HADAR Children & Families

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# DEVASH

Korah קוֹרַח


כ"ט סִיוָן – ה' תַּמּוּז תשפ"ו June 14–20, 2026


## מָה בַּפָּרָשָׁה • In This Week's Parashah

- Korah leads a rebellion against Moshe and Aharon. He is joined by Datan, Aviram, and 250 others.
- Moshe sets up a test. Aharon and the 250 others will bring קְטֹרֶת (ketoret, incense) offerings in מַחְתּוֹת (mahtot, firepans). Everyone will see which ketoret God chooses.
- The earth opens up and swallows Korah and those who stuck with him. A fire consumes the 250 people holding the mahtot.
- The mahtot from the ketoret test are hammered into a cover for the מִזְבֵּחַ (mizbei'ah, altar) as a reminder of this event.
- Benei Yisrael continue to complain, and God sends a plague. Aharon stands in front of the people to protect them, and he uses the same ketoret to stop the plague.
- Moshe collects a staff from each שֵׁבֶט (shevet, tribe). Aharon's staff represents Shevet Levi. The next morning, Aharon's staff miraculously blossoms with almonds.
- It's clear that God chooses the כֹּהֲנִים (kohanim, priests) and לְוִיִּם (Levi'im, Levites). The parashah describes some gifts and privileges they receive in exchange for their work in the mishkan.



## פְּשַׁט הַפְּסוּקִים • Understanding the Verses

Before or after Shabbat, scan to listen to a discussion of these pesukim on the Korah episode of TORAH TIME!

What kinds of people make good leaders? What kinds of values and traits do they have?

Korah and his gang had a particular view of leadership. Here's what they said:

**Bemidbar 16:2-3**

They rose up against Moshe,
together with 250 Israelites, chiefs of the community, chosen in the assembly, respected people.

They combined against Moshe and Aharon and said to them, "You have gone too far! For all the community are holy, all of them, and God is in their midst. Why do you raise yourselves above God's congregation?"

**במדבר טז:ב-ג**

וַיָּקֻמוּ לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה
וַאֲנָשִׁים מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲמִשִּׁים וּמָאתָיִם
נְשִׂיאֵי עֵדָה קְרִאֵי מוֹעֵד אַנְשֵׁי שֵׁם:

וַיִּקָּהֲלוּ עַל מֹשֶׁה וְעַל אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם
רַב לָכֶם כִּי כָל הָעֵדָה כֻּלָּם קְדֹשִׁים
וּבְתוֹכָם ה'
וּמַדּוּעַ תִּתְנַשְּׂאוּ עַל קְהַל ה':



- What do you think of Korah's argument? Does it make sense?
- Why were Moshe and Aharon acting as leaders of the people if they are all holy? Who made them leaders?
- In the Torah, it's clear that God chooses Moshe and Aharon, and punishes Korah. Why do you think that is? What could that tell us about Korah's argument, or about what he really wanted?
- What positive role could leaders play in our lives? Can you think of a time when you did something good as a leader? What kind of leadership is not good? What made Moshe and Aharon the right kind of leaders?

## מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

The Torah tells us who led the rebellion.

**Bemidbar 16:1**

Now Korah, son of Yitzhar son of Kehat son of Levi, took,
along with Datan and Aviram sons of Eliav,
and On son of Pelet—descendants of Reuven.

**במדבר טז:א**

וַיִּקַּח קֹרַח בֶּן יִצְהָר בֶּן קְהָת בֶּן לֵוִי
וְדָתָן וַאֲבִירָם בְּנֵי אֱלִיאָב
וְאוֹן בֶּן פֶּלֶת בְּנֵי רְאוּבֵן׃

Bzzzz
A lot of midrashim are **bugged** by something unusual in the Torah text

Korah was jealous! He wanted power for himself because he was also from the שֵׁבֶט (shevet, tribe) of Levi, just like Moshe and Aharon (see 16:7 and also check out Rashi on 16:1). But this pasuk lists three people from shevet Reuven who also led the rebellion. How did Datan, Aviram, and On get involved? What did they have to do with this Levi rivalry?



