

פרשת

קרח

Parashat Korach

*Bamidbar / Numbers 16:1-18:32, 1 Samuel 11:14-12:22
Luke 18:35-19:28*

Every Man Sees what He Wants to See

ב וַיִּקְמוּ לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה וְאַנְשֵׁים מִבְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲמִשִּׁים וְשָׁנָיִם וּמֵאֹתָיִם נְשִׂיאֵי עֵדָה קְרָאִי מוֹעֵד אֲנָשֵׁי-שֵׁם: ג וַיִּקְהֻלוּ עַל-מֹשֶׁה וְעַל-אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם רַב-לָכֶם כִּי כָל-הָעֵדָה כֹּלֵם קֹדְשִׁים וְכָל-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?'*(NASB) These rebellious men are said to have been leaders within the congregation of Israel. A leader is supposed to be leading the people in the righteousness, holiness, justice, and truth of God. Instead they are causing a rebellion against Moshe, Aaron, and the God of Israel. As we read on in the text, Moshe responds to them in the following way, ד וַיִּשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה וַיִּפְלַע עַל-פָּנָיו: ה וַיִּדְבֹר אֶל-קָרַח וְאֶל-כָּל-עֵדְתוֹ לֵאמֹר בִּקְרַח וַיִּדַע יְהוָה אֶת-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ וְאֶת-הַקְּדוֹשׁ וְהַקְּרִיב אֵלָיו וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר-בּוֹ וַיִּקְרִיב אֵלָיו: ו זֹאת עָשׂוּ קָחוּ-לָכֶם מִחֲתוֹת קָרַח וְכָל-עֵדְתוֹ: ז וַתִּגּוּ-בָהֶן | אִישׁ וְשִׁימוּ עֲלֵיהֶן |

קִטְרַת לִפְנֵי יְהוָה מָחָר וְהָיָה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-יִבְחַר יְהוָה הוּא הַקָּדוֹשׁ רַב-לָכֶם
:לֵוִי 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. 16:6 ‘Do this: take censers for yourselves, Korah and all your
company, 16:7 and put fire in them, and lay incense upon them in the
presence of the Lord tomorrow; and the man whom the Lord chooses
shall be the one who is holy. You have gone far enough, you sons of
Levi!’ (NASB)* Reading through the text, these men say you have gone
far enough and interestingly, Moshe replied with the same, you have
gone far enough you sons of Levi. This seems quite relevant to the
events taking place today. Recently in the news, James Comey testified
about his role in the Russian investigation, Trump, and the leaks to the
media. I heard Jay Sekulow, the Chief Counsel of the American Center
for Law and Justice (ACLJ), state on the radio that Comey committed
a federal crime by leaking classified information to the media. What
is interesting to watch on the news following his testimony is half the
headlines say Comey’s testimony was good for President Trump and
the other half says it was bad for him. The opinions seem to be based
upon a presupposition of who is guilty, and the United States media
seems to live in a bipolar reality. This leads us to the need to take mat-
ters into our own hands as individuals to thoroughly study the matter
and come to conclusions about the truth based upon the evidence. The
truth represents only one reality, right? What we can understand based
upon the television reporting of the news is that *“each man sees what
he wants to see in the story.”* A large portion of this week’s Torah por-
tion is related to a struggle with leadership. It seems that *“each man
was seeing what he wanted to see”* on the role of leadership. Each man
makes decisions in his life based upon the narratives that he tells him-
self in the imagination of his heart. This is exactly what is going on in
the leadership within the United States government today. In the Torah
portion, there was a struggle with leadership because the people want
someone put in place that will also give what they perceived as *“power
and authority over the nation.”* In addition to this, Moshe continues
to say the following, ט הַמַּעֲט מִכֶּם כִּי-הִבְדִּיל אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתְכֶם מֵעַדָּת
יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַקְרִיב אֶתְכֶם אֵלָיו לַעֲבֹד אֶת-עַבְדָּת מִשְׁכַּן יְהוָה וְלַעֲמֹד לִפְנֵי הָעֵדָה

