

# PHILOTORAH

לה"י

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שתשלח מהרה רפואה שלמה מן השמים,  
רפואת הנפש ורפואת הגוף לפצועי המלחמה, ולנפגעי מעשי טרור ואנטישמיות  
בישראל ובכל מקום שהם - עם שאר חולי ישראל. אמן.

**May HaShem protect our soldiers; may He send Refu'ah Sh'leima to the many injured;  
may He console the bereaved families and all of Israel; may He end these wars with  
total success and peace for Medinat Yisrael and Klal Yisrael wherever we are.**

## YERUSHALAYIM

in/out times for

**KORACH**

**m'vorchim**

כ"ח סיון ה'תשפ"ו

June 12-13, '26

 **7:10 PM**

Plag **6:17 PM**

 **8:28 PM**

R' Tam **8:57 PM**

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for other locales



*Artwork by Darius Gilmont*



### Shabbat M'vorchim

This coming Shabbat - Korach in Israel, Sh'lach in Chutz LaAretz - is Shabbat M'vorchim Chodesh Tamuz.

Rosh Chodesh Tamuz is always two days in our fixed calendar because Sivan always has 30 days.

R"Ch Tamuz can be Monday-Tuesday (as it is this year, a 28.57% occurrence) or Wednesday-Thursday (28.03%) or Thursday-Friday (11.51%) or Shabbat-Sunday (31.89%).

So, we will be announcing that Rosh Chodesh Tamuz will be on Yom Sheini (Monday) and Yom Sh'lishi (Tuesday).

רֹאשׁ חֹדֶשׁ תַּמּוּז יִהְיֶה בְּיוֹם שְׁנֵי וּבְיוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי,  
הַבָּא עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לְטוֹבָה:

The Molad of Tamuz is on Monday, June 15th, 6h 46m 16p.

הַמּוֹלַד יִהְיֶה בְּיוֹם שְׁנֵי, אַרְבָּעִים וְשֵׁשׁ דְּקוּת  
וְשִׁשָּׁה-עָשָׂר חֲלָקִים אַחֲרֵי שֵׁשׁ בְּבוֹקֶר.

This corresponds to 7:26am Israel Summer Time. The Molad in Rambam notation is ב' יב:תתמד

The actual (astronomical) molad (a.k.a New Moon) is 5:55am. The time is more accurate than the molad we announce, but it does not have a practical application in our time.

We all know that the 17th of Tamuz until the 29th of the month are mournful days for the Churban of the Beit HaMikdash, the first and the second. These last 13 days of Tamuz are followed by the first 9½ days of Av, all known as the Three Weeks.

Because of events associated with 17 Tamuz, the whole month is treated as a 'dangerous' month for the Jewish People.

According to a number of sources, the 3rd of Tamuz is the date when Yehoshua invoked a unique miracle:

Then Yehoshua spoke to HaShem on the day when HaShem delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, SHEMESH B'GIVON DOM, V'YAREI'ACH B'EMEK AYALON - "Sun, stand still upon Giv-on, and Moon in the valley of Ayalon" (Yehoshua 10:12)

How can that have been? Would that not mess up the orbits of the Moon around the Earth and the orbit of the Earth-Moon around the Sun?

It definitely would. If we were talking about the laws of planetary motion, which are part of the natural way of the universe, which HaShem created.

But we are talking about a Divine suspension of the Laws of Nature by

the One who created the world, and its Laws of Nature.

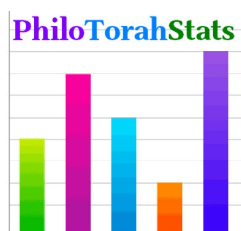
However you want to explain the miracle recorded in Yehoshua, the fact of the matter is that G-d's miracles come in two types - part of nature and beyond/above nature. We need to ponder these miracles and appreciate G-d for them. But we must also ponder and learn about nature - in this case, to learn about the Sun and the Moon when they behave 'normally', and appreciate the Creator all the more.

And this sets a different tone for Tamuz. And don't forget Zechariya's prophecy that will see the sad day of 17 Tamuz become a festive day, when the Beit HaMikdash will be rebuilt.

Give a whole different perspective on Tamuz.

## KORACH

38th of the 54 sedras;  
5th of 10 in Bamidbar



Written on 184 lines (rank: 32nd)

13 Parshiyot; 7 open and 6 closed

95 p'sukim - rank: 39th

1409 words - rank: 36th

5325 letters - ranks: 35th

9th in Bamidbar in these 3 categories

Above average in words & letters per pasuk. Korach is a short sedra (in a

Book with many long sedras) with fairly long p'sukim (in a Book with many short-pasuk sedras)

## MITZVOT

9 mitzvot - 5 positives, 4 prohibitions

Only 17 sedras have more mitzvot; 35 have fewer. Korach just makes it into the top third (tied with Ki Tisa)

## Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P>] and [S>] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI; L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek & pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

## Kohen - First Aliya - 13 p'sukim - 16:1-13

[P> 16:1 (19)] "And Korach took..."  
VAYIKACH KORACH -

Commentators suggest different meanings for this phrase:

- Korach took himself away from Moshe and the mainstream population, to challenge Moshe's authority;
- Korach took some of his fellow Leviyim and some Reuvenites with

him in his rebellion against Moshe;

- Korach "took with words" (i.e. persuaded) others to join his rebellion;
- Korach "took apart" - split the people between himself and Moshe.

**SDT:** Korach is identified as the son of Yitzhar, grandson of K'hat, great-grandson of Levi. It is quite unusual to identify biblical personalities that way. Rashi points out that the lineage mentioned in the pasuk stops before reaching Yaakov Avinu who foresaw Korach's wickedness and pleaded with G-d not to be included in the Torah's account of Korach's deeds. On the other hand, it reached back to Levi because Korach's being from Levi was the major factor involved in the whole episode.

Korach, Datan & Aviram and On b. Pelet (who backed out early on) challenge Moshe's authority.

Korach enlists 250 men to publicize his/their "cause".

**Ponder this:** Korach was a first cousin of Moshe and Aharon. He felt slighted by the fact that both top positions - the leadership and Kehuna - went to two of his uncle Amram's sons (Moshe & Aharon) and the leadership of the K'hat family went to another cousin, the son of Korach's father's youngest brother - Elitzafan b. Uziel. Korach found sympathy for his cause within the neighboring tribe of Reuven because Reuven himself

was passed over for the leadership (which went to Yehuda), the birth-right (Yosef received the double portion of the firstborn in the form of the tribes of Efrayim and Menashe) and the Kehuna/Leviya went to Levi. This is not to whitewash Korach's actions, but to show some of his motivation.

Moshe proposes a test - both Aharon and Korach's people will offer incense before G-d and G-d will indicate whom He chooses. Moshe tries to talk Korach out of his fight by telling him that being a Levi is special - why show dissatisfaction and ingratitude by seeking more?

Moshe then calls for Datan & Aviram, but they arrogantly refuse Moshe's summons.

**SDT:** Sources tell us that Korach taunted Moshe Rabeinu with two mocking questions - A talit made completely of T'cheilet, does it require Tzitzit (with the T'cheilet thread)? A house filled with Torah scrolls, does it require a mezuzah? Both questions pointed to the same argument: A Nation of holy people, people who heard G-d's Voice at Sinai, do they require holy leaders above them? The basis of suggesting the talit question is the juxtaposition of the Korach episode to the portion of Tzitzit at the end of last week's sedra. Kli Yakar suggests that the mezuzah question is alluded to by the

description of Datan & Aviram arrogantly standing at the doorway of their tent and mocking G-d's commandments and Moshe's leadership.

The answer, in fact, is that Tzitzit with T'cheilet is required of every four-cornered garment, even one made totally of T'cheilet wool. And a dwelling (and other types of rooms - with halachic exceptions) requires a Mezuzah, regardless of how many Sifrei Torah are in the room.

A homiletical "explanation" of the significance of a Mezuzah on the door-post of a room filled with Sifrei Torah and other holy books, is that the holiness represented by the content of the room (and the Torah study done therein) are, by definition, internal. It remains within the "four walls of the Beit Midrash". The Mezuzah placed on the doorpost represents the spread of the Torah and its holiness to the outside world. This extension of the domain of sanctity to the "outside world" is an important challenge for the Torah community. *(Heard a long time ago from R' Asaf Bednarsh - son of a classmate of mine, back in the day - at a mezuzah-affixing ceremony)*

## Levi - Second Aliya - 6 p'sukim - 16:14-19

Datan & Aviram, two people with a long record of evil behavior, com-

pounded their wickedness with the unpardonable affront to the Land of Israel by referring to Egypt as "the land flowing with milk and honey" that Moshe took us out of, to "kill us in the wilderness".

Moshe angrily asks G-d not to accept the incense offerings of Korach's group. Moshe then reiterates the challenge to Korach. Korach gathers the People to witness the "show-down"; the 250 people and Aharon will each have the special vessel onto which they will place a glowing coal, onto which they will put the incense and they will all be standing at the entrance to the Ohel Mo'ed. G-d's 'glory' was revealed to the People.

**SDT:** The Gemara tells us that when Korach challenged Moshe's authority, it was the Sun and the Moon that appeared before G-d and said: If you side with the son of Amram (i.e. Moshe), then we will continue to shine; if not, we stop shining. What is the significance of this statement from the Gemara? One commentator points out that the Sun and the Moon were originally of equal greatness, and the Moon was diminished because "two kings cannot rule with one crown." This was exactly one of the problems with Korach's arguments, so the Sun and Moon were particularly appropriate participants in this issue. Notice that not only must the Sun acknowledge the situation, but so must the Moon.

Korach's downfall was his lack of acceptance of a moon-like role.

• Most Aliya-breaks happen at parsha breaks. This is reasonable to expect. When an Aliya-break occurs in the middle of a parsha, and more so, in the middle of a small number of p'sukim that are telling us one episode - then we can pause for a moment and try to see if our attention is being called to something specific. The Aliya-break between Kohein and Levi in Parshat Korach comes right in the middle of the confrontation between Moshe and Datan & Aviram. Rav Sholom Gold z"l points out that the break separates a reference to Egypt as a land flowing with milk and honey with a reference to Eretz Yisrael with the same description. These need be separated, just as one would say L'HAVDIL.

Or maybe... When an Aliya-break occurs, it gives us - the people who are listening to Torah Reading - pause to reflect on what just "happened". Our attention is drawn to the last pasuk or so, and we can focus on it while the gabbai is calling the next person to the Torah (and blessing the previous Oleh).

Datan and Aviram had just called Egypt a land flowing with milk and honey. They mocked G-d (Who uses that term for Eretz Yisrael), they mocked Moshe, and they mocked Eretz Yisrael. As terrible as the

Meraglim were with their report and conclusions about Eretz Yisrael, at least they acknowledged the beauty and specialness of the Land. They said that the Land was truly flowing with milk and honey. One has time during the Aliya-break to be justly enraged by the behavior of Datan and Aviram... and perhaps by those Jews today who unfortunately, echo their sentiments. Sadly, as we still have the Meraglim among us, we've got a D&A or two, as well.

## Shlishi - Third Aliya - 24 p'sukim - 16:20-17:8

[S> 16:20 (3)] G-d tells Moshe and Aharon to separate themselves from the rest of the People so that He will destroy them. Moshe - even while being upset in the extreme with the challenge to his own integrity - pleads on behalf of the People before G-d, asking Him not to punish the multitude because of the sins of an individual.

