

QUESTIONS ON PARASHAT KORACH

Q-1. (a) Which 2 of the Rambam's 13 Articles of Faith did *Korach* reject? **(b)** Why does *Korach's* rebellion follow the laws of *tzitzit* at the end of *Parashat Shelach*? **(c)** After what event did his rebellion take place (2 views)? **(d)** What does "*va-yikach*" *Korach* (*Korach* "took") mean (12 views)? **(e)** Why did *Korach* think that (1) *Moshe* treated him badly (4 views)? (2) he would survive the clash with *Moshe* (2 views)? **(f)** (1) How did *Korach* become so wealthy (2 views)? (2) How was he like *Haman* (2 ways)? **(g)** Why did the following groups join *Korach's* rebellion – (1) *Datan* and *Aviram* (2 views)? (2) the 250 men? (*Bamidbar* 16:1-3)

A-1. (a) That (1) *Moshe Rabeinu's nevu'a* is uniquely superior to that of all other *nevi'im* – Article 8; (2) the entire *Torah* that *Moshe* taught *Bnei Yisrael* was directly from *Hashem*, without any additions or gaps – Article 9 (*Malbim*). **(b)** *Moshe* taught that a garment needs a *techeilet* string in each corner and that a garment made fully of *techeilet* need these strings, too – *Korach* argued that the *Torah* does not mandate such an illogical and absurd law, meaning that this is not *Hashem's* Will, and *Moshe* made up these laws (*Medrash Tanchuma*). **(c)** After *Moshe* (1) installed *Bnei Aharon* as *kohanim* at the *Mishkan's* inauguration (*ibn Ezra*). (2) told *Bnei Yisrael* that they would die in the *midbar* as a result of the *meraglim's* sin (*Ramban*). **(d)** He (1) took himself and parted from the assembly in protest (*Rashi*). (2) made a bad "*lekach*" (deal) (*Sanhedrin* 109b). (3) spoke up (*Septuagint*). (4) committed himself (*ibn Yanach*). (5) plotted (*Radak*). (6) came forward (*Sa'adia Gaon*). (7) "took" people to support him by bribery (*Torah Temima*). (8) took a mob (*Rashbam*). (9) took *Datan, Aviram* and the 250 men (*Sforno*). (10) took the initiative – his heart took him (*Ramban*). (11) took souls with "sweet talk", and (12) by making a feast (*Medrash Tanchuma*). **(e)** (1) (i) Since he did not join in the *cheit ha'eigel*, like *Aharon* did, he was more deserving to be the *Kohen Gadol*; (ii) since *Korach* was the *bechor* of *Yitzhar, Kehat's* 2nd son, he should have been the *Kehat* family's *nasi*, but *Moshe* chose *Elitzafan*, youngest son of *Kehat's* middle son *Uziel*; (iii) his father was *Yitzhar*, meaning "oil" that floats to the surface – *Yitzhar's* sons were superior, deserving anointment with *shemen ha-mishcha* for royalty or *kehuna*; (iv) he thought that *Moshe* made-up illogical *mitzvot*, to humble him; (2) (i) he saw with *ruach ha-kodesh* that his offspring, *Shmuel haNavi* and 14 groups of *levi'im*, would serve in the *Beit haMikdash*, not realizing that his sons – *bnei Korach* – would survive, but he would die; (ii) since he was very wealthy, he thought that *Hashem* favored him (*Bamidbar Raba*). **(f)** (1) (i) He was the overseer of *Pharaoh's* palace in *Mitzrayim* and had the keys to *Pharaoh's* treasuries (*Bamidbar Raba*). (ii) He found one of 3 treasuries that *Yosef* had accumulated from selling the grain in *Mitzrayim* (*Sanhedrin* 110a). (2) (i) Both of them received wealth that was not granted by *Hashem* as a reward – *Hashem* let them grab their wealth without deserving it, and they both died, losing it all (*Bamidbar Raba*). (ii) Both of them listened to the bad advise of their wives – *Korach's* wife drove him to try to defeat *Moshe*, and *Haman's* wife pushed him to kill *Mordechai* – listening to their wives resulted in *Korach's* and *Haman's* deaths (*R. Bechaya*). **(g)** They were (1) (i) from *Sheivet Reuvain*, who, as firstborn, should have been *Bnei Yisrael's* leaders with a double portion – instead *Moshe* assigned the *bechora* to *Sheivet Yosef*, making it into 2 *shevatim, Efrayim* and *Menashe*; (ii) upset that *Moshe* promised that they would reach "a land flowing with milk and honey", but after the *meraglim's* sin, they were destined to die in the *midbar*; (2) they were *bechorim*, firstborns, who believed that *Moshe* stole the privilege to do the *avoda* in the *Mishkan* from them and gave it to his brother *Aharon* (*Ramban*).