לְשָׂרְתָם: י וַיִּקְרַב אֶתְךָ וְאֶת-כָּל-אֶחָיִךָ בְּנֵי-לֵוִי אֶתְךָ וּבְקִשְׁתָּם גַּם-כָּהֵנָה:
 יא לָכֵן אֶתָּה וְכָל-עֲדֹתְךָ הַנִּצְעָדִים עַל-יְהוָה וְאֶהְרֹן מִה-הוּא כִּי תִלּוּנוּ [תְּלִינוּ]
 עֲלֵיו: יב וַיִּשְׁלַח מֹשֶׁה לְקָרָא לְדָתָן וְלֶאֱבִירָם בְּנֵי אֶלְיָאָב וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא נַעֲלֶה:
16:9 is it not enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the rest of the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister to them; 16:10 and that He has brought you near, Korah, and all your brothers, sons of Levi, with you? And are you seeking for the priesthood also? 16:11 ‘Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the Lord; but as for Aaron, who is he that you grumble against him?’ 16:12 Then Moses sent a summons to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab; but they said, ‘We will not come up. (NASB) Note how this attitude of rebellion extended so far in their lives that Datan and Aviram said they will not come up. The people and the leaders who were causing these issues were not willing to come to the Tabernacle and stand before God. As a result, this led to an event that had never been seen before in the history of mankind and has never been seen since. The people who joined themselves to rebellion and sin, the end result was they perished, all of them (*i.e. tents, family, children, and all that they owned*). Similar to today, there is a focus on leadership issues when they refuse to meet with Moshe. They asked rhetorically whether Moshe was to rule over them, in view of what they saw as a record of failure (*Bamidbar / Numbers 16:13*). Korach and his other followers also had related concerns (*Bamidbar / Numbers 16:3*). The point is they saw the story differently based upon their perception of the events that had taken place, they were living in their own reality. Is this what is going on in the nation today (*USA, consider also the worlds view on Islam*)? Is this what was going on in the Torah portion? Was this simply a matter of personal opinion or perspective? This attitude led to the total destruction of not only the people, but also their families and all their possessions. Moshe warned the people to move away from everything they had, because even their possessions were capable of deceiving the people. Let’s discuss these things further in this week’s Torah portion.

This week the Scriptures we are looking at are *Bamidbar / Numbers 16:1-22*.

Bamidbar / Numbers 16:1-22

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. 16:6 ‘Do this: take censers for yourselves, Korah and all your company, 16:7 and put fire in them, and lay incense upon them in the presence of the Lord tomorrow; and the man whom the Lord chooses shall be the one who is holy. You have gone far enough, you sons of Levi!’ 16:8 Then Moses said to Korah, ‘Hear now, you sons of Levi, 16:9 is it not enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the rest of the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister to them; 16:10 and that He has brought you near, Korah, and all your brothers, sons of Levi, with you? And are you seeking for the priesthood also? 16:11 ‘Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the Lord; but as for Aaron, who is he that you grumble against him?’ 16:12 Then Moses sent a summons to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab; but they said, ‘We will not come up. 16:13 ‘Is it not enough that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to have us die in the wilderness, but you would also lord it over us? 16:14 ‘Indeed, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor have you given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Would you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!’ 16:15 Then Moses became

very angry and said to the Lord, 'Do not regard their offering! I have not taken a single donkey from them, nor have I done harm to any of them.' 16:16 Moses said to Korah, 'You and all your company be present before the Lord tomorrow, both you and they along with Aaron. 16:17 'Each of you take his firepan and put incense on it, and each of you bring his censer before the Lord, two hundred and fifty firepans; also you and Aaron shall each bring his firepan.' 16:18 So they each took his own censer and put fire on it, and laid incense on it; and they stood at the doorway of the tent of meeting, with Moses and Aaron. 16:19 Thus Korah assembled all the congregation against them at the doorway of the tent of meeting. And the glory of the Lord appeared to all the congregation. 16:20 Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 16:21 'Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them instantly.' 16:22 But they fell on their faces and said, 'O God, God of the spirits of all flesh, when one man sins, will You be angry with the entire congregation?' (NASB)