[S> 16:23 (13)] Moshe warns the People to separate themselves (physically and psychologically) from Korach and his followers lest they be included in the punishment to come. Moshe declares that all will know that G-d has sent him to do all that he does. If these wicked people shall die in a way that others have died, then G-d has not sent Moshe. But if G-d will "provide" a new creation and the earth will open its

mouth and swallow Korach and company and all that belongs to them, then all will know that these people have truly rebelled against G-d. As Moshe finished these words, the earth beneath them split, opened and swallowed all with Korach. (Implied from the p'sukim is that the People did not actually die but left this world in this unusual and miraculous manner.) The People shouted in panic when they witnessed what was happening. A Divine fire consumed the 250 people who offered the incense.

**SDT:** Earthquake, you say? No. That is a natural phenomenon. What happened here was supernatural. The "mouth of the earth" (PI HAARETZ) that swallowed Korach's gang was created in the moment before the first Shabbat of Creation - as taught in Pirkei Avot. SOF MAASEH B'MACHSHAVA T'CHILA - that which happens at the end was in G-d's thought from the beginning.

[S> 17:1 (5)] G-d tells Moshe to tell Elazar b. Aharon to collect the fire-pans and scatter the burning coals. The copper from the pans was to be used to plate the Mizbei'ach as a reminder that a non-Kohen must not attempt to do any of the kohein's tasks in the Mikdash. In general, the Torah warns us not to be like Korach and his gang, and not to suffer their fate.

[P> 17:6 (3)] The next day, the People, fearing retribution, complained against Moshe for killing (part of) G-d's Nation.

G-d's Cloud descended upon the Ohel Mo'ed and Moshe and Aharon went there for instructions.

**SDT:** The earth not only swallowed Korach's gang, but their possessions as well. The message, says IMREI SHEFER, is that one's wealth often causes a person to be arrogant. This, in turn, leads sometimes to challenging authority. People's possessions were not innocent bystanders, so to speak, to Korach's rebellion, they were the instigators.

• Note that in Korach's rebellion we see not only two punishments, but two very different kinds of punishments, which, in turn, reflect the types of sin. Datan and Aviram and their ilk were plunged down into the bowels of the Earth. But the 250 K'toret-offerers were honorable people. They were godly. The Torah testifies to that when we are first introduced to them. They honestly believed that they were making proper offerings to G-d. Otherwise, they would not have risked their lives. They must have been surprised to have failed! Their sin was reaching TOO high towards the Divine. And their punishment was to be struck down by Divine fire.

Here's another thought... Moshe was chosen by G-d to lead the people. True. And he will always be on a higher level than the rest of us. We, not G-d, elevated Moshe even higher.

At Sinai, we decided that we did not want to hear the "Voice of G-d" any more and we requested that Moshe tell us what G-d wants of us, and we would comply. Originally, G-d spoke to all of Israel. That was the plan, so to speak. And that put all of Israel on the level of prophecy. With Moshe as the chief prophet. We forfeited our direct communication with G-d, and we made Moshe the ONLY prophet (at the time). The Gemara says that the "deal" that the People made at Sinai concerning not having direct communication from G-d, was an irrevocable deal. Korach wanted otherwise. Perhaps he was no longer confident that Moshe could actually bring the People into Eretz Yisra'el, after the whole Meraglim fiasco. The merit of this theory is that it balances the motivations of Korach's gang. Datan and Aviram were BAD. The K'toret bringers were not evil people.

## R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya 7 p'sukim - 17:9-15

[S> 17:9 (7)] Once again, G-d "suggests" that He destroy the People. This time Moshe does not plead with G-d on their behalf but immediately instructs Aharon to burn incense on coals from the Altar and that he should pass among the People to stop the plague that had already begun. This quick action stopped the plague which had already claimed 14,700 lives, not counting those who perished with

Korach.

Sometimes, in times of trouble, Moshe prays to G-d extensively. His prayer after the Sin of the Golden Calf is an example of long prayer. We can say that it was a prayer that lasted 40 days and nights. When Miriam was stricken with Tzora'at, Moshe uttered a short 5-word (11-letter) prayer for her - KEIL NA R'FA NA LAH. And at this point in Korach, Moshe senses that prayer will not work - swift action is called for.

- On another note, let's take a look at the three "big" sins of the Wandering period: Golden Calf, Spies, Korach. Combining different ideas in the commentaries, we can suggest the following: The Sin of the Golden Calf represents sins against G-d. He can be, and often is, most forgiving for that kind of sin. The sin of the spies was an affront to Eretz Yisrael. This, so to speak, G-d considered a graver sin, and was less forgiving. Korach's rebellion was directed against Moshe. A BEIN ADAM L'CHAVEIRO sin. These are the kinds of sins that G-d is least willing to forgive. Similarly, in comparing the Flood, which came as a result of a breakdown in society, with the Tower of Babel, where people united to rebel against G-d, we see that the punishments were different in severity.

## Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 9 p'sukim - 17:16-24

[P> 17:16 (9)] G-d tells Moshe to speak to the People and take a staff from each of the tribal leaders, the staff to be inscribed with the leader's (or tribe's - dispute) name. Aharon's name was to be inscribed on the staff of Levi. The staffs were to be placed in the Ohel Mo'ed. The person whom G-d shall choose, his staff shall blossom; this manifestation of G-d's choice shall hopefully put an end to the complaints and confusion of the People. The People did as instructed and the staffs were placed in the "Tent of Testimony" overnight. On the following day, Aharon's staff had blossomed. Moshe showed the staffs to the People and each tribe took its staff back.

Ramban explains that there were 12 rods, including that of Levi, on which Aharon's name was inscribed. This means that one rod was for Yosef, rather than having separate ones for Efrayim and Menashe. Ramban states that this is always the case: there are 12 tribes - sometimes, Levi is not included - then Efrayim and Menashe are separate; sometimes Levi is included and Yosef is a single tribe. Ramban also says that the Torah is stressing that Levi is one unified tribe - not Leviyim and Kohanim separately - with one tribal leader - namely, Aharon.

## Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 24 p'sukim - 17:25-18:20

[P> 17:25 (2)] G-d tells Moshe to return Aharon's staff to the Mishkan as a reminder to the People not to rebel or complain. Moshe does as instructed.

[P> 17:27 (2)] The People express their feelings of despondency and fear of Divine punishment for their lapses.

[S> 18:1 (7)] G-d reiterates that the Kohanim and Leviyim hold special positions and have the responsibility to not risk their lives by overstepping their bounds.

Leviyim are required to guard the Mikdash [388, A22 18:4] (Honor guard)

In fact, according to the Mishna in Midot, there were 24 guard posts, three of which were manned by kohanim, and the 21 others, by Leviyim.

Kohanim and Leviyim are forbidden to perform each others sacred tasks [389, L72 18:3]. A non-Kohen/Levi may not work in the Mikdash [390, L74 18:4]. It is forbidden to disregard the obligations of the Beit HaMikdash honor-guard [391, L67 18:5].

[P> 18:8 (13)] The Torah next lists several gifts that are given to the Kohen - the meat of certain korbanot, t'ruma, bikurim, consecrated objects, the firstborn of kosher farm animals and the redemption/exchange for a

firstborn donkey. Firstborn humans are to be redeemed for 5 silver shekels [392, A80 18:15].

Firstborn cow/goat/sheep may not be redeemed [393, L108 18:17], but must be given to a kohein who must bring it as a korban within a year (if unfit for the Altar, the b'chor is the possession of the kohen without restrictions). All gifts of the kehuna (24 in number) are for Aharon and his descendants in perpetuity. However, the Kohen does not receive a portion of land in Israel. (This is the basis of the complex intertwined relationship between kohen and non-kohen.)

## Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 12 p'sukim - 18:21-32

[S> 18:21 (4)] The Levi is to receive tithe (a tenth of produce) from all Israelites. (The 10% is to be taken AFTER the T'ruma was taken off for the Kohen, which is about 2%.) This is his due in exchange for his work in the Mikdash. Leviyim also do not receive land (except for 48 cities around the country); their role is that of spiritual functionaries. They receive Ma'aser in lieu of a portion of land.

The service of the Leviyim in the Mikdash constitutes a positive mitzva [394, A23 18:23]. So too it is a mitzva to give Ma'aser Rishon to a Levi [395, A127 18:24].

[P> 18:25 (8)] In turn, the Levi is commanded to give a tenth of his

tenth to a kohen [396, A129 18:26]. This is known as T'rumat Ma'aser or Ma'aser Min HaMa'aser. This mitzva is performed in a technical way nowadays in Eretz Yisrael (by Rabbinic decree) to permit the balance of the produce to us.

The Korach story is depressing enough, but as a once-upon-a-time, a long time ago, we can keep our distance. Not so the mitzva-content of the sedra. There's no fooling around. We don't do these mitzvot, we die. Keep the mitzvot and we will live. Very strongly put. Learn the Korach lesson; it isn't just a story - it applies to each of us.

## Haftara - 24 p'sukim - Sh'muel Alef 11:14-12:22

Shmuel HaNavi renews the kingship of Shaul HaMelech, but reminds the people that it is a bad idea to have a human king in the first place. He also recounts some of the backsliding and punishments of the people from the time of Moshe (this is a major connection to the sedra)... Striking among the common points between sedra and haftara is the invoking of a miracle to "back up" his credentials.

The unexpected violent storm, then, parallels, the flowering stick and/or the Earth swallowing Korach's gang.

# Bringing the Prophets to Life

**Weekly insights into the Haftara  
by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler**

*Author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)*

## What or How?

**KORACH - 24 p'sukim**

**- Sh'muel Alef 11:14-12:22**

As the focus of the previous parasha of Sh'lach centered upon the rebellion of the meraglim against Moshe, and, by definition, against Hashem, so too this week's parasha of Korach focuses upon the rebellion of Korach and his followers against Moshe, a mutiny which includes a defiance of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, as well.

Chazal saw a parallel of this uprising, in the demand they made to the great prophet, Shmuel, to step down from his leadership of the nation and to choose, instead, a King to rule them all. It is for this reason that our ancient scholars established the reading of the 11th and 12th p'rakim of Shmuel Alef as the haftara for Parashat Korach, chapters which, interestingly, do not include the nation's request of Shmuel, but only the prophet's condemnation of the people for the request. After reminding the leadership how he (with God's approval) agreed to choose a king for them, he steps down from his leadership role, by

repeating his just and honest guidance, cautioning them to remain faithful to Hashem and His directives.

But before concluding his final words as leader, Shmuel harshly condemns the people for their very request for a King. He accuses them of being ingrates, ignoring the myriad kindnesses Hashem had done for them by requesting a King to lead them to victory. In doing so, they overlooked the defeat of many enemies who fell before the power of G-d. Shmuel goes out of his way to prove that Hashem Himself was angered with their request, by having G-d bring down heavy rain and thunder - a sign of His displeasure with Israel.

This was Israel's rebellion.

However, were this so, why did Hashem submit to the nation's request that both He and Shmuel knew was wrong and even "rebellious"?

I would submit that Israel's desire for a King was not an act of rebellion at all. In fact, while G-d referred to the insurgents of Korach as B'NEI MERI [Bamidbar 18:25], He never applied such a designation to the nation that spoke to Shmuel. The nation's wish to find a monarch after three-hundred years of no national leader (and during a time when their very existence was threatened by surrounding nations) was far from being an act of

revolt! And, as the Torah itself calls for the people to set up a monarchy, we cannot refer to the nation's wishes as being "defiant".

