

A different opinion and thus a difference in observance?

This weeks reading from Parsahat Korach (*Bamidbar / Numbers 16:1-18:32*) describes Korach, Datan, and Aviram rising up and assembled themselves against Moshe and Aaron and questioned their authoritative role as priests and whether this was really the will of God (ב וַיִּקְמוּ לְפָנַי מִטְּשָׁה וְאֹנָשִׁים מִבְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲמֹשִׁים וּמְאַתָּים נְשִׂאֵי עֵדָה) (קְרָאִי מוֹעֵד אֲנָשִׁי-נְשָׁם). Moshe tells the men to assemble before the Lord in the morning an the Lord will choose who are His. The men stand boldly before God and the Lord answers by fire and all of the rebellious people die. The Lord instructs Moshe and the people to move away from the tents of Korach, Datan, and Aviram because He was going to consume them. The Torah states the earth swallowed them up and they went down to the grave alive. The people’s response to the death of Korach, Datan, and Aviram is recorded in *Bamidbar / Numbers 17:6* in the MT and *16:41* in the English Bibles, saying that Moshe and Aaron killed the Lord’s People. The congregation complained suggesting that it was Moshe’s and Aaron’s fault the people died. A plague broke out in the midst of the congregation as a result, and Moshe told Aaron to take a censor filled with burning incense and stand in the gap between the dead and the living. According to the Torah, burning incense results in both death and life. As we study the reading for this week, the children of Israel persisted in a rebellious Spirit against Moshe, Aaron, and the Lord. The major thread that is being put forward here in the Torah that continues from last week is with regard to rebellion and personal opinion. All forms of rebellion cause sin in our lives before the Lord, but what about our personal opinions (our thoughts)?

ספר במדבר פרק טז

א וַיִּקַּח קֹרַח בֶּן-יִצְחָר בֶּן-קְהָת
בֶּן-לֵוִי וְדָתָן וְאַבִּירָם בְּנֵי אֶלְיָאֵב
וְאוֹן בֶּן-פִּלֶת בְּנֵי רְאוּבֵן: ב וַיִּקְרָא
מוֹ לְפָנַי מִטְּשָׁה וְאֹנָשִׁים מִבְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל
רְאֵל חֲמֹשִׁים וּמְאַתָּים נְשִׂאֵי עֵדָה
קְרָאִי מוֹעֵד אֲנָשִׁי-נְשָׁם: ג וַיִּקְהָלוּ
עַל-מֹשֶׁה וְעַל-אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם
רַב-לָכֶם פִּי כָל-הָעֵדָה כָּלֶם קְדוֹשִׁים
וּבְתוֹכְכֶם יִהְיֶה וּמִדּוֹעַ תִּתְנַשְּׂאוּ עַל-
קְהָל יְהוָה: ד וַיִּשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה וַיִּפֹּל
עַל-פָּנָיו: ה וַיִּדְבֹר אֶל-קֹרַח וְאֶל-
כָּל-עֲדָתוֹ לֵאמֹר בִּקְרֹב וַיֵּדַע יְהוָה
אֶת-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ וְאֶת-הַקְּדוֹשׁ וְהַקָּרִיב
אֵלָיו וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר יִבְחָר-בוֹ יִקְרִיב
אֵלָיו:

Bamidbar / Numbers 16:1-5

16:1 Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took action, 16:2 and they rose up before Moses, together with some of the sons of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, chosen in the assembly, men of renown. 16:3 They assembled together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, ‘You have gone far enough, for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?’ 16:4 When Moses heard this, he fell on his face; 16:5 and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, ‘Tomorrow morning the Lord will show who is His, and who is holy, and will bring him near to Himself; even the one whom He will choose, He will bring near to Himself. (NASB)

א וַיִּקַּח קֹרַח בֶּן-יִצְחָר בֶּן-
 16:1 *Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took action. (NASB)* It is interesting to note how the MT is written listing the people who are involved in the rebellion. The text says that Korach (קֹרַח) took Datan (דָּתָן) and Aviram (אַבְיָרָם) along with On (אוֹן) the sons of Peleth, who are the sons of Reuben. Based upon the MT, Korach was a cousin of Moshe because his fathers Izhar and Amram were brothers (See *Shemot / Exodus 6:16-21*). The Torah tells us that Korach took some men from the first born of Israel (*from the tribe of Reuben, see 1 Chronicles 5:1*).