To summarize what had taken place in this week's Torah portion, certain leaders from among the people decided to take action and take hold of the priesthood as their own going against the command of God. These people claimed that Moshe and Aaron had gone far enough. They believed Moshe and Aaron were lording over the people power and authority, something they wanted for themselves. Moshe claims the God of Israel separated the Levites as holy and doing the service of the Tabernacle, and yet they wanted the priesthood as well. Moshe says this is synonymous to gathering against the Lord God of Israel. The basic conclusion is to reject the command of God as a way of life is to take a stand against the God of Israel. What does this say about the modern theologies of today that speak against the commands of God as a way of life for God's people? They not only grumbled against God but also against Aaron. Their claims come on the heels of having rejected entering into the promised land. They were unwilling to admit their own unfaithfulness in the Lord and wanted to pass the blame to Moshe and Aaron. Their refusal, fear, and unfaithfulness led them to where they are today, and they blamed Moshe saying, *16:13 'Is it not*

enough that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to have us die in the wilderness, but you would also lord it over us? 16:14 'Indeed, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor have you given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Would you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!' (NASB) Notice their claim was Moshe brought them from a land flowing with milk and honey. Their opinion was that Egypt was a place of prosperity (milk and honey), and a desirable place to live. Their bondage and sin was not considered something to be rejected. They rest their case on the idea that Moshe did not bring the people into the land, refusing to see it was their own sin and rebellion that led to their present situation, and their sin and rebellion continues up until this day.

Notice what the Lord says the next day when everyone is standing before the Lord, וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: כֹּה הַבְּדִלּוּ מִתּוֹךְ הָעֵדָה הַזֹּאת וְאֶכְלָה אֹתָם כְּרָגַע: כֹּב וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל-פְּנֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵל אֱלֹהֵי: 16:20 *Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 16:21 'Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them instantly.'* 16:22 *But they fell on their faces and said, 'O God, God of the spirits of all flesh, when one man sins, will You be angry with the entire congregation?'* (NASB) Was the Lord referring to the entire nation of Israel or only to this group of people? Note when the ground opened up to swallow those rebellious people, everyone else run so they too were not consumed. They may have not separated themselves as far as they should have based upon their response. The goal of the Torah command is to humble our lives by submitting and conforming our ways to God's ways for His glory. It is in the commands that we draw near to the Lord, through seeking His righteousness, holiness, justice, and truth, and believing in His Messiah being demonstrated by our love for the Lord and walking in His ways.

The rabbis have the following to say concerning Parashat Korach.

Rashi on Bamidbar / Numbers 16:7

רב לכם בני לוי. דָּבַר גָּדוֹל אֶמְרָתִי לָכֶם; וְלֹא טָפְשִׁים הֵיוּ, שֶׁכֹּהֵן הַתָּרָה בָּהֶם וְקִבְּלוּ עֲלֵיהֶם לְקָרֵב! הֵם חָטְאוּ עַל נִפְשׁוֹתָם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "אֵת מִחְתּוֹת הַחָטָאִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּנִפְשׁוֹתָם" (במדד-

בר י"ז), וְקָרַח שִׁפְקַח הָיָה מָה רָאָה לְשָׁטוֹת זֶה? עֵינָיו הִטְעָת
 וְ; רָאָה שְׁלֵשֶׁת גְּדוּלָה יּוֹצְאָה מִמֶּנּוּ — שִׁמוּאֵל שִׁשְׁקוּל כְּנֹגֵד
 מִשָּׁה וְאַהֲרֹן — אָמַר בְּשִׁבִילֹו אֲנִי נִמְלֵט, וְכ"ד מִשְׁמֵרוֹת עֹמֵד
 וְת לְבָנֵי בְנָיו, כָּלֵם מִתְנַבְּאִים בְּרוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "כָּל אֵלֶּה
 בָּנִים לְהִימָן" (מלכים א כ"ה), אָמַר אֶפְשֶׁר כָּל הַגְּדָלָה הַזֹּאת
 עֲתִידָה לְעֵמֵד מִמֶּנִּי וְאֲנִי אָדוּם?! לְכֹד נִשְׁתַּתַּף לָבֵא לְאוֹתָהּ
 חֲזָקָה, שֶׁשֶׁמֶע מִפִּי מִשָּׁה שֶׁכָּלֵם אוֹבְדִים וְאַחַד נִמְלֵט, "אֲשֶׁר
 יִבְחַר ה' הוּא הַקֹּדֶשׁ" — טָעָה וְתָלָה בְּעֶצְמוֹ, וְלֹא רָאָה יָפֵה,
 לְפִי שֶׁבָּנָיו עָשׂוּ תְּשׁוּבָה, וּמִשָּׁה הָיָה רוֹאֶה. — תְּנַחֲמוּמָא: רַב
*means, "It is a great (an important) thing that I have told you, ye sons of Levi"). But were they not
 fools in that although he so sternly warned them they nevertheless undertook to offer! They, however, sinned
 against their own souls (i.e., they were regardless of their lives) as it is said, (17:3) "the censers of these sin-
 ners against their souls". — But Korah who certainly was a clever (lit., open-eyed) man, what reason had
 he to commit this folly? His mind's eye misled him. He saw by prophetic vision a line of great men (more lit.,
 a great chain) descending from him, amongst them the prophet Samuel who was equal in importance to Moses
 and Aaron together (cf. Psalms 99:6: מִשָּׁה וְאַהֲרֹן בְּכַהֲנָיו, and he said to himself, "On his
 account I shall escape the punishment". And he further saw twenty-four Mishmars (shifts of Levites who formed
 the Temple Choir) arising among his grand-children, all of them prophesying by the Holy Spirit, — as it is said,
 (I Chronicles 25:5) "All these (prominent musicians) were sons of Heiman" (Heiman was a descendant of
 Korah; cf. I Chronicles 6:18—23). — He said, "Is it possible that all this dignity is to arise from me and I
 shall remain silent (be myself of no importance)?" On this account he joined the others in order to attain to
 that prerogative, because he had indeed heard from the mouth of Moses that all else of them would perish and*

