

I'm a “Good Old Rebel,” But I'm No Korah!

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I admit it, right now from the start, I'm a “good old rebel,” a gosh-darn, proud, tried n'true “Grey-coat” Johnny Reb. There you have it! Not only am I darn proud of being a rebel, I believe that it is the moral and civic duty of us all to equally become rebels. Now, ask yourself, do you know what a rebel is? Let's put being a rebel into context.

First of the all, the concept of being a “rebel” did not begin with the American war of Northern aggression against an independently inclined South. This essay is not about American history, but rather this essay is about spiritual/archetypal elements of human psychology that transcend all boundaries and borders. Therefore, we must understand what is a rebel from the spiritual point of view.

To be, or not to be, a rebel is not the question. Rather, the proper question is, when to be, and how to be a proper and right rebel. You see, there are rebels and then there are rebels. There are rebels like Moses, who was the good guy. Then there were rebels like Korah who was the bad guy. I am a rebel of the good kind, as we shall explain.

The difference between good rebels and bad rebels is not too hard to distinguish. Good rebels do not rebel for rebellion's sake. Good rebels do not tear down for the sake of destruction. If good rebels challenge an entrenched system, it is for the sake of making it better, to introduce necessary reforms. The good rebel always has a definite purpose, and a plan for positive construction. This is how Moses led Israel to rebel against Pharaoh, and in that same spirit, this is what led the American Founding Fathers to rebel against England.

When it comes to being a rebel, intentions are more important than actions. We have all too many rebels for all the wrong reasons, and all too few for the right reasons. Before one can become a real “Johnny Reb,” one has to know what this really means, and what the real cost is to take on the cause.

Being a rebel can be a good thing or a bad thing, depending upon one's orientation. Essentially, rebelling against evil is a good thing, whereas rebelling for the sake of rebelling, without a clear and definitive goal in mind is destructive, harmful, and just wrong. Rebelling for the right reasons makes one a good rebel, like Moses. Rebelling for the wrong reasons makes one an anarchist, like Korah of old, and like all too many others in recent times. There is a very, very big difference between these two.

The Biblical episode of the Korah insurrection is the case in point of a rebel without a cause. The episode is described in Numbers 16. It is rather simple. Korah is jealous of

his cousin Moses and demands a higher position for himself and for his associates in the tribe of Reuben. Now, Reuben was Jacob's firstborn, and thus entitled to special privilege. Yet, such privilege seems to have been taken away from them and bestowed upon Moses' tribe, the Levites. Korah, a fellow Levite, felt that he had the right to set matters straight (according to his way of thinking). Well, God thought differently, and Korah and his band of merry men certainly did not come to a merry end. This about sums up the story.

Yet, we are left with one burning question. How could Korah and his band, after seeing all the miracles since the Exodus, ever succumb to such an ugly spirit as personal, petty jealousy? What possessed them to take their course?

Possess them, indeed! According to the Kabbalists, they were indeed possessed by an ancient evil (psychological) spirit, one that still resides amongst us today. Remember this, when the Kabbalists of old use spiritual and mystical metaphors, they are essentially describing what today we recognize as psychological processes that effect the individual, and that also effect the collective.

The teachings of the Ari'zal elaborate on the motives of Korah by revealing that both Korah and Moses were both, (metaphorically speaking), possessed by the ancient spirit of Abel, son of Adam, who was murdered by his brother Kain.

Apparently, upon his death, Abel spirit split into two, between its good side and its bad side. The bad side of Abel was the spirit of passivity and submissiveness that led him to not resist his brother Kain's attempt to murder him.

The good side of Abel was his spirit of outrage over being murdered. This is the spirit of righteous indignation that cries out, "never again." The good spirit of Abel has become the spirit of all those who seek liberty, justice and independence, and are willing to fight for them, rather than to succumb their opposites.

Upon death, Kain's soul also split between good and evil. The good within Kain wanted nothing to do with the bad in Kain and split off from him to become the spirit of all those who make every effort to properly repent, and to serve Heaven (and their fellow man) by performing righteousness. Essentially, the good souls from Abel and the good souls from Kain always seem to find one another, and work together.

The evil side of Kain, however, became the spirit of anger, jealousy, and strife. Kain's evil side is the spirit that is always seeking to negatively attack and criticize, but not offer any positive, constructive criticism how to make things any better. Kain's is the spirit that seeks destruction, for destruction's sake. Kain is the spirit that says, "down with the system," but never offers a viable better system in its place. Kain is the anarchist.

Moses embraced the spirit of the good side of Abel. That is why he was the liberator, the first "Johnny Reb." Moses said "never again," as he stood before Pharaoh and won the emancipation of his people.

