



June 19-20, 2026

ה תמוז תשפ"ו

Candlelighting 8:10 PM

**Parashat Korach** – Numbers 16:1-18:32 קרח  
Stone – p 820 Hertz – p 639 Etz Hayim – p 860

**Haftarah** – I Samuel 11:14-12:22  
Stone – p 1186 Hertz – p 649 Etz Hayim – p 877

**Kiddush** luncheon following services  
is sponsored by  
Vilma & Alan Levi  
in honor of their 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary

**Shabbat** ends 9:10 PM

## **TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION**

Rabbi Seth D Gordon - Rabbi.Gordon@yahoo.com  
Marian S. Gordon, Executive Director - traditionalcong@gmail.com

### **WEEKDAY AND SHABBAT SERVICES**

Tuesday - 6:45 PM

*Shabbat* - 9:30 AM

Board of Directors:

Governance Committee:

Florence Schachter, Chair

Marty Levy, Vice-Chair

Ken Bohm, Ellis Frohman, Ron Green,

Dina Rinder, Mindy Strauss

Ellis Frohman, Financial Vice President

Mark Weinstein, Ritual Vice President

Marty Levy/Mindy Strauss,

Education Co-Vice Presidents

Dina Rinder, Membership Vice President

Steven Puro, Administration Vice President

Chris Brown/Justin Zeid, Building & Grounds

Co-Vice Presidents

Ron Green, Fundraising Vice President

Barbara Levin, Treasurer

Mimi Levy, Secretary

Past Presidents:

Kenneth H. Bohm, Phil Brick

Members at Large:

Maureen Brodsky

Stanley Estrin

Bill Gold

Gary Golden z"l

Jack Heller

Sid Levin

Ari Levy

Carol Max

Florence Schachter

*We welcome new members!*

If you or someone you know would like to receive membership information,  
please contact our office at 314-576-5230  
or traditionalcong@gmail.com

## On This Week's Torah Portion - Korach

When we read the story of Korach, our attention tends to be focused on the rebels. We don't give as much reflection as we might to the response of Moses. Was it right? Was it wrong? It's a complex story. As the Ramban explains, it is no accident that the Korach rebellion happened in the aftermath of the story of the spies. So long as the people expected to enter the Promised Land, they stood to lose more than they could gain by challenging Moses' leadership. He had successfully negotiated all obstacles in the past. He was their best hope. But now a whole generation was condemned to die in the wilderness. Now they had nothing to lose. When people have nothing to lose, rebellions happen.

Next, let us examine the constitution of rebels themselves. It's clear from the narrative that they were not a uniform or unified group. The Malbim explains that there were three different groups, each with their own grievance and agenda. First was Korach himself, a cousin to Moses. Moses was the child of Kehat's eldest son, Amram. As the child of Kehat's second son, Yitzhar, Korach felt entitled to the second leadership role, that of High Priest.

Second were Datan and Aviram, who felt that they were entitled to leadership positions as descendants of Reuben, Jacob's firstborn.

Third were the 250 others, described by the Torah as "Princes of the Assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown." Either they felt that they had earned the right to be leaders on meritocratic grounds, or - Ibn Ezra's suggestion - they were firstborns who resented the fact that the role of ministering to God was taken from the firstborn sons and given to the Levites after the sin of the Golden Calf. A coalition of the differently discontented: that is how rebellions tend to start.

What was Moses' reaction to their rebellion? His first response is to propose a simple, decisive test: Let everyone bring an offering of incense, and then let God decide whose to accept. But the derisive, insolent response of Datan and Aviram seems to unnerve him. He turns to God and says: "Do not accept their offering. I have not taken so much as a donkey from them, nor have I wronged any of them." Num. 16:15

But they had not said that he had. That is the first discordant note.

God then threatens to punish the whole congregation. Moses and Aaron intercede on their behalf. God tells Moses to separate the community from the rebels so that they will not be caught up in the punishment, which Moses does. But he then does something unprecedented. He says: "This is how you will know that the Lord has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea: If these men die a natural death and suffer the fate of all humankind, then the Lord has not sent me. But if the Lord brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the realm of the dead, then you will know that these men have treated the Lord with contempt." Num. 16:28-30

This was the only time Moses asked God to punish someone, and the only time he challenged Him to perform a miracle.

God does as Moses asks. Naturally we expect that this will end the rebellion: God has sent an unmistakable sign that Moses was right, the rebels wrong. But it doesn't. Far from ending the rebellion, things now escalate: The next day the whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. "You have killed the Lord's people," they said. Num. 17:6

The people gather around Moses and Aaron as if about to attack them. God starts smiting the people with a plague. Moses tells Aaron to make atonement, and eventually the plague stops. But some 14,700 people have died. Not until a quite different demonstration takes place - when Moses takes twelve rods representing the twelve tribes, and Aaron's buds and blossoms and bears fruit - does the rebellion finally end.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Moses' intervention, challenging God to make the earth swallow his opponents, was a tragic mistake. If so, what kind of mistake was it?

