



Yeshivat Ma'alot

Parashat Korach

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ישיבת מעלות

פרשת קרח

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True Completion

Chazal condemn Korach for challenging Moshe Rabbeinu at the beginning of this week's parasha. In their eyes *machloket*, or disagreement, is something that must be avoided. However, we also see that Chazal look at *machloket* as a positive thing. First of all, the main bulk of the Torah sheba'al peh is based on disagreements and differing opinions that Chazal had. On the disagreements between Shammai and Hillel it is said that both opinions are according to the word of Hashem¹.

How could the arguments within Chazal be seen as a reflection of divinity and holiness? Even more puzzling is the fact that in some cases if there is no disagreement, then this is considered a negative phenomenon. The Gemara² says in the name of Rav Kahana that if a court unanimously finds someone guilty, he is not punished. Why is there a need for *machloket*? Isn't total agreement better than controversy?

The Yerushalmi³ says as follows: "Rav Yanai said that if the Torah had been given as a finished product, it could not have continued to exist. Moshe asked Hashem to show him what was the halacha. Hashem responded that halacha is decided upon by the majority of the Beit Din so that the Torah can be explained in 49 ways to make pure and 49 to make impure." The majority rule makes it possible for the Torah to be explained in many different ways.

The Torah was not given as a finished product. In other words, there is not an absolutely final decision in every case which determines how one should act. The function of Chazal is not to attempt to reach the Divine truth which is hidden from us, but to decide themselves on the final ruling based on the majority opinion. This process is not just *bedieved*, after the fact, just because we do not know what to do, but *lechatchila*, the way we are supposed to act in the first instance. Thus, the Torah can be interpreted in many directions.

Why is this good, to interpret the Torah in opposite ways? Wouldn't it be better if the Torah was an absolute, clear Truth?

¹ Eruvin 13b

² Sanhedrin 17a

³ Sanhedrin, Perek 4, Halacha 2

Rav Kook zt"l⁴ explains this idea as follows:

“Rabbi Elazar said that Torah scholars increase peace in the world, as it is written that all your *banaich* are students of G-d, and great is the peace of the *banaich*. *Banaich* should not be understood only as “your sons” but also as “your builders”. There are those that mistakenly think that world peace will only be achieved by a unity of style and opinion. They believe that the disagreements of the sages cause the opposite of peace. This is not true. True peace can only come through the multiplicity of peace, only after seeing all the different sides of an issue and all of the opinions, and after understanding that each opinion has some of the truth in it. Even apparently opposite opinions can together reveal the genuine truth, and only through the seeming conflicts can the light of truth and justice shine. Only by examining the different sides of the issue can peace be increased”.

Peace is not composed of many elements which are all the same, but is formed by elements which are all different. The truth of the light of the world can only be built with different points of view, all of which are the words of the living G-d, with different kinds of service and direction and education, each of which has its own place. Not one talent or skill should be lost, but rather they should be expanded and be put in their proper place.

Reality is made up of different components and divergent opinions. All good contains some evil, and all evil has an element of truth. There is nothing in this world which is not composed of different elements, sometimes even opposite elements. Together a single complete unit is created.

Reality is truly made up of 49 aspects in all directions. It is impossible to define one genuine, absolute Truth in this world. True peace in this world is created by discovering every opinion, all the different aspects in every object, and that is completeness (*sheleimut*), and that is peace (*shalom*).

Even within a man who deliberately sinned can points of merit be found. It is impossible that the entire Sanhedrin could only see the negative points of someone. There is nothing in this world which is not composed of opposing points, and if there is a unanimous negative opinion about this person then this shows that the matter was not sufficiently examined. In summary, peace is achieved only through the discovery of the different aspects of every object. The different aspects combine into a complete picture of complex reality.

If so, what was the matter with Korach's controversy? His claim was “The whole congregation is holy”⁵. He claimed that peace comes through equality of all its components, and not through recognizing the differences between its components. Viewing things as all equal, leads to controversy. If all are equal, then each person is a complete entity unto himself, and it is impossible to unite people. Only through different people can unity be achieved- through intelligently combining the different elements true completion can be reached.

⁴ Olat Re'aya A page 330

⁵ Bamidbar 16, 3

In the Kuzari, the king asks the following question⁶: "Why wasn't the Torah given directly to each person? Wouldn't that have been more appropriate for the Divine wisdom?" He is answered: "Wouldn't it have been better if all living creatures could talk?" Why wasn't the world created so that all creatures could talk? The possibility of bringing to the surface all of the different facets of the world comes from the fact that there are different levels and different types of objects in the world, and that is the only way there can there be meaning for each creature, and all together can form a harmonious completeness.

Another example: the ability of man and woman to unite and become "one flesh" comes from the fact that each one is different; each one completes what is missing in the other. Two equal creatures cannot unite, because one does not complete the other, and how then can they unite?

Korach, who claimed that all are equal, brought controversy, because peace does not come from equality, but rather from unification of different people and different opinions. It comes from going after the majority in order to make a decision.

⁶ Part 1, 102-103