

QUESTIONS ON PARASHAT KORACH

Q-1. (a) Which 2 of the 13 Articles of Faith (*Shloshah Asar Ikkarim*) that are listed by the *Rambam* did *Korach* reject? **(b)** Why does the rebellion of *Korach* follow the laws of *tzitzit* at the end of *Parashat Shelach*? **(c)** After what event in the *midbar* did the rebellion by *Korach* take place (2 views)? **(d)** What do the words “*va-yikach Korach*” (and *Korach* took) mean – what did *Korach* “take” (12 views)? **(e)** Why did *Korach* think (1) that *Moshe* treated him badly (4 views)? (2) that he would survive his confrontation 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? **(h)** What 3 previous sins did *Datan* and *Aviram* commit? (*Bamidbar* 16:1-3)

A-1. (a) That (1) the *nevu’a* of *Moshe Rabeinu* is uniquely superior to that of all other *nevi’im* – Article 8; (2) the entire *Torah* that *Moshe* taught *Bnei Yisrael* is directly from *Hashem*, without any additions or gaps – Article 9 (*Malbim*). **(b)** *Moshe* taught *Bnei Yisrael* that a 4-cornered garment needs one blue *techeilet* string in each corner and that a garment that was made fully of *techeilet* needs these 4 strings, too, but *Korach* argued that requiring *techeilet* strings on such a garment is ridiculous, and the *Torah* cannot mandate such an illogical and absurd law – this means that these *halachot* and others are not the Will of *Hashem*, because *Moshe* made up these laws (*Medrash Tanchuma*). **(c)** After *Moshe* (1) installed *Bnei Aharon* as the *kohanim* at the inauguration of the *Mishkan* (*ibn Ezra*). (2) told *Bnei Yisrael* that they would die in the *midbar* as a result of the sin of the *meraglim* (*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, by bribery, so that they would support him (*Torah Temima*). (8) took a mob (*Rashbam*). (9) took *Datan*, *Aviram* and the 250 men (*Sforno*). (10) took the initiative, i.e., his heart took him (*Ramban*). (11) took souls with “sweet talk”, and (12) by making a feast (*Medrash Tanchuma*). **(e)** (1) (i) Since *Korach* did not join in the *cheit ha’eigel*, unlike *Aharon*, who did participate, he was more deserving to be the *Kohen Gadol* than *Aharon*; (ii) since *Korach* was the *bechor* of *Yitzhar*, who was the 2nd son of *Kehat*, he should have been the *nasi* of the family of *Kehat*, but *Moshe* chose *Elitzafan*, who was the youngest son of *Uziel* (*Bamidbar* 3:30), who was the middle son of *Kehat*; (iii) his grandfather named his father *Yitzhar*, which means “oil” that floats to the surface, and he foresaw that *Yitzhar* would produce sons who would be superior and would deserve anointment with the *shemen ha-mishcha* for positions of royalty or *kehuna*; (iv) he thought that *Moshe* made up illogical *mitzvot*, in order to humble him; (2) (i) he foresaw with *Ruach ha-Kodesh* that his offspring, *Shmuel haNavi* and 14 groups of *levi’im*, would serve in the *Beit haMikdash*, but he did not realize that his sons – *nei Korach* – would survive the battle with *Moshe*, but that 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 the 3 treasuries that *Yosef* had accumulated from selling the grain in *Mitzrayim* (*Sanhedrin* 110a). (2) (i) Both *Korach* and *Haman* received wealth that was not granted by *Hashem* as a reward, since *Hashem* let them grab their wealth without deserving it, and they both died, losing it all (*Bamidbar Raba*). (ii) Both *Korach* and *Haman* listened to the bad advice of their wives, since *Korach*’s wife drove him to try to defeat *Moshe*, and *Haman*’s wife pushed him to kill *Mordechai*, and listening to their wives resulted in the deaths of both *Korach* and *Haman* (*R. Bechaya*). **(g)** *Datan* and *Aviram* were (1) (i) from *Sheivet Reuvain*, who, as the firstborn of *Ya’akov*, should have been the *sheivet* of the leaders of *Bnei Yisrael* and should have received a double portion, but instead, *Moshe* assigned the *bechora* to *Sheivet Yosef*, making it into 2 *shevatim*, *Sheivet Efrayim* and *Sheivet Menashe*; (ii) upset that *Moshe* had promised that they would reach “a land flowing with milk and honey”, but after the sin of the *meraglim*, they were destined to die in the *midbar*; (2) the 250 men were *bechorim*, firstborns, who believed that *Moshe* stole the privilege to perform the *avoda* in the *Mishkan* from them and gave it to his own *Sheivet Levi* and to his brother *Aharon* (*Ramban*). **(h)** (1) They were informers to *Pharaoh*, including when *Moshe* killed the *Mitzri* (*Shemot* 2:12-15); (2) at *Yam Suf*, they incited *Bnei Yisrael* to return to *Mitzrayim* (*Shemot* 14:11-12); (3) they disobeyed *Moshe* by leaving *mun* over until the next day and by going out on *Shabbat* to gather the *mun* (*Shemot* 16:27) (*Targum Yonatan*).