The reason for Hashem's dismay with Israel's appeal is found in the very commandment found in Sefer D'varim [17: 14-15] that speaks of the people's wish for a King but adds ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM ELOKECHA BO - "whom G-d shall choose". Israel's request for a King from Shmuel never includes a clear mention of having the navi approach G-d [See Shmuel Alef 8:5-6]. The desire for a new leader was, as they clarified to Shmuel, one based upon the aging of their long-standing navi, and their realization that neither of the prophet's sons were proper choices for leadership. In such a situation, we would expect them to turn to G-d... but they never do. They, themselves, decided that they must have a monarchy - and asked Shmuel to do so.

Yes. They were doing that which the Torah had instructed them to do. And, yes, it is true that they were fulfilling a Divine command.

But when performing a mitzva without any regard for Hashem... well, that it a sort of "rebellion". Isn't it? ✨



The fun way to go over the weekly sedra with your children, grandchildren, Shabbat guests

## SH'LACH

🌿 plus two Unexplained (maybe three)

Yaakov ben Asher is the Baal haTurim - a.k.a. the TUR. The verb LATUR (to tour) is used several times in Parshat Sh'lach.

The question marks between Kol Nidrei and the bracha SHE-HE-CHE-YANU as Yom Kippur enters are for the two p'sukim we say, which are taken from Sh'lach.

## KORACH



Mr. Whipple who told us that Charmin toilet paper was so soft - KO RACH, that people cannot resist squeezing it

- the lightning is for the fire from shamayim that killed the 250 incense offerers
- the sinkhole at the Shaare Zedek parking lot occurred a number of years ago (during the week of Parshat Korach). It "swallowed" some cars - just like the earth swallowed possessions of Korach's gang. B"H, no injuries were reported
- five Pidyon HaBen coins minted by the State of Israel
- honor guard standing at attention for the mitzva of Guard Duty by Leviyim (21 Leviyim & 3 Kohanim) around the Beit HaMikdash and Har HaBayit
- image of a DNA helix. D'n A is a short way to refer to Datan and Aviram
- level, in Hebrew, a PELES, a sound-alike to the Ashkenazic pronunciation of the father of the Reuvenite who first teamed up with Korach and then backed out at his wife's insistence and to her credit (even if her motives were a bit off)
- Milk and honey representing the Land of Israel and - L'HAVDIL, the perverse use of the beautiful phrase by Datan and Aviram in referring to Egypt
- gift boxes for the various gifts to the kohein mentioned in the sedra
- The % symbol for the tenth of a tenth that the Levi is required to give to the kohein - T'RUMAT MAASEIR
- baby carriage (blue for a boy) with the lamb inside, for the mitzva of B'CHOR, that

of a kosher domesticated animal - cow, goat, and sheep. Since sheep speak Italian, the ewe is saying "my first"

- Apple core = KOR. Israeli male nurse = ACH. Put them together: KORACH
- Salt shaker represents the B'RIT MELACH, the salt-like covenant between G-d and the kohanim. Salt doesn't spoil, and so Brit Melach is the term for an indestructible (eternal) covenant
- numbers on the adding machine tape: 2.98% is the part of the produce that a kohein receives - including T'ruma from the farmer (let's say 2%) and the T'rumat Maaseir he would receive from a Levi who received Maaseir from the same yield. 8.82% is the Levi's share (that's a tenth of the yield after T'ruma had already been separated, minus that which he gives a kohein), another 8.82% is taken off for either Maaseir Sheini or Maaseir Ani, and the remaining 79.32% is what the owner has after separating off as required
- garlic and sugar cubes - another representation of Pidyon HaBen, as in the custom of distributing little packets of garlic and sugar cubes to those attending a Pidyon (used to flavor the next cholent the recipient makes for the following Shabbat)
- stalk of wheat, standing straight, looking like the numeral 1, with a decimal point before it - representing the mitzva of giving Maaseir to a Levi from grain, etc.
- close up of the staff of Aharon which blossomed almond

flowers • smiley globe - its mouth represents PI HAARETZ, the mouth of the earth that opened and swallowed Datan and Aviram and company. It is smiling because it has fulfilled G-d's command to it. Pirkei Avot teaches us that PI HAARETZ was one of 10 special items that were created in the instant before the first Shabbat B'reishit • Ice cubes are KERACH, spelled the same as KORACH • Bald head, in Hebrew KEIREI'ACH. also spelled like Korach • Not a donkey have I taken from you... Moshe to Korach and Co. • Murex Trunculus - source of T'CHELET as used by more and more people for their TZITZIT strings. Korach taunted Moshe with the question if a garment made completely of t'chelet requires a P'TIL T'CHEILET on its tzitzit (the answer is YES) • Korach also questioned whether a room with Sifrei Kodesh needs a mezuzah (see Sedra Summary) • copper firepan, as in copper firepans... • 42, 44-49, 84-85, 87-88 are the 11 p'rakim of T'hilim for Bnei Korach • MD is 1500 in Roman numerals. The word with the highest gimatriya in the Torah is TISTAREIR (in Parshat Korach). Its gimatriya is 1500 • 6.5 pairs of Levi's = 13 LEVI, that's how many times the word LEVI occurs in Parshat Korach • CHEILEV and BEN are both followed by the word YITZHAR in the sedra. BEN, as in Korach ben Yitzhar... CHEILEV as in KOL CHEILEV

YITZHAR... the choice of the oil... referring to T'ruma from olives (or olive oil) • Candle with the question How much? (in French). How much is candle? 50+200, the 250 Ketoret bringings, part of Korach's rebellion • and one Unexplained (not an easy one)

לע"נ  
הרב יעקב צבי ב"ר דוד אריה ז"ל  
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l

## Power vs Influence

### KORACH

The Korach rebellion was an unholy alliance of individuals and groups united by their grievances with Moshe's leadership. There was Korach himself, a member of the tribe of Levi, angry (according to Rashi) that he had not been given a more prominent role. There were the Reuvenites, Datan and Aviram, who resented the fact that the key leadership positions were taken by Levites rather than members of their own tribe. Reuven had been Yaakov's firstborn, so some of his descendants felt that they should have been accorded seniority. Then there were the two hundred and fifty "leaders of the community, chosen from the assembly, men of repute" who felt aggrieved (according to Ibn Ezra) that after the sin of the Golden Calf, leadership had passed from the

firstborn to a single tribe, the Levites. Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. *(Ed. note: The more things change, the more they stay the same.)*

The Korach story is an all too familiar tale of frustrated ambition and petty jealousy - what the Sages called "an argument not for the sake of heaven."

What is most extraordinary about the episode, however, is Moshe's reaction. For the first and only time, he invokes a miracle to prove the authenticity of his mission:

Then Moshe said (Bamidbar 17:28-30):

"By this you will know that the Lord sent me to do these deeds; it was not my idea. If all these men die as others do, and share the common fate of all humanity, then the Lord has not sent me. But if the Lord creates something entirely new, so that the ground opens its mouth and swallows them and all they have, and they go down alive to Sheol, then you will know that these men have provoked the Lord."

In effect, Moshe uses his power to eliminate the opposition. What a contrast this is to the generosity of spirit he showed just a few chapters earlier, when Yehoshua came to tell him that Eldad and Medad were prophesying in the camp, away from Moshe and the seventy elders. Yehoshua regarded this as a potentially dangerous threat to Moshe's leadership and said, "Moshe, my lord, stop them!" Moses' reply is one of the

most majestic in the whole of Tanach:

"Are you jealous for me? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His spirit upon them all!" (11:29)

What was the difference between Eldad and Medad on the one hand, and Korach and his co-conspirators on the other? What is the difference between Moshe saying, "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets", and Korach's claim that "All the community is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is in their midst. Why then do you set yourselves above the Lord's people"? Why was the first, but not the second, a legitimate sentiment?

Is Moshe simply being inconsistent? Hardly. There never was a religious leader more clear-sighted. There is a distinction here which goes to the very core of the two narratives. The Sages, in one of their most profound methodological observations, said that "the words of the Torah may be poor in one place but rich in another." By this they meant that, if we seek to understand a perplexing passage, we may need to look elsewhere in the Torah for the clue. A similar idea is expressed in the last of Rabbi Yishmael's thirteen rules of biblical interpretation:

"Where there are two passages which contradict each other, the meaning can be determined only when a third

passage is found which harmonises them."

In this case, the answer is to be found later in the book of Bamidbar, when Moshe asks God to choose the next leader of the Israelites. God tells him to take Yehoshua and appoint him as his successor:

So the Lord said to Moshe, "Take Yehoshua, son of Nun, a man infused with My spirit, and lay your hand upon him. Have him stand before Elazar the Kohen and the entire community, and in their sight, give him this charge. Give over to him some of your majesty, so that the entire Israelite community will obey him."

Moses is commanded to perform two acts over and above presenting Yehoshua to the kohen and people. First he is to "lay his hand" on Yehoshua. Then he is to give Yehoshua "some of [his] splendour." What is the significance of these two gestures? How did they differ from one another? Which of them constituted induction into office? The Sages, in Midrash Rabba, added a commentary which at first sight only deepens the mystery:

"Lay your hand on him" - this is like lighting one light from another. "Give him some of your splendour" - this is like pouring from one vessel to another. (28:18-20)

In actual fact it is this statement that will enable us to decode the mystery.

There are two forms or dimensions of leadership. One is power, the other, influence. Often we confuse the two. After all, those who have power often have influence, and those who have influence have a certain kind of power. In fact, however, the two are quite different, even opposites.

We can see this by a simple thought-experiment. Imagine you have total power, and then you decide to share it with nine others. You now have one-tenth of the power with which you began. Imagine, by contrast, that you have a certain measure of influence, and now you share it with nine others. How much do you have left? Not less. In fact, more. Initially there was only one of you; now there are ten. Your influence has spread. Power operates by division, influence by multiplication. With power, the more we share, the less we have. With influence, the more we share, the more we have.

So deep is the difference that the Torah allocates them to two distinct leadership roles: king and prophet. Kings had power. They could levy taxes, conscript people to serve in the army, and decide when and against whom to wage war. They could impose non-judicial punishments to preserve social order. Hobbes famously called kingship a 'Leviathan' and defined it in terms of power. The very nature of the social

contract, he argued, was the transfer of power from individuals to a central authority. Without this, there could be no government, no defence of a country and no safeguard against lawlessness and anarchy.

Prophets, by contrast, had no power at all. They commanded no armies. They levied no taxes. They spoke God's word, but had no means of enforcing it. All they had was influence - but what influence! To this day, Eliyahu's fight against corruption, Amos's call to social justice, Yishayahu's vision of the end of days, are still capable of moving us by the sheer force of their inspiration. Who, today, is swayed by the lives of Achav or Yehoshafat or Yehu? When a king or queen dies, their power ends. When a prophet dies, their influence begins. Returning to Moshe: here was a man who occupied two leadership roles, not one. On the one hand, though monarchy was not yet in existence, Moshe had the power and was the functional equivalent of a king. He led the Israelites out of Egypt, commanded them in battle, appointed leaders, judges and elders, and directed the conduct of the people. He had power.

But Moshe was also a prophet, the greatest and most authoritative of all. He was a man of vision. He heard and spoke the word of God. His influence is incalculable. As Jean-Jacques

Rousseau wrote, in a manuscript discovered after his death:

...an astonishing and truly unique spectacle is to see an expatriated people, who have had neither place nor land for nearly two thousand years ... a scattered people, dispersed over the world, enslaved, persecuted, scorned by all nations, nonetheless preserving its characteristics, its laws, its customs, its patriotic love of the early social union, when all ties with it seem broken. The Jews provide us with an astonishing spectacle: the laws of Numa, Lycurgus, Solon are dead; the very much older laws of Moshe are still alive. Athens, Sparta, Rome have perished and no longer have children left on Earth; Zion, destroyed, has not lost its children. (Rousseau, Cahiers de brouillons, notes et extraits, no. 7843 (Neuchatel).