The Harvard leadership expert, Ronald Heifetz, makes the point that it is essential for a leader to distinguish between role and self. A role is a position we hold. The self is who we are. Leadership is a role. It is not an identity. It is not who we are. Therefore a leader should never take an attack on their leadership personally:

*continued next page*

"It's a common ploy to personalise the debate over issues as a strategy for taking you out of action . . . You want to respond when you are attacked . . . You want to leap into the fray when you are mischaracterised . . . When people attack you personally, the reflexive reaction is to take it personally . . . But being criticised by people you care about is almost always a part of exercising leadership . . . When you take personal attacks personally, you unwittingly conspire in one of the common ways you can be taken out of action – you make yourself the issue." (Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, Harvard Business School Press, 2002, pp. 130, 190-191.)

Moses twice takes the rebellion personally. First, he defends himself to God after being insulted by Datan and Aviram. Second, he asks God miraculously and decisively to show that he – Moses – is God's chosen leader. But Moses was not the issue. He had already taken the right course of action in proposing the test of the incense offering. That would have resolved the question. As for the underlying reason that the rebellion was possible at all – the fact that the people were devastated by the knowledge that they would not live to enter the Promised Land – there was nothing Moses could do.

Moses allowed himself to be provoked by Korach's claim, "Why do you set yourselves above the Lord's assembly" and by Datan and Aviram's offensive remark, "And now you want to lord it over us!" These were deeply personal attacks, but by taking them as such, Moses allowed his opponents to define the terms of engagement. As a result, the conflict was intensified instead of defused.

It is hard not to see this as the first sign of the failing that would eventually cost Moses his chance of leading the people into the land. When, almost forty years later, he says to the people who complain about the lack of drink, "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" (Num. 20:10), he shows the same tendency to personalise the issue ("must we bring you water?") – but it never was about "we" but about God.

The Torah is devastatingly honest about Moses, as it is about all its heroes. Humans are only human. Even the greatest makes mistakes. In the case of Moses, his greatest strength was also his greatest weakness. His anger at injustice singled him out as a leader in the first place. But he allowed himself to be provoked to anger by the people he led, and it was this, according to Rambam (*Eight Chapters*, ch. 4), that eventually caused him to forfeit his chance of entering the Land of Israel.

Heifetz writes: "Receiving anger. . . is a sacred task . . . Taking the heat with grace communicates respect for the pains of change." *Ibid.* pp. 142-146.

After the episode of the spies, Moses faced an almost impossible task. How do you lead a people when they know they will not reach their destination in their lifetime? In the end what stilled the rebellion was the sight of Aaron's rod, a piece of dry wood, coming to life again, bearing flowers and fruit. Perhaps this was not just about Aaron but about the Israelites themselves. Having thought of themselves as condemned to die in the desert, perhaps they now realised that they too had borne fruit – their children – and it would be they who completed the journey their parents had begun. That, in the end, was their consolation.

Of all the challenges of leadership, not taking criticism personally and staying calm when the people you lead are angry with you, may be the hardest of all. That may be why the Torah says what it does about Moses, the greatest leader who ever lived. It is a way of warning future generations: if at times you are pained by people's anger, take comfort. So did Moses. But remember the price Moses paid, and stay calm.

Though it may seem otherwise, the anger you face has nothing to do with you as a person and everything to do with what you stand for and represent. Depersonalising attacks is the best way to deal with them. People get angry when leaders cannot magically make harsh reality disappear. Leaders in such circumstances are called on to accept that anger with grace. That truly is a sacred task.

***Shabbat Shalom,***  
 **Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l**



**Mazal Tov!!**

**Anniversary Kiddush**

Sponsored by Vilma & Alan Levi  
in honor of their 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary

**Shabbat, June 20, 2026**

Please RSVP with names of all  
attending to  
[traditionalcong@gmail.com](mailto:traditionalcong@gmail.com)

You are Invited!

**4th of July**  
*Shabbat*

Traditional  
Congregation

**Deli Kiddush**

**following 7/4/26 services**

**sponsored by**  
**Rabbi & Marian**

RSVP with names of all  
attending to:  
[traditionalcong@gmail.com](mailto:traditionalcong@gmail.com)

## **PRAYER**

Rabbi Eleazer on concluding his worship  
used to say the following:

*May it be Your will, Almighty God,  
to cause to dwell on our lot love and  
harmony, peace and friendship.*

May You make our borders rich  
in disciples and prosper in our latter  
end with good prospect and hope,  
and set our portion in Paradise.

*Confirm us with a good companion and  
a good impulse in Your world.*

May we rise early and obtain the yearning  
of our heart to revere Your name.

*And may You be pleased to grant  
The satisfaction of our desires!*

## ***Talmud***

## **THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT OF SILENCE**

We find comfort among those who agree with us – growth among  
those who don't.

***Frank A. Clark***