

Introduction

Part 2

Men who Created their own Reality

From the depth of David's soul he praises the Lord saying, אֲהַלְלֶה יְהוָה בְּחַיִּי אֶזְמְרָה לֵאלֹהֵי בְעוֹדַי: לְלוּיָהּ הַלְלֵי נַפְשִׁי אֶת-יְהוָה: ב אֶהַלְלֶה יְהוָה בְּחַיִּי אֶזְמְרָה לֵאלֹהֵי בְעוֹדַי: *Tehillim / Psalms 146:1 Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! 146:2 I will praise the Lord while I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. (NASB)* . Can we say the same as he does, that all of our being is in the Lord God Almighty? This reminds us of what is written in the book of Acts from the Apostolic Writings.

Acts 17:24-31

17:24 'The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 17:25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; 17:26 and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 17:27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 17:28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets

have said, 'For we also are His children.' 17:29 'Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. 17:30 'Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, 17:31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.' (NASB)

Paul was speaking while he was observing the pagan world of the Greek culture. The description that is given here is how God is the author and creator of all things. The Lord God has given us the power to live, to move, and to be who we are. These things are revealed to us for a very important reason. The reason being, so we seek His will, to live our lives for him, to take hold of His words and order our lives accordingly, and so that we will love the Lord God because He first loved us giving us reason to obey Him. This concept of having all of our being in the Lord has philosophical significance. Jewish and Christian philosophical and Biblical hermeneutics have some overlap and dialogue, but they have distinctly separate interpretative traditions. The Talmudic (Rabbinic) hermeneutic that is used by Jewish scholars are used for the investigation and determination of the meaning of the Hebrew Bible, as well as rules by which Jewish law could be established. For the Talmudic method of text study, the starting point is the principle that any text that is deemed worthy of serious study must be assumed to have been written with such care and precision that every term, expression, generalization or exception is significant not so much for what it states as for what it implies. The rabbis as we have them written in the Talmud were the receivers and transmitters of the Mishnah (the Oral Torah) providing us with an early interpretive method on the meaning of the scriptures. The significance of the Mishnah is this oral tradition which is believed to set forth the precise, original meanings of the words, revealed at the same time and by the same means as the original scriptures themselves. Note that the interpretive methods listed above (i.e. such as the word play and the gematria -- letter count-

ing--)) were never used as logical proof for the meaning or teaching of a passage in scripture. These things were used to draw out a particular aspect of the physical / spiritual relationship for discussion. Throughout the history of the Church, for example, for modern Christianity in the 19th century, it became increasingly common to read the Scriptures just like any other writing as opposed to a holy and sacred text. As a result, different interpretations were developed and often disputed. Both the philosophical and hermeneutic methods were hotly debated. Biblical studies were geared towards understanding the Bible purely as a human and historical document as opposed to being inspired by God Himself. The way we consider the Scriptures (the Word of God) as holy and sacred and as a guide for life can significantly effect our perception of reality (truth). According to the Torah, in Parashat Korach, we learn how developing our own reality on truth that opposes God's ways can lead to death.

The example we have that illustrates the significance of having our own version of reality as opposed relying upon God's Word to shape our reality to the truth is found in Parashat Korach.. In Parashat Korach we read the following (from the book of Bamidbar / Numbers), וישלח, *16:12 Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab; but they said, "We will not come! המעט כי העליתנו מארץ זבת חלב ודבש להמיתנו במדבר כי־תשת"ר* *16:13 Is it not enough that you brought us from a land flowing with milk and honey to have us die in the wilderness, that you would also lord it over us?* *אף לא אל־ארץ זבת חלב ודבש הביאתנו ותתן־לנו נחלת שדה וכרם העיני האנשים ההם תנקר לא נעלה* *16:14 Even if you had brought us to a land flowing with milk and honey, and given us possession of fields and vineyards, should you gouge out those men's eyes? We will not come!"* *ויחר למשה מאד ויאמר אל־יהוה אל־תפן אל־* *16:15 Moses was much aggrieved and he said to the LORD, "Pay no regard to their oblation. I have not taken the ass of any one of them, nor have I wronged any one of them."* Notice how these men respond to Moshe concerning his calling them to come and talk. Moshe heard they had a problem with the priesthood and their involvement in the service of God. They felt they were excluded and so their response was that Egypt, the land