**Tanhuma Korah 4**

From here our Sages said, "Oy to the wicked one, and oy to their neighbor."

For Datan and Aviram were killed because of Korah's argument, since they were Korah's neighbors. Korah lived to the south [of the mishkan], as it says, "The families of the children of Kehat were to camp along the south side of the mishkan" (Bemidbar 3:29). The flag of Reuven was next to them, as it says, "The flag of the camp of Reuven will be to the south" (Bemidbar 2:10). And they joined them in the rebellion.

**תנחומא קרח ד**

מִכָּאן אָמְרוּ חֲכָמֵינוּ זִכְרוֹנָם לִבְרָכָה,
אוֹי לָרָשָׁע וְאוֹי לִשְׁכֶנְוֹ.

שֶׁהָרֵי דָּתָן וַאֲבִירָם נֶאֶבְדוּ בְּמַחֲלֹקֶתוֹ
שֶׁל קֹרַח, לְפִי שֶׁהָיוּ שְׁכֵנִים לְקֹרַח,
שֶׁהָיָה שָׁרוּי בַּדָּרוֹם, דִּכְתִיב: מִשְׁפְּחוֹת
בְּנֵי קְהָת יַחֲנוּ עַל יֶרֶךְ הַמִּשְׁכָּן
תֵּימָנָה (במדבר ג:כט). דִּגְלוֹ שֶׁל
רְאוּבֵן סָמוּךְ לָהֶם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: דֶּגֶל
מַחֲנֵה רְאוּבֵן תֵּימָנָה (במדבר ב:י),
וְנִשְׁתַּתְּפוּ עִמָּהֶם.

This midrash points out how the people around you can sometimes be a bad influence. The tribe of Reuven lived next to Korah and his family. They must have



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spent so much time together, and this must have made some of Korah's attitude rub off on Datan and Aviram.

- Do the people around you change the way you think about things? Have you ever done something only because your friends were doing it?
- A mishnah (Avot 2:9) asks: What's the best path in life? One of the answers comes from R. Yosei: Have a good neighbor. What's so valuable about a good neighbor? Can you think of a time when your neighbors, friends, or family influenced your choices or actions in a positive way?
- How can you act as a good neighbor?



## פֵּרוּשִׁים • Commentary

After Korah's rebellion, God reaffirms the promise to Aharon that he and his descendants will be כֹּהֲנִים (kohanim, priests) forever. God describes the service of the kohanim as עֲבֹדַת מַתָּנָה (avodat mattanah, service of a gift). **What kind of gift is this? A gift from whom to whom?**

**Rashi (France, 1,000 years ago)**

God said, "I give the priesthood to you kohanim as a gift."

**רש"י**

בְּמַתָּנָה נְתַתִּיהָ לָכֶם:

**R. Samson Raphael Hirsch (Germany, 150 years ago)**

All the acts performed in the mishkan reach their fullest expression in the idea of mattanah. It was a service of giving oneself up, of devotion.

**רש"ר הירש**

כָּל הַמַּעֲשִׂים הַנַּעֲשִׂים בַּמִּקְדָּשׁ
מְקַבְּלִים אֶת בִּטּוּיָם הַמָּלֵא
בַּמֻּשָּׂג "מַתָּנָה"; זוֹהִי עֲבוֹדָה
שֶׁל וִתּוּר עַצְמִי, שֶׁל מְסִירוּת.

- One of these פַּרְשָׁנִים (parshanim, commentators) thinks that God gave the gift of כְּהֻנָּה (kehunah, priesthood) to Aharon and his descendants. The other one thinks that it's the kohanim who are being told to offer themselves as a gift. Which one is which?
  - On the one hand: Why might it be important to remind the people in charge that their power was given to them as a gift? What does that teach us about the leadership of the kohanim?
  - On the other hand: Why might it be important for the people in charge to remember that the role of leader is to give of themselves for a higher cause?
- Why might God tell this to Aharon just after Korah's rebellion? Did Korah understand these lessons about the priesthood?
- What does it mean to give yourself over as a gift? How can you become a gift to others and to God?





