Shabbat Sivan 18, 5768, June 21, 2008
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Do you believe G-d or Man Made Doctrines?

הואים / This Week's Reading

תורה: Numbers 16:1-18:32 הפטרה: 1 Sam 11:14-12:22 Rom 13:1-7

החדשה

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In Parashat Korach we find Korach, Datan, Aviram, and 250 men all unite to come against Moshe and Aharon to criticize their leadership and demonstrate their opposition saying Moshe and Aharon have raised themselves above G-d's congregation (holy people). The intentions of these men were specifically to promote themselves and to establish a power base from which to emerge as new leaders because they didn't believe G-d. While we continue to study this week's parsha, ask yourself this question: "Is a similar thing happening today, do I believe G-d or manmade doctrines? To begin, let's look at the Hebrew text.

בּ וְאַבְּי לְרָח בּן־יִצְּתָר בָּן לְהָהַ בָּן־לֵנִי וֹ תָּן וַאֲבִירִם בְּגֵי אֵלִיאֵב

יִשְּׂרְאֵל הַמַשִּׁים וּסְאָרָם נְשִּׂיא עַהָּה קְרָאֵי מושה וַאָּנְשִׁים מִבְּגֵי שִׁיְה בָּלְם בְּגַי מִשְׁה וַאַנְשִׁים מִבְּגִי שִּׁה וְעַל־אַהָרוֹ וְיִאַקְרוֹ אֲלַהֶם רַבֹּ־לְבָּם בִּי בִּלְּר בְּיִבְּרָה בְּבָּוֹ מִשְׁה וַיִּבְּר עָל־אָהָרוֹ אֲלַהֶם רַבֹּ־לְבָּם בִּי כִּלְּר הַעָּרְה וְעַלְּהָעִ מִּתְּנִשְּׁאָ עִלְּאָבְרוֹ אֲלִרְם בְּבְּר אָלִרְקוֹ בְּבְּרְבִּ אֵלְּרְבִּ בְּבְּר אָלִרְבְּ וְנִשְׁיִם מִבְּרְוֹ אַלִּרְתוֹ בְּבְּרְבִּ אֵלִי וְנִשְׁיִם וּבְּלְבְּ עַל־בְּּבְוֹ וְעָבְּרִב אֵלִי וְשִּבְּר אָלִרְבְן וְאָתִּי בְּבְּרְוֹ עִּבְּרִב אֵלְיוֹ וְאָלִר בְּבְּרוֹ עִבְּרִב אֵלִיוֹ וְאָלִר בְּבְּרוֹ וְשִּׁתְּב בְּבְוֹ וְשִׁבְּרִב אָבְּרִוֹ אֲשְׁרִזִּבְּבְרוֹ אֲשְׁרִי בְּבָּרְוֹשְׁ אִשְׁרִי בְּבָּרְוֹ אְשְׁרְזִיבְּחָר וְהַוֹה הָאִישׁ אִשְׁרִיבִבְּקוֹ וְאָתִּרְ וְהָוֹה בְּבְּיוֹ בְּעִבְּר בְּבְּרִוֹ בְּעִבְּרוֹ אָבְּרָוֹ אֲתְרִב בְּבְּרִוֹ אֲבְרִוֹ בְּבְּרִוֹ אֲתְרִבְּבְּרִוֹ אָבְרִוֹ בְּעִבְּרִ בְּעִבְּרִוֹ אָּהְרָוֹ בְּעִבְּרִ בְּעִבְּרִוֹ אָּבְרִיב אָּהְרִוֹ מְבִּבְרִב אְבְיוֹי וְשְׁבְבּל אָבְרִיב אָבְרִוֹ מְבִּיבְרִב אְבְּיִים עַבְּרִיבְּבְּלְיבִי בְּבְּבְּיִים עַּבְּרִיבְּ אָּהְבְּבְיוֹ מְבִּבְּרִב אָּבְּרִיב אָּהְבְּיִבְם בִּבּיבְרִב אְבְּרִיב אָּבְּרִיב אְבְרִיבְּ אָבְּרִיב בְּבִּבְיוֹ בְּבִּבְּרִיב אְבְּבְרִיב אְבְּבְיִבְּי בְּבִּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְיִים בְּבִי בְּבִּיים בְּבִיי בְּבְּבְיִים בְּבִי בְּבִיּבְים בְּבִי בְּבְּבְיוֹבְ בְּבִּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְיוֹבְ בְּבְּבְיוֹבְ בְּבְּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְיוֹבְיוֹ בְּבְבְּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְיוֹבְ בְּבְּבְּבוּ בְּבְּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְבוּ בְּבְּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְּבְים בְּבְּבְי בְּבְּבְיבְיבְּבְּבְיבְיבְ בְּבְּבְים בְּבּבּי בְּבְיבְּבְיבְיבְיבְּבְּבְיבְים בְּבּבְי בְּבְּבְיבְּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְיבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְיוֹבְיבְּבְיבְבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְיוֹ בְשְׁבְּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְיוּ בְּבְּבְּבְּבְיוּבְיוֹ בְּבְּבְבְיוֹ בְשְּבְּבְיוּבְיבְּבְיוּבְ