Bamidbar / Numbers 26:5

26:5 Reuben, Israel's firstborn, the sons of Reuben: of Hanoch, the family of the Hanochites; of Pallu, the family of the Palluites; 26:6 of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites; of Carmi, the family of the Carmites. 26:7 These are the families of the Reubenites, and those who were numbered of them were 43,730. 26:8 The son of Pallu: Eliab. 26:9 The sons of Eliab: Nemuel and Dathan and Abiram. These are the Dathan and Abiram who were called by the congregation, who contended against Moses and against Aaron in the company of Korah, when they contended against the Lord, 26:10 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up along with Korah, when that company died, when the fire devoured 250 men, so that they became a warning. (NASB)

It is important to note how the sons of Levi are together with the sons of Ruben. The Levites who were not involved in the Temple ritual were together with the sons of Reuben, the first born of Jacob, suggesting that there may be a connection to the rights of the first born of Israel over and above everyone else.

Obadiah ben Jacob also know as Sforno (עובדיה ספורנו) an Italian rabbi, Biblical commentator, philosopher and physician, born at Cesena about 1475 and died at Bologna in 1550, states the following about the rebellion in *Bamidbar / Numbers 16:1-5*.

Sforno on Bamidbar / Numbers 16:3

ויקהלו על משה ועל אהרן: Korach, Datan and Aviram, assembled in order to incite against Moses and Aaron in the presence of 250 dignitaries of the people who had allowed themselves to be incited. This incident occurred at a time when a number of Israelites had assembled in the vicinity of Moses waiting to have their respective complaints adjudged. The 250 men mentioned walked around as if minding their own business, wanting to consult Moses about some harmless matter. It was their intention to arouse the crowd in order to provide support for Korach's and his henchmen's insurrection as soon as the latter

would show up and begin asking hostile questions of Moses and Aaron. They selected an hour of day when there was a sizable crowd in Moses' vicinity in order to reap the maximum benefit from that, and so that all those who were convinced of the validity of Korach's complaints would spread the word and bring reinforcements from the plain people in the camp.

Sforno states that Korach, Datan, and Aviram attempted to incite against Moshe and Aaron in the presence of the dignitaries of the people. Tradition states that this was at the time when all the people gathered before Moshe waiting for their complaints to be judged. The 250 men walked around as if having a simply matter on their minds, but their true intention was to incite the people against Moshe. The point was to choose a time of day when there was a large enough crowd in order to get the maximum influence on Moshe by peer pressure from the people. The Targum Jonathan describes this situation in the following way.

Targum Jonathan Bamidbar / Numbers 16

XVI. But Korach bar Tizhar bar Kehath, bar Levi, with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On bar Peleth, of the Beni-Reuben, took his robe which was all of hyacinth, and rose up boldly, and in the face of Mosheh appointed a (different) observance in the matter of the hyacinth. [JERUSALEM. And Korach took counsel, and made division.] Mosheh had said, I have heard from the mouth of the Holy One, whose Name be Blessed, that the fringes are to be of white, with one filament of hyacinth; O but Korach and his companions made garments with their fringes altogether of hyacinth, which the Lord had not commanded; and two hundred and fifty men of the sons of Israel, who had been made leaders of the congregation at the time when the journeys and encampments were appointed, by expression of their names, supported him. And they gathered together against Mosheh and Aharon, and said to them: Let the authority you have (hitherto had) suffice you, for all the congregation are holy, and the Lord's Shekinah dwelleth among them; and why should you be magnified over the church of the Lord? And Mosheh heard, as if every one of them was jealous of his wife, and would have them drink of the trial-water on account of Mosheh; and he fell on his face for shame. And he spake with Korach and all the company who supported him, saying: In the morning the Lord will make known him whom He hath approved, and hath consecrated to approach unto His service, and who it hath pleased Him should come nigh in ministering, unto Him. Do this: Let Korach and all the company of his helpers take censers, put fire in them, and lay incense upon them before the Lord, to-morrow; and the man whom the Lord shall make known, he it is who is consecrated. Let it suffice to you, sons of Levi.

