

The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators presents

An Interactive PARSHA EXPERIENCE



Parsha: Korach

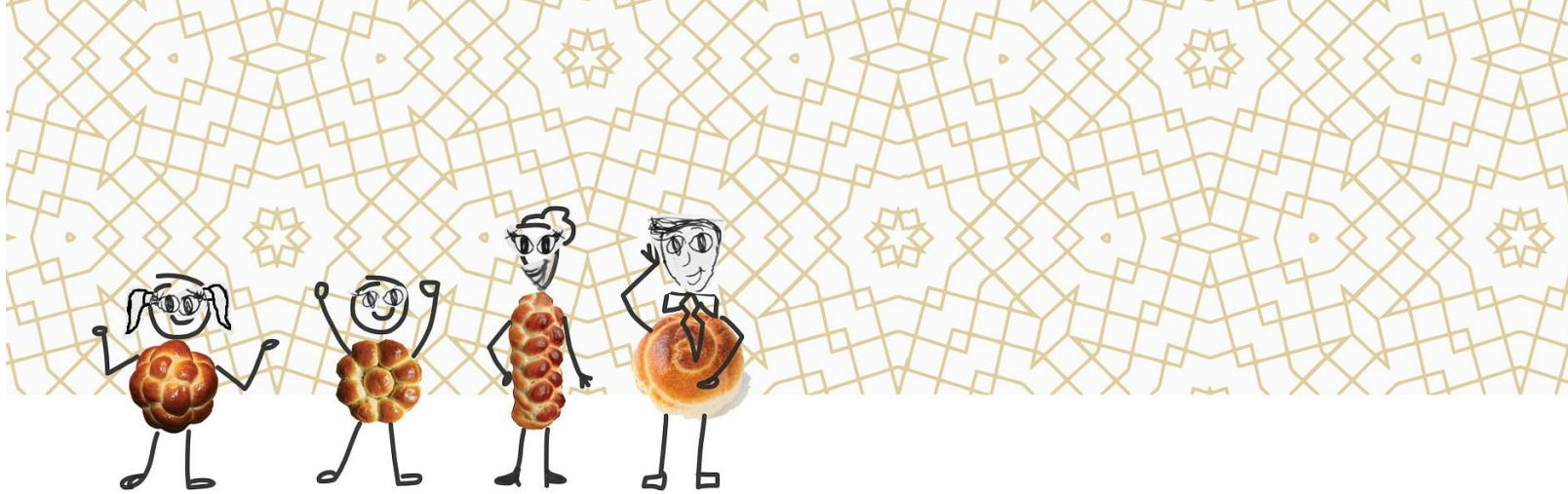
Title: Torah Talk - The Why of What we Do

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The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

We witness one of the Torah's most famous scenes of rebellion in this week's *parsha*, and it plays like a movie. Korach, a Levi, "takes himself aside," along with Datan, Aviram, and On, and confronts Moshe and Aharon, challenging them. Korach and his group of rebels call out Moshe and Aharon, saying: "You take too



much upon yourselves, for the entire congregation are all holy, and the Lord is in their midst. So why do you raise yourselves above the Lord's assembly?" (Bamidbar 16:3)

Zooming In:

Korach, Datan, Aviram, and On are angry that Moshe and Aharon are considered special or different than the rest of the congregation. God is with all of us, they argue, so what makes you so holy or so deserving of your leadership?

As scholars of the Torah, we know that this is a huge deal!

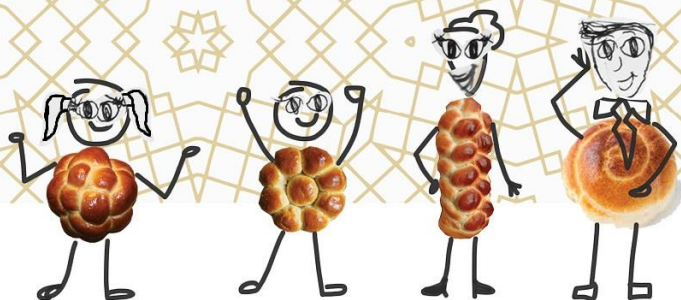
To challenge Moshe and Aharon, who have been God's right-hand helpers, the connectors between God and *Bnei Yisrael*, is an almost earth-shattering action.