## דַּקָּה שֶׁל דִּיוּן • One-Minute Debate

**Debate: Anybody can be a leader.**

### *How to play:*

Here are some arguments to get you started, but try to come up with your own. Then debate someone!

For a true one-minute debate, give each side 30 seconds to make its best case.





### *Agree!*

- Everyone can learn leadership skills. Leadership training can help people who aren't "natural leaders."
- We all have unique skills and we all have something we can contribute to the greater good.
- Leadership is more about how you behave in different situations than what kind of job or role you have.



### *Disagree!*

- Some people just prefer to follow. Not everyone is cut out to be a leader.
- If you have bad behavior or bad values, you shouldn't be a leader. That would not be good for the community.
- Sometimes, God chooses a leader for you, and you have to respect that no matter what.



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# שְׁאֵלוֹת הַשָּׁבוּעַ • Parashah Scavenger Hunt

**aliyot:**
**1)** Bemidbar 16:1 to 16:13
**2)** 16:14 to 16:19
**3)** 16:20 to 17:8
**4)** 17:9 to 17:15
**5)** 17:16 to 17:24
**6)** 17:25 to 18:20
**7)** 18:21 to 18:32

**haftarah:** Shmuel Alef 11:14–12:22

The answers to the first seven questions can be found in the matching numbered aliyah in the Torah reading. The answers to questions 8 and 9 are harder and can come from anywhere in the parashah. The answer to question 10 is in this week's haftarah.

*Good luck!*



1. What place do Datan and Aviram describe as "flowing with milk and honey"?

2. What has Moshe **not** taken from any of Korah's followers?

3. Who got eaten up by fire?

4. How many times does it say that the plague started, and how many times does it say that the plague ended?

5. What was written on the staff for the tribe of Levi?

6. Aharon and his descendants get a lot of privileges, but what do they not get?

7. Where are Bnei Yisrael instructed to stay away from?



8. How many times do people fall on their faces in our parashah? When?

9. Who receives a one-percent gift?

10. **From the haftarah:** What does Shmuel say that is nearly identical to something Moshe says in our parashah?

* Look for the answers on page 11!

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## רֶגַע שֶׁל עִבְרִית • A Moment of Hebrew

**Bemidbar 16:7**

"Place fire in them and lay ketoret (incense) on them before God tomorrow. The person who God **will choose** is the holy one. You have gone too far, children of Levi!"

**במדבר טז:ז**

וּתְנוּ בָהֵן אֵשׁ וְשִׂימוּ עֲלֵיהֶן קְטֹרֶת לִפְנֵי ה' מָחָר וְהָיָה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר **יִבְחַר** ה' הוּא הַקָּדוֹשׁ רַב לָכֶם בְּנֵי לֵוִי:




## *Find the Word!*

Yitro, Moshe's father-in-law, gives Moshe advice to appoint people who can help him judge Benei Yisrael. Can you find where this שֹׁרֶשׁ (shoresh, root) describes Moshe choosing these judges? (Hint: Look at Shemot 17.)



