

# DAF HASHAVUA

## קרח | KORACH

### SHABBAT ENDS:

London: 10.28pm  
 Birmingham: 10.42pm  
 Bournemouth: 10.36pm  
 Cardiff: 10.48pm  
 Dublin: 11.08pm  
 Edinburgh: 11.30pm  
 Glasgow: 11.40pm  
 Hull: 11.03pm  
 Leeds: 10.54pm  
 Liverpool: 11.06pm  
 Manchester: 11.00pm  
 Nottingham: 10.56pm  
 Sheffield: 11.02pm  
 Southend: 10.23pm  
 Southport: 11.12pm  
 Jerusalem: 8.30pm



## SIDRA BREAKDOWN

### קֶרַח KORACH

5th Sidra in:

### בְּמִדְבָּר BEMIDBAR

By Numbers:  
**95 VERSES**  
**1,409 WORDS**  
**5,325 LETTERS**

Headlines:  
**REBELLION  
AGAINST MOSHE**

#### KORACH:

Artscroll p.820  
Hertz p.638  
Koren Sacks p.979  
Soncino p.879

#### HAFTARAH:

Artscroll p.1186  
Hertz p.649  
Koren Sacks p.1569  
Soncino p.893

## SIDRA SUMMARY

### 1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – BEMIDBAR 16:1-13

Korach, from the tribe of Levi, conspires with Datan, Aviram and On from the tribe of Reuven. They gather together 250 leading Israelites and challenge Moshe and Aharon's rights to leadership. Moshe tells Korach and his assembly to prepare an incense offering in a fire-pan to bring the next morning. Aharon will do the same; whoever's offering is received by God will indicate the rightful leadership. Moshe tries to dissuade the rebels. Datan and Aviram refuse to speak with Moshe, accusing him of "bringing the nation out of the land of Egypt in order to kill them in the desert".

**Point to Consider:** *Why is Korach's lineage only listed three generations back and not more? (see Rashi to 16:1)*

### 2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 16:14-19

Datan and Aviram continue their tirade against Moshe, who is angered. He declares to God that he has received no personal gain from his leadership. The next morning, Korach and his assembly arrive with their incense offerings at the entrance to the *Ohel Moed* (Tent of Meeting), as does Aharon, accompanied by Moshe.

### 3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 16:20-17:8

God tells Moshe and Aharon to separate themselves from the rest of the nation, as God will immediately destroy Korach and all those people who have been drawn after him, including many of the Israelites (Rashi). Moshe and Aharon plead for mercy. God relents, telling Moshe to instruct the nation to distance themselves from Korach, Datan and Aviram in order to prove their allegiance to Moshe. Datan and Aviram remain defiant. Moshe announces that if Korach and his followers die a normal death, then he, Moshe, is not God's rightful appointee. Yet if the ground swallows them up miraculously, then Moshe's leadership is legitimate. As Moshe finishes speaking, the ground opens up, consuming Korach, some of his followers and all of their property. A fire then consumes Korach's 250 men whom he had incited to join in the rebellion.

Moshe commands Aharon's son Elazar to gather up the copper fire pans of those who died in order to make them into a covering for the *Mizbeach* (Altar). The next day, the people complain to Moshe and Aharon for 'causing' so many deaths.

### 4TH ALIYA (REVI'I) – 17:9-15

In response to the complaints, God threatens to wipe out the people. As a fatal plague breaks out, Moshe tells Aharon to place incense in a fire-pan to gain atonement for the complainers. Aharon does so, managing to stop the plague, but not before it kills 14,700 people.

### 5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 17:16-24

God tells Moshe to gather a staff from each tribe's leader, with the name of the tribe written on the staff. Aharon's name is to be written on the staff of Levi. The staffs are to be left in the *Ohel Moed*, whichever tribe's staff miraculously blossoms is the rightful leader. The leaders do as instructed. The following morning Aharon's staff has blossoms with a bud and almonds.

### 6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 17:25-18:20

God tells Moshe to preserve Aharon's staff as a reminder that he was chosen, lest the people rebel in the future. God reiterates Aharon's duties and the need for the Levi'im to assist him and the other Kohanim. The Kohanim have the privilege of eating certain parts of offerings and certain tithes. The laws of redeeming firstborn male children and bringing firstborn animals as offerings are stated.