Q-2. (a) Why did *Moshe* fall on his face when *Korach* complained (5 views)? **(b)** Why did *Moshe* specify that *Hashem* will show who is close to Him and whom He chose as leaders "in the morning" – not right away (2 views)? **(c)** Instead of praying for mercy as in previous incidents, why did *Moshe* ask *Hashem* to (1) not turn to *Korach's* and his followers' offerings? and (2) punish them with instant, unusual deaths? **(d)** *Hashem* told *Moshe* and *Aharon*, "separate from amid this assembly" – to what "assembly" did he refer (4 views)? **(e)** What did *Bnei Yisrael* learn from (1) the earth swallowing *Korach's* followers? and (2) the burning of the 250 men who offered *ketoret*? (*Bamidbar* 16:4-5,15, 21-22,32-35)

A-2. (a) *Moshe* (1) prayed to *Hashem* (*ibn Ezra*). (2) was desperate, this being the 4th time, after the *cheit ha'eigel*, the *mit'onenim* and the *meraglim*, that he asked to *Hashem* to forgive *Bnei Yisrael* (*Rashi*). (3) showed that *Korach's* insulting charges humiliated him (*Chizkuni*). (4) humbled himself, showing that he sought no authority over *Korach* and the others (*Tiferet Tzion*). (5) thought maybe *Korach* was right, i.e., he was vain in leading *Bnei Yisrael* – his soul-searching made him realize he was doing *Hashem's* Will (*Ba'al haTanya*). **(b)** (1) The *mun*, each morning, fell next to a righteous person's tent and further from a wicked one's tent – *Moshe* was saying that in the morning, the *mun* will show who is close to *Hashem* (*Medrash Tanchuma*). (2) *Korach* made a feast for the mob who joined him – *Moshe* wanted those drunk to sleep it off and not join *Korach* (*Bava Batra* 10a). **(c)** (1) *Korach* was *Kayin's* reincarnation – just as *Hashem* rejected *Kayin's* *korbanot* for not honoring *Hashem* sufficiently, *Moshe* wanted Him to reject *Korach's* offerings for acting against Him (*Yalkut Reuveini*). (2) *Datan* and *Aviram* disrespected the *Torah* by publicly ridiculing *Hashem's* messenger *Moshe*, with *Korach* claiming that *Moshe* made up the *Torah* laws – their going unpunished even a short time would put doubt on the *Torah's* Divine origin – *Moshe* tolerated their attacks on him and *Aharon*, but not on the *Torah* (*Malbim*). **(d)** (1) *Korach* and his followers, who challenged *Moshe* and *Aharon* (*R. Chananel*). (2) *Bnei Yisrael*, who thought that maybe *Korach* was right; (3) the *shevatim's* leaders who regularly were at the *Mishkan's* entrance; (4) the *bechorim*, who were replaced by the *levi'im* to serve *Hashem*; **(e)** It showed that (1) unlike *Korach's, Datan's* and *Aviram's* claims, *Moshe* was *Hashem's* true messenger; (2) *Hashem* chose only *Aharon* and his sons, and no one else, as *kohanim* (*Ramban*).

Q-3. (a) (1) How did *Korach* die (2 views)? (2) Why did he deserve this punishment? **(b)** How were the following people in *Korach's* company saved from punishment – (1) *Korach's* sons? (2) *Onn ben Pelet*? **(c)** (1) Why did *Moshe* use *ketoret* pans to set up the test of the 250 men versus *Aharon*? (2) Why did *Hashem* assign *Elazar*, not *Aharon*, to collect the 250 *ketoret* pans (3 views)? (3) Why were they the only items salvaged from the rebellion? **(d)** Why was *ketoret* effective in halting the plague after the complaints about the deaths of *Korach's* followers? **(e)** What happened to the land in *Eretz Yisrael* that *Korach's* company were supposed to receive? **(f)** (1) Since *Korach* and his followers' deaths showed that *Hashem* selected *Aharon* as *Kohen Gadol*, what was the need to show only *Aharon's* staff, among the 12 tribes, blossomed? (2) Why is "*matot*" ([the *nesi'im's*] staffs) with a *vav* in 17:21 but without a *vav* in 17:22? (*Bamidbar* 17:2, 11-12, 17-22)

