

PARSHAT KORACH
3 TAMUZ 5780/25 JUNE 2020



The Ground Opens to Swallow Korach and His Followers
Painting by Yoram Raanan

CONTROVERSY THAT CREATES RATHER THAN CONSUMES

1. “The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up with their households...” (Numbers 16:32)
2. Any controversy that is for the sake of heaven will result in abiding value. But any controversy that is not for the sake of heaven will not have abiding value. Which controversy was for the sake of heaven? The controversy between Hillel and Shammai. And which controversy was not for the sake of heaven? The controversy of Korach and his company. (Avot 5:17)
3. The Sages of Israel said regarding one who has not perfected matters of knowledge: “With the increase in the pupils of Shammai and Hillel who had not sufficiently ministered to sages, controversy increased” (Sotah 47b). Their words teach us that had the pupils completed their studies there would have been no controversies or disagreements between them. (Sa’adya Gaon)
4. Both of them [Hillel and Shammai] are the words of the living God, but the law is in accordance with Bet Hillel. Now if both of them are the words of the living God, why did Bet Hillel merit that the law be affixed in accordance with them? Because they were kind and humble and taught their words and the words of Bet Shammai, and even more, they presented the words of Bet Shammai before their own. (Eruvin 13b)
5. *Machloket* – term for argument in Talmud
חלק - to divide, to share

6. In matters of beliefs and opinions that are based on abstract and spiritual ideas....the entire controversy, which oftentimes seems to be burning all the way to heaven, is nothing but a quarrel of words, because the one does not understand the language of the other. (Rav Kook)
7. This is the essence of the tikkun of creation, as it is stated: “Who make peace and creates all things”....For by way of the speech of holiness...all the fallen worlds are repaired and renewed, and it is regarded as if God created them anew. (Rabbi Nachman of Breslov)
8. “The words of one and the words of the other are words of the living God” (Eruvin 13b). This sentence should be read as conditional: “*If* there are words of one *and* words of the other, *then* they are words of the living God, and, as a result, are living words.” (Marc-Alain Ouaknin, *The Burnt Book*)
9. Know that dispute is an aspect of the creation of the world....For had all the Torah scholars been in agreement, there would have been no room for the creation of the world...It was only by way of the dispute between them that there was formed between them an aspect of the empty space.... (Rabbi Nachman)
10. Anyone who pursues glory does not attain God’s glory, but the glory of kings, of which it is said: “But the glory of kings is an investigated matter” (Proverbs 25:2)....However, the person who flees from glory – minimizing his own glory while maximizing the glory of God – attains God’s glory. Of him it is said: “The glory of God is a concealed matter” (Proverbs 25:2). (Rabbi Nachman of Breslov)
11. “...Moses fell on his face.” (Numbers 16:4)
12. Demagoguery is a discourse that shifts the public argumentation from policy issues to questions of motive and identity....Democratic deliberation requires remaining in a place of disagreement, being willing to reconsider one’s own in-group commitments, admitting error, and holding all parties to the same rules.” (Trish Roberts-Miller, “Media, Rhetoric, and the Demagoguery of the Elite”)
13. “In a war between two Torah sages, they did not move from there until they became lovers (Kiddushin 30b).” The love the Sages promise is not the resolution of the dispute, but rather the ability to contain both sides of the uncertainty....Only one who has experienced the collapse of the ideological structure he had fashioned for himself, can look upon the structures of others with a tolerant eye and locate within them the kernels of truth. (Rav Itamar Eldar, “Controversy for the Sake of Heaven”)