

Korah: Democracy or Divine Aristocracy for Israel?

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Winston Churchill said,

that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time...

implying that they were even worse (speech in the House of Commons, 1947, quoting an unknown source).



I'm not sure that the God of Israel agrees, we'll see.

But, that does seem to be the conventional wisdom of the modern era. Democracy rules. There have been some failed attempts at other forms of governing. But it's never turned out good for most of the people under that type of authoritarian regime.

Yet we find today, in the CoronaVirus pandemic era, China has been pushing its model of governance, with one party rule, as more responsive to the crisis. They are claiming to meet the true needs of the people (public health), over what governments in the democratic west, are capable of providing their citizens.

Democracy giving way to authority

With the threat of a possible second wave of infections growing, with the lockdowns, forced business closures, contact tracing, drone and robotic patrolling, facial recognition technology used, immunity certificates, and other invasive methods taken or being discussed by democratic governments, to control the outbreaks, we find elements of China's model spreading like the virus itself, from east to west, eating away at citizen's privacy and civil rights.

Citizens in western democratic countries, might awaken soon, to find themselves in many ways, living in countries, with surveillance and restrictions, much closer to China's regime, than the democracy with its lawless protesters and rioters, they lived in, before the pandemic.

God establishes authority, not democracy

That said, in the Book of Exodus, we find The God of Israel, just before the revelation at Mount Sinai, commanding Moses, to tell the people of Israel,

“You shall be to me a kingdom of priests [teachers of spirituality and morality-leaders to bring the world to God] and a holy [separated and elevated] nation [because of their special mission]...” (Exodus 19:6).

In this week’s Torah reading, Parshat Korah, we find a rebellion brewing against Moses and Aaron’s leadership. The instigator: Korah, their cousin. Korah comes to Moses and Aaron with a mob of 250 community leaders and puts forth the pro-democracy argument. Which is, that they’ve taken too much power for themselves.

“Why do you think you’re so much better than everyone else? We’re all part of the God’s holy people, and he’s with all of us. What makes you think you’re the only ones who should be in charge? (Numbers 16:3).

What’s really bothering Korah?

Commentators discuss that. Both the Ibn Ezra and the Ramban, agree it took place about a year after leaving Egypt.

The Ibn Ezra argues that the rebellion took place, right after the inauguration of the Mishkan (Tabernacle). Then Aaron and his sons were designated a Divinely created Aristocracy. They replaced the firstborn, as the ones to perform the sacrificial service. Korah, a firstborn (Exodus 6:21), felt bitter for this reason. The 250 leaders with him, were also firstborn. Korah easily stirred them up.

Nachmanides, the Ramban, says that the rebellion took place right after the failed spying affair, described in Parshat Shlach. People resented the decree to stay in the desert [isolation?] and die off for another thirty-nine years. Only then, the next generation (of under twenty year olds) would enter the Holy Land. Again, easy pickings for Korah’s “democratic” rhetoric.

A series of proofs that Moses and Aaron were indeed the divinely chosen leaders now ensues.

Moses claims everything he said and did was God’s will. He declares that to prove it, the earth should open and swallow Korah and others with him, and it does. Then a fire from God breaks out and consumes the 250 community leaders. But that only postpones the rebellion.

The next day, the mob, still inspired by Korah's democratic vision, protests to Moses and Aaron saying:

 | You have killed the people of God.

God tells Moses to get away from them and He'll destroy the rebels. But Moses and Aaron instead, pray for mercy. Then, Moses tells Aaron to run and get the incense pans for atonement, as a plague [like CoronaVirus] breaks out. By the time Aaron stands between the living and the dead, and the plague is quelled, 14,700 democratic activists have died. (Numbers 16:28-17:15)

Note the huge spike in infections, with the protests in America.

Final blow to democracy – Aaron's rod buds

God now orders Moses to tell the remaining 12 tribal leaders, to take bare almond staffs and place them in the Tent of Meeting, along with the staff of Aaron. The next day Moses goes into the Tent, and removes them to show the leaders. Their staffs are still just sticks, but Aaron's has blossomed, sprouted buds, and grown ripe almonds. God then tells Moses to put Aaron's staff back into the Tent and keep it as eternal proof of Aaron's legitimate priestly line.

This frightens the people, who complain to Moses,

 | We are lost. Everyone who comes close to the Mishkan will die. Will we ever stop perishing? [when will these draconian regulations and the pandemic end?] (Numbers 17:16-28).

Salary for the Levites, who will receive no land

As if to rub salt into an open wound (of the democrats), or maybe better put, God re-enforces the lesson of Aaron's legitimate priesthood and divinely chosen aristocracy, and that He, God, is in charge, not the mob of democratic activists. God now talks to Aaron about his and his descendants' service in the Mishkan, and later at the Temples in Jerusalem. He then describes the gifts the people must bring to the Kohanim (priests), and the tithes for the Levites. Then God tells Moses about the tithes that Levites will give the Kohanim (Numbers 18:1-32).

These gifts and tithes, are a tax. They will provide a salary for the priests and Levites national service, at the Mishkan, and Temples. They receive this in lieu of not receiving any portion in the Land, as the other tribes will, when they enter Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel).

Korah stood, not for democracy at all, but for an oligarchy with himself at the head

So:

- **A “democratic” rebellion was forcefully put down,**
- **The primacy of divine aristocracy, through the Kohanim and Levites was preserved, and**
- **Moses continued as leader.**

But was Korah really a democrat? Did he really worry about “all the Holy People”? Or was he a demagogue out for self-interest and self-aggrandizement, parading as a democrat?