A-3. (a) (1) (i) *Korach* was not swallowed by the earth – only his followers and his wealth were (16:32) – the 250 offering *ketoret* were burned, not *Korach* (16:35) – he was one of those who died in the plague; (ii) *Korach* both was swallowed by the earth and burned with the 250 (*Sanhedrin* 110a). (2) Since *Korach* set his sight on what was not fitting for him, i.e., the *kehuna*, all that he already had was taken

away when the earth swallowed him (*Sotah* 9b). **(b)** (1) When *Korach's* sons saw their father being swallowed by the earth, they did *teshuva* for having supported him against *Moshe*, and they came to rest on a platform that *Hashem* built for them, instead of being swallowed (*Megilla* 14a). (2) *Onn*, of *Sheivet Reuvein*, agreed to be one of the *bechorim* to offer *ketoret* – *Onn's* wife told him that he would gain nothing by opposing *Moshe*, and she gave him a strong drink, causing him to fall asleep – she sat outside their tent with uncovered her, and when *Korach's* messengers came to summon *Onn*, they turned back upon seeing his wife's immodest appearance, and *Onn* never went to the *Ohel Moed* to offer *ketoret* (*Rashi* – *Sanhedrin* 110a). **(c)** (1) Since, as *bechorim*, they felt entitled to do the *avoda*, *Moshe* wanted to show that *Hashem* had chosen *Sheivet Levi* only for the *avoda* (*Ramban*). (2) (i) *Korach* challenged *Elazar's* being a *kohen* – *Elazar's* gathering the pans showed that *Hashem* designated him a *kohen* (*Rokeach*). (ii) *Aharon* involvement in their deaths made it improper for him to collect their pans (*Ohr haChaim*). (iii) It showed *Aharon* did not rejoice in his enemies' deaths (*Siftei Kohan*). (3) *Korach's* and his followers' property had the law of *ir nidachat*, a city incited to idolatry (*Devarim* 13:13-19) – all the people had to be executed and their property destroyed, except for *kadosh* items (*Sanhedrin* 112b), like the pans (*Meshech Chachma*). **(d)** *Bnei Yisrael* thought *ketoret* was poisonous, causing *Nadav's*, *Avihu's* and the 250 men's deaths – ending the plague with *ketoret* showed that sins, not *ketoret*, cause death (*Rashi*). **(e)** Their shares in the land went to *Yehoshua* and *Calev* (*Bava Batra* 118b). **(f)** (1) Some thought that *Korach's* followers died by wrongly acting as *kohanim*, but that each *sheivet's bechorim* could still do the tasks assigned to the *levi'im* – the budding of *Sheivet Levi's* staff showed that *Hashem* chose only *levi'im* for *Mishkan* service (*Ramban*). (2) Before being placed in the *Mishkan*, the 12 *matot*, spelled with a *vav*, all were equal – after the *matot* were in the *Mishkan*, *Aharon's* staff swallowed the other staffs, like it swallowed *Pharaoh's* magicians' staffs – “*matot*” there also is spelled without a *vav* – the *nesi'im's* staffs, after *Aharon's* staff swallowed and then disgorged them, were inferior to *Aharon's* and are spelled without a *vav* (*Ba'al haTurim* – *Shemot* 7:12).

Q-4. **(a)** How do we know that (1) the *levi'im* were banned from doing the *avoda* of the *kohanim*? (2) the *kohanim* were banned from doing the tasks of the *levi'im*? (3) What was the penalty for their doing the wrong tasks? **(b)** Why are the gifts to the *kohanim* (1) listed here, and not in *Vayikra*, where most of the laws for *kohanim* are given? (2) called “*brit melach*” (salt covenant)? **(c)** Of *Bnei Yisrael's* 24 gifts to the *kohanim*, which (1) 10 did the *kohanim* have to eat in the *Beit haMikdash*? (2) 4 could they eat in all of *Yerushalayim*? (3) 10 could they eat throughout *Eretz Yisrael*? **(d)** (1) If grain became *tamay*, did the owner separate *teruma* from it? (2) What did he do with the separated grain? **(e)** (1) Why did *Bnei Yisrael* have to provide gifts to the *kohanim* related to firstborn sons, first fruit, firstborn male kosher animals and firstborn donkeys? (2) May one bring *bikurim* for new fruit from old fruit? **(f)** (1) Why did the *levi'im* receive *ma'aser* (2 reasons)? (2) Why did the *kohanim* receive portions of *korbanot*? (*Bamidbar* 18:3,8-19,21-24)

