

Bamidbar Chapter 16 - Transcript

Shiur Overview

Summary: Bamidbar Chapter 16 — The Rebellion of Korach

Overview

Bamidbar chapter 16 (extending into chapter 17) describes the **Machlokes of Korach** — the most significant and explicit challenge to leadership in Sefer Bamidbar. While all the challenges in Sefer Bamidbar are fundamentally challenges against leadership, this one is the most direct: Korach explicitly declares Aharon's priesthood illegitimate. Correspondingly, the divine response is the most extreme and deliberate of all the rebellions, underscoring the severity of this challenge. The narrative unfolds in three dimensions: (1) the actions taken by the rebels, (2) the rhetorical arguments and debates from both sides, and (3) Hashem's intervention to vindicate Moshe and Aharon.

The Opening Description of the Rebellion (16:1–2)

The chapter opens with "**Vayikach Korach**" — a verb without a clear direct object. The meforshim all struggle with what "vayikach" means here. It likely signifies that Korach formed a faction or party to stand against Moshe, as the next pasuk clarifies: *"Vayikahalu al Moshe"* — they gathered in opposition.

The text provides a detailed list with genealogies, characteristic of Sefer Bamidbar's style of census-taking and listing. **Three groups** compose the rebellion:

- Korach** — son of Yitzhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi (a Levite)
- Datan, Aviram (sons of Eliab), and On ben Peleth** — all from the tribe of Reuven
- 250 men from Bnei Yisrael** — but not ordinary people. They are described as **Nesi'ei Edah** (princes of the congregation), **Kri'ei Mo'ed** (those who are "called" — recalling the earlier **Mikra'ei Edah**), and **Anshei Shem** (men of renown, whose names are known). These are explicitly part of the existing leadership structure, making this a challenge **from within the leadership** against the leadership.

The Rebels' Opening Argument (16:3)

The rebels open with "**Rav Lachem**" — "You have too much!" They argue: *"Kol HaEdah Kulam Kedoshim"* — the entire congregation is holy. However, given the consistent usage of **Edah** throughout the book, this doesn't necessarily mean every single individual. The **Edah** is always represented by and led through its elders and leaders (**Ziknei HaEdah**). So Korach may be saying: all of us who are under the authority of the Edah are holy, Hashem is among all of us — so why do you (**Tisnas'u**) elevate yourselves above Hashem's community (**Kahal**)?

This is the general challenge all factions agree on: Moshe and Aharon have too much power and act as though they are superior.

Moshe's Initial Response and the Proposed Test (16:4–7)

Moshe **falls on his face** — possibly an act of humility, a gesture of "who am I?" He is not standing in opposition; they stand (**Vayakumu**) while he falls. But then he speaks.

He addresses Korach and his entire congregation (**Kol Adato**) and proposes **a trial by test** — reminiscent of the Sotah, where bringing a korban serves as a divine test. The test: take **machtos** (fire-pans), put fire and **ketores** (incense) in them, and Hashem will show whom He has chosen. Whoever Hashem accepts — that person is the holy one.

The logic connects back to **Kayin and Hevel**: *"VaYisha Hashem el Hevel v'el Minchato, v'el Kayin v'el Minchato lo sha'ah."* When a korban is brought, there is a way to know if God accepts it. Since the entire point of a Kohen is that he is authorized to bring korbanot, the test is straightforward: you claim you're also authorized? Try it. Bring ketores and see what happens.

Moshe closes with the same phrase the rebels used: "**Rav Lachem Bnei Levi**" — turning their own rhetoric back on them.

Key insight: The test is designed to shift the dispute from human deliberation to divine decision — removing it from the realm of argument and placing it in God's hands.

Moshe's Speech to the Levites Specifically (16:8–11)

Moshe now addresses the Levites directly, which is fitting since Sefer Bamidbar is the book where the Levites were chosen and given their role. He reminds them: Hashem already separated you from all other Israelites, brought you close, gave you service in the Mishkan. You stand before the congregation and serve on their behalf as their **shaliach**.

And now you want Kehunah also?

Key sociological insight: It is never the truly low classes who rise against elites — it is always a sub-elite group that feels they don't have enough power or dignity. Moshe is pointing out that the Levites are already privileged; they are demanding more privilege while failing to recognize what they already have.

