

# NOT WHO DOES IT, BUT THAT IT GETS DONE

*by Rabbi Dovid Green*

This week's parsha begins with the dissention of Korach, a cousin of Moshe Rabbainu. He challenged Moshe's authority to appoint Aharon, his brother, as Kohein Gadol, or High Priest. Korach, Doson, Avirom, and 250 men, mostly from the tribe of Reuven, teamed up against Moshe. Rashi, (the medieval French Commentator) writes that Korach was disgruntled about the appointment of his younger cousin as Prince over his family, while he felt the position was coming to him.

The Sages of the Talmud comment about Korach and his colleagues as follows. "Any dispute which is for the sake of heaven will endure, and any dispute which is not for the sake of heaven will not endure. What is a dispute which is for the sake of heaven? This is the dispute between Hillel and Shammai. (And) What is the dispute which is not for the sake of heaven? This is the dispute between Korach and his followers" (Chapters of the Fathers). There are a few questions about this, as follows.

- A. What is a dispute which is for the sake of heaven?
- B. Why is it considered positive for a dispute to endure?
- C. Why does the statement say that the dispute was between Korach and his followers? Wasn't it between Korach and Moshe?

A dispute for the sake of heaven is one which is borne out of similar intentions to ascertain the truth. The opponents are, in reality, on the same team. Hillel and Shammai may have had differing perspectives about how to understand the application of a Torah law, but they both wanted to observe the law as G-d intended them to.

The ability for the dispute to "endure" is that the **goal** of the opponents endures, not the dispute, because the underlying intentions are "for the sake of heaven," and not for selfish ends.

Korach's dispute was not between Korach and Moshe. Korach and Moshe were not opponents. Korach's intentions were not the same as Moshe's. They were motivated by his perceived loss of dignity at the appointment of his younger cousin, not that G-d be served according to His will. Since Korach and his followers were all motivated by selfish ends, none of them were really on the same team. Each one teamed up with the other so that he could attain his own selfish goal. None of them were acting on behalf of the bigger picture. This is why the Sages say that the dispute was between Korach and his followers.

There is a proof that Korach and his followers' intentions were selfish. The test they were willing to undergo to choose a new High Priest was that each one would bring a sacrifice of "Ketores," a blend of particular spices. Each one knew that only one man's sacrifice would be accepted, and only he would live through the test. Still they were willing to go through with it.

Before we enter into disagreements with others we would benefit by remembering the mistake of Korach and his followers. We might ask ourselves together with an objective third party the following questions. Why do I care about this? Is it for the sake of truth, or for my own concerns? What might I lose if I get involved? What might the world gain? Will it really matter in the long run if I get my way?

In conclusion, there is a passage in the morning liturgy. It describes the way the ministering angels sanctify G-d each day. "And they encourage each other to sanctify their Creator etc. The Eitz Yosef, one of the authoritative commentators of the liturgy, writes as follows. "They encourage each other to sanctify G-d. Their focus is not on **who** does the job; rather their main concern is that the job be done." The ministering angels are team players. Let us take their example in our lives, and be better for it.

Good Shabbos.

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