So why would Korach, Datan, Aviram, and On do this?

What are their motivations to challenge Moshe and Aharon's authority?

Questions for Consideration:

- What might be the goal behind Korach, Datan, Aviram, and On's words and actions?
- Is it ever right to question the established leaders or system of who is in charge?



The Parsha Through Another Lens

Acting Out:

Part One: Skit

With the people at your table or in your class, read through Bamidbar 16:1-35.

Assign different people to act as Moshe, Aharon, Korach, Datan, Aviram and the members of the *edah* (congregation). Have everyone read through their “script” (the *pesukim*/verses – see below) once or twice before you act. Then, get out of your seats and truly act out the verses as if they were a skit. Make sure to use your body and voice to show the emotions behind your character's words.

Part Two: Torah Talk

After acting out the *pesukim*, invite each of the actors to your talk show: Torah Talk. Take turns interviewing each actor as a group.

Have the other people at your table or in your class ask each character questions about why they acted the way they did in these *pesukim*.

Be as creative as possible - feel free to challenge your Moshe, or Korach, or a member of the congregation to explain *the why* behind their actions.

Part Three: The Why Questions

Use what you know about this moment in Bnei Yisrael's life - the transition between Egypt and the experiences they've had in the *midbar* (desert) - to add to what you think your character will be thinking and feeling.

- Why do you think the rebels are so frustrated?

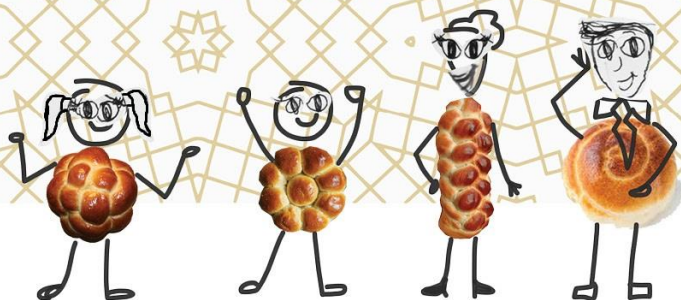


- Do you think the rebels were scared or nervous about challenging Moshe?
- Korach is both a Levi and a cousin of Moshe. How might his family background influence his feelings towards Moshe and Aharon and their leadership?
- Was it a dangerous act to challenge Moshe? (Even before you knew about the actual punishment...)
- How do you think it feels to be Moshe or Aharon, who have worked for so long to build community and hope among Bnei Yisrael, and who are now being challenged about their leadership style?
- If you are a member of the congregation, why would you turn against your leaders - Moshe and Aharon - and join a rebellion?
- Even though Korach (not to mention everyone else involved) dies for his part in the rebellion, the parsha is still named for him. Why do you think that is?

Part Four: Spotlight on Your Own Life

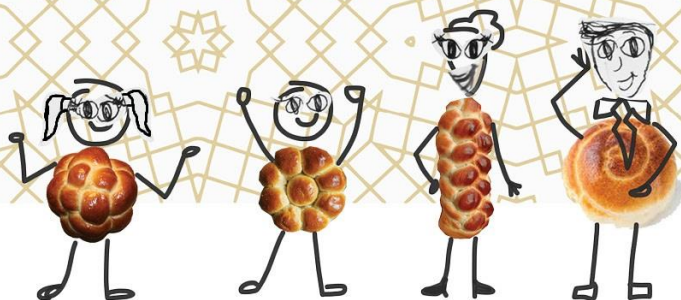
- Think about the people in charge in your life - your teachers, your coaches, your parents, members of the government or others.
- Is there ever a time when you have felt it was hard for you that they had power over some of the decisions in your life?
- Was there ever a time when you didn't understand why someone was chosen to do something special and you weren't?
- What, if anything, would make you challenge a leader, like Korach, did?

