

EARTH TO KORACH COME IN KORACH

Source Materials
Rabbi Efrem Goldberg
reg@brsonline.org

PARASHAS KORACH

16

Rebellion in the Wilderness

Korah son of Izhar son of Kohath son of Levi* separated himself, with Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth, the offspring of Reuben. They stood before Moses with two hundred and fifty men from the Children of Israel, leaders of the assembly, those summoned for meeting, men of renown. They gathered together against Moses and against Aaron and said to them, "It is too much for you! For the entire assembly — all of them — are holy and HASHEM is among them; why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of HASHEM?"

Moses heard and fell on his face.

He spoke to Korah and to his entire assembly, saying, "In the morning Hashem will make known the one who is His own and the holy one, and He will draw him close to Himself, and whomever He will choose, He will draw close to Himself. Do this: Take for yourselves fire-pans — Korah and his entire assembly — and put fire in them and place incense upon them before HASHEM tomorrow. Then the man whom HASHEM will choose — he is the holy one. It is too much for you, O offspring of Levi!"

Moses said to Korah, "Hear now, O offspring of Levi: Is it not enough for you that the God of Israel has segregated you from the assembly of Israel to draw you near to Himself, to perform the service of the Tabernacle of HASHEM, and to stand before the assembly to minister to them? And He drew you near, and all your brethren, the offspring of Levi, with you — yet you seek priesthood, as well! Therefore, you and your entire assembly that are joining together are against HASHEM! And as for Aaron — what is he that you protest against him?"

Moses summons Dathan and Abiram

Moses sent forth to summon Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, but they said, "We shall not go up! It is not enough that you have brought us up from a land flowing with milk and honey* to cause us to die in the Wilderness, yet you seek to dominate us, even to dominate further? Moreover, you did not bring us to a land flowing with milk and honey nor give us a heritage of field and vineyard! Even if you would gouge out the eyes of those men, we shall not go up!"

This distressed Moses greatly, and he said to HASHEM, "Do not turn to their gift-offering! I have not taken even a single donkey of theirs, nor have I wronged even one of them."

Moses said to Korah, "You and your entire assembly, be before HASHEM — you, they, and Aaron — tomorrow. Let each man take his fire-pan and you shall place incense on them and you shall bring before HASHEM each man with his fire-pan — two hundred and fifty fire-pans; and you and Aaron, each man with his fire-pan."

So they took — each man his fire-pan — and they placed fire on them and put incense on them; and they stood at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, with Moses and Aaron. Korah gathered the entire assembly to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of HASHEM appeared to the entire assembly.

God responds amid this assembly, and I shall destroy them in an instant! They fell on their faces and said, "O God, God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and You be angry with the entire assembly?"

HASHEM spoke to Moses saying, "Speak to the assembly, saying,

פרשת קרח

טז

וַיִּקַּח קִרְחַן בֶּן-יִזְחָר בֶּן-קֹהַת בֶּן-לֵוִי וְדָתָן וְאָבִינָדָב בְּנֵי אֶלִיָּאֵב וְאֶת-בְּנֵי-פִלֵּת בְּנֵי רְאוּבֵן; וַיִּקְמוּ לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן שֵׁם מִבְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲמִשִּׁים וַיִּמְאֲתוּם וְנִשְׂאוּ עִדָּה קִרְאִי מוֹעֵד אֲנֹשֵׁי-שָׂם; וַיִּקְהָלוּ עַל-מִשְׁחֵה יְהוָה אֲהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵיהֶם כֹּה-לָכֶם בְּיַד כָּל-הָעֵדָה כָּלֶם קִדְשִׁים וּבְחוּבֵכֶם יְהוָה וּמְרִיעֵה תוֹרַתְשָׂאוּ עַל-קֹהֵל יְהוָה; וַיִּשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה וַיַּפֵּל עַל-פָּנָיו; וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל-קִרְחַן וְאֶל-כָּל-הָעֵדָה לֵאמֹר בְּקִרְי וְיָדַע יְהוָה אֶת-אֲשֶׁר-לִי וְאֶת-הַקְּדוֹשׁ