The mystery of Moshe's double investiture of Yehoshua is now solved. First, he was told to give Yehoshua his authority as a prophet. The very phrase used by the Torah - V'SAMACHTA ET YADECHA, 'lay your hand' on him - is still used today to describe rabbinic ordination, which we call Semicha, meaning, the 'laying on of hands' by master to disciple. Second, he was commanded to give Yehoshua the power of kingship, which the Torah calls 'splendour' (perhaps 'majesty' would be a better translation). The nature of this role as

head of state and commander of the army is made quite clear in the text. God says to Moshe: "Give him some of your splendour so that the whole Israelite community will obey him ... At his command, he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out, and at his command they will come in." This is the language not of influence but of power.

The meaning of the Midrash, too, is now clear and elegantly precise. The transfer of influence ("Lay your hand on him") is "like lighting one light from another." When we take a candle to light another candle, the light of the first is not diminished. Likewise, when we share our influence with others, we do not have less than before. Instead, the sum total of light is increased. Power, however, is different. It is like "pouring from one vessel to another". The more we pour into the second, the less is left in the first. Power is a zero-sum game. The more we give away, the less we have.

This, then, is the solution to the mystery of why, when Yehoshua feared that Eldad and Medad (who "prophesied within the camp") were threatening Moshe's authority, Moshe replied, "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets." Yehoshua had confused influence with power. Eldad and Medad neither sought nor gained power. Instead, for

a while, they were given a share of the prophetic "spirit" that was on Moshe. They participated in his influence. That is never a threat to prophetic authority. To the contrary, the more widely it is shared, the more there is.

Power, however, is precisely what Korach and his followers sought - and in the case of power, rivalry is a threat to authority. "There is one leader for a generation", said the Sages, "not two". Or, as they put it elsewhere, "Can two kings share a single crown?" There are many forms of government - monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy - but what they have in common is the concentration of power within a single body, whether person, group or institution (such as a parliament). Without this monopoly of the legitimate use of coercive force, there is no such thing as government. That is why in Jewish law "a king is not allowed to renounce the honour due to him."

Moshe's request that Korach and his followers be swallowed up by the ground was neither anger nor fear. It was not motivated by any personal consideration. It was a simple realisation that whereas prophecy can be shared, kingship cannot. If there are two or more competing sources of power within a single domain, there is no leadership. Had Moshe not taken decisive action against Korach, he

would have fatally compromised the office with which he had been charged.

Rarely do we see more clearly the stark difference between influence and power than in these two episodes: Eldad and Medad on the one hand, Korach and his fellow rebels on the other. The latter represented a conflict that had to be resolved. Either Moshe or Korach would emerge the victor; they could not both win. The former did not represent a conflict at all. Knowledge, inspiration, vision - these are things that can be shared without loss. Those who share them with others add to spiritual wealth of a community without losing any of their own.

To paraphrase Shakespeare, "The influence we have lives after us; the power is oft interred with our bones." Much of Judaism is an extended essay on the supremacy of prophets over kings, right over might, teaching rather than coercion, influence in place of power. For only a small fraction of our history have Jews had power, but at all times they have had an influence over the civilisation of the West. People still contend for power. If only we would realise how narrow its limits are. It is one thing to force people to behave in a certain way; quite another to teach them to see the world differently so that, of their own accord, they act in a new way. The use of power diminishes

others; the exercise of influence enlarges them. That is one of Judaism's most humanising truths. Not all of us have power, but we are all capable of being an influence for good.

### Around the Shabbat Table:

- (1) Think of the person who has had the most influence on you. Would you consider yourself their student?
- (2) Can you articulate the ways that Moses has influenced your own life?
- (3) How would you like to influence the world for good? Do you need to harness power in order to do this?

## Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

### Message from the Haftara

*Rabbi Katriel (Kenneth) Brander  
President and Rosh Halayshiva  
Ohr Torah Stone Institutions*

## Sculptor or Gardener

### KORACH

The connections between Parshat Korach and its haftara - the final address of Shmuel to the people of Israel - are not difficult to find. Both center on a moment of leadership transition: Korach and his faction seek to displace Moshe, while the people ask Shmuel to step aside in

favor of a king. There is even a striking verbal parallel between the two passages. Moshe defends his integrity before the people: "I have not taken a single donkey from them, nor have I wronged any one of them" (Bamidbar 16:15). Shmuel echoes him almost word for word: "Whose ox have I seized, and whose donkey have I seized? Whom have I cheated, and whom have I oppressed, and from whose hand have I taken a bribe?" (Shmuel Alef 12:3).

In both cases, a selfless leader is confronted by a public that wants something different, and in both cases, that leader insists that his motives have been honest and uncorrupted.

But beneath this parallel lies a quieter, more penetrating tension, one that first emerges earlier, when the people demand a king: "Look, you have grown old, and your sons have not followed in your path" (8:5).

This two-part complaint deserves careful attention, because each half carries a very different weight, challenging all leaders to find a balance between public and family life. This balance is crucial today as Am Yisrael faces serious fractures and threats as a nation: fractures and threats that also affect individuals and families on a personal level as we and our children all navigate war, antisemitism, uncertainty and social

discord.

The first half of the people's accusation in the haftara - "you have grown old" - is, to some degree, a legitimate claim. Leadership has its seasons. A healthy community must be able to acknowledge when transition is necessary, and ensure continuity beyond any one individual. That part of the complaint, while uncomfortable, is appropriate.

But the second claim - "Your sons have not followed in your path" - cuts deeper. This is no longer about public leadership. It is a judgment on Shmuel as a father and mentor. The text itself makes the critique explicit: his sons "were bent on gain, and they took bribes, and they perverted justice" (v. 3). Whatever potential they may have had, something essential in their formation was missing.

Shmuel, who had devoted his life to shepherding the nation through its most turbulent years, may not have been able to invest with the same intensity in his own children.

Shmuel is not alone. Hundreds of years earlier, Moshe Rabbeinu, who spoke 'face to face' with God and led the people for forty years through their most formative period, remains a strikingly distant figure in the lives of his own children. The Torah tells us almost nothing about them, and later Rabbinic sources suggest that they

drifted far from the path that their father walked, even so far as to indulge in foreign forms of worship. The contrast is as sobering as it is tragic: even the greatest of leaders may struggle to bridge the distance between public mission and private sphere.

The Talmud names this tension with painful honesty, describing Torah scholars as sometimes becoming "as cruel to their children and families as ravens" (Eruvin 22a), not from malice, but because the demands of communal responsibility can be all-consuming.

What emerges is not an isolated failure, but a recurring challenge within leadership itself. There are limits to what any family can absorb when a parent is called to serve. Children who grow up waiting for a parent who is always somewhere else - answering the community's urgency, the people's crises, the nation's needs - may eventually stop waiting.


What makes Shmuel's story particularly poignant is that he himself grew up in the shadow of this same failure. He rose to leadership in the aftermath of Eli HaKohen's shortcomings as a father; his first prophetic call (Shmuel Alef 3) was a message of divine judgment against Eli's household. Raised in the Mishkan, Shmuel was shaped by

priestly discipline and devotion, but not necessarily by a model of present, attentive family life. Moshe, too, grew up at a distance from his family, formed in a palace rather than a home. Perhaps neither man was given a full domestic template. They could lead a people; but they had never fully seen what it means to lead a family.

This is what makes the people's incidental complaint so stinging, and what gives our haftara enduring force. It asks a question that extends far beyond Shmuel. What are the unseen costs of leadership? And who bears them?

The Torah does not ask us to raise children in our image; that is the sculptor's approach. A sculpture may be impressive, but it can crack and shatter under pressure.

A parent is closer to a gardener, creating the conditions in which a child can take root, grow, and turn toward the light in their own way.

Parshat Korach and its haftara together challenge both communities and those who lead them to seek leaders who are not only principled in public, but whole in private. Leaders who remember that the family waiting for them at home is not a distraction from their mission. It may be the most important expression of it. 



**PhiloTorah D'var Torah**

## **The Third Passage**

I would like to share an idea I have, related to the third passage of the SH'MA, which is the five p'sukim at the end of Parshat Sh'lach.

Yes, I am aware that we in Israel read Korach this Shabbat. And it is in Chutz LaAretz that they will read Sh'lach. But, there is a famous connection between the two sedras: the end of Sh'lach speaks of the P'til T'cheilet, the blue-dyed thread that joins the white strings of Tzitzit. Korach, says the Midrash, dressed his people in garments of t'cheilet wool and challenged Moshe's authority by suggesting that Moshe is not necessary as a leader since all the people are holy (because they all stood at Har Sinai when G-d revealed Himself to all of us. A blue thread might be necessary, but do you need a blue thread if the garment is all t'cheilet?

The answer is that even on a garment that is all t'cheilet, white strings must be attached and a P'til T'cheilet must put on the corner-tzitzit.

But that is not the point of this PTDT. I'm just justifying my sharing my idea about the tzitzit portion at the end of Sh'lach. And another thing - it seems from Seder Halbur by the Avudraham,

that originally, it was Sh'lach and Korach that were combined (in Chutz LaAretz) when Shavuot is Friday (and Shabbat), not Chukat and Balak which are combined in Chu"L today.

All besides the point. And here is the point.

The portion of Tzitzit which is the third passage of the SH'MA, in addition to being the end of Sh'vii and the Maftir of Parshat Sh'lach, consists of five p'sukim, 69 words. I would like to divide the parsha into two unequal parts. This first part - from the beginning and into the third pasuk, the first 29 words, deals with the mitzva of tzitzit.

HaShem said to Moshe, saying: Speak to Bnei Yisrael and say to them - that they shall make for them tzitzit (fringes) on the corners of their (four or more cornered) garments, for the generations, and that they shall put a blue thread on the corner-fringe. UR-ITEM OTO, and they shall see it...

That's the end of my first part. And they shall see it - what's it? Not the point here, as you shall soon see.

The second part of the parsha explodes from one specific mitzva into remembering and doing all of G-d's mitzvot. UZCHARTEM, and you shall remember all the mitzvot of G-d and do them. And you shall not follow the negative temptations of your hearts and minds (although it

mentions eyes, we should realize that the eyes transmit what is seen to the brain, which interprets and understands what is seen)...

This is not only one of the 613 mitzvot, one of the 365 prohibitions of the Torah, it is one of very few mitzvot which are categorized, in today's language, as 24/7. One of the Mitzvot T'midiot.

The Torah continues: In order to remember and do all of My mitzvot and become holy to your G-d.

Then, the concluding pasuk, ANI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM... I am HaShem your G-d who took you out of Mitzrayim to be your G-d - I am HaShem your G-d. This pasuk can be seen as a restatement of the very first words we heard from G-d, the first pasuk of the Aseret HaDibrot - ANOCHI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM...

All of the above is introduction to the thought I want to share with you. And I warn you in advance, I have no source for the thought, it is mine, from my head (and heart).

Here it is, finally. Take the first part off for the moment and replace it with another mitzva. (Don't do this in your Chumash or Siddur, just figuratively. I think any mitzva will do for this thought; let me choose giving Tz'daka. It is a mitzva to give tz'daka to the needy. So you do the mitzva. And when you look at the coins of bill

that you are giving, remember all the mitzvot and commit yourself to keeping them... remember and do them... be holy to HaShem. And remember that He took us out of Egypt in order to be our G-d.

Same thing for taking a Lulav and Etrog or benching after a meal or making Kiddush or eating matza or davening or learning Torah or doing chessed or refraining from sin...