### 7TH ALIYA (SHEVI'I) – 18:21-32

The 'first tithe' (*ma'aser rishon*) taken from crops is given to the Levi'im. They need to separate a portion of this tithe to give to the Kohanim.

### HAFTARAH (SHMUEL 11:14-12:22)

The haftarah describes the day on which the prophet Shmuel (Samuel) appoints Shaul (Saul) as the first king of Israel. Shmuel rebukes the nation for demanding a king and emphasises that they still need to fear God and obey His commandments. The righteous Shmuel was descended from Korach and he, like Moshe, declares that he has never taken anything from the people.



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# HEALTHY HAGGLE VS DESTRUCTIVE DIVISION

BY: **RABBI OZER MOSZKOWSKI**

Community Rabbi, Bushey & District United Synagogue

In 2020, Utah Governor Spencer Cox ran an unusual campaign advertisement together with his opponent, Chris Peterson. They openly acknowledged their differences yet pledged to respect the democratic process and the will of the voters. Cox later explained that the message was not about mere politeness, but about something deeper: the importance of healthy conflict. A society without disagreement, he argued, is not harmonious, it is stagnant. The real test of a healthy community is not whether we disagree, but how we disagree.

This timeless insight lies at the heart of *Parashat Korach*.

On the surface, Korach's challenge appears principled and progressive: "The entire congregation is holy, every one of them" (*Bemidbar* 16:3). It sounds egalitarian and almost visionary. Yet our Sages reveal the true motive. Rashi (1040-1105), citing the *Midrash*, explains that Korach's protest was driven by personal envy - specifically, resentment over the appointment of Elitzafan ben Uziel. What seemed like a noble ideological campaign was a personal grievance masquerading as a movement.

In *Pirkei Avot*, our Sages distinguish between two types of disputes. The *Mishnah* (5:17) contrasts a *machloket l'shem shamayim*, an argument for the sake of Heaven, with one that is

not. The model of the former is the enduring debates between the School of Hillel and the School of Shammai; the latter is the rebellion of Korach and his followers.

What separates them? Rabbi Ovadiah Bartenura (1455-1520) explains that an argument for the sake of Heaven is motivated by a sincere pursuit of truth. Its goal is not victory but the clarification and refinement of understanding. Korach's *machloket* (argument), by contrast, was fuelled by a desire for power and honour. The argument was merely a vehicle for personal ambition.

Rabbi Yonoson Eibschutz (1690-1764) offers a practical test: look at how the parties relate to one another outside the heat of the argument. Hillel and Shammai, despite their significant halachic differences, maintained profound mutual respect. Their disagreements remained bounded by deep friendship and shared purpose. Korach's dispute, however, quickly became all-consuming. Once unleashed, the spirit of division poisoned every relationship.

The Torah does not demand uniformity of thought. On the contrary, the richness of *Torah Shebe'al Peh*, the Oral Tradition, is built upon vigorous debate, challenge and refinement. *Machloket*, when properly directed, is one of its greatest

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features. It becomes a powerful tool for growth, but only when the intention is *l'shem shamayim*, directed towards Heaven rather than the self.

Korach's tragic failure was not that he questioned Moshe *Rabbeinu* (our teacher). Judaism has always allowed space for honest questioning of leadership when motivated by truth. His fatal error was that the challenge was never truly about truth. It was about ego. And once ego takes centre stage, even sophisticated arguments become corrupted.

In our pluralistic age, disagreement is inevitable within our communities, families and the wider Jewish world. The question is whether we will engage like Hillel and Shammai, or like Korach. This *parasha* urges us to disagree in a spirit of respect, humility and shared commitment to truth, so that our *machlokot* become a source of depth rather than division.



# THE COMMENTATORS: MAHARAL

BY: **SHIRA JACKSON**  
US Education

In this edition of Daf Hashavua, we bring together two voices from Prague who read the story of Korach through very different lives and very different lenses. The Maharal and the Kli Yakar lived in the same city, served the same community, and confronted many of the same pressures — yet their *parshanut* diverges in striking ways. By placing their readings side by side, we can explore how biography shapes interpretation. Their similarities illuminate their shared world; their differences reveal their unique styles and experiences.

