

פרשת קרח Parashat Korach

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

Gehenom (Hell) Cleaves to this Type of Person

In this week's Torah portion we read something very interesting according to *Bamidbar / Numbers 16:12-13*, וישלח משה לקרא יב לדתו ולאבירם בני אליאב ויאמרו לא נעלה: יג המעט פי העליתנו מארץ זבת חלב ודבש להמיתנו במדבר פי-תשתרר עלינו גם-השתרר: [שני] יד אף לא אל-ארץ זבת חלב ודבש הביאתנו ותתן-לנו נחלת שדה וכרם העיני 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!'* (NASB) Here the men respond to Moshe's request making a statement of putting out the eyes of these men? What does this mean? The Hebrew text uses the word כרם which translates as either "vineyard" or if the root word is כרה meaning to dig a grave. This then may be translated as *"and dig the eyes of these men"* (וכרם העיני האנשים ההם) or as the NASB has translated the text as *"to put out the eyes of these men."* Rashi on *Bamidbar /*

Numbers 16:12 states the following.

Rashi on Bamidbar / Numbers 16:12 Part 1

וּגְוִי וַיִּשְׁלַח מֹשֶׁה וְגוֹ' *AND MOSES SENT [TO CALL DATHAN AND ABIRAM] — From here we may learn that one should not persist in strife (Midrash Tanchuma, Korach 10), for, you see, Moses sought them out in order to conciliate them by peaceful words (Sanhedrin 110a).*

Rashi on Bamidbar / Numbers 16:12 Part 2

לֹא נַעֲלֶה *WE WILL NOT GO UP — Their mouth tripped them up (i.e. unwittingly they made mention of their fate) — that they would have only a “descent” (their words are taken to mean: we shall not be going up; we shall go down into the depths of the earth) (Midrash Tanchuma, Korach 6).*

Here Rashi interprets Moshe’s words to be those of seeking peace between Datan and Aviram and the priesthood. Their response was they will not ascend (לֹא נַעֲלֶה). The rabbis derive much meaning behind the statement of either ascending or not ascending, as a reference to taking upon the yoke of God’s commands or being unwilling to do so. Here Rashi states that their statement determined their fate, rather than ascending, they would descend to destruction in the depths of the earth (Gehenom , Hell). Chizkuni states that this phrase not to ascend (or go up) did not mean that Moshe stood upon an elevated platform but was a standard expression when people were asked to appear before a judge. Ibn Ezra states that it was possible the Tent of Meeting was located on high ground within the camp and therefore it was appropriate to use the language of “go up.” The alternative interpretation explains that this describes one who goes to the service of HaShem or to the chosen place (בַּמְקוֹם) of God. The disgruntled nature of their complaint about the priesthood follows on the story of their refusing to ascend to the Promised Land and receive the gift of God. So they were also ridiculing what Moshe had portrayed as an ascent from Egypt saying, “*is this what you call an ascent that*

you took us from a land flowing with milk and honey and now we are stuck in a desert, a place only fit to die? If this is your idea of an עלייה, ascent, improvement in our lot, then no thank you, we do not want any part of it.” (Or HaChaim on Bamidbar / Numbers 16:12 Part 3)

They added כִּי-תִשָּׂתַרְר עָלֵינוּ, “*your sole purpose is to make yourself a prince over us.*” They claimed Moshe’s purpose for Israel was to remain in the desert for a long time as they were dependent upon him and this strengthened his position as autocrat. *Midrash Rabbah on Bamidbar Parashat 5 Part 23* states that Moshe’s position as king was in effect only while Israel was in the desert. The point is the people were allowing their anger and hatred to go unchecked. This caused them to decline the invitation of peace to ascend, to go up, and meet before God to discuss the issue. This approach had devastating consequences as due to their anger, Hell (Gehenom) itself connected itself to them dragging them down into the earth to die.

The Scriptures we are looking at for this week are from *Bamidbar / Numbers 16:1-33*.

Bamidbar / Numbers 16:1-35

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?' 16:23 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 16:24 'Speak to the congregation, saying, 'Get back from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.' 16:25 Then Moses arose and went to Dathan and Abiram, with the elders of Israel following him,

16:26 and he spoke to the congregation, saying, 'Depart now from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing that belongs to them, or you will be swept away in all their sin.' 16:27 So they got back from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the doorway of their tents, along with their wives and their sons and their little ones. 16:28 Moses said, 'By this you shall know that the Lord has sent me to do all these deeds; for this is not my doing. 16:29 'If these men die the death of all men or if they suffer the fate of all men, then the Lord has not sent me. 16:30 'But if the Lord brings about an entirely new thing and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that is theirs, and they descend alive into Sheol, then you will understand that these men have spurned the Lord.' 16:31 As he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open; 16:32 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah with their possessions. 16:33 So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly. 16:34 All Israel who were around them fled at their outcry, for they said, 'The earth may swallow us up!' 16:35 Fire also came forth from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the incense. (NASB)

