

PARSHAT KORACH
30 SIVAN 5781/10 JUNE 2021



In England
Painting by Berthe Morisot

VITAL RUPTURES

1. The earth opened its mouth (*peehah*) and swallowed them up with their households, all of Korach's people. (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. *Machloket* – term for argument in Talmud
חלק - to divide, to share
4. 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....(Rebbe Nachman)

5. In the word *machloket* we can read *M-hlk-t*, which means that the duality [difference of opinion] refuses to give the word “death” (met) the chance to constitute itself. (Marc-Alain Ouaknin, *The Burnt Book*)
6. God can reveal Himself to human beings only because of this human ability to allow the shock of otherness, in the encounter with another human being. The face of the other creates a ‘traumatic upheaval in experience,’ which ruptures the complacencies of one’s own prejudices....This is the vital rupture that makes it possible to experience revelation or inspiration. (Avivah Zornberg, *Bewilderments*)
7. “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”)
8. With regard to the verse: “And the sons of Korah did not die” (Numbers 26:11), it is taught in a *baraita* that in the name of our teacher, the Sages said: A place was fortified for them in Gehenna and they sat upon it and recited songs of praise. Rabba bar bar Hana said: One time I was walking on the path, and a certain Arab said to me: Come and I will show you those from the assembly of Korah who were swallowed. I went and I saw two fissures in the ground from which smoke was emerging. That Arab took a woolen fleece and dampened it with water and placed it on the tip of his spear and passed it over the fissures there. The fleece was singed, indicating the level of heat there. He said to me: Listen; what do you hear? And I heard that this is what they were saying: Moses and his Torah are truth, and they, referring to themselves, are liars. (Sanhedrin 110a)
9. Such is the fate of those who are self-confident,
 the end of those pleased with their own talk.
 Sheeplike they head for Sheol,
 with death as their shepherd.
 (Psalm 49:14-15, a psalm of the sons of Korach)