Unlike classical commentators who explain the verse directly, the Maharal writes as a supercommentator, probing what Rashi uncovers beneath the text. His question is not “What does the *pasuk* (verse) mean?” but “What is Rashi revealing?” Serving as Rabbi of Nikolsburg and later Prague’s Altneuschul, he combined Torah with mathematics, astronomy and philosophy, engaging thinkers like Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler. The Golem legend captures how he came to embody both the mystical and the rational.

The Torah introduces the rebellion of Korach with the words “And Korach took (*Bemidbar* 16:1),” and Rashi comments: “He took himself to one side... Why did he quarrel? Because Elitzafan ben Uziel was appointed [as leader of the Kehat family].” This is puzzling. The Torah itself presents Korach’s

argument as ideological: “for the entire congregation is holy.” (*Bemidbar* 16:3) Why does Rashi ignore Korach’s stated claim and instead attribute the rebellion to personal jealousy?

The Maharal explains that Rashi is not trying to interpret the words of the verse but the reality behind it. Korach’s theological argument, the Maharal notes, cannot be the true cause of the rebellion, because it does not explain why Korach acted now, nor why he gathered this particular coalition. The narrative implies a specific trigger. Rashi therefore identifies the essential cause: the appointment of Elitzafan, which Korach perceived as a personal slight. The Maharal writes that Rashi is revealing the underlying motivation, while Korach’s lofty language is merely the argument he used to justify it. In other words, Rashi is diagnosing the psychology of the event, not reporting Korach’s rhetoric.

The Maharal understands why this is necessary; this was not merely an ancient story but a pattern of human behaviour. Prague’s large and influential Jewish community was often strained by internal factionalism and forceful personalities whose persuasive rhetoric could unsettle communal stability, making the dangers of ego driven leadership more than a theoretical concern.

Through Rashi’s brief comment,



“ The legitimacy of a claim depends not on how it is phrased but on the honesty from which it arises.

the Maharal uncovers a deeper truth: that the legitimacy of a claim depends not on how it is phrased but on the honesty from which it arises. We live in a world saturated with slogans, statements and carefully crafted messages — in politics, in public discourse and in the way people present themselves online. Listen not only to what is said but to what may lie beneath it — not every noble sounding argument is born of noble intention, and not every rallying cry reflects the real motivations of those who shout it. They themselves may not even realise they are untrue — some have been deliberately misled, and others have simply learned to believe the stories they tell themselves.

The Torah’s challenge, through Rashi and the Maharal, is to cultivate the courage to ask whether words are being used to illuminate truth or to conceal it — and to ensure that our own speech is anchored in sincerity.

# THE COMMENTATORS:

## KLI YAKAR



The tenure of the Maharal and the Kli Yakar in Prague overlapped slightly. Whereas the Maharal wrote in a period of intellectual ferment and communal factionalism, the Kli Yakar, who succeeded him only a few years later, wrote in the shadow of something far darker: the violence that would soon engulf Prague's Jews.

The Kli Yakar's style is distinctive: morally charged, psychologically attuned, and rooted in *midrash* used not for *peshat* (the plain meaning of the text) but for ethical and spiritual insight. He often expands a single phrase into a reflection on character, intention and the inner life, crafting interpretations that speak to both heart and intellect.

The Kli Yakar reads Korach's proclamation: "For the entire congregation, all of them, are holy," as a political strategy, not a theological claim. Korach, he argues, manipulates the people by appealing to their sense of grievance; a timeless symbol of the demagogue who cloaks ambition in the language of equality. He presents himself as the champion of the masses, insisting that Moshe and Aharon have unjustly elevated themselves. Beneath this rhetoric lies envy, insecurity and a hunger

for power. Korach's language of "holiness for all" is, in his view, a mask for self promotion.