The Targum describes Korach having a robe made of a fragrant flower hyacinth. Hyacinthus is a small genus of bulbous flowering plants in the lily family. Hyacinth is a reference to the offering of incense. They say that Korach rose up with a different observance in the matter of the hyacinth. The hyacinth is a fragrant flower, and the translation might be with the idea that the people (250 men) wanted to offer incense to the Lord in their own way, in their own manner of doing things (*a different in opinion and thus a difference in observance*). The discussion in the Targum moves on to Korach also having a different observance on the making of tzitzit. In addition, the translation continues saying that all 250 men were jealous of Moshe, and that each one was jealous of his wife and would have had them drink the trial-water on account of Moshe, and this was the reason Moshe fell on his face in shame. The traditional interpretation of Moshe falling on his face was because of his humility before both man and God. There are a lot of concepts being drawn in here to the interpretation of the MT based upon the Targum translation between Korach, Datan, Aviram, and Moshe. The issue at hand based upon the opinions of Korach, Datan, and Aviram is that they wanted to change or modify what God has established in the priesthood. This issue of having a different opinion and consequentially a difference in observance is the motivating factor in the New Testament account (*Jude 1:11*) of Korah being compared to Cain and Balaam in the Torah.

Jude 1:4-22

1:4 For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. 1:5 Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. 1:6 And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, 1:7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire. 1:8 Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. 1:9 But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!' 1:10 But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. 1:11 Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. 1:12 These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds with-

out water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; 1:13 wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever. 1:14 It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, 'Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, 1:15 to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.' 1:16 These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage. 1:17 But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1:18 that they were saying to you, 'In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.' 1:19 These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. 1:20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 1:21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. 1:22 And have mercy on some, who are doubting; (NASB)

Notice how these differences in opinion which leads to differences in observance of the command is correlated to sin. In addition, Jude describes sin as equal with shame (1:13). Jude also states that ungodly men crept into the congregation and deny Yeshua the Messiah. The ungodliness is revealed through the immorality in their lives which is paralleled to Sodom and Gomorrah, those who indulge in the flesh, and are grumblers finding fault in everything and again he speaks of such people following their lusts, being arrogant, and seeking to get advantage over others. Note how all of these things appear to parallel Parashat Korach. The Targum adds to the translation that the 250 men were jealous of Moshe, and each one was jealous of his wife and would have had them drink the trial-water on account of Moshe describing and ascribing the sin of immorality and adultery to Moshe.

Reading through the Scriptures, without taking a cultural and historical perspective, it is a temptation to reinterpret Scripture and change what the Lord has established. We can see this in the history of the church and the underlying theologies that have been developed over the centuries (e.g. *supersessionism, bilateral ecclesiology, replacement theology, etc*). Changing what God has established is what the Torah describes as profaning (חַלְלָהוּ) the Name of the Lord. The issue of personal opinion, disobedience, and the situation going on between Korach, Datan, Aviram, and Moshe reminds us of Parashat Yitro and *Shemot / Exodus 20:24-26*.