Shabbat Shalom!



Bamidbar 16:1-35

1. Korach the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi took [himself to one side] along with Datan and Aviram, the sons of Eliav, and On the son of Peleth, descendants of Reuven.
2. They confronted Moshe together with two hundred and fifty men from the children of Israel, chieftains of the congregation, representatives of the assembly, men of repute.
3. They assembled against Moshe and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for the entire congregation are all holy, and the Lord is in their midst. So why do you raise yourselves above the Lord's assembly?"
4. Moshe heard and fell on his face.
5. He spoke to Korach and to all his company, saying, "In the morning, the Lord will make known who is His, and who is holy, and He will draw [them] near to Him, and the one He chooses, He will draw near to Him.
6. Do this, Korach and his company: Take for yourselves censers.
7. Place fire into them and put incense upon them before the Lord tomorrow, and the man whom the Lord chooses he is the holy one; you have taken too much upon yourselves, sons of Levi."
8. Moshe said to Korach, "Please listen, sons of Levi.
9. Is it not enough that the God of Israel has distinguished you from the congregation of Israel to draw you near to Him, to perform the service in the Mishkan of the Lord and to stand before the congregation to minister to them?
10. He drew you near, and all your brothers, the sons of Levi with you, and now you seek the kehunah as well?
11. Therefore, you and your entire company who are assembled are against the Lord, for what is Aaron that you should complain against him?"
12. Moshe sent to call Datan and Aviram, the sons of Eliav, but they said, "We will not go up.
13. Is it not enough that you have brought us out of a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the desert, that you should also exercise authority over us?
14. You have not even brought us to a land flowing with milk and honey, nor have you given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Even if you gouge out the eyes of those men, we will not go up."
15. Moshe was exceedingly distressed, and he said to the Lord, "Do not accept their offering. I have not taken a donkey from a single one of them, and I have not harmed a single one of them."
16. Moshe said to Korach, "You and your entire congregation should be before the Lord you, they, and Aaron tomorrow.



17. Let each man take his censer and place incense upon it, and let each man present his censer before the Lord; [there will thus be] two hundred and fifty censers, and let you and Aaron each [take] his censer.

18. So each man took his censer, and they put fire upon it and placed incense upon it, and they stood at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting with Moshe and Aaron.

19. Korach assembled all the congregation against them at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord appeared before the entire congregation.

20. The Lord spoke to Moshe and Aaron saying,

21. "Dissociate yourselves from this congregation, and I will consume them in an instant.

22. They fell on their faces and said, "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, if one man sins, shall You be angry with the whole congregation?"

23. The Lord spoke to Moshe saying,

24. "Speak to the congregation saying, 'Withdraw from the dwelling of Korach, Datan and Aviram.'"

25. Moshe arose and went to Datan and Aviram, and the elders of Israel followed him.

26. He spoke to the congregation saying, "Please get away from the tents of these wicked men, and do not touch anything of theirs, lest you perish because of all their sins.

27. So they withdrew from around the dwelling of Korach, Datan, and Aviram, and Datan and Aviram went out standing upright at the entrance of their tents together with their wives, their children, and their infants.

28. Moshe said, "With this you shall know that the Lord sent me to do all these deeds, for I did not devise them myself.

29. If these men die as all men die and the fate of all men will be visited upon them, then the Lord has not sent me.

30. But if the Lord creates a creation, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them and all that is theirs, and they descend alive into the grave, you will know that these men have provoked the Lord."

31. As soon as he finished speaking all these words, the earth beneath them split open.

32. The earth beneath them opened its mouth and swallowed them and their houses, and all the men who were with Korach and all the property.

33. They, and all they possessed, descended alive into the grave; the earth covered them up, and they were lost to the assembly.

34. All Israel who were around them fled from their cries, for they said, "Lest the earth swallow us up [too]!"

35. A fire came forth from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who had offered up the incense.