Back at the Tabernacle, fire came out from ADONAI and consumed the 250 men who were there with their incense burners. But that wasn’t the end of the rebellion. Wouldn’t you think that after those amazing things happened that the people would have gotten the message? Yes, you would, but they didn’t.

The very next day, all of the people of Israel began to grumble against Moses and Aaron, accusing them of killing ADONAI's people. A crowd, a mob, assembled and approached the Tabernacle, shades of what is going on in the United States today in civil situations. As they gathered before the Tabernacle, ADONAI's cloud covered it and His glory appeared. ADONAI told Moses and Aaron to move away so that He could consume the people. But again, Moses and Aaron fell on their faces interceding for the people. *46 Then Moses said to Aaron, "Take the censer, put into it fire from the altar and put in incense. Get going and hurry to the assembly and make atonement for them, because wrath has come out from Adonai and the plague has started."* *47 Aaron did just as Moses had said, and ran into the middle of the assembly. Behold, the plague had already started among the people. But he offered the incense and made atonement for the people.* *48 He stood between the dead and the living and the plague stopped.* *49 However, there were 14,700 dead from the plague, besides those who died because of Korah* (Numbers 16:46-49 TLV). Moses loved his people and always interceded for them when ADONAI was about to judge them. And, very many more than 14,700 would have died from the plague if Moses hadn't sent Aaron out to make intercession. Can a modern plague be sent from ADONAI when He is displeased with His children? Many think that the Coronavirus is directly from Him. Whether it is or not, we, the *Kohanim* of our *Kohen Gadol* Yeshua, our High Priest, are called to make intercession for it to stop, to ask for His mercy and that no more would die. And we do, and many others in Yeshua's body are interceding as well. As a whole, we, the people of the world, probably deserve this plague, but still, as ordinary priests under Yeshua, we are called to make intercession to ADONAI for Him to stop the plague. In that rebellion in the wilderness, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were judged by ADONAI and died. We don't know what happened to *On*, the other member of the Tribe of Reuben who rebelled with them. He is not mentioned again in Scripture anywhere. There is a *Talmudic midrash* about him which tells of his wife saving him by encouraging him to repent. But, it's not true, just another part of the "nonTorah" which was written close to two thousand years after the Exodus and the years in the wilderness. However, the possibility that *On* repented is a very good possibility for why he is not mentioned further.

Our underlying theme for the last several messages has been unity in the body of Messiah. I have proposed that disunity in the body is what may be holding back the salvation of all Israel and the return of Yeshua. He is looking for a body without spot or wrinkle and we as a group of His followers are far from there. A very interesting coincidence is found in something said in a recent presentation by Bible code expert Rabbi Matityahu Glazerson. He revealed the recent years that the Messiah could have theoretically arrived but didn't. Based on his reading of Torah codes, he explained that Messiah did not come at certain times because of the sinful behavior of Israel. In Hebrew years 5775 (2014-2015), 5776 (2015-2016) and 5778 (2017-2018), he credits lack of faith in God, (sexual) impurity and the desecration of the Sabbath as reasons why the Messiah didn't arrive in those years. He then revealed that the Messiah will arrive in the Jewish calendar year of 5781 which can be anytime from the night of *Rosh Hashanah* on September 18, 2020 until the end of 5781 during the day on September 6, 2021. Don't we all hope that is true! However the rabbi adds that this can only happen if the Jewish people repent. And, we are also with him on that. That is our major prayer too. This time is coming. ADONAI said: *10 "Then I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication, when they will look toward Me whom they pierced. They will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son and grieve bitterly for him, as one grieves for a firstborn"* (Zechariah 12:10 TLV). We don't know the day or the hour, but feel in our spirits that it is soon!

There are many reasons for our disunity. One is disunity caused by theological differences. *Korach's* disunity may have included that, but was primarily a challenge of

leadership authority. And, we find that same kind of disunity almost rampant in Yeshua's body today. How many congregations have split because of theological differences which led to rebellion against authority? I don't know the overall answer, but I can think of several right here in our community. In these cases, members challenged the leadership and when they didn't get their way, they pulled out and formed new congregations.