א וַיִּקַּח קִרְחַת בֶּן-יִצְחָק בֶּן-קֵהֶת בֶּן-לוֹי וְדָתָן וְאַבִּירָם בְּנֵי אֶלְיָאָב וְאוֹן בֶּן-פִּלֵּת בְּנֵי רְאוּבֵן: ב וַיִּקְמוּ לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה וְאַנְשֵׁים מִבְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲמִשִּׁים וּמֵאָתַיִם נְשִׂאֵי עֵדָה קְרָאִי מוֹעֵד אַנְשֵׁי-שֵׁם: ג וַיִּקְהָלוּ עַל-מֹשֶׁה וְעַל-אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם רַב-לָכֶם כִּי כָל-הָעֵדָה כָּלָם קֹדְשִׁים וּבְתוֹכָם יְהוָה וּמִדּוּעַ תִּתְנַשְּׂאוּ עַל-קֵהֶל יְהוָה: ד וַיִּשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה וַיִּפֹּל עַל-פָּנָיו: ה וַיַּדְבֵּר אֶל-קִרְחַת וְאֶל-כָּל-עֵדְתוֹ לֵאמֹר בִּקְרֹן וַיַּדַּע יְהוָה אֶת-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ וְאֶת-הַקְּדוֹשׁ וְהַקְּרִיב אֵלָיו וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר יָבֹחַ בּוֹ וְקָרִיב אֵלָיו: ו זֹאת עָשׂוּ קְחוּ-לָכֶם מִחֲתוֹת קִרְחַת וְכָל-עֵדְתוֹ: ז וַתִּגּוּ-בָהֶן | אֲשׁ וְשִׁימוּ עֲלֵיהֶן | קִטְרֶת לִפְנֵי יְהוָה מִחֵר וְהִיָּה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-יָבֹחַ יְהוָה הוּא הַקְּדוֹשׁ רַב-לָכֶם בְּנֵי לׁוי: ח וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-קִרְחַת שְׁמַעוּ-נָא בְנֵי לׁוי: ט הִמְעַט מִכֶּם כִּי-הִבְדִּיל אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתְכֶם מֵעַדַת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַקְרִיב אֶתְכֶם אֵלָיו לְעַבֵּד אֶת-עֲבַדַת מִשְׁכַּן יְהוָה וְלַעֲמֹד

According to the Torah, we read *Bamidbar / Numbers 16:31-33*, לא וַיְהִי כַכִּלְתּוֹ לְדַבֵּר אֶת כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וּתְבַקַּע הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר תַּחֲ-
 תִּיהֶם: לֵב וּתִפְתַּח הָאָרֶץ אֶת-פִּיהָ וּתְבַלַּע אֹתָם וְאֶת-בְּתִיָּהֶם וְאֶת כָּל-הָאֲדָמָה
 אֲשֶׁר לְקִרְחָה וְאֶת כָּל-הֶרְכוּשׁ: לֵג וַיִּרְדּוּ הֵם וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם חַיִּים וְשִׂאֵלָה
 16:31 *As he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open; 16:32 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their house-*
holds, and all the men who belonged to Korah with their possessions. 16:33 So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly. (NASB) The earth which was underneath them split and they descended into Gehenom. It is interesting, in the Hebrew text it states ותְבַקַּע הָאֲדָמָה “*the earth split*” and ותִּפְתַּח הָאָרֶץ אֶת-פִּיהָ “*the earth opened its mouth.*” There is an interesting feature here as a reference to the ground (הָאֲדָמָה) and the land or earth (הָאָרֶץ) in the use of these two words as it is connected to Gehenom and anger. Nachmanides explains why the Torah had to mention both הָאֲדָמָה and הָאָרֶץ as “*opening*” in this verse. Had the Torah only written that the ground split open, the phenomenon could have been considered as an ordinary earthquake, although Moses had predicted the time and the place. This is why the Torah added the words “*the earth opened its mouth*” to explain to us that a great miracle, unparalleled, happened here. This is why the miracle had been predicted as a בְּרִיאָה, a new creation. The place where this took place returned to its original appearance as distinct from an earthquake which leaves behind clear evidence that there had been an upheaval. (*Rabbeinu Bahya, Bamidbar / Numbers 16:31 Part 1*) The significance of this Torah portion reveals to us the spiritual connection to anger and hatred, and its ultimate resting place (Gehenom / Hell). The text also states וְאֶת כָּל-הֶרְכוּשׁ “*all their property*” revealing to us that not only the people, but all of their belongings including their tents, money, pets, everything was swallowed up, descended into darkness. These are things which may become an idol in our lives. The *Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 106* interprets the descent into the earth as being coupled to burning, they were swallowed up in darkness and burned in the fire, which is a distinct definition of Hell. This is derived from *Bamidbar / Numbers 26:10* “*it*

swallowed them as well as Korach when the assembly died as the fire consumed the 250 men.” This teaches us that these men who held onto anger were both swallowed up and also consumed by the fire. The text presented for us today here in Parashat Korach makes a distinction between love and hate. Love is connected to the God of Israel, to heaven, and hate is connected to Gehenom (Hell). The Zohar Bereshit A.6 (pp. 179-192) reveals to us the reasons for both Gehenom and hatred are coupled together based upon the interpretation on *Bereshit / Genesis 1:6-9*.