Shemot / Exodus 20:24-26

20:24 'You shall make an altar of earth for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and

your oxen; in every place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you. 20:25 'If you make an altar of stone for Me, you shall not build it of cut stones, for if you wield your tool on it, you will profane it. 20:26 'And you shall not go up by steps to My altar, so that your nakedness will not be exposed on it.' (NASB)

פרשת יתרו ספר שמות פרק כ פסוק כא-כג

כא מִזְבַּח אֲדָמָה תַעֲשֶׂה-לִּי וְזִבְחֶתָּ עָלָיו אֶת-עֹלֹתֶיךָ וְאֶת-שְׁלֹמֶיךָ אֶת-צֹאנֶיךָ וְאֶת-בְּקָרֶיךָ בְּכָל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֲזַכִּיר אֶת-שְׁמִי אָבוֹא אֵלֶיךָ וַיְבָרַכְתִּיךָ: כב וְאִם-מִזְבַּח אֲבָנִים תַעֲשֶׂה-לִּי לֹא-תִבְנֶה אֹתוֹן גְּזִית כִּי תִרְבֶּה הַנִּפְתָּ עָלֶיךָ וַתְּחַלְלֶנָּה: כג וְלֹא-תַעֲלֶה בְּמַעְלֵת עַל-מִזְבְּחִי אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תִגָּלֶה עֲרוֹתְךָ עָלָיו:

Moshe states when making an altar to bring the burnt offering and peace offering, “*in every place that my name is remembered, I will come and bless you*” (בְּכָל־בְּקָרְךָ בְּכָל־). In addition to this, the Lord says וְאִם- (הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֲזַכִּיר אֶת-שְׁמִי אָבוֹא אֵלֶיךָ וַיְבָרַכְתִּיךָ). *If you make an altar of stone for Me, you shall not build it of cut stones, for if you wield your tool on it, you will profane it.* (NASB) This command prevents man from remembering the Lord God in the manner of his own making as opposed to how the Torah describes who God is. This brings us back to the concept of having a difference in opinion and thus a difference in observance. In this command, the Lord God wants an altar built according to His design and not by the imagination of the heart, since one’s imagination is quick to profane and change what the Lord has established. The possibility of changing-modifying what God has established for our salvation is also a serious temptation and again the result is profaning (וַתְּחַלְלֶנָּה) the Name of the Lord. The question though is how weighty is the “*personal opinion*” when seeking to do what is right in the eyes of the Lord? If we attempt to approach the Lord by the means of our own opinion that is not subject and submissive to His word, we will be exposed and naked before Him and remain guilty in our sin (20:26).

The final verses in Parashat Yitro are a warning for us to be careful how we relate to the Lord, and that we walk according to His ways and worship him in the way He chooses and not in the way that we choose. This has serious spiritual implications and directly impacts our relationship. Today’s verses speak of not only how we relate to the Lord spiritually but also physically, how we should be living, walking, and drawing near to Him (e.g. *the proximity of the 10 commandments provides context*). This imperative of both the spiritual and the physical are related to the covenant relationship that we have with God our Father in the Messiah Yeshua. The Apostle Paul wrote in *Galatians 1:4* saying, “*Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world...*” The Scriptures teach us that the Lord redeems us through the Messiah, and by doing so He makes salvation an objective reality in the sense that we have a both a future expectation of the world to come and a present day salvation from our enemies.

Found within the covenant is the idea of being destined for eternity and that our life here is preparatory for the world to come. The rabbis agree with this perspective, according to *Messilat Yesharim on Pirkei Avot 4:21*.

Mishnah Pirkei Avot 4:21

Rabbi Elazar HaKapor says: Envy, lust and honor drive a man from the world. רבי אלעזר הקפר אומר, הקנאה והתאוה והכבוד מוציאים את האדם מן העולם .

Messilat Yesharim on Pirkei Avot 4:21

To summarize, a man was created not for his station in this world, but for his station in the World to Come. It is only that his station in this world is a means towards his station in the World to Come, which is the ultimate goal. This accounts for numerous statements of our Sages of blessed memory, all in a similar vein, likening this world to the place and time of preparation, and the next world to the place which has been set aside for rest and for the eating of what has already been prepared. This is their intent in saying (Avoth 4:21), “This world is similar to a corridor ...,” as our Sages of blessed memory have said (Eruvin 22a), “Today for their performance and tomorrow to receive their reward,” “He who exerted himself on Friday will eat on the Sabbath” (Avodah Zarah 3a), “This world is like the shore and the World to Come like the sea ...” (Koheleth Rabbah 1:36), and many other statements along the same lines.