And takes Koach ...

Appears to be two groups of people; one group from the tribe of Reuben, and one from the tribe of Levi. Koach appears to have organized these groups people. of Maybe this is why the begins verse with "and takes Koach"

Moshe addresses the sons of Levi, and Koach.

20 This week's parsha begins with the words "Korach takes" which immediately begs the question, what does Korach take? The Hebrew text in the first verse, אלקה is a transitive verb. A transitive verb describes an action performed on an object, a verb that is accompanied by a direct object. However, our verse does not provide an object for איקה. Let's look at how the English translators chose to translate this verse:

Numbers / Bamidbar 16:1

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)

Numbers / Bamidbar 16:1

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16:1 Korah son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and certain Reubenites--Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On son of Pelethbecame insolent (NIV)

The opening sentence simply says that "Korach took" without explaining what he took. Rashi says Korach took himself to a "different side". (See *Rashi on Bamidbar Parashat Korach*). Rambam said that Korach took counsel into his heart. (See *Rambam on Bamidbar Parashat Korach*). Other Torah commentators such as Ibn Ezra, Chizkuni, and Sforno disagree saying Korach took other people, for example the 250 national leaders.

The point of this specific portion of scripture is the rebellion of Korach's heart. Rebellion is in the most general sense a refusal to accept authority. This naturally encompasses a range of behaviors. In Korach's case he took action by bringing together a group of people who agreed with him against the leadership G-d had established by first questioning their authority and right to be their leaders. Not only did they question the authority of their leaders they doubted the word of G-d.

Now as you know, Moshe received the word of the Lord from between the cherubim upon the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant in the Mishkhan (tabernacle). The Mishkhan was a portable sanctuary called the Ohel Moed (tent of meeting) and the place where one would seek the counsel of the Lord. It is interesting to note that Korach, Datan, and Aviram have their own Mishkhan according to the Hebrew text. Now it does not say for certain that they actually tried to create an Ohel Moed Mishkhan of their own, rather, I believe this relates to them choosing to take counsel in themselves as Rambam puts it "Korach took counsel in his own heart."

Ibn-Ezra / אבן-עזרא Abraham ibn Ezra (1092-1167) a Famous Jewish scholar and biblical commentator, poet, astronomer, mathematician.

Chizkuni or Hezekiah ben Manoah, a French rabbi from the 13th century around 1240.

Sforno or Hananeel ben Jacob Sforno, a scholar of the Talmud, lived in the 15th and 16th centuries.

מאַרץ זַבֿת חַלָבֹ וּדָבַשׁ לַהְמִיתַנוּ בּמַּדְבֵּר נו גם־השתרר:

Note how the Torah uses the word "Mishkhan" to describe their dwelling place. Also note how the English translations in the margin do not translate the Hebrew word "Mishkhan" as tabernacle but translate as "dwellings" in the NASB and "tents" in the NIV. What do you think is the significance of the use of the word "Mishkhan" in the Torah? The use of the Mishkhan indicates that Korach, Datan and Aviram had set up a Tabernacle of their own that was in direct defiance of Moshe's leadership, along with the priesthood against the true Mishkhan at the Ohel Moed (Tent of Meeting).

