

**Parashat Korach (Korah/bald)**  
**July 1, 2006/5 Tamuz 5766**

Torah: Num. 16:1-18:32  
Haftarah: I Sam. 11:14-12:22  
Brit Chadasha: Rom. 13:1-7 (Lederer)  
Acts 5:1-11 (Feinberg)

**Question Authority**

This is a *parashat* that is primarily about leadership and how people are to relate to their leaders. As a result, I have entitled my *Drash*, my study, "Question Authority."

Moses and Aaron were chosen emissaries of G-d to lead His people, Israel. Korach and some of those in his circle took exception to this. They confronted Moses and Aaron and questioned their leadership. Their argument was that Israel was G-d's Chosen people, and they were all Holy – Moses and Aaron were the same as everyone; no more Holy than anyone else. They expected an explanation, but that is not what they got.

**Num. 16:28** Then Moses said, "This is how you will know that the L-RD has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea: <sup>29</sup> If these men die a natural death and experience only what usually happens to men, then the L-RD has not sent me. <sup>30</sup> But if the L-RD brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have treated the L-RD with contempt."

**16:31** As soon as he finished saying all this, the ground under them split apart <sup>32</sup> and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, with their households and all Korah's men and all their possessions. (NIV)

Korach and his men questioned the leadership G-d placed above them, and they got gulped. Notice they never did get an explanation of why Moses and Aaron were their leaders, but simply proof that they were their leaders. The reason did not matter. G-d placed Moses and Aaron in a leadership position. That was it. That should have been explanation enough.

The Torah portion continues in chapter 17 with yet another physical sign of Aaron's leadership, in this case. Various men in the camp put their staffs in a specified area, and Aaron's started to bud – that was the sign that G-d said would show who the leader was. Again, there was no talk of why Aaron's staff budded – something started actually blooming on it -- when the others didn't – only the sign given.

Chapter 18 talks about the specific duties of Priests and Levites. 18:25-29 talks about tithing – this is the verse where we get the figure of 10% and are commanded to give this offering towards the maintenance of the temple, and in modern days to our congregation of fellowship.

The Haftarah portion tied very closely in with the Torah portion. Samuel is reminding people of how G-d appointed Moses and Aaron to lead. He reminds them of the consequences of disobedience.

**I Sam.12:14** If you fear the L-RD and serve and obey him and do not rebel against his commands, and if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the L-RD your God--good! <sup>15</sup> But if you do not obey the L-RD, and if you rebel against his commands, his hand will be against you, as it was against your fathers. (NIV)

Samuel ties a person obeying G-d with obeying the king over that person. And the king, as the leader, of course also has to submit to G-d.

In the Lederer selection for the Brit Chadesha, the Apostle Paul also talks about leadership. According to Paul, the governing authorities are placed in their positions by G-d, and as a result, the people have a duty to do what is expected of them as responsible citizens. He compares rebellion against authority as a rebellion against G-d, and responsibility towards one's civic duties.

**Rom. 13:7** Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. (NIV)

I had a problem with Romans 13. Upon reflection, I could only come to the conclusion that certain parts of Paul's writings were geared to specific peoples under specific contexts. Moses and Aaron were appointed by G-d. They knew it; the people knew it. When we think of authority in a modern context, it can be applied to government officials. Government leaders were not appointed by G-d. They were elected by people. People who are not perfect. People who question authority are often branded as radicals, as rebels, but rebelling against authority – depending on how you define “rebellion” does not necessarily have to mean rebelling against G-d.

I seem to recall quite a few Christians being very upset over the former federal government's stance on same-sex marriage. They felt re-defining the definition of marriage was immoral and unjust. There were letter writing campaigns and protests. For me, and involving many of my friends, we take issue with the role of Canada's military presence in foreign countries. We feel it is immoral and unjust. There are letter writing campaigns and protests. Whether one agrees or disagrees with the issues I have just mentioned is not the point. The bottom line

is this: to speak up for what one believes in a peaceful, productive manner, is not rebellion. It is as much a part of being a responsible citizen as paying taxes. No laws are being broken. No one is getting hurt. Trying to influence the direction of public policy is not rebellion. It is an expression. It is not going to crumble the order of things to question authority. If leadership has merit, it can stand the test of inquiry. Moses and Aaron sure did.

In fact, I would be willing to go so far as to say that we have an obligation to speak up if we find something going on in society that goes against our consciences as Believers. If we define "rebellion" as always toeing the party line without question, we have a serious problem when that authority is acting in a way contrary to G-d, with potentially dangerous consequences. Using Paul's writings as the basis for what constitutes rebelling against G-d through rebelling against the authorities, the people of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising were rebels. The righteous Gentiles who hid Jews during the Holocaust, were rebels. And Praise the L-rd they were.

And now let's look at how submitting to leadership related to the life of Yeshua. Yeshua submitted to Godly authority before worldly ones. He did many things that irked both the religious and political leaders of His day. He challenged the Rabbis when they took him to task for His actions, and when the governing authority asked him to cool it, He wouldn't. The result? We all know how this story ends (or, begins, because He will come again).

In our congregations of fellowship, we are to respect our Pastors, our Elders, and even our friendly neighbourhood Deacon. Otherwise, the Body cannot function as a whole if the people are in rebellion against the leadership. This does not mean there will never be friction – in fact, some friction can be a positive thing. Leadership needs accountability as much as anyone else in a congregation. But it has to be dealt with in a positive and productive manner. The Matthew 18 principles of how to approach conflict resolution definitely apply. As well, because G-d's word is Eternal, we still have an obligation to tithe, as outlined in Numbers 18:25-29, because this is how the work of the L-rd is supported.

As a side note, G-d has different roles for each of us. For some of us, that's leadership. It doesn't necessarily mean they are better, or more holy, but that this is a given role for a purpose or season. Not everyone is gifted or intended to be a leader. Accepting our gifts and roles is important. Korach and his cohorts did not understand this.

What it all comes down to, as it usually does, is obedience towards G-d. G-d appointed Moses and Aaron as leaders, and when that was questioned, G-d got angry and there were consequences. G-d has many things He wishes us to follow – whether we do or not is our choice, and the results of our actions come about depending upon our choosing to follow His word.

Let's pray.