Note how the Mishnah in *Pirkei Avot 4:21* states that envy, lust, and honor drive a man from this world. What does it mean to be driven from this world? Could it be that these things cause our lives to be cut short? Note how *Messilat Yesharim on Pirkei Avot 4:21* states that “*it is only a man’s station in this world, which is a means towards his station in the Olam Haba (The World to Come).*” This suggests that the way we live here on earth is preparatory for life in the World to Come. We practice walking in righteousness, we practice walking in the light, being guided by God’s Word, all in preparation for the World to Come. Do you think your life here on earth is preparatory for life with God in eternity?

As the rabbis say, the ultimate goal of life is to direct our steps with the perspective of the World to Come in mind. This was the purpose of the redemption that Yeshua provides for us in the sense that He has made atonement, sanctified us, and the redemption he provides for us is an objective reality in the sense that it has both eternal and temporal (*immediate / today*) benefits. Paul wrote in *Galatians 1:4* that the Messiah saves us “*from this present evil world.*” In no uncertain terms, *Galatians 1:4* teaches that there is not only an eternal but also a present day, or temporal, benefit to the redemption of God. The present day salvation from our enemies (*this evil world*) is influenced by the manner in which one lives, in righteousness as opposed to unrighteousness. The manner in which one lives also effects our relationship with the Lord in heaven, such that He will

move in our lives to draw us back to Him and His ways of righteousness and truth if we have fallen away. This is the point and importance of the teaching in Parashat Yitro on *Shemot / Exodus 20:24*, the Lord said “... *in every place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you.*” (NASB) This may also be the point of Parashat Korach, however, these men were lost spiritually and desired to make a name for themselves by changing the interpretation of the commands. The Scriptures speak of the altar being built in a particular way (without tools) and not to be built in places that are chosen arbitrarily, but at places in which the Lord has chosen. This is very important, because these things are related to hearing from God, and His presence being in our midst and to receive his blessing. These Scriptures are also related to Parashat Korach and the issue of personal opinion, disobedience, and the situation going on between Korach, Datan, Aviram, and Moshe. This issue of personal opinion that stands in opposition to God’s word is very serious. Take for example, David describes the peace and safety that is present before the Lord at His Tabernacle, and the rabbis say (*Midrash Tehillim 16, Part 12*) these things are found in the fear of the Lord and walking in His ways according to His commands. This is why David says in *Tehillim / Psalms 70*, הַ יְשׁוּעָה יְשׁוּעָהּ : 70:4 *Let all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; And let those who love Your salvation say continually, ‘Let God be magnified.’* (NASB) The joy of the Lord is the gladness of heart that comes from knowing God, abiding in the Messiah, and being filled with the Holy Spirit. If we hold a personal opinion that stands in opposition to God’s word, is that abiding in the Messiah and would such a person be filled with the Holy Spirit? Would our Father make His dwelling place in the heart of one who doesn’t believe or agree with His word?

The joy of the Lord is found within the Salvation of God. According to the Scriptures, Salvation consists of a future expectation (*present day and eternal*), and a present temporal salvation from one’s enemies, hurt, and trouble. The temporal aspect of salvation is what David is seeking from the Lord in the psalm saying, וַאֲנִי | עָנִי וְאֶבְיֹן, 70:5 *But I am afflicted and needy; Hasten to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O Lord, do not delay.* (NASB) Here, David asks the Lord to hurry (חׁוּשָׁה) from the root word חׁוּשׁ for “*to hurry with excitement or expectation*,” the Lord is his help (עֲזָרָה) and deliverer. The Aramaic Targum states, הַ יִּיְחַדּוּן וַיְדוּצוּן בְּמִימְרָךְ כָּל תְּבַעֵי אוֹלְפָן מִינְךָ וַיִּמְרוּן תְּדִירָא יִסְגִי יִקְרִיָּה דִּיהוּה רַחְמֵי פּוֹרְקֵנְךָ : 70:5 *Let those who seek instruction from you be glad and exult in your word, and let those who love your redemption always say, “May the glory of the Lord be magnified.”* 70:6 *But I am poor and lowly, O God; hasten to me, you are my help and salvation; O Lord, do not delay.* (EMC) The Septuagint states, 70:5 ἀγαλλιάσθωσαν καὶ εὐφρανθήτωσαν ἐπὶ σοὶ πάντες οἱ ζητοῦντές σε καὶ λεγέτωσαν διὰ παντός μεγαλυνθήτω ὁ θεός οἱ ἀγαπῶντες τὸ σωτήριόν σου 70:6 ἐγὼ δὲ πτωχὸς καὶ πένης ὁ θεός βοήθησόν μοι βοηθός μου καὶ ῥύσθη μου εἴ σύ κύριε μὴ χρονίσῃς 70:4 *Let all that seek thee exult and be glad in thee: and let those that love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified. 70:5 But I am poor and needy; O God, help me: thou art my helper and*