Numbers 16:24

'Speak to the congregation, saying, 'Get back from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.' (NASB)

Numbers 16:24

"Say to the assembly, 'Move away from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.'" (NIV)

Numbers 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. (NASB)

Numbers 16:27

So they moved away from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Dathan and Abiram had come out and were standing with their wives, children and little ones at the entrances to their tents. (NIV)

"Mishkhan" (Tabernacle) isn't translated in the English Bible.

Creating a creation

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What these men have done is so significant that Hashem creates a new thing specifically to address this rebellion. HaShem created a new thing, why does it say he created a new thing? בריאה denotes the creation of a phenomenon which has no precedent in the scriptures. The rabbis interpretation of this explains why the verse uses "if HaShem will create a creation" instead of "if HaShem will create" (*Gur Aryeh*) The rabbis say if the mouth of the earth is "a creation" from the six days of creation then fine, but if not "may HaShem create." I feel the reason the text is written this way is to demonstrate these men did not die in a manner that is common to man such as someone dying in an earthquake. In this case the earth swallows up the people and there is no trace of them left behind.

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This is clear in the word ותבלעם "and will swallow them," Rashi comments that נבלעה of the verse is a term of the conditions and not the result of the fulfillment of the conditions. The verse reads "If HaShem will create a creation, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them"; not "if HaShem will create a creation and the earth opens its mouth, then it will swallow them." Moshe speaks being lead by the Ruach HaKodesh (the Holy Spirit) and ground swallowed them immediately.

After the events with Korach, the children of Israel complain and blame Moshe and Aharon for killing the people of HaShem.

י וּיִלְּנִי בְּלֵּיְעָהָתְּ בְּנֵיִישִּׂרְאֵלֵ מְמְחֵרְתֹּ עַלֹּימִשֶׁהְ וְעֵלֹּיאַהְרָןְ בְּלֵּיְתִּם יְתְּהֵי וְיְהִי בְּהַפְּהָלְ הַעֵּרָהְ עַבְּרִבְּיִלְ אָבֶּרְ מִוֹעֵדְ וְהִנְּהְ בִּפְּהוּ הָעָנֵן עִּלְישִׁהְרֹן אֶלִיפְנֵי אָהֶל מוֹעֵדְ: נֵיכָא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶלִיפְנֵי אָהֶל מוֹעֵדְ: נִיכָא מִשֶּׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶלִיפְנֵי אָהֶל מוֹעֵדְ: נִיבָא מִשֶּׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶלִיפְנֵי אָהֶל מוֹעֵדְ: נִיבָּא מִשֶּׁה לֹאמֹר: הרֹשִׁוּ מִתּוּדְּ

ָּהָ בְּעָבָהַ הַוּאַתַּ נַאֲכַּלֶּהָ אֹתָם כְּרָגַע וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם: וַיֹּאֹמֶר הוּשָׁהַ אֶל־אַהֲרֹן <u>כָּח אֶתֹּ־ בַּמִּחְתָּה</u> וְתָּן־עָלֶיהָ אֵשׁ מֵעַל הַמִּוְבֵּח ושִׂים קִשֹׁרָת וְהוֹלֵךְ מְהֵרָה אֶל־הֵעֵרָה וְכַּפֵּר עֲלִיהָם כִּי־יִצְא

הַבֶּלֶצֶף אִלּפְּנֵי יְהנָה הַחֵל הַנְגֶּף: וַיִּכַּח אַהֲרֹן כַּאֲשֶׁרּן דִּבֶּר יַּה משׁה יַּהֶרֹּץ אֶלְיתִּוּךְ הַבְּלֵל וְהִנְהָ הַחֵל הַנָּגֻּדְ בַּעִם וִיִּתֵּן אַתְּיהַבְּלְטֶרָת וְיְכַבֶּר עַלִּיהָעֵם: וַיַּצֵעְהֹּ בֵּין־הַמֵּתִּים וּבִּין הַחַיִּים יּ וֹתְעָצֵּךְ הַמָּגַפְּהֹי עַלִּיךְ הַמֵּתִים בַּמְגַפְהֹ אַרְבְּעָהֹ עָשֶׂר אֶלֶךְ אָלִי וֹשְׁבַע מֵאִוֹת מִלְבַּדְ הַמֵּתִים עַלִּידְבַּרִילְרְח: וַיֵּשְׁבַ אַהֲרֹן אֶלִי זּ מֹשְׁהֹ אֵלִיפְתָח אָהֶל מוֹעֵד וְהַמְּגַפְּהֹ נַעַצְרָה:

Then a plague breaks out and begins to destroy the people. Moshe quickly commands Aharon to take burning incense and make atonement for the people. Aharon then quickly takes burning incense and stands between the dead and the living making atonement for them. What I find interesting in this portion of

The children of Israel complain and blame Moshe and Aharon, that they killed the people of HaShem.

As a result, a plague breaks out and atonement is made for the people using burning incense from upon the altar.

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scripture is that burning incense makes atonement for the sin of the people. Why does burning incense make atonement in this case? Why doesn't Moshe make atonement in blood? To assure ourselves the word כפר here means atonement we should look elsewhere in the Torah. Take for example a comparison of the texts where is used in the same form elsewhere in the Tanach. Two texts which illustrate the use of כפר describing "atonement" is found in *Leviticus / Vayikra* 17:11 and its parallel in *Exodus / Shmot* 30:16.

Exodus / Shmot 30:16

וְלָקַחְתָּ אֶת־כֶּסֶף הַכְּפֻּרִים מֵאֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְנָתַתָּ אֹת וֹ עַל־עֲב ֹדַת אֹ הֶל מֹ ועֵד וְהָיָה לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְזִכָּר וֹן לִפְנֵי יְהנָה לְכַפֵּר על־נַכְּשׁ תִיכֵ ם: פ

Leviticus / Vavikra 17:11

כִּי נֶפֶשׁ הַבָּשֶׂר בַּדָּם הָוֹא וַאֲנִי נְתַתִּיו לָכֶם עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְכַפֵּר עַל־נַפְשׁ תֵיכֶם כִּ,י־הַדָּם הוֹא בַּנֵפָשׁ יִכָפָּ,ר:

Exodus / Shmot 30:16

'You shall take the atonement money from the sons of Israel and shall give it for the service of the tent of meeting, that it may be a memorial for the sons of Israel before the Lord, to make atonement for yourselves.' (NASB)

Leviticus / Vayikra 17:11

'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.' (NASB)

Clearly the same word is used here in these verses which refer to the sinner being forgiven because his sins are wiped clean by the blood. The use of Numbers / Bamidbar 17:11 and 12 clearly is used for making atonement, furthermore, in Numbers / Bamidbar 17:13 it says Aharon stood between the living and between the dead. This indicates that the dead were intermingled amongst the living. Apparently these men that died the previous day were not the only ones with a rebellious attitude towards Moshe, Aharon, and G-d.

Conclusion

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Think back a little and remember in Parashat Akharei Mot (see *Leviticus / Vayikra 16*) Moshe reminds us of the death of Aharon's sons to emphasize that HaShem's way of atonement was the only way sins could be removed. What an important concept to grasp here. From since the beginning of HaShem's creation the deceiver (HaSatan) has been tempting men to think they could go their own way, that man could determine his own destiny and create his own righteousness. In this week's Parashat Korach we find a group of people who were united by a man who thought the same way that righteousness is a product of one's own making. The Torah teaches us that there is only one way of atonement because there is only One G-d and His holiness must be satisfied in only one way through the sacrifice which was made by the appointed mediator, in this case it was Aharon and his children and Moshe. I feel this should drive home the thought about what our goal should be in our longing desire to draw closer to the Lord and knowledge of him. That is to strive hard to not be deceived by the intentions of our heart but remain faithful according to the Word of G-d.

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While reading through the scriptures we may come upon something that is unusual or difficult to understand. As a result it is easy to look elsewhere for answers to the difficult questions found in the Bible. Rather than seeking G-d through prayer and reading the scriptures a lot of times the first place we look to is what others have said about a particular portion of scripture. In both Christianity and Judaism there is a vast sea of commentaries to choose from. Below I have listed a few that are available today.