Q-2. (a) Why did *Moshe* fall on his face when *Korach* complained (5 views)? **(b)** Why did *Moshe* call *Korach*, *Datan* and *Aviram* “*resha’im*” (wicked men – 16:26), but he termed the 250 men “*chata’im*” (sinners – 17:3)? **(c)** (1) 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)? (2) Did *Moshe* decide on the test with *ketoret*, or did *Hashem* command it? **(d)** Instead of praying for mercy for those who had sinned in the previous incidents, why did *Moshe* now ask *Hashem* to (1) not turn to the offerings of *Korach* and his followers? and (2) to punish them with instant, unusual deaths? **(e)** Why was *Aharon* silent when *Korach* attacked him – why did he not refute *Korach*’s arguments? **(f)** *Hashem* told *Moshe* and *Aharon*, “separate from amid this assembly” – to what “assembly” did he refer (4 views)? **(g)** (1) How did *Korach* die (2 views)? (2) Why did he deserve this punishment? **(h)** What did *Bnei Yisrael* learn from (1) the earth swallowing *Korach*, *Datan* and *Aviram*? and (2) the burning of the 250 men who offered *ketoret*? **(i)** Will *Korach* and his followers be resurrected at *techiyat ha-meitim*? (*Bamidbar* 16:4-5,15, 21-35)

A-2. (a) *Moshe* (1) was praying to *Hashem* (*ibn Ezra*). (2) was desperate, since this was 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*, but his soul-searching made him realize that he was doing the Will of *Hashem* (*Ba’al haTanya*). **(b)** *Korach*, *Datan* and *Aviram* displayed wickedness because they believed that *Moshe* was speaking falsely in the name of *Hashem*, and they rebelled against him, but the 250 men were *bechorim* who were seeking attachment to the *Shechina* by performing the *avoda*, but they were sinners who wanted to act *le-sheim Shamayim*, but their actions were in error (*Ohr haChaim*). **(c)** (1) (i) Since the *mun*, each morning, fell next to the tent of a righteous person and further away from the tent of a wicked person, *Moshe* was saying that in the morning, the *mun* will show who is close to *Hashem*, and who is not (*Medrash Tanchuma*). (ii) *Korach* made a feast for the mob that joined him, and *Moshe* wanted those men who were drunk to sleep it off and not join *Korach* (*Bava Batra* 10a). (2) *Moshe* never took any steps on his own accord – he was inspired by *Ru’ach haKodesh* to undertake this test using *ketoret* (*Ramban*). **(d)** (1) *Korach* was the reincarnation of *Kayin*, and just as *Hashem* rejected the *korbanot* of *Kayin* because they did not honor *Hashem* properly, *Moshe* wanted Him to reject the offerings of *Korach* for acting against *Hashem* (*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, and if they went unpunished even for a short time, it would put doubt in the minds of *Bnei Yisrael* concerning the Divine origin of the *Torah* – *Moshe* tolerated the attacks by *Korach* and his followers on him and *Aharon*, but not on the *Torah* (*Malbim*). **(e)** *Aharon* was humbly acknowledging that he believed that *Korach* indeed was more deserving to be the *Kohen Gadol*, and held the position only because he obeyed *Hashem* (*Ramban*). **(f)** (1) *Korach* and his followers, who challenged *Moshe* and *Aharon* (*R. Chananel*). (2) *Bnei Yisrael*, who thought that maybe *Korach* was right; (3) the leaders of the *shevatim* who regularly were at the *Mishkan*’s entrance; (4) the *bechorim*, who were replaced by the *levi’im* to serve *Hashem*; **(g)** (1) (i) *Korach* both was swallowed by the earth, and then he was burned together with the 250 *bechorim*; (ii) *Korach* was not swallowed by the earth, since only his followers and his wealth were swallowed up (16:32), and the 250 *bechorim* who offered *ketoret* were burned, but not *Korach* (16:35) – he was one of those who then died in the subsequent plague (*Sanhedrin* 110a). (2) Since *Korach* set his sight on the prestige of what was not fitting for him, i.e., the *kehuna*, everything that he already had was taken away when the earth swallowed him (*Sotah* 9b). **(h)** It showed that (1) unlike the claims of *Korach*, *Datan* and *Aviram*, *Moshe* was the true messenger of *Hashem*; (2) *Hashem* chose only *Aharon* and his sons, and no one else, as *kohanim* (*Ramban*). **(i)** Originally, *Hashem* excluded them, since they denied the fundamental principles of the *Torah*, but *Chana*, the mother of *Shmuel*, prayed that they not be excluded from *techiyat ha-meitim* and *olam haba*, since a major driving force of *Korach*’s sin was that *Korach* had foreknowledge that *Shmuel* would descend from him, and she did not want her son to be the cause of *Korach*’s eternal punishment – *Hashem* agreed that he would resurrect *Korach* and his followers, except for *Datan* and *Aviram* (*Tiferet Tzion*).