deliverer, O Lord, delay not. (NASB) The Aramaic Targum say “*Let those who seek instruction from you be glad and exult in your word.*” What does it mean to have a heart that seeks instruction? This is an question that is related to Parashat Korach on “*Why is seeking God important?*” Korach, Datan, Aviram were obviously not seeking truth and life in drawing near to the Lord God in heaven.

In Paul’s letter to the Romans, he makes an astonishing statement from the Psalms saying, “*There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God*” (*Romans 3:11 and Tehillim / Psalm 14:1-3*). It is interesting that both Paul and David make this generalized statement about all men. Based upon David and Paul’s assertion that no one seeks God, from since the beginning of creation, is this statement really true? Has not even one person really sought after God? Based upon history, and even today, there is no question whether many people (millions and possibly billions) have sought after a god. The difference here may be of whether one seeks after their own understanding of their own gods as opposed to seeking after the one true God. This ties us back to the creation account and Adam and Eve’s sin of disobedience through deception. Based upon the biblical context and history, mankind is only able to perceive bits and pieces of truth concerning the Lord God in heaven, as Paul said in *Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (NASB)* Our conceptions of God are blurred, and it is only when the Lord chooses to reveal Himself to us that the pieces begin to come together as we begin to perceive the truth. It is only then that truly seeking the Lord God is possible. Yeshua said in *John 17:3, “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”* Here Yeshua is telling us that continuing to seek the Lord God in heaven, desiring to know Him more, and obeying His word, is the essence of true life and eternal life. Was this what Korach, Datan, and Aviram were wanting? Is this what you want for your life and relationship with God?

The most important thoughts our minds can entertain are thoughts that seek Him and His Word, because these are the things that will determine the quality and direction of life. Seeking the Lord God, then, is an ongoing responsibility and privilege for all of His children. Based upon David and Paul’s words, this is not an easy thing to do because our minds are filled with misconceptions and deceits that are reinforced by our culture. These mistaken beliefs are removed through seeking the Lord God and coming to know Him through His word and through living out His commandments. For example, *2 Chronicles 15:2-4* states, “*He [Azariah, the prophet] went out to meet Asa and said to him, ‘Listen to me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. For a long time Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach and without the law. But in their distress they turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him, and he was found by them.’*” These instructions are simple, when God’s people sought Him, life went well, but when their desire to seek Him waned and eventually ceased altogether, their world came apart. Sin increased, immorality increased, and contact with the Lord God and hearing from Him ceased. The statement from *2 Chronicles 15* is remarkable, “*If you seek him, he will be found by you.*” This is a very

profound principle that it is repeated throughout the Scriptures. The idea is that when we draw near to the Lord, He reveals Himself to us. The Lord does not hide Himself from the seeking heart.