וְהַקָּרִיב אֲלֵיו וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר-בּוֹ יִקְרִיב אֲלָיו; וְאֵת עֲשׂוֹ קָחוּ לָכֶם מִחוּחוֹת קִרְחַן וְכָל-עֵדָהוּ; וְהִנְנוּ-בֵּיתָו אֲשֶׁר נִשְׂמַע עֲלֵינוּ א וְקָטַרְתָּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה מִלֶּחֶר וְהָיָה אֲשֶׁר-יִבְחַר יְהוָה הוּא יִקְדֹּשׁ רַב-לָכֶם בְּנֵי לֵוִי; וְאִמְרוּ מִשְׁחֵה אֶל-קִרְחַן שְׂמוּעָה נָא בְּנֵי לֵוִי הֲמַעַט מִכֶּם כִּי-הִבְדִּיל אֲלֵינוּ יְשׂרָאֵל אֶתְכֶם מֵעַדְתָּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַקְרִיב אֶתְכֶם אֲלֵיו לַעֲבֹד אֶת-עֲבֹדַת

מִשְׁכַּן יְהוָה וְלַעֲמֹד לִפְנֵי הָעֵדָה לְשֹׁרְתָם; וַיִּקְרַב אֲהֲרֹן וְאֶת-כָּל-אֹהֲרֵי בְנֵי-לֵוִי אֲמָרוּ וּבִקְשׁוּתְכֶם גַּם-כֹּהֲנֵינוּ; לָכוֹ אֲמַר וְכָל-עֵדָתְךָ הַנְּעִדִים עַל-יְהוָה וְאֲהֲרֹן מִדֵּי-הוּא כִּי תִלְעִינוּ [וְחָלוּנוּ כִּי] עֲלֵינוּ; וַיִּשְׁלַח מֹשֶׁה קִרְחַן מֶאֱרֶץ זָבֹת חֶלֶב וְדָבַשׁ וְהִמְיִתְנוּ בַמִּדְבָּר כִּי-שָׂתַבְרָה עֲלֵינוּ גַם-הַשְׂתַּבְרָה; אֲפֹ לֹא אֶל-אֶרֶץ זָבֹת חֶלֶב וְדָבַשׁ הִבְרִיאְתֶּם וְהִתְנוּ-לָנוּ וְנִחַלַת

שָׂדֶה וְכֹרֶם הַעֵינִי הַאֲנָשִׁים הָעַם תִּנְשָׂר לֹא נַעֲלָה; וַיַּחַר לְמֹשֶׁה מְאֹד וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-יְהוָה אֶל-מִנְחָתְךָ לֹא חָמוֹר אֲחֵד מִדֶּם נִשְׂאוּתִי וְלֹא הִדְרַעְתִּי אֶת-אֲחֵד מִדֶּם; וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-קִרְחַן אֲמַר וְכָל-עֵדָתְךָ הָיוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֲמַר נָדָם וְאֲהֲרֹן מִחֵר; וַיִּקְחוּ אִישׁ מִחוּחַתּוֹ וַיִּתְנוּ עֲלֵיהֶם אֲשׁ וַיִּשְׂמוּ עֲלֵיהֶם קִטְרוֹת וַיַּעֲמִדוּ פָתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיִּמְשֹׁה וְאֲהֲרֹן; וַיִּקְהָל

כָּל-כָּל-הָעֵדָה; וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אֲהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: הִבְרָלוּ מִחוּר הָעֵדָה הַזֹּאת וְאֲכַלְהָ אֲתָם כְּרֹגַע; וַיַּפִּלוּ עַל-פְּנֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל אֲלֹהֵי כְרוּחוֹת לְכָל-בָּשָׂר הָאִישׁ אֲחֹרַי יִחַטָּא וְעַל-כֵּן הָעֵדָה וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: דַּבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-הָעֵדָה לֵאמֹר

16:3. Korah began his tirade by accusing Moses and Aaron of selfishly taking power and prestige for themselves at the expense of the rest of the nation, which was just as qualified as they.

