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Parashat Korach - #285

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## On the Parashah... An Argument for the Sake of Heaven?

A commentary on the Rambam, called “Yad Ketanah”, brings a novel thought: arguments for the sake of heaven are forbidden! (Hilchot De'ot 10). This is puzzling. After all, Pirkei Avot refers to the controversy between Hillel and Shammai as a controversy for the sake of heaven, singling it out for praise, and contrasting it with the controversy of Korach and his assembly, which was not for the sake of heaven! The Yad Ketanah explains: everyone claims that their controversy is for the sake of heaven! Have you ever seen a disputant say: “I've got to admit: this controversy is not for the sake of heaven”? People always deceive themselves, and not just others, claiming that their controversy is for the sake of heaven. They are not conscious of the self-interest that motivates them.

After all, we have to wonder how Korach, who was exceedingly wise, saintly and blessed with Divine intuition, immersed himself in such an ugly controversy with two holy individuals, Moshe and Aharon. Surely he was not the sort of person who pursues honor for himself.

The Yad HaKetanah explains that Korach deceived himself, speaking about the glory of G-d and the glory of Israel, and claiming: “All the people in the community are holy, and G-d is with them. Why are you setting yourselves above G-d's congregation?” (Bemidbar 16:3). A minute element of passion was present in Korach. It was so small and so concealed that he was not even conscious of it, but it nevertheless led him to become confused and to call evil good.

Moshe knew full-well what the problem was, and he answered Korach: “Listen to what I have to say: You sons of Levi, isn't it enough that the G-d of Israel has separated you from the community of Israel? He has brought you close to Him... Although He gave this privilege to you and all your fellow Levites, you are now also demanding the priesthood?!” (ibid. v 8-10).

Why would Moshe use this argument to answer Korach's claim about the Divine holiness that envelops the entire Nation of Israel? What he was saying is this: If you are truly concerned about the specialness of Israel in the aggregate, and the idea that one should not set himself above them, then why didn't you say so when you were

chosen with your tribe? You must understand that you have personal motives veiled in a lofty ideology.”

Yet by then Korach's conscience had already been dulled, and he didn't listen. That is how he sank into perdition. We thus learn that when someone gets enthusiastically involved in a controversy, “for the sake of heaven” so to speak, he must examine himself many times over, wondering whether or not extraneous considerations are involved.

As a humorous aside, there was once a Knesset member who would stop at nothing to hold on to his seat, yet he claimed that he was acting for the sake of heaven. People answered him, “Of course you are! Surely Yeshayahu said (66:1): 'Heaven is My seat.’”

But if this is all so, the question still remains: How did our Sages say that Hillel and Shammai's controversy was for the sake of heaven? The Yad Ketanah answers very simply: They were intimate friends. We can therefore be certain that neither was interested in claiming victory over the other: they only wished to clarify the truth. Similarly, Rabbi Yonatan Eibschutz in his book “Ye'arot Devash” explained that the gauge of a controversy being for the sake of heaven is whether or not the parties are friends.

In summary, differences of opinion are permissible, but divided hearts are forbidden. Every one of us must flee a thousand miles from what seems like controversy, and must run like a gazelle towards friendship and camaraderie.

## Rav Aviner on...

### “I Love My Rabbi”

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Shelach 5773 – translated by R. Blumberg]

I love my Rabbi. Why? I don't know. But since I love him, and since he gives meaning to my life, I don't ask myself questions.

The truth is, when I think about him, I can't think of anything special about him, anything outstanding, anything particularly brilliant. He's a regular Rabbi. Sometimes I meet a Rabbi who speaks well, who writes well, who makes an impression, and I am charmed by him, but it's only for a moment, and very quickly I return to my Rabbi, because he is mine, and precisely because he is just regular.

More than the blessing he has brought me through his speech and writing, I am influenced by his personality, by his being a good, upright man, a G-d-fearing man, a holy man. True, it's been explained to me that “holiness” is a level held by the elite few, something described at the end of Mesilat Yesharim, so let me correct myself. I won't say that he is holy, but that to me he seems holy.

He has no novel or brilliant ideas. He is totally old-fashioned. He goes over old ideas, but I am happy with those ideas.

I'm not saying he's not wise. He is truly very wise, but not the kind of wise man who foments revolutions. He just knows how to transmit to me what he received from his teacher, and his teacher from his teacher, back to what Moshe received from G-d. And that's all I need.

You see, my Rabbi has a marvelous personality. Obviously, I don't know how to penetrate the depths of his soul, but you can't fool me. I've seen my Rabbi in all sorts of situations: in business – how honest and reliable he is! With family – what a gentle

husband and father he is! At the dinner table – what simple food he eats, and in what small quantities!