Moshe concludes with a crucial theological statement: **your rebellion is not against me but against Hashem**. Aharon did nothing on his own — Hashem chose him. This pasuk is later quoted by the Rambam as a foundational statement about Moshe's entire mission: he never acts in his own name but only in Hashem's name.

Datan and Aviram's Separate Grievance (16:12–14)

Moshe's argument to the Levites doesn't address Datan and Aviram, who are from Reuven, not Levi. He calls for them, but **they refuse to come** — "Lo Na'aleh" (we will not come up).

Their response mirrors Moshe's own rhetoric. Moshe had said to the Levites *"HaMa'at Mikem"* (is it too little for you?), and Datan and Aviram throw the same word back: *"HaMa'at"* — is it too little what you've done to us?

Their argument is fundamentally different from Korach's. They make two claims:

1. **Moshe took them out of a land of milk and honey to kill them in the desert.** This is a remarkable and deliberate rhetorical inversion — *Eretz Zavot Chalav UDevash* was always a description of Canaan, never of Egypt. Earlier complaints about Egypt (in Beha'aloscha) referenced specific foods — cucumbers, melons, etc. — but nobody ever called Egypt "a land flowing with milk and honey." Datan and Aviram deliberately flip the script, applying the language of the Promised Land to Egypt to maximize the rhetorical force of their accusation.

2. **Moshe has not delivered on his promises.** He hasn't brought them to the promised land, hasn't given them a *nachalah* (inheritance), fields, or vineyards. And now he wants to be a *sar* (ruler) over them — *Tishtarer Aleinu*, the same concept as *Tisnas'u*.

Their phrase "**Ha'einei HaAnashim HaHem Tenaker**" — "Will you gouge out the eyes of these men?" — is an idiom meaning Moshe is trying to fool them, to blind them to reality. The equivalent of "pulling the wool over our eyes": we can see what you're doing, and we refuse to come.

The Two Distinct Challenges

The chapter thus reveals **two separate grievances** united under one rebellion:

- **Korach and the Levites:** Moshe and Aharon have taken too much *power and religious authority* — the Kehunah should not be exclusive.

- **Datan and Aviram (Reuven):** Moshe has *promised and not delivered* — he brought them out of Egypt but failed to bring them to the land, and now seeks to dominate them.

Moshe's Anger and Prayer (16:15)

He turns to (ויחר למשה מאד). Moshe becomes very angry. Do not turn toward their" — אל תפן אל מנקהם Hashem and asks offering." This is precisely the language of the Kayin and Hevel described God turning toward/accepting an 'ויקרן ה' story, where offering. Moshe is invoking that framework

In response to their accusation that he is an oppressor, Moshe defends himself minimally: "I have not taken even one donkey from them. I have not harmed any of them." He does **not** try to justify the failure to reach Eretz Canaan. His only point is that the characterization of him as a self-serving oppressor is false — he is there to help them.

The Test Proceeds (16:16–19)

Moshe instructs Korach's group on the exact procedure: tomorrow morning, each of the 250 men will bring his with ketores before Hashem. Korach and Aharon (fire-pan) are singled out as the **principals** of the debate — the ultimate question is which of them is the legitimate priest. The 250 follow through: each brings his fire-pan, places ketores on it, the place where all korbanos are, פתח אהל מועד, and stands at .brought. Korach gathers the entire congregation to watch

God's Intervention and Moshe's Intercession (16:19–24)

the glory of Hashem appears. This — וירא כבוד ה' אל כל העדה motif recurs throughout Bamidbar. Sometimes it signals something positive (as in Parshas Shmini, indicating God's presence in the Mishkan), but in these rebellion narratives it signals that **God has noticed and is intervening** — and when God intervenes in these situations, things typically get worse, not better. Moshe is always the one who **lightens** the punishment. Even when Moshe is furious, he never proposes anything as extreme as what God proposes

God tells Moshe and Aharon: **הבדלו מתוך העדה הזאת ואכלה אתם קריגע** — "Separate yourselves from this congregation and I will" — "destroy them all in an instant." This closely parallels the **Golden Calf** episode, where God similarly proposed destroying everyone and making Moshe into a great nation

Moshe and Aharon fall on their faces and plead God, the God of the spirits of all flesh" — a phrase — **לכל בשר** — "invoking the sanctity of every human soul. Their argument One man sins and You are" — **האיש אחר הקטא ועל כל העדה תקצף** — "angry at the entire congregation?" The logic of God's anger is that Korach had convinced most of the important people to join him. But Moshe argues they are **followers, not instigators** — the blame belongs to Korach alone

God appears to accept this argument. A new divine instructing the (וידבר ה' אל משה), communication follows congregation to **move away from the mishkan of Korach, Datan, and Aviram**. Notably, this is one of the — **משכן** only times a private individual is described as having a as if Korach has set up a rival dwelling against the Mishkan of Hashem. The instruction is practical: the punishment will be localized, so anyone physically present will be caught up in it.