16:13-14. They had the gall to describe the land of their servitude with the same words God had used to praise the Promised Land

Parashas Korach

Korah's genealogy stops with Levi, and omits the name of Jacob, because the Patriarch prayed on his deathbed (Genesis 49:6) that his name not be associated with Korah's assembly (Rashi).

The presence of such a respected delegation naturally lent credence to Korah's grievances.

Introduction to "Judaism A to Z" The Common Sense Rebellion

MIDRASH RABBAH (NUMBERS 17)

3. NOW KORAH... TOOK. What is written in the preceding passage? *Bid them that they make them . . . fringes . . . and that they put with the fringe of each corner a thread of blue* (Num. xv, 38). Korah jumped up and asked Moses: 'If a cloak is entirely of blue, what is the law as regards its being exempted from the obligation of fringes?' Moses answered him: 'It is subject to the obligation of fringes.' Korah retorted: 'A cloak that is entirely composed of blue cannot free itself from the obligation, yet the four blue threads do free it! If,' he asked again, 'a house is full of Scriptural books, what is the law as regards its being exempt from the obligation of mezuzah?'² He answered him: 'It is under the obligation of having a mezuzah.' 'The whole Torah,' he argued, 'which contains two hundred and seventy-five sections,³ cannot exempt the house, yet the one section⁴ in the mezuzah exempts it! These are things,' he continued, 'which you have not been commanded, but you are inventing them out of your own mind!' Hence it is written, **KORAH . . . TOOK (WAYYIḲḲAH)**. **WAYYIḲḲAH** cannot but signify discord, his heart having carried him away; as is borne out by the text, *Why doth thy heart carry thee away—yikḳahaka* (Job xv, 12)? This explains what Moses said to him in the text, *Is it but a small thing . . . that the God of Israel hath separated you?* (Num. xvi, 9).¹ The Sages said: Korah was a very clever man and one of the bearers of the ark; as it says, *But unto the sons of Kohath gave he none, because the service of the holy things belonged unto them* (ib. vii, 9), and Korah was the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath. [When Moses commanded 'That they put with the fringe of each corner a thread of blue', Korah instantly gave orders and had two hundred and fifty cloaks of blue made, in which the two hundred and fifty heads of Sanhedrin who rose against Moses wrapped themselves; as it says, *And they rose up in face of Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty men; they were princes of the congregation, the elect men of the assembly* (ib. xvi, 2). Korah rose and made for them a feast at which they wrapped themselves in the blue cloaks. Aaron's sons came to receive their dues, viz. the breast and the shoulder.² They [Korah's party] stood up in front of them and said to them: 'Who commanded you to receive these gifts? Is it not Moses? We shall not give anything! The Omnipresent did not command us to do such a thing!'

RASHI (NUMBERS 15:1)

