

ENDURING DISPUTES

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Korach

Enduring Disputes

The special maftir (Bemidbar 28:9-15) which is read because this Shabbat is also rosh chodesh begins with a description of the korban mussaf brought in honor of Shabbat, and states (verse 10), "The olah-offering of each Shabbat on its own Shabbat, in addition to the continual olah-offering and its libation." This verse seems to be entirely superfluous. What is it teaching?

R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (1865-1935; Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael) explains: The daily korban tamid (referred to in the above verse as the "continual olah-offering") has a special holiness because it is brought every day, so much so that it can even be brought on Shabbat. This verse teaches, however, that the korban tamid, when it is brought on Shabbat, does not merely have the holiness of Shabbat layered on top of its usual holiness. Its holiness on Shabbat is not the holiness of an everyday offering that is brought on Shabbat also; rather, it is the holiness of a Shabbat offering. Similarly, the joy represented by the wine libation is not merely the joy of the daily wine offering enhanced by the fact that it is Shabbat; rather, it is the joy of a Shabbat wine libation. (Olat Re'iyah vol. 2, p.49)

"Korach son of Yitzhar son of Kehat son of Levi separated himself . . ." (16:1)

We learn in Pirkei Avot (ch.5): "Any dispute that is for the sake of Heaven will endure, but one that is not for the sake of Heaven will not endure. What dispute was for the sake of Heaven? The dispute between [the Sages] Hillel and Shammai. What dispute was not for the sake of Heaven? The dispute of Korach and his congregation."

Several points about this mishnah require explanation. First, why does the mishnah refer to the dispute of "Korach and his congregation" rather than to the dispute of "Korach and Moshe" (paralleling the dispute of "Hillel and Shammai")? Second, the Mishnah implies that it is good if a dispute endures, for it says that a dispute that is for the sake of Heaven will endure, while a dispute

that is not for the sake of Heaven will not endure. Why is it desirable for a dispute to endure?

R' Eliyahu z"l (1720-1797; the Vilna Gaon) is quoted as answering these questions as follows: When a group gathers together to instigate a fight that is not for the sake of Heaven, it is inevitable that they will fight amongst themselves. Therefore, Korach's dispute with Moshe is called the dispute of "Korach and his congregation," i.e., Korach and his congregation fought amongst themselves.

As for the second question: When someone instigates a fight that is not for the sake of Heaven, it is inevitable that the original basis for the fight will be forgotten. This is what the mishnah means when it says that a dispute that is not for the sake of Heaven will not endure. Rather, it will quickly degenerate into a different dispute. On the other hand, a dispute that is for the sake of Heaven will endure, i.e., it will stay focused on the original point of contention. (Quoted in Ha'maor Ha'gadol)

R' Aryeh Leib Zunz z"l (Poland; 1768-1833) offers another explanation for the above mishnah:

Our Sages teach that the words we utter when we study Torah form angels and come before Hashem. When they stand before Him, Hashem Himself repeats the words represented by these angels. It follows that when two students of Torah have an argument about the correct understanding of the material and their arguments are for the sake of Heaven, the words of both of them rise to Heaven and are repeated by Hashem. In this way, their words endure. This is not true about a dispute that is not for the sake of Heaven; those words do not endure. (Kometz Ha'minchah)

"If Hashem will create a phenomenon, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them and all that is theirs, and they will descend alive to the pit--then you shall know that these men have provoked Hashem'." . . . The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households, and all the people who were with Korach, and the entire wealth." (16:30, 32)

We read in Tehilim (111:1-2), "I shall thank Hashem wholeheartedly in the counsel of the upright and the congregation! Great are the deeds of Hashem, accessible to all their wants." R' Shmuel Yehuda Katzenellenbogen z"l (1521-1597; Italy) writes: "'Their' wants" refers to "the upright and the congregation," meaning that, as great and awesome as Hashem's creations are, they bend to the wishes of righteous people such as Moshe Rabbeinu, as illustrated by our verses. Even when the tzaddik decrees on his own, without any prior consultation with Hashem, nature complies, as was the case here.

R' Katzenellenbogen writes further: We read (Shmot 14:27), "Moshe stretched out his hand over the sea, and toward morning the water went back to eitano / its power . . ." The midrash makes a play on the similar Hebrew letters in the words "eitano / its power" and "tena'o / its condition," and comments: "Hashem made a condition with the sea at the time of creation that it would split."

Commentaries ask: Why is this condition alluded to in the verse that speaks of the *conclusion* of the Splitting of the Sea rather than in the verse which speaks of the *beginning* of that event? R' Katzenellenbogen explains: The condition referred to here is not that the sea would split for Moshe. Rather, the midrash means that when the sea returned to its natural state, it returned as well to having the latent characteristic of splitting any time a tzaddik decreed, such as when Yehoshua bin Nun split the Jordan River 40 years later, or when the Talmudic sage Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair did the same thing 1,500 years after that. (Derashot Mahari Mintz No. 8)

"Hashem said to Aharon, 'In their Land you shall have no heritage, and a share shall you not have among them; I am your share and your heritage among Bnei Yisrael.'" (18:20)

R' Moshe Sofer z"l (the Chatam Sofer; Hungary; died 1840) comments: It is well known that it is difficult to keep one's thoughts attached to Hashem at the same time that one is actively involved with people. For one who wants to cleave to Hashem, hitbodedut / solitude is the prescription.

Aharon Hakohen, however, was able to do both simultaneously. He was always involved with people--always trying to resolve conflicts and strengthen marriages. Even so, he never left his lofty and holy position. This is what the verse means when it says, "I [Hashem] am your share and your heritage [even] *among* Bnei Yisrael." (Torat Moshe)

Letters from Our Sages

This letter was written by R' Aharon Lewin z"l Hy"d (born 1879; killed in the Holocaust, 6 Tamuz 5401 / 1941). R' Lewin was rabbi of Rzeszow (Reisha), Poland and a member of the Polish Senate. This letter casts light on how R' Lewin performed his parliamentary duties.

B"H, Reisha, Sunday, 21 Cheshvan 5692 [1931].

Last week, I delivered a speech in the parliament in Warsaw, and I spoke with a pained heart of the troubles which have found us, for we are drowning. The economic crisis which exists presently in our country has struck a brutal blow to our entire nation and has claimed untold numbers of casualties. May the Omnipresent One have mercy on us and say to our troubles, "Enough!" Before I ascended to the podium, I reviewed divrei Torah in my head to awaken G-d's mercy upon me and my constituents. Among other thoughts which flashed through my mind like bolts of lightning, I also thought about what I had seen some time ago in the sefer Kapot Temarim by R' Moshe ben Chaviv, who made a novel observation that the one who blows the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is not an agent

of the congregation, but rather of the Merciful One. We find a similar concept regarding the kohanim in the Temple; they were agents of G-d, not our agents. [One halachic implication of this question is whether a particular kohen may offer a person's sacrifice if that person previously vowed not to derive any benefit from that kohen.] Of course, that was neither the time nor the place to think elaborate thoughts about the subject, and the thought passed out of my mind as quickly as it had entered it. However, when I returned home for Shabbat Kodesh, I said, "Since I had this thought, it is a sign that I am meant to delve into it a bit." Therefore, I will record some observations that I had, but I must be brief, as I must return to the parliament in Warsaw. [R' Lewin then discusses the issue for several pages.] (She'eilot U'teshuvot Avnei Cheifetz 35)

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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