Table 1 List of Christian and Rabbinic commentaries.

Rabbinic Commentaries

Tanach and Commentaries Tanach

- Rashi on Chumash
- Ramban (Nachmanides) on Chumash
- Ohr HaChayim on Chumash
- Ba'al HaTurim on Chumash
- Targum Onkelos on Chumash

Talmud

- Mishnayot
- Tosefta
- Talmud Bavli
- Rashi on Talmud
- Tosafot
- Mesechtot Ketanot
- Talmud Yerushalmi

Kabbalah

- Zohar
- Tikunei Zohar

Midrash Halacha

- Mechilta
- Sifra
- Sifrei

Midrash Aggadah

- Midrash Rabbah on Chumash and Five Megillot
- Midrash Tanchuma (Warsaw Edition) on Chumash
- Midrash Tanchuma (Buber Edition) on Chumash

Christian Commentaries

- Word Biblical Commentary (WBC 59 Volume)
- The Expositor's Bible
- Sheffield/T & T Clark Bible Guides Collection (44 Vols.)
- Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary, Expanded Edition
- Socio-Rhetorical Commentary Series (8 Vols.)
- R. Kent Hughes' Preaching the Word Upgrade (12 Vols.)
- R. Kent Hughes' Preaching the Word Collection (19 Vols.)
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- Midrash Eicha
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As you can see there is a virtual ocean of materials out there to study and one could spend a lifetime researching these various commentaries. I don't think it is difficult to believe that one could get lost in the teachings of men. Take for example Judaism's heavy reliance upon the rabbinic sages and the Christian church believing tradition against what the bible says about the role of the Torah in our lives today. The question remains do we take the teachings of G-d which are found in the scriptures or the teachings of the classical texts which are listed above. Thousands of years ago were it any different than it is today? In the Cetuvei Shelachim (apostolic writings), this very thing occurred in Yeshua's day, the chief priests refused to believe upon G-d's chosen Messiah. Though Yeshua gave them signs of his Messiah ship such as the healing of the lepers; healing of leprosy was a miracle that only G-d could perform because leprosy is an incurable disease. After their healing Yeshua directed the men to perform the specified sacrifices according to the Torah of Moshe as a testimony unto the priests; yet in the midst of these miracles the priest remained in unbelief because of their own man made doctrines.

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Now I know what you may be thinking. Today there are so many beliefs, not only in Christianity, but also in Judaism. I don't see HaShem opening up the ground today like he did in the Torah. G-d has not caused me to die because of my beliefs, so I have to have it right. Well, do not mistake G-d's patience for His tolerance of false doctrine. Let's talk a little about the patience of HaShem.

The patience of HaShem

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You may ask yourself saying G-d is patient and will overlook some of these manmade doctrines that I accept. This isn't the age of the giving of the Torah so judgment doesn't come like it did to Korach and friends. Arguing from this point

of view is not quite correct in the sense that G-d is patient, and he demonstrates his grace in his patience in that by his patience we are lead to repentance. Take for example what it says in the book of Romans: Romans 2:4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? (NASB)

The record in *Bereshit /Genesis* records the wickedness of Lemach including the generations that followed him prior to Noah's flood. *Genesis / Bereshit 6:5* reports "the wickedness of man was great upon the earth." Yet from the time recorded of Lemach until the flood, G-d had been patient for 800 years. Consider Jeroboam's sin in 931 BCE, Jeroboam was an idolater and the kings that followed him walked in what the Tanach calls "the sins of Jeroboam." HaShem allowed the northern kingdom however to last over 200 years before causing the enemy to take Israel into exile. In G-d's written record, the Tanach, and later in the Cetuvei Shelachim (apostolic writings) we know for certain what God approves of and disapproves of because of the word of G-d itself. G-d commands us to conform to the unchanging standard of His word, the Bible. Surely the Sages of old had keen insights into the text which are often helpful, especially for obtaining the mindset of the times. But, when deciding upon what is correct and what is not correct we need to accept the inspired word of the Most High G-d found in the Bible as authoritative over the doctrines of men.

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Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד: Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi, "Yeshua" King Messiah forever and ever

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