Q-3. (a) How were the following people who were in the company of *Korach* saved from punishment – (1) *Korach*’s sons? (2) *Onn ben Pelet*? **(b)** (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 the pans the only items that were salvaged from the rebellion? **(c)** Why was *ketoret* effective in halting the plague that *Hashem* sent after *Bnei Yisrael*’s complaints about the deaths of the followers of *Korach*? **(d)** What happened to the land in *Eretz Yisrael* that the men of

the company of *Korach* were supposed to receive? (e) (1) Since the deaths of *Korach* and his followers showed that *Hashem* had selected *Aharon* as the *Kohen Gadol*, what was the need to show that only the staff of *Aharon*, among those of the 12 tribes, blossomed? (2) Why is the word “*matof*” ([the *nesi'im*] staffs) spelled with the letter *vav* in 17:21 but without a *vav* in 17:22? (*Bamidbar* 17:2,11-12,17-22)

A-3. (a) (1) When the sons of *Korach* 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*, who was from *Sheivet Reuvein*, agreed to be one of 250 *bechorim* who would offer *ketoret*, but *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 then sat outside their tent with her hair uncovered, and when the messengers of *Korach* came to *Onn*'s tent to summon, they turned back upon seeing the immodest appearance of his wife, and *Onn* never went to the *Ohel Moed* to offer *ketoret* (*Rashi* – *Sanhedrin* 110a). (b) (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) In addition to challenging *Aharon* as the *Kohen Gadol*, *Korach* believed that he at least should be a *kohen* just as *Elazar* was, since the *gematria* of “*Korach*” is the same as “*Elazar*”, and *Elazar*'s gathering the pans showed that *Hashem* designated only him and his brothers as *kohanim* (*Rokeach*). (ii) *Aharon*'s involvement in their deaths made it improper for him to collect their pans (*Ohr haChaim*). (iii) It showed that *Aharon* did not rejoice in the deaths of his enemies (*Siftei Kohen*). (3) The property of *Korach* and his followers had the law of *ir nidachat*, a city incited to idolatry (*Devarim* 13:13-19), and all of the people in an *ir nidachat* had to be executed and their property destroyed, except for items that were *kadosh* (*Sanhedrin* 112b), like the *ketoret* pans (*Meshech Chachma*). (c) Since *Bnei Yisrael* thought that the *ketoret* was poisonous and caused the deaths of *Nadav*, *Avihu* and the 250 men, *Hashem* showed that, by ending the plague with *ketoret*, it was sins, not *ketoret*, that cause death (*Rashi*). (d) Their shares in the land went to *Yehoshua* and *Calev* (*Bava Batra* 118b). (e) (1) Since some of *Bnei Yisrael* thought that the followers of *Korach* died because they wrongly acted as *kohanim*, but that the *bechorim* of each *sheivet* could still do the tasks that had been assigned to the *levi'im*, the budding of the staff of *Sheivet Levi* showed that *Hashem* chose only *levi'im*, and not any other *sheivet*, for service in the *Mishkan* (*Ramban*). (2) Before being placed in the *Mishkan*, the 12 *matot*, spelled with a *vav*, all were equal, but in the *Mishkan*, the staff of *Aharon* swallowed the other staffs, like it swallowed the staffs of the magicians of *Pharaoh* – the word “*matof*” there also is spelled without a letter *vav*, and the staffs of the *nesi'im*, after the staff of *Aharon* swallowed and then disgorged them, were inferior to the staff of *Aharon* and are spelled without the letter *vav* (*Ba'al haTurim* – *Shemot* 7:12).