Korah, at this time, was still silent, possibly brooding and jealous of Moses all along. Finally, as we know Korah snapped. But why? We are taught that his jealousies grew within him to the point that Korah actually drew to himself the spirit of the bad side of Kain. Not that Korah actually felt something enter him, yet, one day he awoke with a deeper resentment of Moses, and a resolve to overthrow him.

The spirit of the bad side that possessed Korah came from Kain, and Kain, after all, was Adam's first-born. Therefore, now that this spirit resided within him, Korah began to feel himself superior to Moses, and a little bit each day, he felt more and more compelled to challenge Moses, to oppose him, and to replace him. Yet, Korah never thought ahead about what God would have to say about any of this. Korah was not interested in God, the future, or anything else. He was only intent on addressing his rebellion, his insurrection. It was not well thought-out, it was not well planned. It was not rebellion to make things better, it was a rebellion that would have made things worse.

We know the outcome of the story, and scripture is also very clear about a single point. Although Korah, his family, and his band of merry men, were all swallowed up by the Earth, nevertheless, many of the children survived. Some of the Sages interpret this to refer not to his bloodline family, but rather to his disciples and students. In other words, the spirit of the Korah insurrection survived, and survives to this day.

Indeed, every time the spirit of the bad side of Kain arouses its ugly influence, people are driven mad with the passion to see how very much wrong everything is, and how much everything needs to be destroyed. No thought however is given to what, and how, we are to rebuild after the destruction. Essentially, the spirit of bad Kain, just wants to tear down, and destroy without concern for building up.

The bad spirit of Kain is the one that leads to murder and bloodshed, disguised under the false cloak of political, or social activism. Essentially, the spirit behind modern terrorism, in all its forms, is an expression of this dark, evil spirit of Kain, the first murderer. This is the bad rebel, and we see this type, to this day, in so many different political and social movements that seek to destroy everything, both good and bad.

Opposed to this evil spirit of Kain is the spirit of good Abel, the liberator and defender of liberty, the voice that cries out, "I know oppression, and I am not going to take it any more!" And here is where we face the eternal conflict. The good rebel, possessed by the good spirit of Abel, embodied in a Moses, verses the bad rebel, possessed by the bad spirit of Kain, embodied in a Korah.

This original, historical battle was resolved long ago in the Sinai desert, but the war between spirits and psychological forces that compel men to action continues to this day, and will continue, all the while that we have those who embrace the bad sides of both Kain and Abel.

The bad side of Kain seeks destruction for destruction's sake. The bad Kain was then, and remains today, a murderer, a spiller of innocent blood. Those souls possessed by the bad side of Abel surrender to Kain's violence, tolerate it, and make no efforts to take the necessary decisive action to prevent it. Bad Abel essentially is appeasement politics.

Bad Kain souls and bad Abel souls stand opposite the spirit of the good side of Abel, the spirit of liberation. The good Abel souls are joined by those who embrace the good side of Kain, those who have overcome their destructive cravings, and instead seek to assist their brother Abel in properly bringing about a better world, all in the most constructive of ways.

So, the call today to be a rebel has to be defined specifically as being a call to stand up for liberty and justice, and to reject the call for destruction and violence.

Mind you, Moses never lifted a hand against Korah. Such violence would have been the way of Kain. Instead, Moses relied on God. Moses told the 250 merry men, who were the backbone of Korah's rebellion, to approach God while bringing the incense offerings. Moses remembered well that when Aaron's two sons Nadav and Avihu came forth to do this, yet doing it in an improper manner, God's energy shot out from the Ark, electrocuting both of them to death. Moses knew that the fate of the 250 would fare no better.

Strange, why the 250 did not see this coming. It should have been obvious. But, jealousy is a lousy spirit. It can blind the eyes of those who would otherwise be able to see. Moses set it up, and God did the rest. This is our lesson to learn. We do our share, God does His!

Our way is not to follow in the footsteps of violence. This is the path of Korah. This is the way of evil rebellion. Our way is the way of Moses, the way of emancipation and liberty. Moses is the man who fights for the little guy, and, what many might think to be, the lost cause. But what is right is right, and we stand up for what's right.

We confront the worst of the old, with a clear and present plan to build something better, and greater, for the future. God is our guide, and our help. All good souls walk this path, even the good souls that separated out of evil Kain.

So, it's good to be a "good old rebel," as long as one is doing it the right way, and for the right cause. We are all supposed to be the spiritual children of Moses, and not the spiritual children of Korah. We are all known by our deeds. They reveal what possesses us from within.

To this day, the good fight continues. May liberty and justice always win. May the good, old rebels fight the good cause, in God's way, and bring about the Light of God's Word and Way, even as did Moses.