.Separation is about **getting out of the danger zone**

The Confrontation with Datan and Aviram (16:25–27)

Moshe must physically travel to Datan and Aviram because they are geographically distant — Korach, as a Levi, was near the Ohel Moed, but Datan and Aviram are camped with Shevet Reuven. The elders of Israel follow Moshe. He warns the congregation to move away from the tents of these wicked men and touch nothing belonging to them, lest they be swept away in their sins.

Datan and Aviram remain **defiant**. They come out and stand at the entrance of their tents — a posture of — **פתח אהליהם** taking an official stand. They stand with their wives, older children, and younger children, unafraid

Moshe's Final Challenge and the Nature vs. Miracle Distinction (16:28–30)

Moshe delivers his climactic declaration: **בזאת תדעו כי ה' שלחני** By this you will know that Hashem sent me to do all these" — things, that it is not from my own heart." This responds to the totality of their challenges — against the Exodus, against Aharon's priesthood, against everything

Moshe sets up a clear test: **If these people die like every** with the ordinary visitation of all, **person dies** mankind — **then Hashem did not send me**. This is understood as a pointed reference to the **Meraglim episode**, where the punishment was that the generation would die in the wilderness. But that punishment unfolded naturally over people simply died as people die. — **במות כל אדם** — 40 years Nobody's side was definitively proven right by that outcome;

the rebels essentially got what they predicted (death in the .desert), even if it was framed as punishment if Hashem creates something new, a — **אם בְּרִיאָה יִבְרָא ה'** — **But** new creation. This is perhaps **the clearest place in the Torah** articulating the distinction between the natural course of events and a direct, miraculous divine intervention — something directly and unmistakably attributable to God. The specific sign: the earth will open its mouth, swallow them alive **וְשָׂאוֹל** with all their possessions, and they will descend alive to .(the underworld/realm of the dead)

The Earth Swallows Them; Fire Consumes the 250 (16:31–35)

The moment Moshe finishes speaking, the earth splits open, swallows Korach, Datan, and Aviram — their households, all ;their people, all their possessions. The earth covers them they are lost from the congregation. The — **וַיֵּאבְדוּ מִתּוֹךְ הַקֶּהֱלִל** — surrounding people flee from the terrifying noise of the .earthquake

from the presence of — **מֵאֵת ה'** Separately, **fire comes out** Hashem (the Kodesh Hakodashim or wherever the divine presence resides) — and consumes the **250 men** who offered the ketores. This directly parallels **Nadav and Avihu**, who .also brought ketores and were consumed by fire

An important observation: the 250 men were **never explicitly threatened with death**. The stated test was only whether Hashem would accept their offering or not. But the outcome reveals that when you "play with fire" — when you bring an unauthorized offering in a spirit of challenge and God rejects it — the consequence is death. The gap between the stated terms of the test and the actual outcome is significant.

Note on Chapter Division

The chapter break at this point is somewhat artificial — the story clearly continues into chapter 17, and the chapter division probably should not have stopped here, though it certainly should have included everything up to this point.

| Full Transcript

Bamidbar Chapter 16: The Rebellion of Korach

Introduction: The Most Significant Challenge to Leadership

We're doing Bamidbar chapter 16. This is the chapter and the next chapter somewhat. I'm not sure if the chapter was split in the correct place, but in any case this chapter and the next chapter talk about what's known as the Machlokes of Korach [the challenge or faction of Korach], which came to be against Moshe, specifically against Aharon and being the Kohen [priest].

Probably the most significant challenge — as we've discussed, in some sense all the challenges in Sefer Bamidbar are challenges against the leadership. This might be the most, or most explicitly, the challenge against the leadership, right? It's very explicitly Korach saying that Aharon's leadership, Aharon's priesthood, Aharon's Kehunah [priesthood] is not legitimate.