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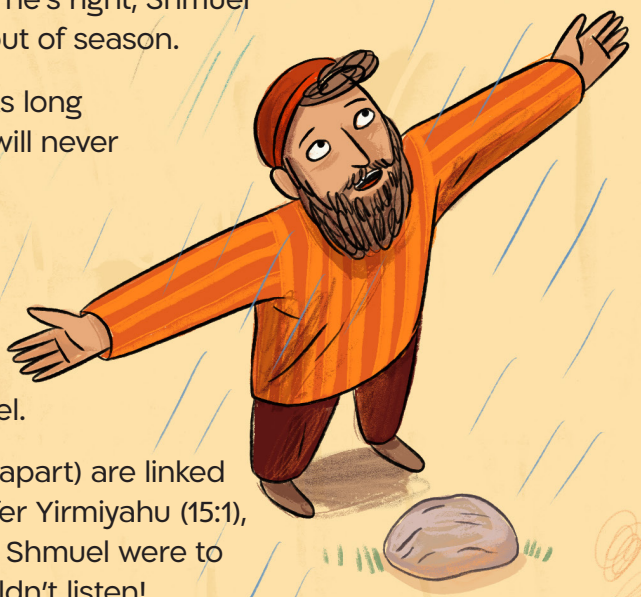
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## הַפְטָרָה • Haftarah

Shmuel was a prophet and leader of Benei Yisrael.

In our haftarah, he appoints Shaul as Benei Yisrael's first king. Then Shmuel gives a speech where he expresses some serious hesitations about this. He says that asking for a king is a betrayal of God! (We talked about this last year in Devash for Parashat Shoftim.) To prove that he's right, Shmuel makes a miracle, causing thunder and rain to happen out of season.

This scares Benei Yisrael, but Shmuel comforts them. As long as they continue to serve God, Shmuel promises, God will never abandon them.



**What's the connection to Parashat Korah?**

Our parashah and haftarah both highlight examples of people who were selfless leaders: Moshe and Shmuel.

In fact, these two people (who lived hundreds of years apart) are linked in a bunch of pesukim in Tanakh. One example is in Sefer Yirmiyahu (15:1), where God tells Yirmiyahu that even if **both** Moshe and Shmuel were to stand together and pray for Benei Yisrael, God still wouldn't listen!

A midrash notices the way Moshe and Shmuel are brought together in this pasuk, and offers a whole list of things that they have in common:



**Yalkut Shimoni to Yirmeyahu 292** **ילקוט שמעוני ירמיהו רצב**

**Shemot 2:1-2**

זֶה לֵוִי וְזֶה לֵוִי.

**Both** were levi'im.

**Divrei Ha-Yamim Alef 6:12-13**

זֶה בָּנָה מִזְבֵּחַ וְזֶה בָּנָה מִזְבֵּחַ.

**Both** built a mizbei'ah (altar).

**Shemot 17:15**

**Shmuel Alef 7:17**

זֶה מָלַךְ עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל וִיהוּדָה,
וְזֶה מָלַךְ עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל וִיהוּדָה.

**Both** ruled over a unified Jewish nation.

**Vayikra 8**

זֶה הִקְרִיב וְזֶה הִקְרִיב.

**Both** offered sacrifices.

**Shmuel Alef 7:9**

**Tehillim 99:6**

זֶה בְּקָרְיָאָה וְזֶה בְּקָרְיָאָה.

**Both** called out to God.



זֶה בְּ**הִנֵּנִי** וְזֶה בְּ**הִנֵּנִי**.

**Both** responded to God's call with hineini ("here I am").

**Shemot 3:4**

**Shmuel Alef 3:4**

וְלָמָּה הוּא מַעֲלֶה שְׁנֵי נְבִיאִים
הַלָּלוּ מִכָּל הַנְּבִיאִים? עַל יְדֵי
שֶׁלֹּא נָטְלוּ שֹׁחַד.

And why are these two prophets lifted above all the other prophets? Because neither one ever took a bribe.

- Can you find the words in our parashah and in our haftarah that show that both Moshe and Shmuel never took a bribe? Why is that such an important detail about them? (Hint: See question 10 of the Parashah Scavenger Hunt, pages 6 and 11.)
- The midrash points out a lot of parallels between Moshe and Shmuel. Could some of these other things they have in common also show how Moshe and Shmuel are models of leadership?
- Bonus! In Kabbalat Shabbat, can you find another pasuk that connects Moshe and Shmuel? (Hint: It's one of the references we included for the midrash above.)



