



## Mordekhi's Drash for Shabbat June 28, 2008 / Sivan 25, 5768

### Parashah #38

Torah: *Korach* (Korah), *B'Midbar* (Numbers) 16.1-18.32

Haftorah: *Sh'mu'el Alef* (1 Samuel) 11.14-12.22

Suggested Messianic Writings: Acts 5.1-11

Shalom,

The Hebrew name of קרח *Korach* (pr: koh-rakh), Korah in English, comes from the root word, קרח *kah-rahk*, which means, "to make bald." We would tend to think of the normal English translation of having no hair, but Webster also lists two more definitions for *bald*: "Not having the usual or natural covering;" and "Undisguised, outright." I believe that both definitions could apply to Korach, for they both state his position in the camp of Israel. He lost the spiritual covering of Moshe as his leader, and his disdain or jealousy of Moshe was undisguised.

We saw a few chapters ago (B'Midbar/Numbers 12) where Moshe's two older siblings – Aharon and Miryam – challenged Moshe's authority. HaShem then announced to the two that Moshe was His choice, the only one to whom He speaks face to face. The consequence was an outbreak of *tzara'at* on Miryam, for which she was quickly healed but had to spend a week outside the camp because of her uncleanness. It was at this point that Aharon "saw the light," for when he realized that Miryam had been stricken for what they had said, he cried out *to Moshe* for forgiveness.

Now this short time later, the Levite Korach gathers a rather large crew of 250 men around him and comes to challenge the authority of Moshe. It had to have been so obvious by this time that Moshe's authority was ordained by HaShem, but all too often human desire tends to overlook the obviousness of HaShem. How often do we see leadership questioned in our own day, leadership that has been established by HaShem? Granted, leadership is human, but HaShem works with leadership, and if the leadership is pliable, HaShem forms them into what He wants them to be; if not, HaShem will remove them from leadership. People usually don't have the grace and/or patience to wait for HaShem to work, and generally get involved first with *lashon hara* (gossip, evil speech), then gather a group around them and attack the leader.

The thing about Korach is that he did not gather the "rabble" that had followed Israel out of Egypt, but he gathered 250 men of Israel, "leaders of the community, key members of the council, men of reputation." Korach had a silver tongue, and with it he convinced righteous men to do evil. The tongue has a great power, as Chofetz Chaim noted: "One who speaks lashon hara destroys three people: the subject of his evil words, his listener, and himself." When one speaks against HaShem-established leadership, the punishment will indeed come at some point or other from HaShem Himself. The later Jewish scholars got this figured out, for Pirkei Avot 1.11 states, "Scholars, be cautious with your words, for you may incur the penalty of exile and be banished to a place of evil waters. The disciples who follow you there may drink and die, and consequently, the Name of Heaven will be desecrated." This is from the wisdom of man's writings; the wisdom found in the *Messianic Writings* states something very similar, from Ya'akov (Jacob/James) 3.1 & 18, "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, since you know that we will be judged more severely... And peacemakers who sow seed in peace raise a harvest of righteousness." Avoid following a silver tongue disguised as an angel of light, it will eventually get you into trouble.

Korach believed that the entire nation of Israel should be placed on an equal footing with Moshe and Aharon, incorrectly interpreting *Sh'mot* (Exodus) 19.5, when HaShem had told Moshe to tell Israel, "You will be a kingdom of Cohanim for Me..." In other words, if all of the people are holy, how can Moshe and Aharon exalt themselves to leadership? Where Korach missed the boat was in not understanding that Moshe had been exalted to his position by HaShem; Moshe did not exalt himself – in fact, he was most reluctant to accept the position. And for Korach, it was not enough that he had been separated as a part of the tribe of Levi to serve in the Tabernacle – he wanted more for himself than was allotted to him by HaShem. Sadly, that's a *not unusual* human attribute.

