



Korach **Bamidbar (Numbers) 16:1 – 18:32**

The sections of Bamidbar that we read at this time of the year are filled with stories of dissension and rebellion among the Israelites. Nowhere is this as apparent as it is in Parshat Korach.

Who was Korach? The key to understanding Korach and that which motivated his challenging Moses and Aaron is that they were cousins. His criticism of leadership was ultimately religious in nature. "All the people are holy, and G-d is in their midst. Why do you raise yourselves above the members of the community?" (16:3). In response Moses rebuked Korach and all his men for desiring the responsibilities of the Kohanim, instead of being satisfied with the already special privileges reserved for Levites. Moses challenged Korach, reminding him that G-d ultimately will choose who is worthy of leadership.

Datan and Abiram led a second challenge. When Moses sent for them they refused to come. Their criticism of Moses was more political in nature, since as leaders of the tribe of Reuben, the oldest of Jacob's sons, they felt that they were entitled to be the leaders of the community. They criticize Moses for leading the people out of the land of Egypt.

The next morning the rebels, along with Moses and Aaron, offered incense in their fire pans to G-d in front of the Mishkan. Moses and Aaron's offering was accepted, and those of the rebels, rejected. Then the earth opened, and Korach, Datan, and Abiram, as well as 250 others who were gathered with them, were swallowed up. This led to additional distress in the camp and further challenges to Moses.

The Parshah concludes with a reminder of the importance of the various responsibilities of the Kohanim and Levites.



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