## הֲלָכָה • Halakhah

Learn one way the parashah practically impacts our lives



This week, Korah challenges Moshe's leadership. One midrash imagines that the challenge comes from a detail in last week's parashah, about the mitzvah of tzitzit. God tells Moshe to tell the people to put a string of תְּכֵלֶת (tekhelet, a sky-blue color) on the corners of their clothing.

In the midrash, Korah asks: "What about a טַלִּית (tallit, garment) that is entirely tekhelet? Does that need tekhelet strings on its corners?" When Moshe answers that such a tallit still needs tekhelet fringes, Korah starts making fun of Moshe, picks a fight, and we all know how that ends. Not well!

But Korah might get us thinking about the rules for a colorful tallit.

**Rambam Laws of Tzitzit 2:8**

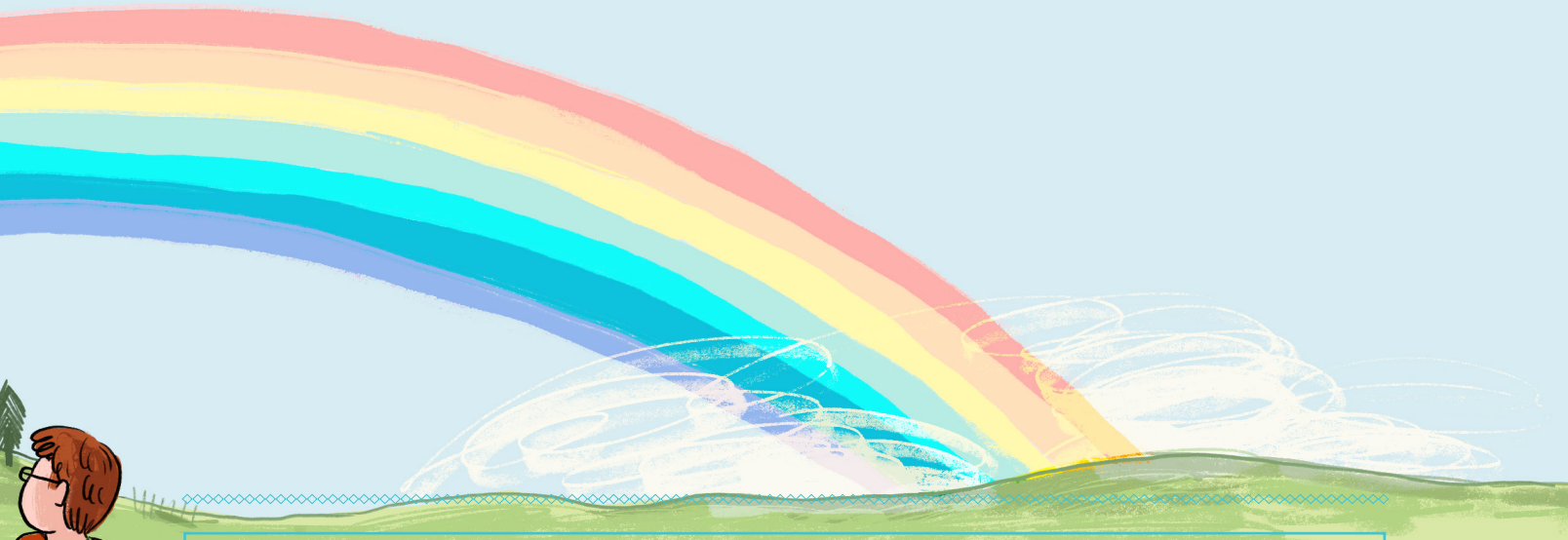
When a tallit is entirely red or green or some other color, you make its [normally] white strings of the same color. If it is a green tallit, the strings should be green; if red, they should be red...

**רמב"ם הלכות ציצת ב:ח**

טַלִּית שֶׁהִיא כֻּלָּהּ אֲדֻמָּה אוֹ יְרֻקָּה אוֹ מִשְׁאָר צִבְעוֹנִין עוֹשֶׂה חוּטֵי לָבָן שֶׁלָּהּ כְּעֵין צִבְעָהּ, אִם יְרֻקָּה יְרֻקִּין אִם אֲדֻמָּה אֲדֻמִּין...