He arose and assembled two hundred and fifty (men, fitted to be) the heads of the Sanhedrin	עָמַד וְכִנְס רַ"נ רָאשֵׁי סִנְהֶדְרָאוֹת,
the majority of them of the tribe of Reuben, his neighbors,	רֶבֶן מִשְׁבֵּט רְאוּבֵן שְׁכֵנָיו,
and these were Elizur the son of Shedeur,	וְהֵם אֵלִיצוּר בֶּן שְׂדִיאוּר
and his companions, and others similar to him,	וְחֻבְרָיו וְכִיּוֹצֵא בּוֹ,
as it is stated (v. 2), "princes of the congregation, the elect men of the assembly";	שְׂנַאֲמָר: "נְשִׂאֵי עֵדָה קְרָא מוֹעֵד"
and further it states (Num. 1.16),	וְלִהְלֵךְ הוּא אוֹמֵר (בְּמִד' א):
"These were the elect of the congregation."	"אֵלֶּה קְרוּאֵי הָעֵדָה וְגו'."
He clad them in garments made entirely of blue wool,	וְהִלְבִּישׁן טְלִיתוֹת שְׂכָלָן תְּכֵלֶת.
they came and stood before Moses,	בָּאוּ וְעָמְדוּ לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה,
and said to him; A garment made entirely of blue wool,	אָמְרוּ לוֹ: טְלִית שְׂכָלָה תְּכֵלֶת
does it require fringes or is it exempt?	חִיבֵת בְּצִיצִית אוֹ פְטוּרָה?
(Moses) said to them: It does require.	אָמַר לָהֶן: חִיבֵת.
They began to laugh at him:	הִתְחִילוּ לְשַׂחֵק עֲלָיו,
Is it possible that a garment (made) of another material,	אֶפְשָׁר טְלִית שֶׁל מִין אַחֵר
(that) one thread of blue wool	חוט אֶחָד שֶׁל תְּכֵלֶת
exempts it (i. e., makes it ritually correct),	פּוֹטְרָה,
(yet) this which is made entirely of blue wool	זוֹ שְׂכָלָה תְּכֵלֶת
shall not exempt itself? (Tanḥuma).	לֹא תִפְטוֹר אֶת עֲצָמָה? (תַּנְחֻמָּה):

EXODUS (35:31)

³⁰ Moses said to the Children of Israel, "See, HASHEM has proclaimed by name, Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. ³¹ He filled him with Godly spirit, with wisdom, insight, and knowledge, and with every craft — ³² to weave designs, to work with gold, silver, and copper; ³³ stone-cutting for setting, and wood-carving — to perform every craft of design. ³⁴ He gave him the ability to teach, him and Oholiab, son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. ³⁵ He filled them with a wise heart to do every craft of the carver, weaver of designs, and embroiderer — with the turquoise, purple, and scarlet wool, and the linen — and the weaver; the artisans of every craft and makers of designs.

ויאמר משה אל בני ישראל ראו קרא יהוה בשם בצלאל בן-אורי בן-חור למטה יהודה: וימלא אתו רוח אלהים בחכמה בתבונה ובדעת ובכל-מלאכה: ולחשב מחשבת לעשות בזהב ובכסף ובנחשת: ובחרשת אבן למלאות ובחרשת עץ לעשות בכל-מלאכת מחשבת: ולהורת נתן בלבבו הוא ואהליאב בן-אחיסמר למטה-דן: מלא אתם חכמת לב לעשות כל-מלאכת חרש וחשב ורקם בתכלת ובארגמן בתולעת השני ובשש וארג עשי כל-מלאכה וחשבי מחשבת:

SIDDUR - AMIDAH

אתה חונן לאדם דעת, ומלמד לאנוש בינה. חננו מאתך דעה בינה והשכל. ברוך אתה יהוה, חונן הרעת.

אתה You graciously endow man with wisdom* and teach insight to a frail mortal. Endow us graciously from Yourself with wisdom, insight, and discernment. Blessed are You, HASHEM, gracious Giver of wisdom.

RASHI (NUMBERS 15:6)

6. This do: take you censers } זאת עשו קחורלכם מחותות.

Why did he choose to command them thus? } מה ראה לומר להם כך?

(Moses) said to them: } אמר להם:—

Among the heathens, there are many customs } בדרך הגוים יש נימוסים הרבה

and many priests, } וכומרים הרבה,

and (Other editions: not all of them) all of them assemble in one house; } וכלם (ס"א ואין כלם) מתקבצים בבית אחד,

as for us, we have only one Lord, } אנו אין לנו אלא ה' אחד,

one ark, } ארון אחד,

and one Torah, } ותורה אחת,

and one altar, } ומזבח אחד,

and one High Priest, } וכהן גדול אחד,

and you are two hundred and fifty men, } ואתם ר"ן איש

(each) seeking the high priesthood; } מבקשים כהנה גדולה,

I too desire this. } אף אני רוצה בכך,

Here you have the service most beloved of all, } היא לכם תשמיש קביב מכל,

that is the incense, the most beloved of all offerings, } היא הקטרת הקביבה מכל הקרבנות,