of their bondage, a place of great sin and disillusionment was a land of milk and honey. The rabbis comment on these verses in the following way. *Chizkuni on Bamidbar / Numbers 16:13 Part 1* state the following, “כִּי תִשְׁתַּרְרַר עֲלֵינוּ גַם הַשְׁתַּרְרָר,” “*but you have also imposed a dictatorship over us!*” According to Rashbam, the Torah uses the word **גַּם**, usually translated as “also,” both positively and negatively, i.e. as a continuation of something previous, or as an abrupt opposite of something previously stated. Our verse is an example of Datan and Aviram using it in the latter sense as if asking: “are you now going to also (even) act as dictator? Shemot / Exodus 12:32 is such an example where the Pharaoh who had railed against Moses and Aaron all the time, suddenly makes a 180 degree turn by pleading for Moses to bless him also when offering sacrifices to the Jewish God. Bamidbar / Numbers 22:33, is another such example where the angel who had not killed anyone tells Bileam that he would have killed not only his ass but also Bileam if he had been at liberty to do so.” Note how the rabbis draw out the two-faced nature of Pharaoh, when it pleased him he asked Moshe to bless him. These people felt that Moshe and his brother were lording over them authority to rule over them as opposed to offering them God’s way for Teshuvah (repentance) which leads to freedom from sin, and the establishment of liberty, justice, and truth, the basic needs of every individual on this earth. *Babbeinu Bahya on Bamidbar / Numbers 13 Part 2* states that by the word “rule” the people meant that “*Moshe was the political autocrat over the people and Aaron was the religious autocrat in his capacity as the High Priest.*” The question is where did these people come up with the idea that all Moshe and Aaron were trying to do was to set up rule and control over the people? Why would they think this? Moshe had told these people “*is it not enough that G’d has set you apart to become Levites, etc.*” as referring to the “*elevation*” the lifting up of the people to a place of higher elevation. Note the rabbinic thought process follows as the Land of Canaan was situated higher in elevation than that of Egypt which was situated at sea level. The Lord God in heaven was drawing the people nearer to Himself by bringing them into the Promised Land. This is illustrated at this time the people were at a high plateau in the wilderness and the imagery that is given them is to the Lord lifting them up to heaven, raising them up to set them in a place of blessing even to having heard the

voice of God and receiving His holy Words (mitzvot). The people on the other hand felt Eretz Yisrael (Land of Israel) was punishment and did not want the blessing of God. The people accused Moshe of bringing them to a place where all one could do was die. Rashi's explanation to this question is, *"Perhaps we can say that Datan and Aviram did not want to justify their refusal to go and see Moses merely because he had brought them to a place where all one could do was die. They implied that even if all he had done was not to bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey this would be sufficient reason for them to decline his invitation as Moses had failed to deliver on his promise."* Remember that the people did not go straight up to the Land of Canaan but went into the wilderness to the Mountain of Sinai. They were working up to their next argument: *"will you put out the eyes of these men?"* Ibn Ezra interprets the verse as *"do you want to gouge out the eyes of those men so that they cannot see"* (what you are doing to them?) *The subject of האנשים ההם are the people who had left Egypt, Datan and Aviram saying that these people had not been blind enough not to see how their lot had deteriorated under Moses' rule. It is like someone saying about others: "these people must have their eyes shut, this is why they do not see."* Ibn Ezra is speaking of something that is related to knowing the truth and having a perceived reality that was not true. These men are saying God, Moshe, and Aaron are blinding the eyes of the people. These people are blaming Moshe for their own sin saying, *"Is it not sufficient that you did us the evil of causing us to die in the desert, but even the good that you promised us you did not do."* These men are blaming Moshe and God for their sin and not taking responsibility for their choices and actions. It is significant to note that the Torah does not quote the people saying *"we will not go,"* or *"we will not come,"* but writes *"we will not ascend, go up."* What this teaches us is that the people refused to ascend, to go up to the Lord, to draw near, and to pray. This is very important for us today as it is related to God's Word and preparing our hearts and minds, to receive God's Truth (God's reality and truth). How often are we taught the law of God has passed away? The instructions (Torah) of God were given to cause us to ascend, to raise up, to draw near, and to have fellowship with God our Father in heaven, to receive forgiveness, to have fellowship with God and others, to have a relationship with God. The Midrashic approach