Q-4. (a) How do we know that (1) the *levi'im* were prohibited from performing the *avoda* that was assigned to the *kohanim*? (2) the *kohanim* were prohibited from performing the tasks of the *levi'im*? (3) What was the penalty for *kohanim* and *levi'im* who performed tasks that they were not assigned to perform? (b) Why are the gifts that *Bnei Yisrael* gave to the *kohanim* (1) listed here, and not in *Sefer Vayikra*, where most of the laws of the *kohanim* are described? (2) called “*brit melach*” (salt covenant)? (c) Of the 24 gifts from *Bnei Yisrael* to the *kohanim*, which (1) 10 did the *kohanim* have to consume in the *Beit haMikdash*? (2) 4 could they consume in all of *Yerushalayim*? (3) 10 could they consume throughout *Eretz Yisrael*? (d) (1) If grain became *tamay*, was the owner required to 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* that related to firstborn sons, first fruit, firstborn male kosher animals and firstborn donkeys? (2) May one offer *bikurim* for new fruit from the previous season's 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*”, meaning that they could not perform the *avoda* of the *kohanim*, (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) Listing the gifts to the *kohanim* here was a response to the protest by *Korach* and his company against *Bnei Aharon*'s being *kohanim*, rather than members of all of the *shevatim* becoming *kohanim* (*Rashi*). (2) Just as salt preserves one's meat, giving the proper 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*) that were offered on *Shavuot*; (vi) *log shemen metzora* (remnants of oil from the *korban* that was offered by a *metzora*); (vii) *Shetei ha-Lechem* (2 loaves of bread) that were offered on *Shavuot*; (viii) *lechem ha-panim* (show bread); (ix) *sheyarei menachot* (remnants of flour *korbanot*); (x) *minchat ha'omer* (*korban omer*); (2) (xi) *bechor* (*korban* of male firstborn animals); (xii) *bikkurim* (first fruits); (xiii) *hamurim min hatoda u-mei'ayl nazir* (remnants of the thanksgiving *korbanot* and parts of the ram that was offered by a *nazir*); (xiv) *orot kadshim* (value of the hides of animals that were offered as *korbanot*); (3) (xv) *teruma*; (xvi) *terumat ma'aser*; (xvii) *chala*; (xviii) *reishit ha-gez* (first sheared wool); (xix) *zeroa, lechayim ve-keiva* (the shoulder, jaw and stomach of a slaughtered animal, whether or not it was a *korban*); (xx) *pidyon ha-ben*, and (xxi) *petter chamor* (firstborn donkeys that were redeemed); (xxii) *sedei achuza* (a consecrated field that was not redeemed by the owner); (xxiii) *sedei cheirem* (a field dedicated to *cheirem*, which became property of the *kohanim*); (xxiv) *gezel ha-geir* (property that was stolen from a convert that was 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) Since a person's first acquisitions are the most precious of all to him or her, *Bnei Yisrael* gave part of their “firsts” to the *kohanim* to show that *Hashem* owns all that we possess (*Sefer haChinuch* – *Mitzvah* 18). (2) No, one may not bring *bikurim* for produce that was formed before *Tu Bishvat* from produce that was formed after *Tu Bishvat*, and vice versa (*Rambam* – *Hilchot Bikurim* 2:7). (f) (1) The tithes were the reward to the *levi'im* (i) resulting from their involvement in the *avoda* of the *Beit haMikdash*, and (ii) for foregoing the portion of land for their *sheivet* in *Eretz Yisrael* (*Ohr haChaim*). (2) When the *kohanim* ate *korbanot* for *Hashem* that were offered by *Bnei Yisrael*, *Hashem* provided atonement to *Bnei Yisrael* for their transgressions (*Pesachim* 59b).

Q-5. (a) Did male *bechorim* who were born in the *midbar* have to be redeemed (2 views)? (b) (1) If a woman, after she experiences 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 bechor*” (sanctify to Me all firstborns – *Shemot* 13:2), had to be redeemed; (2) *Resh Lakish* – no, those who were born in *Mitzrayim* and those who were born after they entered *Eretz Yisrael* required redemption, but not those who were born in the *midbar* (*Bechorot* 4b). (b) (1) No, he redeems only a son that “opened her womb”; (2) the baby then is considered to have a viable life (*Mitzvah* 392).

Q-6. (a) Why is the *ma'aser* for *levi'im* in 18:24 called “*teruma*”, which was normally given to a *kohen*? (b) After a farmer gave *ma'aser rishon* to a *levi*, who was allowed to eat it? (c) Did one give *ma'aser rishon* (1) from vegetables? (2) from grain that the farmer grew to sell commercially, rather than for himself to eat? (d) Why did *Ezra* decree that *ma'aser rishon* should be given to the *kohanim*, rather than to the *levi'im*? (*Bamidbar* 18:24-31)

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

Q-7. (a) Why was the last chapter of *Sefer Yeshayahu* chosen as the *haftara* for *Shabbat Rosh Chodesh*? (b) In the *haftara* of *Parashat Korach*, why did *Shmuel haNavi* say, “I am old and gray-headed” since he died at the age of 52? (*I Shmuel* 12:3)

A-7. (a) The next to last verse states that all of the nations will honor *Hashem* in the *Beit haMikdash* on every *Shabbat* and *Rosh Chodesh*, after the war of *Gog* and *Magog*, prior to the final *geula*, when all nations will recognize the greatness of *Hashem* and *Bnei Yisrael* (*Ramban*). (b) *Shmuel* asked to die before *Shaul*, and in order to conceal that *Shmuel* died young, *Hashem* caused him to look prematurely aged (*Radak*).