

PARSHAT KORACH  
NUMBERS 16:1-18:32  
HAFTARAH I SAMUEL 11:14-12:22  
03 TAMMUZ 5783/22 JUNE 2023

MACHLOKET – SCHISM



*The Lovers – Rene Magritte*

As before, I am deeply indebted to Aviva Zornberg's *Bewilderments*

1. Moses appealed to G-d, saying, "The Israelites would not listen to me; how then should Pharaoh listen to me, me of uncircumcised lips?" Exodus 6:12
2. [Korach and his company] combined against Moses and Aaron and said to them, "You have gone too far! For all the community are holy, all of them, and G-d is in their midst. Why then do you raise yourselves above G-d's congregation?" When Moses heard this, he fell on his face. Then he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, "Come morning, G-d will make known who is His, and who is holy." Numbers 16:3-5.
3. Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab; but they said, "We will not come! Is it not enough that you brought us from a land flowing with milk and honey to have us die in the wilderness, that you would also lord it over us? You have not brought us to a land flowing with milk and honey and given us possession of fields and vineyards, so should you gouge out the eyes of those involved? We will not come!" Moses was very angry.... Numbers 16:12-15.

4. [Moses said] “But if G-d will create a new thing, so that the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, you shall know that these men have spurned G-d.” Numbers 16:30
5. "Now Moses was very angry” He was very *anguished*. Why? When a man argues with his companion and reasons with him; when he answers him, he has peace of mind; but if he does not answer him, then this involves anguish. Bamidbar Rabbah 18:10.
6. *Machloket*: dispute or argument (ideally “for the sake of heaven”) but also SCHISM.
7. *Ba’alei Machloket*: (“masters of dispute”): Schismatics, who are *kulo din*, strictly legal, always right, not open to discussion. To the Rabbis both Korach and the entire generation of the Second Temple, were *Ba’alei Machloket*.
8. “[Korach’s] proper place is Gehinnom, the underworld, where all language is silenced.” Zornberg p.182 based on R. Jacob Loew ben Bezalel of Prague (*Gur Aryeh* on Numbers 16:27).



*The Mouth of the Earth -- Yoram Ranaan*