There are 613 mitzvot in the Torah. The Torah refers to mitzvot in the plural, but sometimes it refers to the body of mitzvot in the singular. KOL HAMITZVA - All the mitzva? All the mitzvot, but they are all parts of a whole.

Even look at the wording of a bracha for a mitzva. Matza at the seder, for example. ...ASHER KID'SHANU - He who sanctifies us with His mitzvot, V'TZIVANU, and commands us, AL ACHILAT MATZA, on the eating of Matza. The bracha could have just said, BARUCH ATA... MELECH HA-OLAM SHE-TZIVANU... Perhaps, the ASHER KID'SHANU B'MITZVOTAV serves to remind us that the specific mitzva we are about to perform, is part of a whole system by which we sanctify ourselves.

I don't usually ask for feedback (although I would appreciate it, in general), but I'd love to hear what you think of my idea. **PTDT**

דבֿשן

אמֿ  
microULPAN

DUVSHAN. Honey cake. More commonly called UGAT D'VASH

לֿבֿן - LUVNAN. Sponge cake. More commonly called UGA L'VANA.



## Walk through the Parsha

with **Rabbi David Walk**



**KORACH**

## One's Proper Goals

This week I had to speak at a Bar Mitzva. These are not the best weeks to speak at joyous occasions. In our Torah readings, we have the terrible whining and complaining in the second half of B'haalot'cha, then, of course, the sin of the 'spies' in Sh'lach, and this week we have the rebellion against Moshe and Aharon instigated by Korach. We would love to develop positive messages for the young men and women that we are addressing. So, we must be creative.

Before we look at a number of explanations for the behavior of Korach, I

am going to offer a separate idea from one of the most clever commentaries on our Tanach these days, Rav Yoel Bin Nun: The most remarkable thing about Korach is that it was included in the Torah. The Torah does not hide from the Jewish People even the most difficult stories, the failures and the sins. These failures are not only those of the "wicked" and the "sinners", but even those of the great prophets, prophetesses, and kohanim - Aharon, Miryam, and even Moshe... What can we learn from this? First of all, that there are no perfect people and no perfect generations, and that it is impossible to lead a nation without crises. There is no nation without politics, no generation without bitterness and rebellions.

Cool! Let's begin with some of the more normative approaches to the motivations of Korach and his cohorts. Most of the traditional commentaries are a bit perplexed by the use of the transitive verb VAYHIKACH (and he took) at the beginning of our parsha. The problem, of course, is that there is no direct object; we are not told what Korach 'took'.

Rashi claims that Korach 'betook' himself. He moved himself away from the mainstream of the nation to rebel against the status quo. Onkelos translates it ITPALEG, or 'he removed himself'. In both of these explanations,

tions, Korach is the direct object of the verb LAKACH.

Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch cleverly explains that the verb is an introduction to the story. As he explains: The expression "Korach took" appears without an object. All that follows serves as the object of the "taking". Logically, the expression denotes an unauthorized action taken in one's own interest. Korach arrogated to himself the right to call Moshe and Aharon to account for their position among the people. Since this is expressed through the word "taking", it also implies that the motive behind his action was selfish.

Rav Hirsch continues to explain how attractive the ideas presented by Korach are. Rav Soloveitchik similarly called this incident the 'common sense rebellion against God'. Rav Hirsch presents Korach's idea in the following manner: Everyone is near to God, and God is near to everyone. Therefore there is no need for an Aharon and a Moshe. The entire position occupied by them is, according to them, an unwarranted usurpation founded.

Before I present the opinion which I find the most fascinating this year, I'm going to share a truly intriguing idea from the Netziv. That great Rosh Yeshiva saw merit in the 250 leaders who joined Korach's rebellion. In spite of their joining into Korach's

rebellion, they were truly spiritual individuals. The Netziv explains:

It was not possible simply to take firepans and offer incense in the Mishkan, for the Levites stood guard to prevent any unauthorized person from approaching. Therefore, they were compelled to initiate a dispute against Moshe and Aharon. All of this was the course of conduct of the 250 men. Nevertheless, since their intention was for the sake of Heaven, they were therefore punished by being consumed in the fire that emerged from the Holy of Holies; yet this also contained an element of honor.

These firepans became holy. They were made of copper and were later 'hammered into plating for the holy altar itself' (Bamidbar 17:4 & 5). These men were executed, but their holy act became an eternal memorial to their holy intentions.

But we really must return our focus to our most interesting of villains, Korach himself. The Rebbe of Apt, the first Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel (1748-1825) prefaced his comments on Korach with an appealing explanation for the differences between Kohanim and Leviyim. He avers that together they are very powerful and produce the CHASH-MAL which Yechezkel witnessed in his famous vision of the Divine Chariot. Even though modern Hebrew borrowed this mysterious term to

describe 'electricity', we really have no idea what Yechezkel is describing.

So the Rebbe jumps in to explain that this term is the amalgam of the contributions of Kohanim and Leviyim. CHASH (quiet or 'shhh') is the silent Divine Worship of the Kohanim on the Holy Altar. MAL (from the word MALAL, speech) is the job of the Leviyim, who sing and make music. Korach noticed that the Gematriya of his name is 308, just like CHASH. He believed that he was destined to be a quiet kohen (how ironic!), hence his entire rebellion.

Cool! But he was wrong. Even though most of his progeny were destroyed, one survived to become the eventual progenitor of the B'nei Korach (and of Sh'muel HaNavi) who were famous musical Leviyim in the Holy Temple. They even wrote 11 poems of our book of T'hilim. Korach was clever, but his wit led him in the wrong direction, talent tragically wasted.

We all have talents and skills which must be developed and honed so that we can make great contributions to our families and our nation. But we must work hard to discover in which directions our gifts and capacity can best be developed and used.

What's the greatest tragedy? Korach deprived us of his considerable genius. Remember, be the best 'you' that you can be. Then we all win. 🙏

## Rav Kook Torah



by Rabbi Chanan Morrison -  
[www.ravkooktorah.com](http://www.ravkooktorah.com)

## Holiness in the Midst of the Community

**Summary:** The requirement for a prayer quorum, and why it is derived from two examples of rebellion and infamy.

### The Need For a Minyan

Judaism has an unusual concept called a minyan – a prayer quorum. Special prayers sanctifying God's name, such as the K'dusha and Kaddish prayers, may only be recited in the presence of ten adult Jewish men. An individual may pray alone, but without a minyan, certain parts of the liturgy must be omitted.

Where does this requirement come from?

The Talmud derives it from God's declaration, "I will be sanctified in the midst of the Israelites" (Vayikra 22:32). What exactly does the word 'midst' mean?

We find the word 'midst' used again when God warned the people living nearby the dissenters in Korach's rebellion: "Separate yourselves from the midst of this EIDA (community)" (Bamidbar 16:20). From here, the Sages concluded that God is sancti-

fied within an EIDA.

And what is the definition of EIDA? The Torah refers to the ten spies who brought a negative report of the Land of Israel as an EIDA RA'A, an evil community (14:26). So we see that God is sanctified in a community of at least ten members.

The requirement for a prayer quorum, and the way it is derived, raises two issues that need to be addressed:

Prayer appears to be a private matter between the soul and its Maker. Why should we need a minyan of ten participants in order to pray the complete service?

Why is the requirement for a minyan derived precisely from two classic examples of rebellion and infamy – the spies and Korach?

## **Perfecting the Community**

Holiness is rooted in our natural aspirations for spiritual growth and perfection. However, the desire to perfect ourselves – even spiritually – is not true holiness. Our goal should not be the fulfillment of our own personal needs, but rather to honor and sanctify our Maker. Genuine holiness is an altruistic striving for good for its own sake, not out of self-interest.

The heart of an elevated service of God is when we fulfill His will by helping and uplifting society. There-

fore, the K'dusha prayer may not be recited in private. Without a community to benefit and elevate, the individual cannot truly attain higher levels of holiness.

This special connection between the individual and the community is reflected in the number ten. Ten is the first number that is also a group, a collection of units forming a new unit. Therefore, the minimum number of members for a prayer quorum is ten.

## **Learning from Villains**

But why do we learn this lesson from the wicked?

It is precisely the judgment of the wicked that sheds light on the reward of the righteous.

If the only result of wrongdoing was that the wicked corrupt themselves, it would be unnecessary for the law to be so severe with one who is only hurting himself. However, it is part of human nature that we influence others and are influenced by our surroundings. The wicked have a negative influence on the entire community, and it is for this reason that they are punished so severely.

This also illuminates the opposite: the power of the righteous. Just as the wicked are judged not only for their own actions but for the harm they bring to the community, so, too, the

righteous are rewarded primarily for the good they bring into the lives of others.

Now it becomes clear that true holiness is in the context of the organic whole. Thus the K'dusha prayer, sanctifying God's Name, requires a minyan, a representative community of ten souls.

*Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 258-260  
Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 104*

## **The Daily Portion - Sivan Rahav Meir**

### **Being Number 1 means fulfilling the mission meant for you**

Translation by Yehoshua Siskin

Korach, whose story is read in this week's Torah portion in Israel, has become synonymous with conflict and division. He was jealous of the positions held by Moshe and Aharon and wanted to take their place and lead the people himself. What happened to him? And what sometimes happens to us as well?

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman explains that Korach's mistake is a common one that persists until today. Korach already held an honorable position. He was one of those responsible for

carrying and caring for the most sacred objects of the Mishkan, including the Ark of the Covenant and the Golden Menorah. But instead of focusing on this important role, he envied others and wanted to take their place. As Rabbi Biderman writes:

If Korach had known that an ordinary person who fulfills his mission in this world is as important before the Creator as Aharon the Kohen Gadol when he stands in the Holy of Holies, he would never have begun this dispute.

Korach thought that striving upward meant replacing the person at the top. But this Torah portion teaches us that being Number 1 means excelling where you belong, in the role that is right for you. You are important precisely when you are fulfilling your unique divine mission and purpose in life.

That is what matters most in the eyes of the Creator and it is what should matter to us as well. There is no reason to be jealous or to try to be someone else.

Just be the very best version of yourself.

**Send your friends this link so that they can receive Sivan Rahav-Meir's content too: [tiny.cc/DailyPortion](http://tiny.cc/DailyPortion)**



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

**KORACH**

## **Korach took himself**

The sidra opens with a strange word, VAYIKACH KORACH, “And Korach took”. What he took is not stated.

Some versions say, “Korach took men”.

The Targum Onkelos says, “Korach separated himself” – he betook himself to the other side of the situation and mounted a mutiny against Moshe.

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 109b) says he took upon himself a bad deal, getting saddled with a rebellion which he had no chance of winning.

The d'rash, the homiletical view, also deserves to be mentioned, that what was wrong with Korach was his character. He was a taker and not a giver. He wanted everything for himself, without a thought to what he could contribute to the wellbeing of the community.

## **When the dog barks**

Nobody likes Korach, but what about his henchmen Datan and Aviram?

Korach was out for title and position. He had no time or respect for Moshe and Aharon, and if they stood in the way of his personal advancement and advantage, they had to go.

But there is no evidence that Datan and Aviram wanted to take over the running of the community, and if they did there would have been major conflicts between themselves and Korach.

What Datan and Aviram wanted, according to the interpretation of the Maharal, was plain mischief. They enjoyed seeing the community abuzz with contention, with people taking sides and criticising one another.

The Book of Mishlei likens the person who makes quarrels and stirs things up to a dog: “Like a man who grabs hold of a dog’s ears, so is the person who gets involved in other people’s quarrels” (26:17).

It’s probably not fair to the dog to mention him in a negative connection, since dogs are usually friendly and loyal, but according to the Midrash the dog is an appropriate simile since anything can set a dog off barking and when one barks the others join in.