And there also seems to be the most extreme response. The response to Korach seems to be the most extreme, the most deliberate and extreme response from all these challenges, which is another reason to think that this challenge was somewhat more significant or maybe one of the most important, I would say, rebellions or challenges to the leadership that there was in Bamidbar.

The Structure of the Narrative

It's described in quite at length and with different steps and different steps, both action steps. So what's the actions Korach did, what actions other people who were along with him, part of his faction or different faction along with his party did. And also different discussions or debates.

This is one attribute of all these challenges, as I've discussed already once. It's not that Moshe just uses power. He also seems to have rhetoric. There's also arguments made from both sides. And then also the question of the punishment or Hashem's response. Hashem always somehow steps in at some point and shows who is correct and basically backs up Moshe, backs up Aharon and so on.

But those are the three things and each of them have various doublings and various different stages or however you understand the story repeating itself or going back and forth. So we'll try to go in order of the chapter and go through what it says.

The Opening: Vayikach Korach — The Formation of the Rebellion

The Problematic Verb

First it talks about, gives you like a very general description of the rebellion and this is called **Vayikach Korach** [And Korach took]. It doesn't say there isn't an object of this verb exactly. Vayikach, who did he take? And apparently this is an object that Mefarshim [commentators] will struggle with this, but this is probably a verb that is trying to say he became a faction, he became a party and to stand against Moshe. As it says in the next verse, they gathered against Moshe, they gathered to stand in opposition to Moshe.

The Three Groups of Rebels

So what we have is a list and a list that also has some of the attributes of Sefer Bamidbar in the sense of giving genealogies and lists and the census of everything.

So we have Korach with his entire genealogy, the son of Yitzhar, son of Kehat, son of Levi. Then we have two other people, Datan and Aviram, sons of Eliav, and On, the son of Pelet. These are all sons of Reuven and they all stand, they'll stand in front of Moshe along with a third.

So there's Korach, there's these two brothers plus one more person from Reuven and then there's a third group, more people from Bnei Yisrael, generally from the Bnei Yisrael, 250 **Nesi'ei Edah Bnei Yisrael** [princes of the congregation of Israel], this is like we discussed, there's the Edah [congregation]. So these are the leaders, the general, the leaders, the princes of the congregation.

The Leadership Challenging the Leadership

These are the people that were called, right? Remember we had before, there's people that are called the **Mikra'ei Edah** [those called to the congregation]. These are one of the people

that we get called. So one of the elders, **Anshei Shem** [people of names], people like we said, they're Mikra'ei Edah, right? We had before the lists of people that were in charge of the census and so on. People whose name is known, these are not just randos, these are people who are explicitly part of the leadership really and they're the ones challenging the leadership and the position of Moshe and Aharon.

The Rebels' Opening Argument: "Rav Lachem"

And this is their first statement and we'll see there's a response with the same rhetoric or the same language. Their first statement starts, **Rav Lachem** [You have too much]. It's great, you've talked a great amount. All of us, **Kol HaEdah, Kulam Kedoshim** [All the congregation, all of them are holy].

People usually read this to mean the entire community is holy but as we've been discussing, Edah doesn't necessarily always mean every single person or might be also every single person but always as represented by the elders, as led by the **Ziknei Edah** [elders of the congregation], by the people in charge of the Edah. So it's possible that he's saying, look, we're all under this authority of the Edah Kedoshim and Hashem is with all of us.

So why are you, this **Nasu** [raise up], why are you acting with **Hitnasut** [self-elevation]? I'm always looking for the correct term about this, for being raised up, for being higher. Why do you think you're higher than Hashem's gathering, Hashem's Kahal [assembly], Hashem's community?

So this is the very general challenge and to this, it seems like all of these sides, all of these people, whether they're separate factions within Korach's party, whether or not these are all something they all agree with, they're saying in very general terms, Moshe and Aharon have too much power, they have too much, why are they being, think that they're better than everyone else?

Moshe's Initial Response: Falling on His Face

Now Moshe, as we've seen before, falls on his face. He hears and he falls on his face, again which means something like, I don't really have what to answer, this might be an act of like humility, something like he's not standing, they're standing, right? They're standing and Moshe falls to his face, he's like, who am I, what am I doing here?

But he does speak and he stands up, doesn't say, well there's some discontinuity here maybe, but he stands up and he speaks to Korach and to all of his congregation, to everyone on the side of Korach, the **Adat** [congregation] of Korach, he speaks to them and he gives them a test.