Devarim / Deuteronomy 4:29

4:29 “But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.” (NASB)

Jeremiah 29:13

29:13 “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” (NASB)

Matthew 7:7

7:7 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” (NIV)

The Septuagint states something similar on David’s words saying, *70:4 Let all that seek thee exult and be glad in thee: and let those that love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified. (LXX)* The concepts put forward here are the Lord has given His word to be a light for our path so that we are able to walk in this present evil age. Elsewhere, we read the Lord Himself is our Light (*John 1:7-9; John 12:35, 36, 46, and 1 John 1:5*) which follows through from the concepts of our rejoicing, exulting, and being glad in Him. This statement is found in *Tehillim / Psalms 27:1*, and the idea may be found in *Isaiah 60:1, 20, Micah 7:8*, and elsewhere. The light of God is a reference to “His righteousness,” and is the beauty of the Name of God. The Lord is my Salvation (*Tehillim / Psalm 18:2, 62:2-6*), whom shall I fear? “*If the Lord is for us, who can be against us?*” (*Romans 8:31*). Whom shall we fear? (*Tehillim / Psalm 118:6 The LORD is for me; I will not fear; What can man do to me?*). The concept of “The joy of the Lord” is the gladness of heart that comes from knowing God, abiding in His Word and in His Messiah Yeshua, and being filled with His Holy Spirit. When Yeshua was born, it was proclaimed from heaven, the angels proclaimed “good tidings of great joy” (*Luke 2:10*). Thus, in a parallel thought, all who know Yeshua, know the joy that He brings. Take note that even before he was born, Yeshua brought great joy, as indicated in *Luke 1:47* and John the Baptist as a baby in the womb at hearing Mary’s voice “leaped for joy” in his mother’s womb (*Luke 1:44*). Yeshua spoke of Joy in His ministry. His enemies accused Him of being too joyful on occasion (*Luke 7:34*) and he described himself as the bridegroom enjoying a wedding feast (*Mark 2:18–20*); He “rejoiced in the Holy Spirit” (*Luke 10:21*); He spoke of “my joy” (*John 15:11*) and promised to give His disciples a life filled with joy according to *John 16:24*. Joy is reflected in many parables, including the three stories in *Luke 15*, that speak of the “rejoicing in the presence of the angels” (*Luke 15:10*) and conclude with a joyful shepherd, a joyful woman, and a joyful father. In addition, Nehemiah told those who had returned to the Land and repented, that the joy of the Lord would be their strength (*Nehemiah 8:10*). The early believers (ekklesia) was characterized by gladness and the joy of the Lord (*Acts 2:46, 13:52*), where the “joy in

the Holy Spirit” is a distinguishing mark of the kingdom of God (*Romans 14:17*). Joy is also considered manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit (*Galatians 5:22*). We are also told that it is our duty to rejoice in the Lord (*Philippians 3:1, 4:4, and 1 Thessalonians 5:16*). According to Peter, in the Messiah, the believer is “*filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy*” (*1 Peter 1:8*). Based upon these Scriptures, the joy of the Lord is also of supernatural origin. The Aramaic Targum version of the Scriptures that states, “*Let those who seek instruction from you be glad and exult in your word,*” suggests that those who seek the Lord, His instruction, according to His word, His Torah (instruction), the Lord will give them joy and they will exult in His Word. By this we know that we are the children of God, and no one can snatch us away from Him (*John 10:28–29*). By this reasoning, we can see how the Lord is the Author and Finisher of our faith. (*Hebrews 12:2*) As a result of these things, the joy of the Lord may be inexplicable to the one who does not possess it and more specifically, to the one who does not know the Lord God Almighty and His Messiah Yeshua. But, for the believer in the Messiah, the joy of the Lord comes as naturally as the Lord works and lives in our hearts. As we abide in the Messiah we are told to abide in His word and to hold God’s truths close to our hearts. The men Korach, Datan, and Aviram did not do this. In this present age, we need to hold onto the True Vine (Yeshua) and to God’s Word. In doing this, the Lord will empower our lives, we will be filled with His strength and vitality, and the fruit we produce includes the joy of the Lord which is in fact His doing (*John 15:5*). Praise the Lord! So be careful to guard your opinions, because it is very easy to hold an opinion that stands contrary to God’s word and can influence your relationship with both Yeshua and our Father in heaven.

