

Conflict and Resolution



Murmuring

Conflict = “a: competitive or opposing action of incompatibles: antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons) b: mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands” (Webster's).

The focus of our studies has been on the topic of Conflict Resolution. With a view of “the act of finding an answer or solution to a conflict, problem...an answer or solution to something” (Webster's), thus, a Resolution.

The Resolutions to the Conflicts we have consider have involved admonitions to repent of the core source of the Conflict, i.e., doing what is good, and shunning what is evil, and/or the death and destruction of those bent on rebellion, whether as an individual or a nation. In some cases the destruction of those bent on sin, and reject any form of repentance, i.e., the flood during the days of Noah, to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, is essential to the cleansing of the land, and the preservation of the creation.

Various views are held, even religiously, concerning Conflict: some love it, and will even poke the tiger, so to speak, to get a conflict stirred up. Others hate it, and will do everything possible to avoid it, even to the point of ignoring transgressions hoping they will just go away. Which they don't do, usually.

An interesting view of conflict is that held in some Jewish circles. Having discussed the view with an elderly Jewish gentleman, and then doing some further investigating, the view goes like this: “The Torah is full of stories of

bloodshed and warfare. But only one of our forefathers engaged in hand-to-hand combat: Jacob, who wrestled with an angel and went on to start a nation.

Since then, wrestling with God has been at the core of Jewish identity. The wrestling can take different forms, from struggling to understand the Holocaust to arguing over the meaning of a sacred text.

Jacob was the third patriarch, grandson of Abraham...He began his career as a wily trickster, strategically obtaining for himself his brother's birthright, after following his mother's orders in deceiving his blind old father Isaac. His name itself meant heel or crooked.

But touched – and partially crippled – by an angel, he emerges as the archetypal Jewish ancestor. Even flawed, he continues on to face and wrestle with God and man. Jacob, more than any other figure, represents the character of our people.

Like his grandfather before him, Jacob received a new name from God, symbolizing a transformation. "No more shall you be called Jacob, but Israel, declared the angel, for you have wrestled with God and with men, and have prevailed."

Among the understandings of the name Israel are:

- One who wrestles with God.

- One who is straight (direct, honest) with God.

This quality of confrontation and engagement with God, as opposed to pure submission, remains a distinguishing characteristic of Judaism” (mishpacha.org).

Our endeavor has been to consider the various Conflicts and their ensuing Resolutions. Some, are clearly seen, others leave the reader with more questions than answers. Nevertheless, on this side of the law of Moses, these recorded conflicts have been “written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

In this segment we want to consider the murmurings of the people against Moses and Aaron, and identify the true target of their complaints.

“And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron in the wilderness: and the children of Israel said unto them, Would that we had died by the hand of Jehovah in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. Then said Jehovah unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or not. And it shall come to pass on the sixth day, that they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily. And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that Jehovah hath brought you out from the land of Egypt; and in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of Jehovah; for that he heareth your murmurings against Jehovah: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? And Moses said, This shall be, when Jehovah shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that Jehovah heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against Jehovah. And Moses said unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before Jehovah; for he hath heard your murmurings. And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of Jehovah appeared in the cloud. And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread: and ye shall know that I am Jehovah your God. And it came to pass at even, that the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the camp. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness a small round thing, small as the hoar-frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, What is it? For they knew not what it was. And

Moses said unto them, It is the bread which Jehovah hath given you to eat. This is the thing which Jehovah hath commanded, Gather ye of it every man according to his eating; an omer a head, according to the number of your persons, shall ye take it, every man for them that are in his tent. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered some more, some less. And when they measured it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating. And Moses said unto them, Let no man leave of it till the morning. Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and became foul: and Moses was wroth with them. And they gathered it morning by morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted. And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which Jehovah hath spoken, Tomorrow is a solemn rest, a holy sabbath unto Jehovah: bake that which ye will bake, and boil that which ye will boil; and all that remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not become foul, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, Eat that to-day; for to-day is a sabbath unto Jehovah: to-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that there went out some of the people to gather, and they found none. And Jehovah said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?" (Exodus 16:2–28).

The keys of this event gives the reader plenty to consider: 1) When the people murmured against Moses and Aaron, they were actually murmuring against God. Murmur comes from "The Hebrew word (*lun*) *and* denotes the semi-articulated mutterings of disaffected persons. It is used in connection with the complaints of the Israelites in the desert against Yahweh on the one hand, and against Moses and Aaron on the other hand" (ISBE). Man has often murmured when

matters didn't go, as they perceived they should. But, beware of thy words! In the 1st Century, when the apostles of Jesus Christ were being examined, "there stood up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in honor of all the people, and commanded to put the men forth a little while. And he said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves as touching these men, what ye are about to do. For before these days rose up Theudas, giving himself out to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were dispersed, and came to nought. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the enrolment, and drew away some of the people after him: he also perished; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered abroad. And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown: but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them; lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God" (Acts 5:34–39). 2) When God does acquiesces to the complaints of man, the answering of such complaints, may very well contain an element of proving: "Then said Jehovah unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or not" (Exodus 16:4). Well, they failed the test: "And it came to pass on the seventh day, that there went out some of the people to gather, and they found none. And Jehovah said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?" (Exodus 16:27–28).

When you are in a conflict with Jehovah's appointed ministers, you might do well to consider your manners, as well as how you respond to Jehovah's answer: of the apostles, Jesus said, "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me; and he that rejecteth me rejecteth him that sent me" (Luke 10:16).