**-OZ**

**Y’HI ZICHRO BARUCH**

# Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

## KORACH

*G-d said to Moshe, "Return the stick of Aharon before the Ark of Testimony to be preserved as a symbol and warning to the rebellious people, so that their complaining will end and they will not die" (17:25).*

Up until now, the Parasha tells us of a wave of revolts against Moshe's and Aharon's authority. These were responsible for the death of Korach and his 250 men, and a further 14,700 in the plague (17:14).

As Rashi explains, the core of the first revolt, led by Korach, was driven by his own angry disappointment in that the position of leader of the tribe division of Kehat did not go to him, but to Elitzafan ben Uziel, someone considerably below him in ancestral tree of the tribe of Levi. Korach did not accept that the reason he was passed over was because that was what G-d wanted (3:15,30), and that was that. So we learn of Korach and his company with popular support challenging Moshe's authority. Moshe responded with the challenge to take on a key position and see what would happen: to offer the ketoret whose unfitting use had caused the death of Aharon's two eldest sons, Nadav and Avihu.

And like with Nadav and Avihu, the

fire poured out and killed the company, with Korach and his associates already swallowed up in the ground. The Torah then tells of the steps to ensure that the lessons learnt from what happened would be engraved in Klal Yisrael's conscience for all time.

Yet the people didn't listen. Instead, they 'fought fire with fire'. They rebelled against Moshe and Aharon a second time, blaming Moshe and Aharon for their deaths: "You have killed the people of G-d" (17:6). 14,700 died through plague, a far larger number this second time round. We are told that the numbers would have been much higher, but for the ketoret. Ironically: it was the ketoret that took the lives of the people in smaller numbers in the first episode and yet saved the lives of the people in much larger numbers in the second episode.

Only then, finally, G-d demonstrated that He chose Aharon and his tribe, the Levites, to be the spiritual leaders of the Israelites. He did this in a gentle way: namely that when the stick of the tribe of Levi was placed next to the sticks of all the other tribes, it was the only one which miraculously blossomed and produced almonds (17:16-24). It was after that miracle of the blossoming almonds - a controlled experiment - that the Israelites paid attention and quieted down.


So it took a lot to restore order among the fissiparous and rebellious Israelites. It wasn't the earth swallowing up Korach as Moshe prompted that did it. It wasn't the death of the 250 who got too close with the ketoret. It wasn't the death of the 14,700 that inspired t'shuva. No. It was the 'small, silent voice' in the shape of Aharon's stick that almond-blossomed that got the message across. The people listened, and they learnt.

That opens the question. Why, instead of asking the earth to open up and swallow the rebels, didn't Moshe respond to Korach and Co with "Watch this" and perform the controlled experiment with the almonds to demonstrate to all and sundry that Aharon was the man that G-d chose to head His Service? After all, the Torah tells us that that is what worked. Why didn't he do that straight away instead of leaving a wake of thousands dead before he finally got round to it?

In responding, let's consider a very rare skill which sounds easy, but is very widely sought after. That is the capacity to listen. Indeed, today many people pay fortunes to those in the mental health profession to simply listen to what they have to tell, as they cannot find such people among their family and friends. Those other people are all too wrapped up in their own journeys through life to listen.

As were the waves of people sucked into Korach's rebellion and its aftermath. They weren't in a state to listen. They couldn't listen even if they wanted to. They were lusting for their own power, in the disguise of democracy (16:3). Such people don't listen. That is human nature, and Moshe Rabbeinu knew it. He might have been our teacher, but as all teachers know, teaching extends to the teachable, not the unteachable. And Moshe judged that Am Yisrael was unteachable at that moment: with so many wrapped up in their own agendas, own pride, and own kavod, there were no 'reasonable' ways to move them. Only after experiencing the series of shocking events would they find themselves moved - to listen.

This is true in life, today very much included. ASEI L'CHA RAV - make yourself known to a worthy mentor. Fortunate are those who do listen when suitably instructed, corrected, and admonished, even when the rav tells them things that they don't want to hear. But the world contains egoistic, kavod-driven, and patently toxic individuals of all ages that will not listen to reason. And Moshe Rabbeinu knew that it was futile to even try. He knew that they would have to suffer unpleasant, jarring, life-changing experiences first.

Only then they would be ready to listen... 

# **Dvar Torah** by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

*Graciously shared with PhiloTorah*

## **KORACH**

Parshat Korach contains two areas of complaints against Moshe. The first is the well-known dispute with Korach. In Bamidbar 16:21, we find G-d instructing Moshe and Aharon, "Separate yourselves from among this congregation that I may consume them in a moment." In the following verse it states, "And they fell upon their faces and said 'O' G-d, G-d of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin and You be angry with the entire assembly?"

G-d responded by instructing Moshe to "Speak to the assembly saying, 'Go up from all around the dwelling places of Korach, Datan and Aviram.'" They are swallowed up and Moshe and Aharon are vindicated by G-d. The very next day, 17:6, "The entire assembly of the Israelites complained on the morrow against Moshe and Aharon saying, 'You have killed the people of G-d!' You would think that after what they saw the previous day, they would be a bit more inhibited in their complaints. Thus, they held Moshe accountable for the death of the people. There remain some unanswered questions in these two cases of complaints against Moshe.

Firstly, why, in the episode with Korach does G-d instruct Moshe and Aaron "Separate yourselves" while later, during the people's complaint, G-d says, "Get yourselves up"? Secondly, during the Korach episode, Moshe intervenes only on behalf of the innocent and G-d responds accordingly, waiting for those that are innocent to separate from Korach. However, at the time of the people's complaint, Moshe intervenes on behalf of all the people, yet G-d immediately takes retribution and fourteen thousand, seven hundred died. Why?

Rabbi Moshe Silverman pointed out that Moshe cannot save Korach. His actions were premediated, and guilt was clear.

It is to Korach to save himself by backing down. He does not and he is swallowed up. However, Moshe can and does separate himself and the rest of the Jewish people. Thus, in the next verse, he falls asking G-d to exonerate the people in this case. G-d listens and spares the people. In the second scenario, when the people complained they did so with malice. They believed that two hundred fifty quality people died when they could have been spared. They did not know that this was from G-d.

Thus, when Moshe hears G-d's plan, being asked to "Get yourselves up from among this assembly and I shall

destroy them in an instant", in the very same verse "he falls on his face" showing G-d that he does not want to get up and remove himself from guiding these people. Moshe immediately responded to G-d when told to "Separate" in reference to the death of Korach, while he did not immediately respond to G-d when told to "Get yourselves up" when the people complained. Moshe is not even offended by their challenge; he is only concerned about preserving their well-being and showing them their error. Perhaps, this is what we should be looking at in life. Disputes are based on error - not malice - need to be approached as Moshe Rabbeinu did: First, by immediately showing concern about the party that is in error, secondly, by taking caring action to help show their mistake and finally, saving the party from further pain by putting an end to the specific situation that caused the error. 🛟

## The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

### KORACH 5785

What are we to make of the 250 men who joined Korach's rebellion? The Torah call them, "princes of the assembly, men of renown" (16:2). Clearly, they were men of importance. Yet, when each chose to take his fire-pan with incense and attempt

to offer it before HaShem (16:17-18), as Moshe had suggested, they were consumed in a fire that "came forth from HaShem" (16:35). What is somewhat strange is that in the aftermath of this punishment, HaShem instructs Moshe to take "the copper firepans that the [250 men] had offered and spread them out as a coating for the Altar." Why distinguish these utensils, now items associated with sin, by placing them on a vessel of holiness - the Mizbei'ach? (17:4). The Torah then states that this repurposing of the machtot (firepans) would serve as a reminder that "no alien person who is not of the offspring of Aharon shall draw near to bring up the smoke of the incense before HaShem" (17:5). But could there be a deeper reason underlying this reminder?

To answer these questions, we turn to Ramban's extensive commentary on the Korach episode. Ramban persuasively argues that the 250 men were the firstborns of the tribes who were disenfranchised from serving a priestly role following the debacle of the Golden Calf. That role was transferred to the tribe of Levi who, unlike the firstborns, remained loyal to HaShem in the wake of people's delinquency and did not sin. Apparently, contends Ramban, these firstborns never quite reconciled to their displacement, and harboring deep frustration and possible resentment,

they bided their time until they could once again assert their longing to serve as HaShem's servants in the Mishkan. When Korach rose up against Moshe and Aharon, they saw an opportunity to reclaim their former status. And while they did not share at all Korach's cunning and nefarious agenda to depose Moshe as leader, they nevertheless wanted the singular distinction of being HaShem's close attendees. They hoped that by bringing the ketoret, HaShem would accept their sincere aspiration, reinstate them, and, if nothing else, would allow them to serve along with the Leviyim.

Unfortunately, that was not to be. HaShem chose to make it abundantly clear that only members of the tribe of Levi would be eligible to be the kohanim and leviyim. But, at least to acknowledge the genuine yearning of the 250 men to serve, their firepans (machtot) would find a place of honor on the Altar. Such, in my brief summary, is the explanation of Ramban. Perhaps though, we might suggest another connection between the firepans and the Mizbei'ach. It begins with this question: What was it that marginalized the firstborns and qualified the tribe of Levi to be HaShem's M'SHOR-TIM (servants)?

The status of a firstborn is one of biological privilege, kinship, not of merit. It is an accident of birth, and

while the halacha does grant the bechor certain material benefits and honors, it does not automatically confer upon him any other personal assets. Many of our great Biblical figures (Yitzchak, Yaakov, Yosef, David, etc.) - including Moshe - were not firstborns. The members of the tribe of Levi demonstrated early on how they earned their exalted position. They consistently showed that they had the strength of character to do the right thing even when it went against the grain of their natural predispositions. Their patriarch Levi overcomes his violent temperament, turns his father Yaakov's, stern reprimand around to earn Moshe's supreme accolade of, "They shall teach Your laws to Yaakov and Your instructions to Israel. They shall offer You incense to savor and whole-offerings on Your Altar" (D'varim 33:10). And the descendants of Levi, in addition to their Temple duties, become the rabbinic leaders and teachers of Torah of their generation. In the glowing words of the prophet: *"And you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you, that my covenant might be with Levi, says the Lord of hosts. My covenant was with him for life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear with which he feared Me, and was afraid of My Name. The Torah of Truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not to be found on his lips: he walked with Me in*

*peace and uprightness, and turned many away from iniquity. For the kohen's lips should keep knowledge, and they [the people] should seek Torah at his mouth: for he is a messenger of the Lord of hosts."* (Malachi 2:4-7)

This astonishing transformation of Levi and his progeny - this heroic mark of character - becomes the defining qualification to serve HaShem. The firstborn never rose to the challenge; the tribe of Levi did! If so then, the plating of the Altar with the firepans of the firstborn contained a message quite beyond that of certifying the tribe of Levi to serve. To wit: that to earn the privilege of ministering to HaShem, one must be prepared to accept the "Altar experience", i.e. to sacrifice. Which means to undergo distress and embrace the struggle, to strain and toil, to wait and persevere amidst the uncertainties and absurdities of life - and all for a higher and more sacred purpose. The courage to stand up for moral clarity and remain ever-faithful to HaShem outweighs the status of birth.

The message here is quite powerful. We may not all be of the Levitic tribe, nor are we all firstborn, but we would be wise to remember Rambam's extraordinary claim (Sh'mita v'Yovel 13:13) that "Not only the tribe of Levi, but any one of the inhabitants of the world whose spirit generously moti-

vates him... to set himself aside and stand before Gd to serve Him and minister to Him and to know Gd... he is sanctified as holy of holies. Gd will be His portion and heritage forever and will provide what is sufficient for him in this world like He provides for the Kohanim and the Levites." In a word, if we can emulate the virtues of the tribe of Levi, we can all qualify to become "honorary kohanim/leviyim".

