

Messianic Rabbi: When Our Worship Isn't Worship

Sometimes when I read the Bible, I like to imagine that I am standing inside the text, and I try to think what it would have been like or felt like to see and hear the events that I am reading.

For instance, I have tried to imagine what it would have been like to be both inside Noah's ark and outside of the ark when the rains were flooding the earth. I wondered what it would have been like to watch Moses raise his rod and see the waters of the Red Sea part. I have visualized Samson breaking down the pillars in the Philistine temple.

Another biblical experience I have imagined and tried to place myself into the story is the rebellion of Korach. Recently, I was thinking about this event and once again trying to do so as if I was watching the narrative transpire in front of my eyes. I saw Korach and those men with him walking up to Moses to shout their accusations.

I saw the cloud of G-D's presence above the heads of Moses and Korach as I thought about the words in Numbers 16:3b: "You've gone too far! All the community is holy—all of them—and *Adonai* is with them! Then why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of *Adonai*?"

In the middle of my visualization of Korach's rebellion, I heard within my heart the words: "Too many believers are siding with Korach today." This thought shocked me, and I stopped imagining the rebellion of Korach and began to consider Korach's rebellion and the words he spoke.

First, it is important that we realize that Korach wasn't trying to lead the children of Israel into harlotry or infant sacrifice. He wasn't challenging Moses' military or even

governing leadership. Korach was challenging Moses' spiritual leadership. Look at the accusations being made. Korach said, "Everyone is holy and Ad-nai is with them."

Korach's dissent was focused singularly upon the spiritual role that Moses held. Korach challenged Moses as the spiritual leader of the people of G-D by saying: "Everyone is holy," and Korach's proof from his statement was: "Ad-nai is with them."

In other words, Korach's proof that everyone could worship G-D without Moses' leadership was that G-D was present. Korach made the same mistake that many believers are making today by confusing G-D's presence with G-D's approval.

We forget that it is impossible for G-D not to be present because He is omnipresent, everywhere all the time. We also conflate G-D's moving in our midst with His agreement with our actions. Don't forget G-D was visibly present when the Israelites made the golden calf.

The more I thought about this statement made by Korach and the dramatic response G-D had to Korach's rebellion, the more concerned I became about the statement. I felt so strongly: "Too many believers are siding with Korach today."

Korach was leading a rebellion of worship. He didn't want to be the leader; he didn't want there to be a leader of how to worship G-D. After all, everyone is holy. As I sat there broken in spirit and thinking about Korach's worship rebellion and his desire to remove Moses' leadership of worship, two other biblical events popped into my mind.

The first was the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16, and the second was the Jerusalem council we read about in Act 15. Within both of these stories, we find similar statements made. In Luke 16:31, we read Yeshua saying:

"But Abraham said, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises

from the dead!'"

And in Acts 15:19- 21, we read these words from Jacob:

"Therefore, I judge not to trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God—but to write to them to abstain from the contamination of idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what is strangled, and from blood. For Moses from ancient generations has had in every city those who proclaim him, since he is read in all the synagogues every Shabbat."

While these two events are separate situations, the statements are very similar in that both direct those hearing to Moses. The first says if they do not listen to Moses; the second says they will hear Moses read in synagogue. While it is important to note that all four of the items that Gentiles were to abstain from were parts of pagan worship rituals, the focus should be that they will hear Moses read in synagogue.

Why? Because Moses/Torah was provided to instruct us on how to worship G-D. In reality, the purpose of Torah is to instruct us on how to worship G-D because, in truth, everything we do should be an act of worship, as we read in Colossians 3:23-24:

"Whatever you do, work at it from the soul, as for the Lord and not for people. For you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as a reward. It is to the Lord Messiah you are giving service."

The bottom line is that there are many believers today who have joined the ranks of Korach by deciding they can choose how they want to worship G-D, rather than following Moses. People think of Torah as a list of dos and don'ts, but the truth is that G-D used Moses to lead us in the proper way to worship Him.

If we choose not to follow Moses, we are choosing to follow Korach, and if you read the rest of the story, that doesn't

end well. When we choose to worship G-D our way instead of His way, we change places with G-D. When we choose to worship how we want to, it simply isn't worship. {eoa}

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