The Proposed Test: Trial by Ketores

A Divine Test, Not Human Deliberation

This is very interesting, maybe the first time, but we have a test, we have the story of a Sotah [suspected adulteress], which is a similar kind of test, where by being a korban [offering] there will be a test, and this is also a test, Moshe proposes a trial by test, let's see who is right.

And he says, let's see in the morning we will see, Hashem will show who is the one He chose, who is really holy, who did He choose, who did He make close to Him, and he proposed a test, this is what you'll do, you'll take **machtos** [fire-pans], you'll take vessels of, where we put fire, where we put **ketores** [incense] in, you'll put fire, you'll put ketores, all of you, all of

you will do this, and you will see whoever Hashem chooses, He is the Holy One.

Turning Their Rhetoric Back on Them

And he finishes with the same way they started, in other words, and as we'll see, he elaborates on this in the next piece, when he talks specifically to Bnei Levi [the children of Levi], before he was talking to everyone, maybe also not from Levi, right, so it was explicitly people from Shevet Reuven [the tribe of Reuben] here, and from other people, from other Shevatim [tribes] in Bnei Yisrael.

But he seems to say, proposed, look, there's ketores, he doesn't say what will happen, we'll see later when something happens, but it seems like the simple test is, something like, goes back all the way to Kayin and Hevel [Cain and Abel], so when you bring a korban, there's a way to know if God accepts someone's korban, and of course the point of a Kohen is that he is the one that is authorized to bring korban, so you people are claiming that you're also authorized, okay, try it out, let's see, try to bring a korban, which korban, ketores, okay, but you'll try it out.

Moshe's Speech to the Levites: "You Already Have Privilege"

The Book of the Choosing of Levi

And now he tries to speak also specifically to Korach, specifically to Levi, and he says, and this is, again, very much pertinent to this book, which, this is the book where we had the choosing of Levi, and giving Levi their job, right, it's not something that we had in earlier books, at least not in the same explicit way, not at length.

And Moshe speaks to the Levi and he tells them, look, Hashem, the God of Israel, has already separated you from all the other people to make you close, so you're the ones who are serving in the Mishkan [Tabernacle], you're the ones who stand before the congregation to serve them, right, in other words, you serve for them, as we've seen many times, you stand in for them, you're their **shaliach** [agent], in the Mishkan, and now you want Kehunah also?

The Sociology of Elite Rebellion

In other words, you already have Levi, so this is, of course, what always happens, everyone knows, it's never the real low classes that can rise against the elites, it's always some subset of the elite that think that they don't have enough power, they don't have enough dignity, they don't have enough, whatever privileges it is that they're demanding.

But Moshe is saying, look, this is basically what he's saying, he's saying, you're demanding privilege, but you're already privileged, so you're, notice that you're also privileged.

"This Is Not About Me, It's About Hashem"

And then he finishes, he finishes this little speech with saying that you are not about me, you're about Hashem, this is the big statement that Moshe has, that the Rambam quotes this later pasuk of Moshe in this parashah, as like a very general pasuk about Moshe's entire message, his entire **shlichut** [mission], his entire, everything he does, that he doesn't do things in his own name, he does things in Hashem's name.

But this is what he's saying, you and everyone, you are, you gathered here against Hashem, not against me, what do you want from Aharon? Aharon didn't do anything, Hashem chose him, as he's saying, and this, of course, is what his test is about, and to show, this test is meant to move the question,

not from the question that people will deliberate about and discuss, to a question that God will decide by showing whose korban he accepts.

So that's about the Leviyim [Levites].

Datan and Aviram's Separate Grievance: The Refusal to Come

Moshe Calls, They Refuse

Now, apparently this didn't answer the question of Datan and Aviram, who are children of Eliav, children of Reuven, they're not, for them you can't say that they're Levi and so on, so he tries to go speak to them, so he calls them, other than by Korach, where he speaks to them directly, apparently they were not there, or there's something happened in between, he calls them, but they don't come, and they respond by themselves, or through some messenger, they say, we'll not come.

Flipping the Rhetoric: "HaMa'at"

And they answer him, it's very interesting, they answer him in the same language that he's answered to Levi, right, that Moshe said **HaMa'at Mikem** [Is it too little for you], so there's **rav** [much], **ma'at** [little], all the time, rav, rav, and then Moshe said HaMa'at, is it little, is it few, what you've gotten already, and then they say to Moshe in the same way, they say, **ma'at**, is it few what you've done to us, so here we see what their real problem is.