one would escape: “He whom the Lord will choose will be holy”. He mistakenly applied this to himself. But he had not seen correctly, for his sons repented of their rebellious attitude and therefore did not die at that time (cf. Numbers 26:11), and it was from them that Samuel and the Levitical singers were descended. Moses, however, foresaw this. (Midrash Tanchuma, Korach 5).

Rashi states these men were warned and yet sinned against their own souls. He says that Korach’s “*minds-eye*” misled him. He decided to take matters into his own hands based upon his version of reality. This is why we are warned over and over again from the Scriptures to be careful so as not to be deceived. The reason being, a man’s “*minds-eye*,” the stories that he tells himself, have the capability to lead one to seeing what he wants to see and not seeing the truth. A large portion of this week’s Torah portion is related to this topic of “*each man wanting to see what he wants to see.*” This is why it is so important for us to humble our lives according to God’s Torah being led by God’s Spirit. Rashi goes on to speak of Korach seeing prophetic visions in his minds-eye of his descendents and greatness which led him to be deceived. We should be careful to not allow our imaginations go wild. Our thoughts should be governed by God’s word, and this is why the rabbis have placed so much emphasis upon getting God’s word into our hearts each day. (*i.e. The importance of studying Torah.*)

Sforno states the following on *Bamidbar / Numbers 16:7*.

Sforno on Bamidbar / Numbers 16:7 Part 1

הוא הקדוש הוא לבדו שלא יזכה לזה אלא אחד בלבד וזה אמר למען ייראו וישובו בתשובה ולא יאבדו כי לא יחפוץ הוא הקדוש במות המת: הוא הקדוש *only he is the one accorded the title “holy.” In the test Moses proposes there could be only one winner. Moses made this statement in order to frighten his listeners (as they would become aware of the enormity of the gamble they were going to involve themselves in) and knowing this they might repent and not lose their lives. Just as G’d does not want the sinner to die but to repent, so Moses offered these people the*

chance to retract and thereby save their lives. (compare Ezekiel 18,32).

Part 2

רב לכם בני לוי אתם האדם אשר לקרחה דבר גדול אתם מטילים עליכם כי יותר יקצוף ה' עליכם בהיותכם כבר, נבחרים לעבודתו: רב לכם בני לוי you, inasmuch as you are considered people belonging to Korach (compare verse 32), are being judged more sternly, exactingly, precisely because due to your superior social position you must lead even more exemplary lives than ordinary Israelites. G'd will be much more angry at you if you fail to reflect the nobility you already represent.