So I'm happy hearing his Torah lectures, because I know that what he teaches is really him. I see that my Rabbi does not just learn Torah, but he himself is Torah. His mind is Torah. His emotions are Torah. His soul is Torah.

He warms up my heart. He lights up my mind. He provides both warmth and light.

Thank you dear G-d for giving me this Rabbi, to me and to my dear wife and to my dear children.

I'll tell you the truth. It took me a long time to understand this. It's not my fault, but like everybody else, I'm captive to the media, to public opinion, so I used to be more appreciative of media-star Rabbis. But thank G-d, I've succeeded, especially with my wife's help, in salvaging my thinking from its subjugation to the media, and then I began to appreciate my Rabbi, to appreciate him and to love him.

Still I must confess, not everybody loves him, or more precisely, not everyone is totally satisfied with what he says. Yet how is it his fault? He says what G-d says. Should he distort the Torah to please them? I, too, am sometimes aggravated by the things that he says, but I get over it quickly, especially thanks to my wife. I understand that if I experience dissonance, it's not because there's something wrong with the Torah, but because there's something wrong with me. And then my equilibrium is restored.

Make no mistake, however. He does not issue commands. He is not patronizing. He is not arrogant. He just transmits the word of G-d innocently. Yes, that's the word I was looking for – innocence! My Rabbi is innocent! Not innocent in the sense of naïve. After all, I said he's wise. Rather, he is innocent in the sense of having perfect faith.

No, he's not haughty. Quite the contrary, he is a slave, a slave who has been sold to the community. In fact I once read that Ha-Rav Kook used to sign his letters: "Servant to the Holy Nation on the Holy Land". When I need my Rabbi, day or night, for anything big or small – he's there.

My Rabbi is not a success in the socio-economic sense. People don't clap for him. They don't shout "Hurrah!" when they see him. He's not in the headlines. He doesn't have TV photo-ops. Quite the contrary, very often he is snubbed. Yet he carries on without fear or trepidation. He speaks candidly. Oh how I love him!

I therefore decided to write him a letter. My wife helped me word it:

Dear Rabbi X,

My deepest thanks to you for all the spiritual bounty we are privileged to receive from you. Every word that the Rabbi writes, every talk, every lecture that the Rabbi transmits, we read with great appetite and listen to it with the pleasure of learning.

We try to improve ourselves in light of your words which influence us, and especially in light of your personality, which shines and illuminates, so full of goodness and the fear of G-d.

Your personality, drenched in so much modesty and humility, wisdom and common sense, teaches us a chapter of morality, of faith, of integrity and goodness. The words you write are so pure and pristine and so directly aimed at the Divine truth, that sometimes it's alarming to read them, so powerfully ensconced are they in deep proximity to the Master-of-the-Universe.

How fortunate I am that I and my family and the people of my town, my country and of everywhere, have been privileged to know a righteous saint. Thank you for your infinite devotion.

(signature)

## **Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law**

### **Har Ha-Bayit - Temple Mount**

Rambam on the Temple Mount

Q: I heard that Rambam entered the Temple Mount, "In the great and holy House", i.e. a house (Shul) that was built there?

A: The source is a letter in Sefer Charedim, Mitzvat Ha-Teshuvah, Chapter 3. But the intent is a Shul close to the spot of the Temple, but not on the Temple Mount itself (And this is like the words of Shut Maharik, Shoresh 5. And this is the opinion of Ha-Rav Yaakov Chai Zereihen, Av Beit Din of Tiveria, brought in Shut Tzitz Eliezer 11:15. And when Ha-Rav Hirshenzohn suggested building a Shul on the Temple Mount, Maran Ha-Rav Kook opposed it with all forcefulness. Shut Malchi Be-Kodesh, Chapter 4, p. 3).

Ha-Rav Shlomo Goren and the Temple Mount

Q: Did Ha-Rav Shlomo Goren permit ascending the Temple Mount?

A: Ha-Rav Goren wrote: "A major doubt exists in relation to the location of the Temple on the Temple Mount, and on account of this doubt, we forbid entering the Temple Mount", "Even though it is permissible for someone who is impure from the deceased to enter the Temple Mount (the part which was added and not part of the Temple), and even the deceased himself, but as the Rambam rules in Hilchot Bi'at Mikdash, we are concerned about a large portion of the Temple Mount lest it is part of the Courtyard, Sanctuary and Holy of Holies" (Ma'alin Ba-Kodesh, Gilyon Av 57763, p. 149).

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