The Inversion: Egypt as "Eretz Zavav UDevash"

Is it, is it a little, is it small to you, the problem you made for us, you took us out of **Eretz Zavav UDevash** [a land flowing with milk and honey], and they flipped the script, right, Egypt was never called Eretz Zavav UDevash, nobody thought that, there were different things that people complained about Egypt, and Bnei Yisrael, we talked about **kishuim** [cucumbers], and **avitchim** [melons], and so on, nobody said Eretz Zavav UDevash, that wasn't a description of Egypt, that was a description of Eretz Canaan [the land of Canaan].

But here they're saying, look, you took us out of Eretz Zavav UDevash, you're going to kill us in the desert, and now you want power over us, you want **tishtorer aleinu** [to rule over us], same, same idea as **tisnas'u** [elevate yourself], right, you want to be a **sar** [prince], you want to be a, like a power, a prince over us.

The Accusation: Promises Not Delivered

You didn't bring us to Eretz Zavav UDevash, you didn't give us a **nachalah** [inheritance], you didn't give us a land with a field, with a vineyard, anything, what are you trying to do, you're trying to put out our eyes, trying to pierce out our eyes, I think this is an image to say, that Moshe is fooling us, he's pulling the wool over our eyes, as we would say, they would say, **ha'einei anashim hahem tenaker** [will you gouge out the eyes of these men], are you punching out our eyes, we can see what you're doing to us, we're not coming to you.

So this is what their, was their argument, so Korach was saying that Moshe took too much power, and this is what they were saying, that Moshe has promised and has not delivered, he promised to bring

You took us out of the **Eretz Zavav U'Dvash** [Eretz Zavav U'Dvash — a land flowing with milk and honey]. And they flipped the script, right? Mitzrayim was never called

Eretz Zavav U'Dvash. Nobody thought that. There were different things that people complained about. Mitzrayim and Bnei Yisrael, we talked about kishuim [cucumbers] and avitchim [melons] and so on. Nobody said **Eretz Zavav U'Dvash**. That wasn't the description of Eretz Canaan. But here they're saying, look, you took us out of **Eretz Zavav U'Dvash**. You're going to kill us in the desert.

And now you want power over us. You want to destroy our land. It's the same idea as **hishtarer** [to lord over], right? You want to be a **sar** [prince/ruler]. You want to be like a power, a prince over us. You didn't bring us to **Eretz Zavav U'Dvash**. You didn't give us a **nachala** [inheritance]. You didn't give us a land with a field, with a vineyard and anything. What are you trying to do? You're trying to put out our eyes, trying to pierce out our eyes.

I think this is an image to say that Moshe is fooling us. He's pulling the wool over our eyes, as we would say, or they would say, **ha'einei ha'anashim hahem tenaket** [will you gouge out the eyes of these men?] — are you punching out our eyes? We can see what you're doing to us. We're not coming to you.

So this was their argument. So Korach was saying that Moshe took too much power. And these Datan and Aviram were saying that Moshe has promised and has not delivered. He promised to bring us out of Mitzrayim to a better place. It turns out he brought us to a worse place. And even that he can't provide for us. We're all going to die in the desert.

Moshe's Anger and Prayer Against the Rebels

And now here, Moshe is upset. Moshe is very upset, is angry. And he asks Hashem — and since we said that the test will be Hashem, if Hashem accepts their **mincha** [offering] — so he asks Hashem, do not accept their **mincha**. **Al tefen el minchatam** [do not turn toward their offering], exactly the language that we discussed like **vayifen Hashem** [and Hashem turned toward], right? Hashem do not turn, do not turn to their **mincha**.

And Moshe says, responding to their argument against him, that they said, that look, he's somehow oppressing them, right? He's taking them out of **Eretz Zavav U'Dvash** to a worse place. And Moshe says, did I take something from them? I didn't even take one donkey from them. I didn't do anything bad to any of them. I'm trying to help them. It's true that there's challenges. And Moshe is not even answering, not justifying himself about the fact that he's not taking them to Eretz Canaan and so on. But what he's doing is saying, their idea of me as some kind of oppressor, some kind of person who's just taking them, just trying to look for his own gain, that's not correct. I'm here to help them. And you know, if it helps or it doesn't help, that's up to Hashem in some sense.