This opinion reflects the world the Kli Yakar inhabited. The most famous example came after his commentary was already written, in February 1611, when Prague was thrown into chaos as the forces of Leopold of Passau<sup>1</sup> invaded the city. Amid the political struggle between the Habsburgs and the Bohemian estates, the Jewish community became a convenient target. Over several days, mobs rampaged through the Jewish quarter, murdering dozens, looting homes and burning property. This event became known as the *Größer Mord* — "the Great Murder." The Kli Yakar lived through it, witnessed the devastation firsthand and later composed special *selichot* to commemorate the tragedy.<sup>2</sup>

He had seen how leaders could inflame crowds, and how ordinary people could be swept into violence by those claiming to defend them. Here the contrast with the Maharal becomes clear. Where the Maharal reads Korach through the lens of human psychology — the lies people tell themselves, the inner distortions that allow ego to masquerade as

**“ His voice, forged in crisis, reminds us how deeply the Torah understands the fragility of community and the responsibility borne by those who lead it**

principle — the Kli Yakar shaped by the violence he witnessed, focuses on the lies we tell others, the manipulative rhetoric that cloaks ambition in virtue and can ultimately destroy the very people it claims to defend.

His reading of Korach is not only exegesis but testimony. It reflects the wounds of Prague, the dangers of charismatic agitators, and the Kli Yakar's conviction that true leadership is measured by humility and moral courage. His voice, forged in crisis, reminds us how deeply the Torah understands the fragility of community and the responsibility borne by those who lead it.

<sup>1</sup> Leopold of Passau (Leopold V, Archduke of Austria) was a Habsburg prince who, in 1611, attempted to seize control of Prague during a period of political instability. The Habsburgs were the ruling Catholic dynasty of much of Central Europe, while the "Bohemian Estates" were the local noble and civic leadership of the Kingdom of Bohemia, many of whom were aligned with Protestant factions. The Jewish community of Prague found itself trapped between these rival powers.

<sup>2</sup> One of these, offers a haunting, first person account of the violence; it appears in Prague manuscripts under the heading "Selichot for the 2nd of Adar — on the Great Decree (הַגְּדוּלָה הַגְּדוּלָה)".



# SEFER YIRMIYAHU (JEREMIAH) – PART 6

## PROPHET TO KING YEHOYAKIM

BY: **PNINA SAVERY**  
Ma'ayan and US Educator

Following the death of King Yoshiyahu, the Egyptians install his son, Yehoyakim, as king. He is forced to tax the people in order to pay the huge taxes demanded by Pharaoh Necho. Anyone who attacks his pro-Egyptian policy is threatened with death. Even Uriah, a prophet who speaks against Yehoyakim's rule, is executed by the king. Not only is he murdered, but his body is cast into the graves of the common people, showing the contempt the king has for anyone who speaks against him (*Yirmiyahu* 26:22-23).

In chapter 22, Yirmiyahu approaches the new king with a prophecy of rebuke. He is not even dealing with idolatry here, but with the corruption and lack of social justice. Yirmiyahu is concerned about the oppressive taxation system that Yehoyakim has put in place and he sees a drastic decline in social morality. He urges the king to seek justice and righteousness, otherwise "this house will be destroyed" (22:5).

When the king refuses to listen, Yirmiyahu turns towards the Temple and addresses the people there in the name of God. He warns them: "If you do not listen to Me and follow the Torah, then this house shall be like Shilo". The idea that the Temple of Jerusalem could be destroyed like the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) terrifies the people. Yirmiyahu is trying to

shock them into action. However, the false prophets and corrupt priests of the Temple reassure the people that the Temple can never be destroyed, and that it will also protect the people (26:7-9).

Following this, Yirmiyahu is put on trial for uttering treasonous words against the Temple. The people defend him, stating that "this man does not deserve the death penalty for he has spoken in the name of God" (26:16). The support of the people is encouraging. For now, Yirmiyahu is safe.

In the fourth year of Yehoyakim's reign, Yirmiyahu is instructed to write a scroll containing his prophecies. He dictates this to Baruch ben Neriah, his scribe, and then instructs him to read it aloud in the Temple. When the king hears about this, he is so angry that he throws the scroll into the fire, ordering the arrest of both Yirmiyahu and Baruch. They are forced to go into hiding in order to save their lives (chapter 36).