to these words of Datan and Aviram was that their mouth betrayed them as having refused to ascend, to go up, not simply to the Promised Land, or entering willingly into the blessing of God. Notice how something more is at stake here. They refused God's Word, they refused to walk in God's ways, and by doing so they prepared the way of their destruction by going to die at the hand of their own reality (illustrated by the words they say). This is why the rabbis have so much to say concerning Lashon Hara (the evil tongue) and its connection to all other sins (idolatry, immorality, adultery, murder, selfishness, pride, covetousness, etc.). All of these things are intimately connected which shape our understanding of the truth vs. a lie. If we are not following in the footsteps of the Messiah, we may mistake Egypt for a land flowing with milk and honey. The deception here is great, especially when one teaches that the divine commands are of no importance to us today. When we truly seek to walk in the footsteps of the Messiah, the truth and life that is found by faith in him will become a part of our lives to produce the fruit that God is looking for. Without faith in Yeshua the Messiah, and the empowering of God's Spirit in our lives, it is impossible to produce the fruit the Lord God our Father is looking for. The reason is the one who has his own version of reality is walking in his own ways and is unable to walk in God's ways!

ב וַיִּקְמוּ לְפָנַי מֹשֶׁה וְאַנְשֵׁים מִבְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲמִשִּׁים וּמְאַתָּים וְנָשִׂיָאֵי עֵדָה קְרָאִי מוֹעֵד אַנְשֵׁי-שֵׁם: ג וַיִּקְהֵלוּ עַל-מֹשֶׁה וְעַל-אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם רַב-לָכֶם פִּי כָל-הָעֵדָה כָּלֵם קְדֹשִׁים 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 וַיִּפֹּל עַל-

פָּנָיו: ה' וַיִּדְבֹר אֶל-קָרַח וְאֶל-כָּל-עֲדָתוֹ לֵאמֹר בִּקֹּר וַיֵּדַע יְהוָה אֶת-אַשְׁרֵךְ-לוֹ וְאֶת-הַקְּדוֹשׁ וְהַקָּרִיב אֵלָיו וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר-בּוֹ יִקְרִיב אֵלָיו: וְזֹאת עָשׂוּ קְחוּ-לָכֶם מִחֲתוֹת קָרַח וְכָל-עֲדָתוֹ: ז' וַתִּגּוּ-בָהֶן | אִשׁ וְשִׁימוּ עָלֵיהֶן | קְטֹרֶת לִפְנֵי יְהוָה מִחָר וְהָיָה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-יִבְחַר יְהוָה הוּא הַקְּדוֹשׁ רַב-לָכֶם בְּנֵי לְוִי:

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. Remember how in the news, James Comey testified about his role in the Russian investigation, President Trump, and the leaks to the media. I heard Jay Sekulow, the Chief Counsel for 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 (2017). 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 is what was taking place in Parashat Korach. This teaches us as God's people we need to take matters into our own hands as individuals to thoroughly study a 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 because of his presuppositions."* (i.e. Datan, Aviram, and Korach) A large part of this week's Torah portion 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 himself in the imagination of his heart. This is exactly what is going on in the leadership within the United States government today. This is

what is going on in the anti-Torah doctrines of the Church. This is what has been going on all throughout the history of mankind. 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 מֵעֵדוּת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַקְרִיב אֶתְכֶם אֵלָיו לְעַבֹד אֶת-עֲבֹדַת מִשְׁכַּן יְהוָה וְלַעֲמֹד לִפְנֵי הָעֵדוּת לְשִׁרְתָּם: י וַיִּקְרַב אֹתָהּ וְאֶת-כָּל-אַחֶיךָ כְּנִי-לֹוִי אֹתָהּ וּבִקְשׁוּתָם גַּם-כָּהֵנָה: יא לָכֵן אֹתָהּ וְכָל-עֲדֹתָהּ הַנֹּעֲדִים עַל-יְהוָה וְאַהֲרֹן מֵה-הוּא כִּי תִלּוּנוּ [תְּלִינוּ] עֲלֵיו: יב וַיִּשְׁלַח מֹשֶׁה לְקָרָא לְדָתָן וְלֵאבִירָם כְּנִי אֵלֶיָּאב 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 ascend 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 as it is related to putting God first in our lives. (Pride) These men asked rhetorically whether Moshe was to rule over them, in view of what they saw as a record of failure (*Bamidbar / Numbers 16:13*). How often is this the case for the nations and even for God’s people to put the Lord God, His Word, and His Messiah first in their lives? 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, LGBT, etc*)? 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 these men, 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 deception.

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. So, if we seriously consider these things we are discussing here, 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 others. Their refusal, fear, and unfaithfulness led them to where they are today, in Hell! 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 וְאֶכְלֶה אֹתָם בְּרִגְעָה: כִּב וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל-פְּנֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל 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 ran 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 mitzvot (commandments) in the Torah 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 for truth. (see *John 14*)

Rashi on Bamidbar / Numbers 16:7 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 Word being led by God’s Spirit. Rashi goes on to speak of Korach seeing prophetic visions in his minds-eye of his descendents not dying 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 on Bamidbar / Numbers 16:7 Part 1 states 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)*

Pride is a major aspect that forms our presuppositions and philosophical beliefs. 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*” and this is a direct function of the reality we develop and shape our lives by. 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 these men 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 as opposed to holding fast to the simplicity of God’s Word. The danger that we have is that in our sin it is possible to develop a perspective and stories (a narrative) in our hearts that are contrary to God’s Word and His commands 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 this Torah based example, the people did not hold fast to the Word of God. The presuppositions, philosophical beliefs, personal opinion, these things shaped their perspective (their reality) based upon the stories they told themselves in regard to the commands. This led to their utter destruction. Can you see the parallel to what Yeshua taught in *Matthew 7* regarding those who stood before Yeshua and his response was “*I never knew you, you worker of iniquity?*” This is one of the ma-

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 to live by. Modern theologies are the stories we tell ourselves so we do not have to be accountable to all of God's Word. The best example of this is the faith alone doctrine. This leads then to doctrines such as "*eternal security*" or "*once saved always saved.*" These types of theological leanings are rooted in pride filled attitudes. Parashat Korach demonstrates how pride in our hearts may lead to total destruction. Note also that it was not just the men who were responsible for the rebellion who died. This way of thinking led to the destruction passing on to 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 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. This is what we are trying to understand here in this Torah series "*the Torah and the Gospel Message,*" by examining all of these things that are related to the presuppositions and philosophical beliefs that we hold on to that shape our perception of reality. These things lead to questions we ask about life and spiritual matters, and the questions we ask are shaped by the assumptions, the expectations of the hypothesis and theories we embrace and ultimately the theologies and doctrines we hold onto. The idea of coming to the truth is a universal principle and the reason there is so much variation in biblical interpretation. The difficulty however is to find a set of assumptions that we can all agree upon that leads to correct conclusions. This is why I believe it is vital that we hold on to a Torah centric hermeneutic when exercising biblical interpretation.