Whoa! Have you ever seen a colored tallit with colored tzitzit? That's what the Rambam thinks you should have, and this is the position of the Shulhan Arukh (Orah Hayyim 9:5).

But not everyone agrees. Here's the other view:





**Rema Orah Hayyim 9:5**

Ashkenazim always make their tzitzit (fringes) white, even when they wear colored clothing, and you shouldn't change this practice.

**רמ"א אורח חיים ט:ה**

וְהָאַשְׁכְּנַזִּים אֵין נוֹהֲגִין לַעֲשׂוֹת הַצִּיצִית רַק לְבָנִים, אַף בִּבְגָדִים צְבוּעִים, וְאֵין לְשַׁנּוֹת (ת"ה סימן מ"ו).

According to this, you don't have to make the strings colored, and you shouldn't. Just keep your tzitzit strings white no matter what! It's ok for the threads to be different from the clothing itself in this way.

Later rabbis strongly recommended that everyone just wear tallitot that are mainly white to avoid taking sides in this debate (Taz OH 9:8). And that's why most tallitot you will see are mainly white, even if they have some stripes of other colors. But the next time you see someone with a colored tallit, check their tzitzit. What color are they?




## Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. Egypt! (16:13)
2. A donkey (16:15)
3. The 250 people who had offered קְטֹרֶת (ketoret, incense) for Korah's side (16:35)
4. Twice that it started (17:11, 17:12), twice that it ended (17:13, 17:15)
5. Aharon's name (17:18)
6. Land (18:20)
7. The אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד (ohel moed, tent of meeting) (18:22)
8. Three times: Moshe falls on his face when he first hears the claims of Korah and his followers (16:4), then on two other occasions Moshe and Aharon fall on their faces and cry out to God to make sure God doesn't punish everyone (16:22, 17:10)
9. Kohanim, because Levi'im receive a one-tenth gift, and then they give one-tenth of that to kohanim (18:26)
10. That he did not take a single donkey that did not belong to him (Shmuel Alef 12:3; compare to Bemidbar 16:15)

## תְּפִלָּה • Prayer in the Parashah

**Who is holy?** According to Korah, the answer is: Everybody!

Korah says:

| **Bemidbar 16:3** | **במדבר טז:ג** |
| --- | --- |
| "For the whole congregation all are kedoshim (holy)" | כִּי כָל הָעֵדָה כֻּלָּם קְדֹשִׁים |

But the Torah disagrees with Korah. It actually never describes Benei Yisrael as holy. Only God is described as holy. Benei Yisrael, on the other hand, is meant to **try to be** holy. God says this explicitly: קְדֹשִׁים תִּהְיוּ (kedoshim tihiyu, you should strive to be holy) (Vayikra 19:2).

In tefillah, we talk a lot about God's holiness. The third בְּרָכָה (berakhah, blessing) of the Amidah is a great example. Here we say that:



- God is holy: אַתָּה קָדוֹשׁ (atah kadosh)
- God's name is holy: שִׁמְךָ קָדוֹשׁ (shim'ha kadosh)
- Every day קְדוֹשִׁים (kedoshim, holy beings) praise God

Who are these kedoshim? The berakhah seems to be talking about angels, who are holy beings.

When we say this berakhah in the Amidah, we focus our thoughts on God's Holiness and on angels, who are holy too. This can help us think about ways that we might try to imitate their holiness in order to strive to be more holy ourselves.

- What does it look like to try to be holy? How are angels a model for that?
- Why can't we assume that all humans are holy? Why was Korah wrong?
- What are some things you could do to try to be more holy? How can you create more holiness around you in the world?
- How would you explain to Korah the difference between thinking you're already holy and thinking that you always want to try to be holier?