The parallel for the priestly and Levite aristocracy: Plato's *Republic*

In *The Republic*, (Book VIII), Plato discusses five types of regimes. These five regimes progressively decline from Plato's Ideals. He starts from Aristocracy at the top, his ideal, with a philosopher-king in the lead. From there he proceeds to the lowest form, Tyranny, with a demagogue-dictator in the lead.

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For Plato, the ruling class in Aristocracy, consists of the philosophers-kings, with the aid of the soldiers and others in the government administration. Their job is to force onto the majority of the people, the order established by the philosophers. What Plato calls, the Good. They may not own property, in order to preclude, that the policies they undertake have any taint from personal interests.

The majority of the people may own property and produce goods for themselves. But they must also sustain their rulers through contributions, i.e. taxes.

Plato's ideals and the Torah: no room in either for democracy

According to Plato, the aristocratic mindset of a just ruler, can result from an intensive educational training. The object is to produce selfless and upright intellectuals, aware of the absolute Good, by learning the Truth, based on the Platonic Ideas. Wealth, fame, and power are just shadows of the Good, not the True Good. Therefore, the philosopher, who learns metaphysical contemplation, is not tempted to abuse his power in his pursuit of material goods. So his state policies are dedicated to establishing only the Good in the state, not his personal interests.

This sounds very similar to what we've just read in the Torah. The Torah promotes the idea that the Kohanim (also a teaching class), Levites, king and his administration, are to guide, and if necessary even force, the Jewish people into observing the Mitzvot (Commandments) of the Torah, to achieve God's ideals. This was the system God was setting up, through Moses and Aaron's leadership.

Maimonides describes the ideal Jewish leader

Maimonides, the Rambam, writes in his Mishneh Torah, Book of Kings And Their Wars 11:4, about the future Messiah (ideal Jewish leader),

If a king will arise from the House of David, who diligently contemplates the Torah and observes its Mitzvot, as prescribed by the Written Law and Oral Law, as David his ancestor did, will compel all of Israel to walk in the ways of the Torah, rectify the breaches to its observance, and fight the wars of God, we consider him possibly the Mashiach.

Plato scorns democracy – and portrays it much as we see it today

About Democracy, Plato says, it is where freedom is now the highest value (not the Good). In it, the lowest classes grow bigger. The poor become the winners. People are free to do what they want and live how they want. The democratic man, in Plato's scheme, takes great interest in all the things he can buy with his money. Modern international consumer culture.

Plato believes that democratic leaders concern themselves more with money and power, than how one can help the people. We certainly see that today, among politicians. Democratic man does whatever he wants, whenever he wants to do it. His life has no order or priority.

At bottom: tyranny

Then finally at the bottom, Plato describes Tyranny, where no one has discipline and society exists in chaos. Democracy falls to the longing for freedom. People can even break the law if they so choose. This appears to be very similar to anarchy, and what we've been seeing in America and around the world recently, with the Black Lives Matter-led "George Floyd" protests and riots.

We've all seen this recently in the US, where radical leftists have promoted the idea to "Defund the Police." They've created police-free "democratically led" autonomous zones, like CHAZ/CHOP in Seattle. According to Plato, strong men must seize power, to maintain order. As again we've seen happen in CHAZ/CHOP, with gun-toting leaders. Which will cause them to become tyrants.

Interestingly, the Torah reading starts off, “And Korah took...” (Numbers 16:1).

What did he take? He took himself and his “democratic activists” aside, to separate themselves from the community (shades of CHAZ/CHOP). They sought to argue against the system, the Divine Aristocracy, and against Moses and Aaron. Korah took advantage of the chaotic moment after the spying affair, to attempt to seize power.

Plato explains, the tyrannical mindset creates the worst form of man, due to his being the most unjust and thus the furthest removed from any joy of the true kind, the Good. Desires consume him, thus causing him to do terrible things such as murder and plunder. There is complete lawlessness. The tyrant becomes a law unto himself.

What we have seen today

There have been reports of shakedowns on local businesses, extorting money from shopkeepers in CHAZ/CHOP and the abuse of its own “citizens.” And, during the Black Lives Matter-led “George Floyd” protests and riots (although protesting supposedly for equality, democracy, and against police abuse); there have been many reports of specifically anti-Semitic epithets, graffiti, violence, and destruction being done. See my [last article](#).

| [BLM and Black Nazis are Evil Like White Nazis](#)

And [this article also](#). – Ed.

| [Monument Avenue – casualty of revolution](#)

Korah and democracy v. God and proper leadership

Korah too, like BLM, wants mob rule in the name of “democracy.” He was a demagogue, willing to sacrifice everyone else to achieve his power grab. As BLM and the far Left in America do today.

Yet, the God of Israel said,

| You shall be to me a kingdom of priests [teachers of spirituality and morality-leaders to bring the world to God] and a holy [separated and elevated] nation [because of their special mission].... (Exodus 19:6)

Looking forward

God wants to create a Holy Society in Israel, led by a Divine Aristocracy, not a democracy, with the Kohanim and Levites teaching and serving in the Temple. And, the Jewish king, who eschews all self-aggrandizement, writes for himself two Torah scrolls. He keeps one of these with himself at all times, to

...read all the days of his life, so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees, and not consider himself better than his brothers, and turn away from Mitzvah observance... (Deuteronomy 17:16-20).

Maimonides confirms: God does not wish a democracy

The Rambam continues, about the future Messiah (ideal Jewish leader),

If he succeeds in all the above, builds the Temple in its place, and gathers the dispersed of Israel, he is definitely the Mashiach.

He will then improve the entire world, motivating all the nations to serve God together, as Zephaniah 3:9 states:

I will transform the peoples to a purer language that they all will call upon the name of God and serve Him with one purpose.

In a sense to achieve Plato's idea of the True Good, which he must have gotten from the Torah.

God wants a Divine Aristocracy for Israel, not a Democracy.

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