This happens in every congregation at some time in their existence. It has happened here at *Beit Shalom* several times in the past, but has never resulted in a split. And, I am happy to say that for the past nine or ten years we have had great unity. And, it is because of the maturity of you, the *mishpacha*. Congregations which have been in existence for a number of years have all seen rebellion, at least to a degree. It can happen when certain people don't respect or like the leadership and want someone else. It may be because they don't like the sermons; they say that they are not getting fed. Some even rebel over such minor things as not liking the songs sung or decorations chosen for the sanctuary. And frequently, it is because they disagree on theology. Whatever the case, it can and often does lead to rebellion which disrupts the *shalom* in the congregation.

But the point here, the message of *Parasha Korach*, is that every ministry which is truly ordained by ADONAI has a leader of whom He approves. However, in thousands of situations, churches and ministries have split because people disagreed with the anointed leader. To be truthful, in some of those cases, the previously anointed leader has become un-anointed because he or she has gone away from ADONAI's principles or have fallen into sin or departed from His vision for that group. Leaders don't always stay anointed. As the leader of *Beit Shalom* I don't consider myself to be expendable. I am the anointed leader for as long as ADONAI wishes me to be and no longer. And you who know me, recognize that I am not perfect and don't always make perfect decisions. But still, you follow the Biblical principles which ADONAI has taught you and have the love for each other and for me which He commands us to have. *Sha'ul* was called and appointed to be an emissary by Yeshua Himself, yet he submitted himself to the leaders of the movement in Jerusalem. Every leader must be under higher authority and the lack of that authority over leaders is many times what has caused the splits in Yeshua's body.

As we look around the body of Messiah today we see widespread rebellion. It is not a new phenomenon. It was present when Israel was wandering in the desert and it is present among ADONAI's people today. What is the most visible and unity-destroying movement in Yeshua's body today? What do you think it is? I believe that it is the movement of those in Replacement Theology, those who declare that "the Church" has replaced Israel in G-d's promises and that "the Church" is now the Israel of the Bible. It has been estimated that there are 100,000,000 Christians in the United States who believe this. And this is not just a theological position; they have also taken action. In many cases these same people are also anti-Zionists, those who oppose Israel's right to their homeland. And many of them are leaders of movements directed against Israel, and in many cases, are in favor of Palestinian ownership of the entire land. How can those who claim to follow Jesus get so far off track? Many in this group deny that ADONAI promised the Land of Israel to the Jews and say that the promises made to Abraham "do not apply to any particular ethnic group, but to the Church of Jesus Christ, the true Israel." This group denies the Jewish claim on any land in the Middle East. They say: "The entitlement of any one ethnic or religious group to territory in the Middle East called the 'Holy Land' cannot be supported by Scripture." They then go on to say that the land promises which are specific to Israel in the Old Testament were fulfilled when Joshua conquered Canaan. And, some say that when Yeshua comes back, there will be nothing Jewish about His kingdom. According to them, it will all have to do with the "Church," the new Israel.

Can't we as Yeshua's body, agree on anything? The good news is yes, we can. There are many today who are praying for unity and reaching out to those who may differ from them. But still, today we have many, many different church denominations. In *Sha'ul's* day there was already tension among different groups of Yeshua's followers, but nothing like the division which we have today. Over the past 2000 years Yeshua's followers have divided themselves into many thousands of denominations. And it's getting worse and worse. The *Center for the Study of Global Christianity* at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary has studied denominations and has estimated the numbers of denominations which have developed through the centuries. In the year 1900 there were an estimated 1,600 denominations worldwide. It took approximately 1,870 years, from the time of Yeshua's death in the year 30CE to the year 1900CE, for those 1,600 denominations to develop. But, in the year 2000, 100 years later, there were now an estimated 34,000 denominations, an increase of 32,400 in 100 years. This number then rose to an estimated 43,000 in the year 2012. In just twelve years, 11,000 new denominations formed, not congregations, but "denominations." That's hard to believe isn't it? Is it because many of Yeshua's followers only trust themselves and their own ideas? In the last 112 years, from 1900 to 2012, 43,000 denominations were added to the 1,600 denominations which had developed in the previous 1,870 years. And that doesn't begin to count the number of individual congregations and the number which have arisen from splits within congregations. What this shows us is that division in Yeshua's body is increasing.