The Test Procedure: 250 Fire-Pans and the Principals

So we're back to the test. So Moshe goes back to Korach, tells them the exact plan for tomorrow. You'll come all tomorrow morning. Each will bring his **machtah** [fire-pan]. He'll put **ketores** [incense]. He'll bring it all to Hashem. 250 people, so 250 **machtahs**. And maybe Moshe even prepared these. It's not clear why he's counting how many **machtahs** there are. And we'll bring Aharon. So there's 250 people. Each one thinks he is, okay, let's all try. And Aharon will bring. So apparently they're the main, right? These are the principals of this debate. Like it's either Korach or Aharon in the end.

And that's what they do. They follow through what Moshe has challenged them to do. They each bring their **machtah**. They each put **ketores** on it. They all stand **petach Ohel Moed** [at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting], which is the place where all korbanos are brought. Moshe and Aharon stand there. Korach brings everyone to watch the story.

The Glory of Hashem Appears: Divine Intervention

And **vayera kevod Hashem el kol ha'edah** [and the glory of Hashem appeared to the entire congregation]. And then the glory of Hashem is revealed. We've seen this exact state many times. The glory of Hashem is revealed. Usually, sometimes it's a good thing, right? As we saw in parashat Shemini, that means that the Mishkan has **kevod Hashem** [the glory of Hashem]. But also means that God has noticed, right? Like we said, always in these stories, God intervenes at some point and takes over the situation. And when God intervenes, usually in these situations it makes things worse. Moshe is always the one making things lighter, making things better. Even when he's upset, even when he's **vayichar l'Moshe me'od** [and Moshe was very angry], Moshe didn't propose to do anything like what God proposes, but God proposed something much more radical.

God's Proposal to Destroy the Entire Congregation

And God speaks to Moshe and Aharon and He tells them, please separate yourself from this congregation. I will destroy all of them in a moment. And Moshe and Aharon fall on their faces. And they ask Him, they beg Him, they say, **Eil Elohei haruchot l'chol basar** [God, the God of the spirits of all flesh]. All the spirits of each flesh. So this is some language for human life, for human soul. And they're saying one person sins and you're upset at the entire congregation.

So here we see, Hashem's plan was to kill everyone, not only Korach and his group. Besides for Moshe and Aharon, very similar to what happened in the **Egel** [Golden Calf], right? Where Hashem says, I'll make you into a great nation. Hashem here wants the same thing. He says, you separate yourself and everyone will be dead.

Moshe's Argument: Only Korach is Guilty

But then Moshe says, what do you mean? It's just Korach and his group. And obviously there's an argument here, right? It's not just Hashem being over-mad and saying, I will kill everyone. What's going on is probably that Korach convinced most people, or at least the important people of the **edah** [congregation], to be on his side. But Moshe is arguing that it's not their fault. It's clear they're all led by Korach. So you should be angry at Korach, not at all of them.

And therefore, Hashem seems to agree to this. And therefore we get a new message. **Vayedaber Hashem el Moshe** [and Hashem spoke to Moshe]. And he says, so now the **edah** is already part of the saved side. And they tell them, you should separate yourself. You should rise from around the **Mishkan**. Very interesting. I'm trying to remember, there's one more person that has a **Mishkan**. But Korach and Datan and Aviram are said to have a **Mishkan**, like against the Mishkan of Hashem. But everyone should go away from it because they will be destroyed, but not everyone else.

Moshe Confronts Datan and Aviram at Their Tents

So that's what happens. So Moshe stands up and again goes to Datan and Aviram. So the whole time we see Korach and his people are next to Moshe. **Petach Ohel Moed**, of course,

makes sense. Korach was a Levi, so he was close. But Datan and Aviram are far. They're wherever Shevet Reuven [the tribe of Reuben] lives. So they're not in the same place. So therefore, Moshe has to go to them. And all the elders go after him.

And Moshe speaks to the elders, speaks to the congregation. He tells them, move away, separate yourself from the tents of these evil people. Don't touch anything of them because you'll be destroyed, you'll die along with their sins. So in other words, you do have to separate. So when it says separation, the separation means if something bad happens to them, if you happen to be there, you might also get caught up with it. It's not that when there's a natural disaster or some punishment that happens, it's going to happen on their place. So if you're smart, you're going to move out of the way and then you won't have the problem.