There is an additional message here, very much relevant to our beloved State of Israel, currently under such terrible assault. It comes from an address given by Rav Soloveitchik on the 10th anniversary of the State of Israel (1958). In that stirring speech, the Rav stressed that the designation of kedusha-holiness is only acquired through sacrifice. "Whatever is not sacrificed cannot become sanctified. Kedusha is created through suffering, effort, sleepless nights; when one is prepared to fight for something." Moshe is elevated to his great prophetic peak by virtue of his pleading with HaShem for a total of 120 days. The 10th of Tishrei is a sanctified day - Yom Kippur - because of that period of tension and doubt that Moshe endured. David HaMelech is given the credit for having sanctified the Beit HaMikdash even though he did not build it. Why? because he fought and waited, planned and waited only to leave its construction to his son, Shlomo. What sanctified the First Temple,

asked the Rav? David's distress and suffering! And then to the Rav's climactic peroration: The surest sign that the State is Israel partakes of kedusha is the stark reality that its existence is borne through apprehension and danger, pain and sacrifice. It is our very YISURIM that confirms our kedusha status and distinction.

In this regard and in terms of our previous discussion of the great legacy of the tribe of Levi, we might say that the choice of the Leviyim established a merit-based kedusha and not one based solely upon birth order.

We believe, of course, that all of our tribulations and sufferings will ultimately yield the redemption we so fervently pray for. But, if until then, we must deal with the monsters and demonic forces that seek our harm and destruction, we will continue to fight and wait, struggle and hope, because we know that - for My salvation is near to come, and My righteousness to be revealed" (Yeshayahu 56:1). 🙌

## Insights into Halacha

- Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

Ohr Somayach ([yspitz@ohr.edu](mailto:yspitz@ohr.edu))

## The Great Cholent Challenge

*(PhiloTorah editor's notes in green)*

### Cholent is its Name...

Ahh! Nothing is more geshmak than the awesomely redolent aroma emanating from the kitchen and wafting throughout the house on a Shabbat morning. If you are like most of us, you just can't wait until you sink your teeth into that piping hot, special for Shabbat, delicacy - Cholent. This exceptional meat and potato, barley and bean (and whatever else you decide to throw in) concoction of a stew has been around for a very long time. In fact, the eminent Ohr Zaru'a, Rav Yitzchak of Vienna, in the mid-1200s, already mentioned Cholent by name!

Etymologists have a difficult time figuring out where the name comes from. There are several hypotheses regarding it, including the Hebrew / Aramaic SHELAN (food that rested overnight), SHALUK (thoroughly cooked), from the German SHUL ENDE, referring to a food for after shul, and a combination of the French words CHAUD (hot) and LENT (slow). However, most Sefardim stick to the

name given to a hot Shabbat food by the Mishna, CHAMIN.

The origins of this humble dish lie in the words of the renowned Ba'al HaMa'or, Rav Zerachiya HaLevi of Gerona, who lived in the mid-1100s. He writes that it is a Takanat Chachamim (Rabbinic decree) to enjoy the Shabbat with a hot dish. He adds that whoever does not do so is suspect of being a MIN (heretic; a.k.a Apikores)!

The reason is that the heterodox Kara'im (Karaites), who denied the Rabbinic Mesorah, prohibited eating any hot food on Shabbat, due to their rejection of Torah SheB'al Peh (the Oral Law) coupled with their literal interpretation of the pasuk, LO T'VA'ARU AISH B'CHOL MOSHVO-TEICHEM B'YOM HASHABBAT, You shall not kindle fire in any of your dwellings on the Shabbat day" (Sh'mot 35:3). The Ba'al HaMa'or explains that one who refuses to eat a hot dish on Shabbat (cooked before Shabbat, as per the Oral Law) is suspect of following their heretical interpretation of the Torah and not those of our Chachmei HaDorot.

On the other hand, the Ba'al HaMa'or affirms that whoever makes sure to cook, heat up (before Shabbat), and eat a hot dish on Shabbat will merit seeing 'the end of days'. Quite a large reward just for eating Cholent! And this is not just a minority opinion; his

words are codified in halacha by the Rama as a 'Mitzva' and eating Cholent on Shabbat is considered 'Minhag Yisrael' by the Mishna B'rura. In fact, I know of a certain well-known rabbi who, although not enamored of Cholent, nonetheless makes sure to "eat one bean every Shabbat", and that way fulfill "Mitzvat Cholent".

## Serving Up

However, getting the Cholent from a bubbling pot on a blech (a plain sheet of metal placed on the gas burners) onto our plates presents several halachic challenges, as, in our zeal to fulfill this gastronomical Mitzva, we certainly do not want to unintentionally desecrate the Biblical prohibition of BISHUL, cooking on Shabbat. Aside from the issues of SHEHIYA, placing a food on the fire before Shabbat until the time it is being served on Shabbat, and the more stringent CHAZARA, returning food to the (covered) flame on Shabbat, there is also a separate issue of MEIGIS, stirring, which one might possibly violate by doing the simple innocuous action of lifting the lid off of the simmering Cholent pot and replacing it, or just ladling out some Friday night TO'AMEHA Cholent.

*There is an inyan of tasting Shabbat food on Erev Shabbat LICHVOD SHABBAT, to ensure that it is properly cooked. This is referred to as TO'AMEHA.*

Therefore, in order to serve our 'Mitzva Cholent' properly, without Chas V'Shalom unwittingly transgressing any Shabbat prohibitions, authorities have come up with a five-point plan, which enables us to serve a steaming, savory Cholent, and allows us to return it to the blech for seconds. (more Mitzvot!)

Note: This follows the widespread Ashkenazic practice that one must first remove the pot from the fire in order to serve.

Here are the five steps:

The pot of Cholent must be sitting on a covered flame, as a reminder that we cannot adjust the flame on Shabbat.

*Several extensive footnotes add much to the discussion presented here - see the website...*

In Mishnaic and Talmudic terms this is referred to as GARUF V'KATUM, meaning the coals in the ovens were pushed to the side and /or covered up. There is a famous machloket Rishonim whether the key reason for doing this is so there will be a reminder that it is prohibited to stoke the coals and make the food cook faster and better, or whether it is meant to actually lessen the cooking heat. Making sure the flame is covered is a prerequisite for committing CHAZARA on Shabbat in a permitted manner. A blech on the

stovetop is the most commonly known example of this.

*Regarding the Shabbat hot plate (plata), another common method to keep food warm on Shabbat, most contemporary authorities, including Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank, Rav Moshe Feinstein, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rav Ovadiah Hadaya, the Debreciner Rav, Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fischer, Rav Yitzchak Zilber, Rav Eliezer Yehuda Waldman, Rav Ben Zion Abba Shaul, Rav Shmuel HaLevi Wosner, Rav Ovadia Yosef, and Rav Yitzchak Yosef, maintain that it has the halachic status of a blech, since its temperature cannot be changed, and it is only meant to keep food warm, and not actually cook. However, it should be noted that several of these poskim maintain that this halachic dispensation only applies if one is actually unable to cook on the plata. Other authorities feel that even if one can actually cook on said hot plate, the din still applies as it is not the derech to cook on a hot plate, and therefore no issue of MECHEZI K'MEVASHEL arises. Several authorities, on the other hand, including the Chazon Ish, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, and Rav Nissim Karelitz, are stringent that a plata does not constitute a true covered flame, due to a LO PLUG. Rav Moshe Sternbuch rules that only B'SHAAT HAD'CHAK may one be lenient to perform CHAZARA onto a plata. Due to this*

*debate, several authorities maintain that it is preferable to place a layer of thick aluminum foil on the plata before Shabbos, in order to satisfy all opinions.*

The Cholent must be fully cooked.

It must still be hot or at least warm.

One must take it off the fire in order to serve it.

If one wants to keep it hot for later (Fleishig Shalosh Seudot, anyone?) he must have in mind when taking the pot off the fire to serve that he is planning on returning it to the fire.

One must have his hand on it the whole time.

However, in extenuating circumstances, even if one was not planning to return it to the flame, as long as his hand was still on it, he may nevertheless do so. Similarly, if he placed it on the counter (i.e. in order to serve the Cholent), but still intended to return it to the fire, according to the majority consensus, he is permitted to return it to the blech.

## **Sefardic Style**

Common Sefardic practice follows the opinion of the Shulchan Aruch, based on his understanding of the Rambam, that once the Cholent is fully cooked, scooping out from the pot no longer constitutes MEIGIS. Accordingly, one may scoop out and

serve Cholent directly from the pot after it is fully cooked, even while it is still on top of the blech.

However, it should be noted that the Ben Ish Chai and, later, Rav Ben Tzion Abba Shaul, qualified this leniency, explaining that one should only rely on this L'TZORECH MITZVA; otherwise, they maintain that one must take the pot off of the fire before ladling out. Interestingly, the Tzitz Eliezer maintains that Yeshiva bochurim raiding the Cholent pot on a Friday night in order to learn, qualifies as TZORECH MITZVA. Rav Ovadiah Yosef added that if the bochurim in question were trying to save time in order to hurry back to their learning, then certainly even the Ben Ish Chai would agree that it is considered L'TZORECH MITZVA to allow serving off the fire.

## **When in Bnei Brak...**

A third opinion is that of the Chazon Ish. His was a dissenting opinion regarding the permissibility of relying on using a blech, explaining that since a blech does not sufficiently lessen the fire's heat level, as well as merely acting as a cover for the fire, it is not considered a true covered flame. Therefore, he held that one may not put the pot back on a blech on Shabbat. Consequently, he maintained that in order to keep Cholent hot after serving, it is permissible to scoop out Cholent while the pot was

still on the fire, provided that the Cholent was fully cooked and one took care not to actively stir the pot. His brother-in-law, the Steipler Gaon, followed this as well. According to this ruling, once the Cholent is fully cooked, one need not take the pot off the fire in order to serve.

Although, as mentioned previously, most contemporary Ashkenazic authorities did not allow one L'CHATCHILA to scoop out of a hot pot while still on a blech, there is one scenario on which many contemporary authorities rule leniently (relying on the Chazon Ish's shita): if the pot is too heavy to move off of the fire. A prime example of this would be the giant Cholent pot found in many a yeshiva kitchen.

Many decisors, including the Minchas Yitzchak, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, Rav Shmuel HaLevi Wosner, and Rav Moshe Sternbuch, allow one to scoop and serve the Cholent without taking the pot off the blech if it is too heavy to move off the flame. However, it should be noted that Rav Moshe Feinstein was not inclined to rule leniently in scooping out Cholent from a pot on the fire, even if the pot was too heavy to move. Rather, he mandated that several people move it together in order to properly serve the Cholent from off of the fire.

*Quite fascinatingly, it turns out that concerning the simple-sounding, yet*

*quite complicated halachic topic of serving Cholent on Shabbat, the perceived MEIKEL, Rav Moshe Feinstein, who allows CHAZARA onto a blech, is actually the most MACHMIR, as even regarding an industrial-sized Cholent pot, he only allows the Cholent to be served off of the fire. On the other hand, the perceived MACHMIR, the Chazon Ish, who in practice forbids CHAZARA on Shabbat nowadays, is practically more MEIKEL, as I'maaseh, once the Cholent is fully cooked, he allows it to be scooped out and served from the pot while still on the fire.*

Although these procedures and nuances may seem complicated, they are but a small sampling of the numerous intricate halachot that pertain to the prohibition of cooking on Shabbat. It behooves us all to make sure that we are serving our Cholent in the proper halachic way, as, aside for the earthly reward of eating Cholent on Shabbat, the taste of its Mitzva is eternal.