It is around this time that Babylon rises as the new superpower, fulfilling Yirmiyahu's prophecies that Babylon will overtake the Egyptians. It is no longer a prophecy but simply current events when Yirmiyahu speaks about the emergence of a powerful nation in the north. The Babylonian leader is called "My servant" by Yirmiyahu, showing

**“ The idea that the Temple of Jerusalem could be destroyed like the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) terrifies the people. Yirmiyahu is trying to shock them into action.**

that he is carrying out God's will (25:9). However, at the same time, Yirmiyahu states that, after 70 years, the Babylonians will meet their downfall, as a punishment for their sins against the Jewish people.

At this point, King Yehoyakim dies. This is not mentioned in *Sefer Yirmiyahu*, and *Sefer Melachim* (Kings) does not record the cause of death. *Divrei HaYamim* (Chronicles) relates that he is deported to Babylon in chains. The medieval commentator Rashi (1040-1105) explains that Yehoyakim was dragged along the ground whilst being deported, which is how he died.

This is the end of a king that rejected and even persecuted Yirmiyahu. Yirmiyahu now has another chance to convince a new king of Yehuda (Judah) to repent. Will this avoid, or at least reduce the severity of the coming destruction?

# THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT KORACH

19-20 JUNE | 5 TAMUZ

## IT'S ALL ABOUT PERSPECTIVE!



BY: **NATANA SABEL**

Tribe gap year student

At the beginning of the *parasha*, Korach, Moshe's (Moses') cousin, challenges Moshe and Aharon's rights to be the leaders of the Jewish people. Alongside 250 Israelite men, Korach accuses Moshe and Aharon of hoarding all the power and expresses his belief that the power should be shared equally amongst everyone. During the Jewish people's time in the desert, Moshe encountered many different complaints from the

nation but this situation was a first of its kind. This was more than just a complaint about the lack of food and the people not remembering and appreciating the powers of God - this was a targeted and personal attack on Moshe and Aharon. Moshe's initial response to the rebellion was rational - he told Korach and his men to bring an offering of incense the next day, and God would either accept or reject their offering. Moshe doesn't stop after proposing this test. Moshe reminded Korach that he was a Levi, of what he already had and he encouraged Korach to be satisfied with his position.

Don't get me (or Moshe!) wrong, of course we understand that it is

important to have goals and it is even necessary to ensure that you have something to work towards, but alongside this, it is vital to maintain a positive outlook on your position in life. Korach was jealous of Moshe and Moshe's response highlights the best way to react to jealousy. We learn that jealousy is best combated by humility and that we should always trust in God's plan.

If you ever find yourself jealous of your friends or anyone around you, try and remind yourself of the ways to combat jealousy we learn from Moshe, and focus on the positive difference that a shift in perspective can make!  
Shabbat Shalom

### Parasha Wordsearch

Find these words in the grid. The words can go in any direction and can share letters as they cross over each other.

W	O	B	T	M	S	Y	G	X	U	H	X	V	H	N
L	Y	T	I	L	I	M	U	H	K	P	C	L	E	G
S	X	B	G	U	A	V	E	C	J	I	U	S	Q	F
S	S	B	R	J	Q	B	E	H	R	Q	F	G	W	G
K	P	E	Z	R	C	G	P	L	S	R	A	W	N	N
Y	J	E	H	P	N	K	A	J	F	A	D	W	K	V
J	L	F	R	S	O	J	Y	D	C	H	U	X	P	
P	N	M	R	S	O	R	E	D	A	E	L	P	T	U
S	R	S	B	I	P	M	J	A	P	Q	C	H	E	L
D	B	H	K	K	O	E	W	Z	L	B	D	R	T	N
O	B	F	Q	O	N	G	C	A	O	O	U	V	D	I
O	F	F	E	R	I	N	G	T	A	D	U	J	O	U
U	P	Z	N	A	O	D	H	M	I	Q	R	S	C	I
T	D	H	V	C	G	S	L	P	B	V	U	S	Y	C
N	O	R	A	H	A	W	H	L	A	B	E	I	P	W

- MOSHE
- HASHEM
- KORACH
- OFFERING
- JEALOUSY
- HUMILITY
- PERSPECTIVE
- AHARON
- LEADER
- LEVI





# THE TRIBE SCRIBE

KORACH: HEATED DISCUSSIONS!