Bereshit / Genesis 1:6-9

1:6 Then God said, 'Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' 1:7 God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. 1:8 God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day. 1:9 Then God said, 'Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear'; and it was so. (NASB, וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי רָקִיעַ בְּתוֹךְ הַמַּיִם וַיְהִי מְבֻדָּל בֵּין מַיִם לְמַיִם: ז וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הַרָקִיעַ וַיְבַדֵּל בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מִתַּחַת לְרָקִיעַ וּבֵין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל לְרָקִיעַ וַיְהִי-כֵן: ח וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְרָקִיעַ שָׁמַיִם וַיְהִי-עָרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר יוֹם שֵׁנִי: פ ט וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יִקְוּ הַמַּיִם מִתַּחַת (הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶל-מְקוֹם אֶחָד וַתֵּרָאָה הַיַּבְשָׁה וַיְהִי-כֵן:

Metaphorically speaking, the Zohar interpretation is centered upon the firmament, this division that is made between the waters above and the waters below. This is visually connected to the Sefirot a graphical picture of the 10 attributes/emanations of God through which He creates the physical and the spiritual worlds. The Zohar identifies three forces that permeate all of existence and parallel this to the three pillars of the Sefirot. The central pillar is the binding force which joins the two sides of the Sefirot together. This is metaphorically related to the firmament that separates that which is above from that below,

and also describes our lives as having the ability to share (the right side) and the ability to receive (the left side) and the middle column being our freedom of choice (free will). By our free will we resist the desire to receive (to take) and nurture the desire to share (to give). The concept that is put forth by the Zohar is on the second day of creation, a dispute broke out, when the left side was aroused with this dispute against the right side, the fire of anger between the two sides was fierce. Kabbalistically, it is said that from this dispute, from this fire of anger, Gehenom was created. Gehenom (Hell) was awakened and created by the left, and the left cleaved to it. This is interpreted as “whoever wants to strengthen the left shall fall into Gehenom which originates from the left.” This is a very interesting kabbalistic way of thinking about hatred, anger, and being set on fire by Hell. The concepts presented here in the Zohar describe these two sides (desires) and there is the need of an intermediary to make peace.

James 3:6

3:6 And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. (NASB)

Matthew 5:22

5:22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. (NASB)

James’ comment that the tongue is “*the very world of iniquity*” may be an allusion to the upper worlds in the sefirot and the left/right as they are being described in the Zohar. Yeshua also speaks of the danger of pride that may be puffed up in Bina (knowledge) which leads to the danger of jealousy and anger and descending into the fire of hell. The Zohar states that an intermediary came along on the third day (Tiphareth, Beauty) and brought peace between

the two sides ending the dispute between the left and the right. As the intermediary made peace between the two sides, Gehenom (Hell) removed itself from the left and descended below, the left joined the right and there was peace everywhere. It was because of the power of disagreement, of anger, that Gehenom clinged (cleaved) to the left. This has a direct application to this week's Torah portion Parashat Korach (*Bamidbar / Numbers 16:1-18:32*) where Korach did not want to be attached above, he refused to ascend, to take upon himself the structure of holiness that God had laid out according to the Torah. So like the left, he joined himself with anger and Gehenom cleaved to him. This is why we read what happened to Korach in the Torah, him and those who joined themselves with him went down to Sheol (the grave) descending into Gehenom (Hell). Because of anger, he was transformed by the fires of hell, just as James and Yeshua were stating in the Scriptures, of the dangers of hatred towards others, and pride, as opposed to loving others, even our enemies. Moshe, the intermediary of God, attempted to settle the dispute between Korach and the priesthood. We can see the parallels here as Anger drives one to be unbalanced, becoming heavy on the left (unrighteousness) as opposed to the right (righteousness, holiness, and truth).

The point of the kabbalistic interpretation on the firmament causing a separation, a division between the left and the right, and the waters above from the waters below, heaven and Gehenom (Hell), this alludes to the need for an intermediary, a Messiah sent from God! This Messiah is the one who makes peace and prevents one from literally descending into hell! It is easy to see how many NT connections there are to this week's Torah portion and the absolute imperative for having faith in Yeshua the Messiah for the salvation of our souls. This is the way God established for us to have true peace, a peace that is from within that is divinely created in our lives to overcome anger, hatred, and pride. Yeshua the Messiah on the third day raised from the grave, overcoming death, and by faith enters into our lives such that we may have peace from within, where both the left and the right, the desire to take, and the desire to give, are brought under His rule, and we live our lives according to His Word, for the glory of the Father in heaven! This week's Torah portion also provides us with a strict warning against allowing anger and hatred to be cultivated in our hearts. This

is connected to forgiving others so that our Father in heaven will also forgive us. (*Matthew 6:14*) The way of life is trusting in God our Father above, believing in Yeshua the Messiah who laid his life down on our behalf, and loving one another as Yeshua has demonstrated for us by example. (*John 13:34, John 15:12*) It should be easy to see how the Torah and the Gospel Message go hand in hand!