



Parashat Korach

Our *parasha* opens with *Korach's machloket* against *Moshe*. *Rashi* writes, quoting *Chazal*, that *Korach* challenged *Moshe* by asking why a *tallit* made entirely of *techeilet* requires a *ptil techeilet* and why a house full of *sifrei kodesh* requires a *mezuzah*. There is no question that *Korach* was an intelligent individual. Clearly what stands behind these questions and what stands behind *Korach's machloket* is a worldview drastically different from that of *Moshe*. What exactly is the worldview that stands behind these questions?

The Torah tells us that *Datan* and *Aviram* joined *Korach* in his *machloket*. How did they come to join forces with *Korach*? *Rashi* explains that their *shevatim* camped next to each other – "*Oy la'rasha, oy lishcheino*." In other words, the *rasha* here is *Korach*, and the "neighbors" are *Datan* and *Aviram*. Yet in *Tehillim* 106, where *David HaMelech* recaps *B'nei Yisrael's* journey through the desert, we find very interestingly that in describing *Korach's machloket*, *David HaMelech* doesn't mention *Korach* at all! He mentions only *Datan* and *Aviram*, saying, "*Tiftach eretz vativla Datan, vatechas al adat Aviram*, The earth opened and swallowed up *Datan*, and covered the congregation of *Aviram*" (v. 17). Why does *David HaMelech* ignore the *rasha* himself, *Korach*, and focus only on the "neighbors"?

The *mishnah* in *Avot* (5:17) teaches: "Every *machloket* that is *l'sheim shamayim* is destined to survive; every *machloket* that is not *l'sheim shamayim* is not destined to survive. What is a *machloket l'sheim shamayim*? Like the *machloket* of *Hillel* and *Shammai*. What is a *machloket* not *l'sheim shamayim*? Like the *machloket* of *Korach* and his congregation." Our third and final question is that asked by many of the *meforshim* of that *mishnah*: How can you tell if a *machloket* is *l'sheim shamayim* or not? After all, everyone who starts a *machloket* is certain that what he's doing is *l'sheim shamayim*!

The answers to these questions enter us into the *sugya* of *machloket* in general. The first time we find *machloket* in the world is on the second day of Creation, on which *Hashem* divided between the upper waters and the lower waters. Therefore, *Gehinnom* was created on this day as well, teaching us that *Gehinnom* does not exist only in *shamayim*, but on Earth as well, brought here through *machloket*.

The next time we find *machloket* is on the sixth day of Creation. *Chazal* teach in *Bereishit Rabbah* that when *Hashem* wanted to create Man, some of the angels were in favor and some were opposed. *Chessed* and *Tzedakah* were in favor; *Emet* and *Shalom* were opposed, because Man would be full of *sheker* and *ketatah*, conflict. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* answered *Emet*, explaining that even though Man is full of *sheker*, in the end the truth would shine forth from the *sheker* with unique intensity. To *Shalom*, however, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* gave no answer, because peace is in the Heavens, not on Earth – "*Oseh shalom bimromav*." The nature of our world is to be full of dispute. How can we live in peace in a world whose nature is *ketatah*? The only way to do this is to connect with that which is above us.

In all of Creation, the Torah says, "Ki tov." *Ramban* explains that "ki tov" means "Hashem desired that it last forever." How can something that Hashem wants to last forever be referred to as just *tov*? It should be *metzuyan*, *nifla*, outstanding, amazing! *Tov* is like a B-! The answer is that *tov* is not a grade, but much more. *Tov* indicates *chibur*, a connection between two things. This is what *Shlomo HaMelech* means when he says, "Matza isha, matza tov, One who has found a wife has found good" (*Mishlei* 18:22)? One who has found a wife has found more than good – he has found the greatest thing one can find! Rather, *tov* indicates a natural and genuine connection between two things. One who has found a wife has found this connection. We find *tov* as a result of *chibur* again by the birth of *Moshe Rabbeinu*. *Amram* had divorced *Yocheved*, but remarried her at the behest of *Miriam*. As a result of this connection, a baby was born – *Moshe* – about whom it says, "Vateire oto ki toy hu, And she saw that he was good" (*Shemot* 2:2).

Korach's mistake was thinking that *yahadut* is about what a person thinks and feels is right, when the truth is that *yahadut* is, first and foremost, what a person must do. When a person does what he must, afterwards he feels that what he did was the right thing. This is essentially what stands behind *Korach's* claim – if the *tallit* is entirely of *techeilet*, there is no need for an additional *ptil techeilet*, because the *techeilet* represents the greater picture, what I feel, whereas the *lavan* represents the details, what I must do. *Korach* saw only the greater picture, the *techeilet*, without seeing the details. This is the first sign that a *machloket* is not *l'sheim shamayim*. One who sees the greater picture, oblivious to the details, does only what he feels, not what he needs to do. The trick is to be able to integrate the details into the greater picture. *Korach* lacked the ability to find the *chibur* between the two, and therefore his *machloket* was not *tov*. A *machloket* that is not *tov*, that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* does not desire to last forever, will not survive, as the *mishnah* in *Avot* says.

The *gemara* in *Yevamot* says that even though *Beit Hillel* and *Beit Shammai* argued, they still married between each other, fulfilling the *passuk*, "V'ha'emet v'hashalom ehavu, Love truth and peace" (*Zechariah* 8:18). This *passuk* is perplexing, however, because *Emet* and *Shalom* seem to contradict each other – there is only one truth, whereas peace indicates compromise, even at the expense of truth. Rather, *Shalom* – *shleimut* – is the greater picture, the *techeilet*, while *Emet* is the details. Unlike *Korach*, *Hillel* and *Shammai* were able to combine the greater picture and the details without any contradiction or tension. They were able to find the *chibur*, and therefore their *machloket* was *tov*, and destined to survive.

The next sign that a *machloket* is not *l'sheim shamayim* is involving outside parties, looking for support from one's neighbors. Had *Korach* intended his *machloket* against *Moshe* for the sake of Heaven, he would have discussed his issues one-on-one with *Moshe*, not gone around trying to spark a rebellion. This is the reason *David HaMelech* emphasizes the neighbors in *Tehillim*, to demonstrate that *Korach's* *machloket* was not *l'sheim shamayim*.

Chazal in *Midrash Rabbah* say that all the blessings and kindnesses *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* gives to *Am Yisrael*, he seals with *Shalom*. *Keriat Shema* concludes with the *bracha* of "HaPoreis Shalom." *Birkat kohanim* concludes with *Shalom*. The *midrash* brings many more examples. *Sefer HaMiddot* writes: "Bakesh shalom v'rodfeihu, Seek out peace and chase after it' – seek it with your friends, chase after it with others. Don't ever give up, rather chase after it until you find it." The period in which we find ourselves right now, between *Kabbalat HaTorah* and *17 Tammuz*, is a period in our past during which we were *k'ish echad b'leiv echad* around *Har Sinai*, until the *Cheit HaEigel*. If we make an effort to

create peace with all who surround us, near and far, we will merit the fulfillment of the words of *Yeshayahu HaNavi*, speaking about *Melech HaMashiach*, "*Mah navu al heharim raglei mevaser, mashmia shalom, mevaser tov*, How beautiful upon the mountains the feet of the messenger, the announcer of peace and bearer of good tidings" (52:7).

Shabbat Shalom!

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