A-4. **(a)** 18:3 says, (1) the *levi'im* “shall not approach the holy vessels and the *mizbei'ach*”, (2) “neither they [the *kohanim*], nor you”, (3) *mita biydei Shamayim* (death at the Hand of Heaven) (*Rambam* – *Hilchot Klei haKodesh* 3:9-11). **(b)** (1) It was a response to *Korach's* protest against *Bnei Aharon* being *kohanim* (*Rashi*). (2) Just as salt preserves one's meat, giving gifts to the *kohanim* preserves one's wealth (*Ketubot* 66b). **(c)** (1) (i) Parts of an animal *chatat*, and (ii) bird *chatat*, (iii) *asham vaday* (guilt *korban*); (iv) *asham talui* (pending guilt *korban*); (v) *shalmei tzibur* (parts of communal *korbanot*) of *Shavuot*; (vi) *log shemen metzora* (oil remnants of a *korban metzora*); (vii) *Shetei ha-Lechem* (2 loaves of bread) of *Shavuot*; (viii) *lechem ha-panim* (show bread); (ix) *sheyarei menachot* (*korban* remnants of flour *korbanot*); (x) *minchat ha'omer* (*korban omer*); (2) (xi) *bechor* (male firstborn); (xii) *bikkurim* (first fruits); (xiii) *hamurim min ha-toda u-me'ayl nazir* (remnants of thanksgiving *korbanot* and parts of the *nazir's* ram); (xiv) *orot kadshim* (value of the hides of *korbanot*); (3) (xv) *teruma*; (xvi) *terumat ma'aser*; (xvii) *chala*; (xviii) *reishit ha-gez* (first sheared wool); (xix) *zeroa*, *lechayim ve-keiva* (a slaughtered animal's shoulder, jaw and stomach, whether or not it is a *korban*); (xx) *pidyon ha-ben*, and (xxi) *petter chamor* (redeemed firstborn donkeys); (xxii) *sedei achuza* (consecrated field not redeemed by the owner); (xxiii) *sedei cheirem* (field dedicated to *cheirem* – property of the *kohanim*); (xxiv) *gezel ha-ger* (a convert's stolen property returned after he died, leaving no heirs) (*Chulin* 133b). **(d)** (1) Yes; (2) he gave it to the *kohen* (*Rambam* – *Hilchot Teruma* 2:14). **(e)** (1) One's first acquisitions are most precious – *Bnei Yisrael* gave of their “firsts” to the *kohanim* to show that *Hashem* owns all we possess (*Sefer haChinuch* – *Mitzvah* 18). (2) No – one may not bring *bikurim* for produce formed before *Tu Bishvat* from produce formed after *Tu Bishvat*, and vice versa (*Rambam* – *Hilchot Bikurim* 2:7). **(f)** (1) The tithes were their reward for (i) their involvement in the *avoda* of the *Beit haMikdash*; (ii) foregoing their *sheivet's* portion of *Eretz Yisrael* (*Ohr haChaim*). (2) When the *kohanim* ate *Bnei Yisrael's* *korbanot*, *Bnei Yisrael* achieved atonement (*Pesachim* 59b).

Q-5. **(a)** Did male *bechorim* born in the *midbar* have to be redeemed (2 views)? **(b)** (1) If a woman, after a miscarriage, gives birth to a boy, is the father required to redeem his son? (2) Why does *pidyon ha-ben* apply only after the baby is 30 days old? (*Bamidbar* 18:15)

A-5. **(a)** (1) *Rebi Yochanan* – yes, all *bechorim* born after *Hashem's* command in *Mitzrayim*, “*kadesh li kol becho*” (*Shemot* 13:2), had to be redeemed; (2) *Resh Lakish* – no, those born in *Mitzrayim* and after they entered *Eretz Yisrael* required redemption, not those born in the *midbar* (*Bechorot* 4b). **(b)** (1) No, he redeems only a son that “opened her womb”; (2) the baby then is considered viable (*Mitzvah* 392).

Q-6. **(a)** Why is the *ma'aser* for *levi'im* in 18:24 called “*teruma*” that was normally given to a *kohen*? **(b)** After a farmer gave *ma'aser rishon* to a *levi*, who could eat it? **(c)** Did one give *ma'aser rishon* from (1) vegetables? (2) grain that the farmer grew for sale, rather than to eat? **(d)** Why did *Ezra* decree that *ma'aser rishon* should be given to *kohanim*, not *levi'im*? (*Bamidbar* 18:24-31)

A-6. **(a)** It teaches that *ma'aser* may be eaten only after the *kohen's* *teruma* is separated from it (*Rashi*). **(b)** After the *levi* separates *terumat ma'aser*, *ma'aser rishon* is *chulin gemurin* (completely non-holy) – any *Levi* or *Yisrael*, whether *tahor* or *tamei*, could eat it; **(c)** the *Torah* applied it only to (1) grain – *Chazal* extended it to vegetables; (2) grain the farmer eats – *Chazal* extended it to commercial grain (*Mitzvah* 395). **(d)** He penalized the *levi'im* because they did not go up with him to *Yerushalayim* (*Rambam* – *Hilchot Ma'aser* 1:4).

Q-7. In the *haftara*, since *Shmuel haNavi* died at the age of 52, why did he say, “I am old and gray-headed”? (*I Shmuel* 12:3)

A-7. *Shmuel* asked to die before *Shaul* – in order to conceal that *Shmuel* died young, *Hashem* caused him to look prematurely aged (*Radak*).