Sforno says the way in which Moshe requested the people to offer incense before the Lord should have been a warning sign. Note Datan and Aviram's refusal to come before the Lord at the Tabernacle. They may have foresaw what might happen, and presumed their remaining at home would prevent their destruction. This should have led to their repentance, but it only led to their destruction in another form. If you think there is a way to get around the judgement of God and remain in your sin make a note that this week's Torah portion shows us the Lord God sees and knows all! Sforno says these men were leaders, and due to their leadership role they were held to a higher standard. The Apostle James makes the same conclusion in his epistle, saying *James 3:1 Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. (NASB)*

Midrash Tanchuma interprets these verses in the following way:

Midrash Tanchuma Buber, Korach 6:1

... Immediately (in Numb. 16:3) THEY GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST MOSES AND AGAINST AARON, AND THEY SAID UNTO THEM: YOU HAVE GONE TOO FAR (RB), FOR ALL THE CONGREGATION ARE HOLY, EVERY ONE OF THEM, AND THE LORD IS IN THE MIDST OF THEM. SO WHY DO YOU ELEVATE YOURSELVES OVER THE COMMUNITY OF THE

LORD? R. Levi said: At that very time Korah gathered his company and said to them (i.e., to Moses and Aaron): You have increased (rt.: RBH) the burden upon us to be more than the slavery of Egypt. We were better off under the Egyptians than under your authority, for in each and every year fifteen thousand and forty-five of us die.¹⁴ Now they wished to stone him; therefore (according to vs. 4), WHEN MOSES HEARD THIS, HE FELL ON HIS FACE. Moses said to them: I do not desire kingship, nor does Aaron <desire> high priesthood. Thus it is stated (in vs. 11): AND AS FOR AARON, WHAT IS HE THAT YOU SHOULD MURMUR AGAINST HIM? Moses said to the Holy One: Sovereign of the world, did you not command me thus (in Exod. 28:1): AND YOU SHALL BRING NEAR UNTO YOURSELF <YOUR BROTHER AARON AND HIS SONS ALONG WITH HIM,... TO SERVE ME AS PRIESTS>? Now they have arisen against us to kill us. He said to him (in Numb. 16:5): IN THE MORNING THE LORD WILL MAKE KNOWN <THOSE WHO BELONG TO HIM....> {From where?} [What does this mean?] R. Nathan said: The Holy One said: If all the magicians of the world gathered together and tried to turn the morning into the evening, they would be unable <to do so>; but just as I <formerly> separated the light and the darkness (in Gen. 1:4), so have I separated out Aaron to sanctify him as most holy.

..

The Rabbis draw this same conclusion about the Torah portion, there was a struggle with leadership because the people want someone put in place that will also give what they perceived as “*power and authority over the nation.*” The issues at hand here are in relation to being humble before God and men. The Apostle Paul wrote in *Romans 12:3* “*For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.*” Pride is “*thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think.*”

Humility on the other hand is not “*thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think.*” The one aspect of the commands that Yeshua taught us and commanded his disciples was to learn the lesson of humility by humbling our lives according to God’s Word. We are told to be humble servants before God. (*James 4:10*) In Parashat Korach, there was a focus on leadership issues when they refuse to meet with Moshe. They asked rhetorically whether Moshe was to rule over them, in view of what they saw as a record of failure (*Bamidbar / Numbers 16:3 and 16:13*). The point is they told themselves a different story in their minds-eye based upon their perception of the events that had taken place, they were living in their own reality. The danger that we have is that in our sin it is possible to develop a perspective and stories in our hearts that are contrary to God’s Word, to His commands, and that may lead to further sin. We have to be careful not to enter into our own reality, but to stay in God’s reality by walking in his ways and remaining in His Word (the Scriptures). This is what was going on in the Torah portion, the people did not hold fast to the Word of God. Personal opinion and perspective based upon the stories they told themselves in regard to the commands of God led the people to destruction. This is one of the major issues with modern theologies today that exclude the Torah as a way of life and disregard the commands as valid for each of us in our lives. Modern theologies are the stories we tell ourselves so we do not have to be accountable to God’s Word (i.e. Faith alone). These types of stories led to attitudes and seeded their hearts leading to their total destruction, but not only the men responsible for the rebellion, the destruction also included their families and all their possessions. This is a heavy warning for us today, especially in this present age of sin and rebellion. If we need to keep our eyes focused upon Yeshua and remain in God’s Word, all of Scripture, including the Torah. If we determine our hearts to do what is right, and to seek the kingdom of God, we will not go far from what the Lord God our Father wants for our lives.