IN THIS WEEK'S PARASHA, WE MEET **KORACH**, WHO CHASED GLORY, PICKED A HUGE FIGHT WITH **MOSHE** (MOSES) AND **AHARON** (AARON) - AND IT DIDN'T END WELL! THE **MISHNA** (ORAL **TORAH**) SAYS THAT **KORACH'S** ARGUMENT IS THE WORST KIND! BUT GUESS WHAT - IT ALSO TALKS ABOUT GOOD ARGUMENTS! SO HOW DO YOU ARGUE THE RIGHT WAY?

THE GREAT SAGES **HILLEL** AND **SHAMMAI** ARGUED ALL THE TIME - BUT TO FIND TRUTH, **KORACH** ARGUED FOR POWER AND HONOUR. HE FELT THAT HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN A LEADER.



ASK YOURSELF, 'AM I TRYING TO LEARN, OR JUST WIN?' **RABBI LORD SACKS** EXPLAINS THAT THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF ARGUMENTS:

1. TRUTH (GOOD)
2. VICTORY (LIKE **KORACH** / VERY BAD). CHECK YOUR GOAL BEFORE YOU BEGIN!

Tip: Be like Hillel and Shammai; not like Korach!

NO NAME-CALLING OR PUT-DOWNS. TRUTH ARGUMENTS DON'T USE INSULTS OR PERSONAL ATTACKS - ONLY RESPECTFUL WORDS.

LOOK FOR WHAT'S UNDERNEATH. **KORACH** SAID, 'IT'S NOT FAIR!' BUT REALLY WANTED A BIGGER ROLE. SOMETIMES ARGUMENTS ARE ABOUT FEELINGS, NOT JUST FACTS.

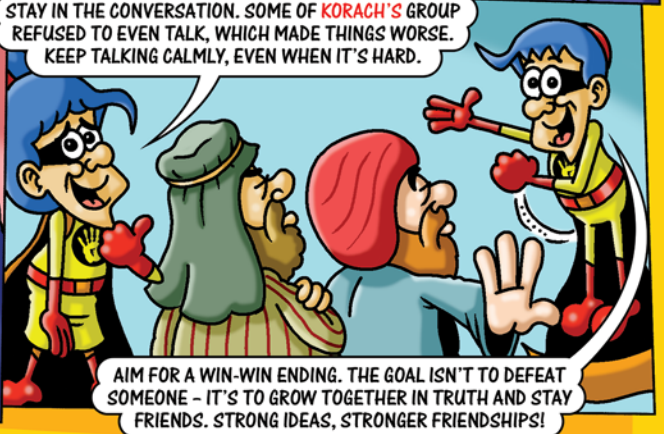


GUESS WHAT?! IT'S OK TO BE WRONG! IF YOU LOSE AN ARGUMENT, BUT LEARN THE TRUTH, YOU STILL WIN.



IN HIS BOOK "**BEYOND DISPUTE**", **DANIEL TAUB** GIVES SOME TOP TIPS FOR CONSTRUCTIVE DISAGREEMENT.

WHEN IN DOUBT, HEAR THEM OUT! LISTEN PROPERLY BEFORE JUMPING IN.



STAY IN THE CONVERSATION. SOME OF **KORACH'S** GROUP REFUSED TO EVEN TALK, WHICH MADE THINGS WORSE. KEEP TALKING CALMLY, EVEN WHEN IT'S HARD.

AIM FOR A WIN-WIN ENDING. THE GOAL ISN'T TO DEFEAT SOMEONE - IT'S TO GROW TOGETHER IN TRUTH AND STAY FRIENDS. STRONG IDEAS, STRONGER FRIENDSHIPS!



IN **JEWISH** LEARNING, WE USE **CHAVRUTA** - LEARNING WITH A PARTNER. WHY? BECAUSE THINKING TOGETHER MAKES IDEAS STRONGER! AND ARGUING? THAT'S NOT A PROBLEM - IT'S PART OF THE PROCESS! LIKE A 'THINKING WORKSHOP' WHERE IDEAS MIX AND GROW.



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Tribe is the Young People's Department of the United Synagogue: Creating a future for our community through engaging, educating and inspiring the next generation.