Those familiar with the passage know that this group of leaders incurred a greater penalty – the earth opened up and swallowed them alive. Moshe asked HaShem to show that the punishment was truly from Him and not a freak natural disaster – He asked Him to ברא *bara*, create, a new thing – the same word used in *B'reshet* (Genesis) 1.1. This Hebrew verb is only ever used with HaShem as its subject, and signifies two

things: 1) a divine intervention through natural means, and 2) a special creation out of nothing – this is clearly from the hand of HaShem only.

Later on, in B'midbar chapter 26 when Moshe calls for a census of Israel, we are told in verse 11 as sort of a footnote that the sons of Korach did not die at this rebellion. Rashi wrote a large article explaining this, as our current parashah indicates that the entire households of these leaders perished. Rashi believes that these sons either repented before or right as the ground opened up, and that a large ledge was elevated that sustained them. However it worked out, we do hear from the repentant sons of Korach later on, if not the direct sons, then later down the line of generations, for *Divrei-Hayamim Alef* (1 Chronicles) 6.33(18)-34(19) reveals that the prophet *Sh'mu'el* (Samuel), who in his day was as great a leader of Israel as Moshe and Aharon, was a descendant of Korach. Not only that, but *Heman* (*hey-mahn*; the name means "faithful") the singer, noted many times in both books of the Chronicles as serving under King David in the Temple, was a grandson of Sh'mu'el. 1 Chronicles 25.5 calls Heman "the king's seer in matters pertaining to God." Psalm 88 is attributed to Heman. Heman had 14 sons and 3 daughters; eleven Psalms are attributed to the "Sons of Korach," this could be Heman and family. The sons of Korach would write lines such as found in Psalm 45.2(1), "My heart is stirred by a noble theme; I address my verses to the king; my *tongue* is the pen of an expert scribe" [emphasis added]; a vast turn-around (*teshuvah*) from the tongue of Korach. It is also noted, in 2 Chronicles 29, that Levitical descendants of Heman helped in the days of Hezekiah with the cleanup of the Temple.

What can we learn from Korach and his sons? The plan of HaShem – submission to His hand of authority and quick repentance can bless not only those around you, but can bring blessings through future generations to follow you. To challenge HaShem? Hebrews 12.29 reminds us of the words found in *D'varim* (Deuteronomy) 4.24, "ADONAI your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God." *Yeshu'ahu* (Isaiah) wrote this (33.14b-16): "Who of us can live with the devouring fire? Who of us can live with eternal burning? He whose life is right and whose speech is straight, he who scorns getting rich by extortion, he who shakes his hands free of bribes, stops his ears against talk of bloodshed and shuts his eyes against looking at evil. Such a person will live on the heights, his refuge a fortress among the cliffs, his food and water in steady supply. Your eyes will see the king in his beauty, they will gaze on a land stretching into the distance." That gives a different slant to the trite statement that "the God of the Old Testament is mean, Jesus is cool and loving." We must understand the Yeshua is the Righteous Judge, the same yesterday, today and forever. In *Mattiyahu* (Matthew) 3.12, Yokhanan the Jewish Immerser says this of Yeshua: "He has with him his winnowing fork; and he will clear out his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn but burning up the straw with unquenchable fire!" Yeshua Himself, speaking of coming judgment, said, "I have come to set fire to the earth! And how I wish it were already kindled!" But if we choose to stand with Him, "He will neither fail you nor abandon you" (*D'varim* 3.6).

It's our choice. We all stumble at times, but should we not prefer to be as the man who cried out to Yeshua, "I do believe – help my unbelief" (Mark 9.24).

שְׁאַלוּ שְׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַיִם – *Sha'alu shalom Yerushalayim* – Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!

B'rakhot v'todah rabbah  
(Blessings & thank you very much)

## Mordekhi

This Yeshua, who has been taken away from you into heaven, will come back to you in just the same way as you saw him go into heaven.  
(Acts 1.11 CJB)