We don't hate those in Yeshua's body who have extreme viewpoints, but through the Holy Spirit we are enabled to love them. ADONAI has commanded us to love them as ourselves, second only to our love of Him. In His High Priestly prayer Yeshua prayed: *20 I pray not on behalf of these only, (speaking of His disciples), but also for those who believe in Me through their message, 21 that they all may be one. Just as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You, so also may they be one in Us, so the world may believe that You sent Me.* (John 17:20-21 TLV). His disciples got the message and that's the message that we must get as His disciples today. We must contend through prayer for the unity to which Yeshua has called us. And to do this we must include in our prayers the spiritual warfare of which *Sha'ul* reminds us when he said: *12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the worldly forces of this darkness, and against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places* (Ephesians 6:12 TLV). Some true followers of Yeshua may not realize it, but they have been influenced by *HaSatan*, the Adversary. But, because of our prayers and the prayers of many within the body of Yeshua, I believe that many of those who now hold this position will change and come to ADONAI's viewpoint. That is a major prayer for us today. Come back to ADONAI's ancient standards, standards which are still true today. ADONAI said through Jeremiah: *34 Thus says Adonai, who gives the sun as a light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars as a light by night, who stirs up the sea so its waves roar, Adonai-Tzva'ot is His Name: 35 "Only if this fixed order departs from before Me" —it is a declaration of Adonai— "then also might Israel's offspring cease from being a nation before Me—for all time."* *36 Thus says Adonai: "Only if heaven above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then also I will cast off the offspring of Israel—for all they have done."* It is a declaration of Adonai (Jeremiah 31:34-36 TLV). And about Israel, the Jews, ADONAI said through Ezekiel: *24 "For I will take you from the nations, gather you out of all the countries and bring you back to your own land. 25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean from all your uncleanness and from all your idols. 26 Moreover I will give you a new heart. I will put a new spirit within you. I will remove the stony heart from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Ruach within you. Then I will cause you to walk in My laws, so you will keep My*

rulings and do them. 28 Then you will live in the land that I gave to your fathers. You will be My people and I will be your God” (Ezekiel 36: 24-28 TLV).

Who are we, those of us in this room? We are *Beit Shalom Messianic Synagogue*, a very small part of the Messianic Movement, which itself is but an infinitesimal part of the overall body of Messiah. But we and all of the other Messianic Jewish synagogues have an important part to play in the events of the “last days.” In *Beit Shalom’s* statement of belief we say: “The nation of Israel is chosen by G-d to be a channel of blessing to all the nations of the earth. The return of Israel to their land is a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. The Messianic Jewish Community, composed of Jews and non-Jews, dormant for many centuries, is being resurrected and revealed in the Olive Tree of Israel. Pictured in this tree is the spiritual unity among all believers in Yeshua, the members of the *Guf HaMashiach* (Body of Messiah). In these days, G-d is calling His Jewish people back to Himself as He promised through the Prophets. In the end of days, all of Israel will turn to G-d and accept Yeshua as their Messiah. The *Torah* will then go forth from Zion and the Word of the L-RD from Jerusalem under the leadership of *Yeshua HaMashiach*, the King of Israel.” The movement called Messianic Judaism is but one tiny part of Yeshua’s overall body, but a part which has been re-established by ADONAI as a sign of the end of the age. It has not been re-established as a pattern for the Church to follow, but as a catalyst and a foreshadowing of the coming “salvation of all Israel.” Messianic Judaism and the Church are equal partners in bringing about the return of Messiah Yeshua as King. And, His return will be brought about by unity in love throughout the body.

In saying this, we believe that this same understanding is possible for all of Yeshua’s body today and we continue to pray for understanding for those who are currently being deceived. Jealousy, dissatisfaction with position and out and out rebellion against ADONAI are all present in Yeshua’s body today. And, we can all be deceived by the sin of *Korach*. Because it is always lurking, we must guard our souls against it. This does not mean that anyone who is deceived is not truly Yeshua’s, not a part of His body. Yeshua is the only one who knows the truth of each heart. We don’t seek to judge anyone, but hope through our love and our prayers that the unity which Yeshua calls for between all of His followers will soon come.

<12> מָרַן אֲתָהּ, **Maran atah! Our L-rd, come!** <13> *Shabbat shalom!*