*See website for all the footnotes and sources.*

*Rabbi Spitz's footnotes are very extensive. The ones I decide to include are few among the many. If you want more than this PhiloTorah column provides, click on the website, find the topic and do some more reading.*

*For any questions, comments or for the full Mareh Mekomot / sources, please email the author: [yspitz@ohr.edu](mailto:yspitz@ohr.edu)*

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz serves as the Sho'el U'Meishiv and Rosh Chavura of the Ohr Lagolah Halacha Kollel at Yeshivas Ohr Somayach in Yerushalayim. He also currently writes a contemporary halacha column for the Ohr Somayach website titled "Insights Into Halacha".

[ohr.edu/this\\_week/insights\\_into\\_halacha/](http://ohr.edu/this_week/insights_into_halacha/)

**Disclaimer:** This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz's English halacha sefer, "Food: A Halachic Analysis" (Mosaica/ Feldheim) containing over 500 pages featuring over 30 comprehensive chapters discussing the myriad halachic issues pertaining to food, is now available online and in bookstores everywhere.



## KORACH

**GM** Korach has gathered his gang and is challenging Moshe and claiming that he (Korach) should have been appointed Kohen Gadol, rather

than Moshe's brother, Aharon. In Bamidbar 16:10, Moshe stated things this way -

וַיִּקְרַב אֶתְךָ וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲוִיֶיךָ בְּנֵי־לֵוִי  
אֵתְךָ וּבִקְשִׁיתֶם גַּם־כֹּהֲנָה:

*He (God) drew you near, and all your brothers, the sons of Levi with you, and now you seek the kehuna as well?*

The gimatriya of that pasuk is 2735. Three other p'sukim in Tanach have the same gimatriya, including Sh'mot 31:10 -

וְאֵת בְּגָדֵי הַשָּׂרָד וְאֶת־בְּגָדֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ  
לְאַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן וְאֶת־בְּגָדֵי בָנָיו לְכַהֵן:

*And the meshwork garments, the holy garments for Aharon the kohen, the garments of his sons [in which] to serve [as kohanim]*

This is what Korach sought for himself.

*USFUNEI T'MUNEI CHOL is the title of my book of Gimatriya Matches - IY"H and BE"H. The title translates to Hidden in the Sand. That's how I feel about my Gimatriya searches. Like walking along the beach with a metal detector. Beep-beep-beep. Lean down and find something. Usually, nothing of note. But sometimes you find something special.*

# RED ALERT!

## KORACH

*by Rabbi Eddie Davis (RED)  
of the Young Israel of Hollywood -  
Ft. Lauderdale (Florida)*

## DIVREI TORAH

• Korach was a very smart man, and he was quite wealthy as well. So why is he risking it all by leading a rebellion? Much is written to get an insight in Korach's thinking. The Midrash raises a solid point in Korach's position. The firstborn males were supposed to be the Kohanim, to perform all the rituals in the Mishkan and in the Beit HaMikdash on behalf of the people. They lost that privilege because they were involved in the sin of the Golden Calf. The Leviyim and Kohanim were elevated to take the places of the firstborn since they did not worship the Golden Calf. Aharon is the choice as the Kohen Gadol, but Aharon definitely took part in the sin of the Golden Calf. Aharon should not even have been considered for the job. The Midrash answers the question with a challenge: Take a look at the law of the Para Aduma. And the Midrash does not explain the answer. The law of the Para Aduma is enigmatic at best: one becomes purified by the ritual while another person becomes impure. As we do not understand the Para Aduma, so we do not understand Aharon becoming the Kohen Gadol.

• Korach was misled by what he saw with the divine spirit. The Midrash states that Korach saw that in the future he would have a most famous righteous descendant, the prophet Sh'muel. Seeing the future this way was surely an ingredient in Korach's convincing himself that he was righteous and he was right, for otherwise how would he have such a righteous descendant! This proves to us that if a person is given the gift of seeing the future within the divine spirit does not mean that he is beyond sinning, and sinning big time. Korach's eyes and his heart were terribly misguided by this vision of the future. Korach became convinced that he was right; he was actually blinded by the prospect of having a Shmuel in the family. And so it was. Korach's sons did not follow their father in the rebellion. Emphatically the Torah tells us (in Parshat Pinchas) that Korach's sons did not die (with their father). Korach's sons become the ancestors of Shmuel. So Korach's vision was right on, but he wasn't!

• The Torah lists some individual followers, including On ben Pellet, of the tribe of Reuven, but the Torah does not mention him again as the rebellion progressed. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 16a) states that his wife saved him. She said to her husband: You are not going to gain anything in this rebellion. Right now you are a follower. And even if Aharon is

deposed, you will still remain a follower. But, said On, I promised Korach that I will go with him. She gave her husband some wine to drink, and he fell asleep. And she then sat in the doorway of their tent, and took off her hair covering. When the rebels came by to collect On for the rebellion, they saw her with her hair uncovered, and they went away. One of the takeaway messages from the Talmud was that these rebels were very observant Jews. They were dedicated to keep the Mitzvot. Even though these rebels were challenging Moshe and Aharon, they remained committed to Jewish law. The irony of it all does not go unnoticed.

- The Talmud (Sanhedrin 110a) gives us a Midrashic view of the rebellion: Korach's wife said to him: See what Moshe has done. He himself has become king; his brother he appointed Kohen Gadol; his brother's sons he made vice Kohanim. If T'ruma is brought, Moshe decrees: Let it be for the Kohanim. If Ma'aser (a tithe) is brought, which belongs to you (the Leviyim), he orders: Give a tenth of it to the Kohen. Moreover he has your hair cut off (part of the Levitical purification ritual), and makes sport of you as if you were dirt. Korach said to her: But he has done likewise (had his hair shaved). She continued: Moshe commanded you to set Tzitzit on your garments, but if there is virtue in blue wool, then

bring forth blue wool, and clothe the entire academy with it. The Talmud paints Korach's wife as the instigator to the rebellion. This is in contrast to On ben Pellet's wife who saved her husband. Women have a major influence on their husbands (as it should be), but blessed be those, men and women, who are devout and religious.

- The Talmud continued: "When Moshe heard, he fell on his face" (16:4). What news did he hear? Rabbi Shmuel b. Nachmani said in R. Yonatan's name: That Moshe was suspected of (adultery) with a married woman... the Talmud quotes a verse which teaches that every person warned his wife on Moshe's account, as it is written, "And Moshe took the Mishkan and pitched it outside the camp" (Sh'mot 33:7, to avoid all grounds of suspicion). This Talmudic passage raised a great deal of commentary. It could be that it was allegorical. It is said that if a person strives for a role in leadership, but not for the sake of Heaven, it is seen as an act of adultery. If so, the Midrashic accusation is that Moshe assumed his kingship not for the sake of Heaven. Or possibly a more literal interpretation (which I prefer) is that Moshe pitched his tent outside the camp, where he was alone, without his wife. And women would come there to ask questions of him. Women did not give their jewelry for the Golden Calf. Their husbands would

think that their wives prefer to listen to Moshe than to listen to their husbands. (Note: All deeds of leaders are subject to over-analysis, and subject to misinterpretation!)

- Moshe did not react in haste: “In the morning Hashem will make known the one who is His own and is the holy one...” (16:5). Why did Moshe wait to the next morning? One commentator wrote as follows: Every morning the Manna would descend from Heaven. For the righteous, he would find the Manna at his doorstep. The moderate would have to go out and collect it. The evil people had to go further out and find their Manna (Yoma 75). Moshe would tell the people: wait till morning, and we will all know who is the righteous one in this controversy, by noting where your Manna is placed. This is cute, but I would prefer a simpler explanation. Moshe decided to wait until morning, giving Moshe the opportunity to approach each rebel during the rest of the day to attempt to convince them to give up the rebellion.

- Each time I read this Parsha, there is always a certain amount of uncertainty in figuring out what each rebel wanted. All of them could not have desired to be the Kohen Gadol. Commentators differ as to what Korach really wanted. Some say he wanted to be the Kohen Gadol; others say he wanted to be the head of one

of the Levitical families. This actually supports what our Sages say in Pirkei Avot (5:21): What is an example of a dispute for the sake of Heaven? The dispute between Hillel and Shammai. What is an example of a dispute not for the sake of Heaven? The dispute of Korach and all his company. This latter dispute is actually between Korach and Moshe. Yet the Mishna states Korach and all his company. Now we understand what the Mishna was saying. There was a dispute between Korach on one side and all his company were on different sides because they all strived for a position of Kohanic leadership. No way all of them could be satisfied. Truly a dispute between Korach and his allies.

## Questions by RED

### From the text

1. Who are the three ringleaders of the rebellion? (16:1)
2. What test did Moshe propose in order to determine who is the Kohen Gadol? (16:6,7)
3. How did the 250 rebels die? (16:35)
4. What did Hashem command Moshe to do with those incense pans? (17:3)
5. How many Jews died by the plague that Hashem sent after the rebellion? (17:14)

### From Rashi

6. What question did Korach pose to Moshe (to prove that the Torah is illogical, or that Moshe was making things up)? (16:1)
7. What did Moshe proclaim that he did only as a result of Hashem's command? (16:28)
8. Why did Hashem want the plague to stop by Aharon using incense? (17:13)
9. Why did Hashem choose almond blossoms to sprout on Aharon's staff as a show of his divine appointment? (17:23)
10. If someone of Bnei Yisrael were to trespass and enter the Mishkan, who is held responsible? (18:30)

### From the Rabbis

11. When did Korach's rebellion take place? (Ramban)
12. What was so wondrous about the earth swallowing up Korach and his entourage? We do have earthquakes! (Ramban)
13. Who is responsible to oversee the work of the Kohanim? (Sifre)

### Midrash

14. Which three women in TaNaCh did something to cause their husbands to die?

### Haftara - Shmuel Alef

15. Whom did Samuel crown as the first king of Israel? And where did this occur?

### Relationships

- a) Datan - Aviram
- b) Korach - Aharon
- c) On - Reuven
- d) Itamar - Elazar
- e) Yitzhar - Korach

## **ANSWERS**

1. Korach, Datan, and Aviram
2. Each man would offer incense, and Hashem will choose one.
3. Hashem sent a fire, and it consumed them.
4. Hammer them out as sheets/covering for the Altar.
5. 14,700 people.
6. If a piece of clothing is made completely out of T'cheilet, does it require Tzitzit with T'cheilet?
7. To appoint Aharon as Kohen Gadol, and Aharon's sons as the Kohen Gadol's assistants, and Eltzafan as the leader of the Kehat family.
8. The people were thinking that incense is the killer. Nadav and Avihu died with an incense offering, and so did the 250 rebels. It was time to demonstrate that incense can be a life saver.
9. Almond blossoms rapidly. To say: Anyone who challenges Aharon's position will be punished quickly.
10. The Leviyim.
11. According to the Ramban, the rebellion took place right after the debacle of the Spy Mission (When Moshe's popularity was not so great.) [According to the Ibn Ezra, it occurred right after the Mishkan was erected.]

12. The earth opened up and swallowed ONLY Korach and his entourage and closed up again as if nothing had happened.

13. The Sanhedrin.

14. Chava (Eve), Delila, and Jezebel.

15. Shmuel crowned Sha'ul as king at Gilgal

## **Relationships**

- a) Brothers
- b) First Cousins
- c) Grandson & Grandfather
- d) Brothers
- e) Father & Son