The Defiance of Datan and Aviram

So that's what they do. And they all move away. But Datan and Aviram are defiant. They come out, they stand **petach aholeihem** [at the entrance of their tents], which again, you'll see that's the place where you stand, where you're making an official stand. They're standing there with their wives, their children, with their older children, with their younger children, and they're not afraid. They're saying, okay, we're here.

Moshe's Final Challenge: Natural Death vs. Divine Miracle

And here Moshe gives his final speech, his final sort of challenge to this. And he says, now you will know that Hashem sent me to do everything I've done, right? So we see they're challenging everything. As we see, they challenged him taking them out of Mitzrayim, they challenged him making them into a nation, they challenged everything. He said, you will see that Hashem sent me. I didn't make this up. This is not from my heart. I didn't make any of this up.

The Test: If They Die Like All People

And we'll see like this, if these people die, like every person dies, everyone dies, right? So the fact that people die, that doesn't prove anything. And I think that this is very clearly a reference to what happened before in the Meraglim [spies]. Because the Meraglim exactly died like every person, right? As it says, they will die in the Midbar [wilderness], they will take 40 years, but it doesn't say that anyone, besides for some people, **motzi'ei dibat ha'arets ra'ah** [who brought forth an evil report of the land], but even them, it doesn't say exactly when they died.

And the basic story of the Midbar is that they all died, it took time, they stayed for another generation, and that's until the previous generation died. But they all died, basically. **K'mot kol adam** [like the death of all people], **u'fekudat kol adam** [and the visitation of all people], everyone died, you know, in the way that everyone, people die.

But, Moshe says, that doesn't really — so that doesn't prove, okay, so it got proven, it's basically what they said, that I can't take them there to Israel. So, they sort of got what they predicted. Of course, it's presented as a punishment for a sin, but that's basically what — nobody really got his side proven to be right.

If Hashem Creates Something New

Moshe is saying, now, if that will happen, then **lo Hashem shelachani** [Hashem did not send me], you're right, Hashem didn't send me. But, if Hashem will do something new, and it's, if He will create a creation — **im bri'ah yivra Hashem** [if Hashem creates a creation] — I don't know this necessarily means something like very extreme, like **bereishit bara Elokim** [in the beginning God created], whatever creation means. But, the point is that, if there will be something new, something unlike creation, this is probably the clearest place you could find in the Torah for the concept of a difference between what we call natural course of events and a miraculous course, or something that directly attributable to God, right? **Im bri'ah yivra Hashem** [if Hashem creates a creation].

If He will do something, and what will He do? The earth will open its mouth, and swallow them, and everything belonging to them. They will go straight down, alive, to **She'ol** [the underworld/realm of the dead]. **She'ol** is where dead people go, under the ground somehow, wherever that is. Then, you will know that these people blasphemed against God. It's not against me, against God.

The Earth Opens and Swallows the Rebels

And that's exactly what happened. As He finishes to speak, the earth opens its mouth, it splits, it opens its mouth, it swallows them, their houses, meaning their household, all their people, all their possessions, everything goes down to **She'ol**, and then it covers them up, the earth covers them up, they get lost. They are out of the congregation, they get lost.

And then the people around all run away from the great sound, from the great noise of this earth opening up, or some kind of earthquake, or whatever exactly, however exactly it will be described. And they, because they realize that this is a dangerous place.

Fire Consumes the 250 Men Offering Ketores

And then, so that's what happens to Korach, to Korach and Datan and Aviram. Then, the 250 people, a fire comes out **me'et Hashem** [from Hashem], from the Mizbeach [altar], this means from wherever, like **me'et Hashem**, from where Hashem is, **kevod Hashem**, and it destroys, it eats, meaning destroys or burns the 250 people.

This is, of course, very similar to what happened with Nadav and Avihu, who got burnt. So, obviously, this is what really happens. We just had — that we didn't have this until now. They were not threatened with dying. They were not, they were only threatened with Hashem not accepting their **korban** [offering]. But apparently, when you play with fire, when Hashem doesn't accept your **korban**, at least when it's in a way of a challenge and all of that, so this is what's going to happen. What's going to happen is, you will be killed.

Conclusion and Continuation

So that's the end of this chapter. And we'll see, there's a continuation to this story. And I'm not sure the chapter should have stopped here, or probably shouldn't have, which for sure should have went until here, but let's, we will follow the chapter division for today.