

CHABAD

 RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

Friday 19 June 2026 - 4 Tammuz 5786
 Sedra Korach

JEWISH LEADERSHIP

REBELLION! THE VERY WORD SOUNDS EXCITING TO MODERN EARS. Rebellion suggests freedom from oppression, equality. However, some rebellions simply function as a reactionary return to elitism.

In this week's Sedra¹ we read about the first organized rebellion among the Jewish people. Korach, a cousin of Moses and Aaron, launched a massive campaign against their leadership. The question is what precisely were his goals?

On the one hand he seemed to be criticising Moses and Aaron for taking too much spiritual power. "The entire community is holy", he declared. "Why do you raise yourselves above the congregation?" If - as he seemed to be saying - every Jew has direct access to G-d, there is no need for any one to be on top. He was objecting to the whole institution of leadership and hierarchy.

But as the story unfolds a somewhat different picture emerges. Korach had his eyes on a particular leading position. He envied Aaron and wanted to replace him as High Priest. This contradicts what we thought was the basis of his opposition. Did he want there to be spiritual leadership or not?

In fact Korach's rebellion was unusual. It was not the rejection of authority that characterizes most radical movements. On the contrary he wanted to *elevate* Jewish leadership. It was not a move to the left, it was a move to the right.



Yahrzeit of the Lubavitcher Rebbe זי"ע - 3rd Tammuz
 May the Rebbe's Torah teachings help each of us to
 bring Goodness to the World

Moses, who carried the titles “Teacher” and “Law Giver”, and Aaron who was “High Priest”, were not restricted to these specific roles. In addition to spiritual guidance and the running of the services in the Tabernacle, they were involved with the general welfare of the people, dealing with domestic issues. Aaron was famous as a marriage counsellor. They were leaders who were also concerned about the daily needs of the people.

According to an explanation in Chassidic teachings, Korach did not approve of this double role. His concept of a leader was one who is purely occupied with religious and spiritual matters, a kind of spiritual academic. This kind of leader should be available for those who are searching for additional inspiration. The average Jew, however, is spiritual enough and has no need for contact. Everyday matters, including basic religious performance, could survive independently of the saintly sages.

What Korach was criticising was the *involvement* of Moses and Aaron, their claim that they were responsible for the daily life of the people. Instead Korach wanted to replace them and be the saintly scholar in an ivory tower: that was his idea of leadership!

As the story concludes, the rebellion was crushed, and the attempt to sever a leader from his flock failed. Judaism is all encompassing. It does not deal merely with “religious” matters. It addresses the total Jew, including his or her human side. Moses and Aaron therefore had the responsibility to deal with the full range of human experience².

This image of Jewish leadership was particularly represented by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, whose Yahrzeit was on Thursday, 3 Tammuz, 18 June. The Rebbe’s teachings show how the Torah relates to every aspect of life, giving access to every man, woman and child. His life gives an example of concern for the spiritual and also the material wellbeing of every human being - a concern expressed by his thousands of emissaries round the globe.

Through their efforts over the past seventy years, Judaism has been revitalised in many places, preparing the Jewish people and the world for the ultimate vitality, the coming of Moshiach!

1. Numbers chs. 16-18. 2. Freely based on the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s *Likkutei Sichot* vol.4 pp. 1051-2.

Torah teachings are holy - please treat this page with care

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SEDRA KORACH

YEAR 8 KORACH

"It's not fair!" Complaints were coming from all sides in the school gym and the coach was looking rather stressed. "Why did you make Samuel the captain?" That was the main theme.

Some of the complaints seemed genuine, while others were obviously no more than jealousy. Some complaints were coming from people standing round Ben, who had been a rival possibility.

"Silence!" the coach shouted, trying to restore order. "I will not take complaints with everyone screaming together."

"Coach," said Adam, raising his hand politely, trying to attract his attention. "We don't feel that you have picked out our team's captain fairly". Fortunately the captain in question was away that day, so the boys felt they could say what they liked about him.

"Explain why it's not fair!" said the coach. For the next two minutes a variety of different complaints were expressed by a number of boys, some at considerable length. However, the majority of Year 8 did not actually say anything.

"Have you all finished?" asked the coach. The voices died down and now the large gym hall was still and quiet. The coach cleared his throat.

"In this week's Torah portion a man by the name of Korach came with a complaint.... Does any one remember what Korach said?"

It took a few seconds till Adam piped up. "Korach said that he wanted to become the high priest. Or something. He wanted to be important. He didn't want everything important to go to Moses and Aaron".

"What was wrong with that?" asked the coach. "Why shouldn't he complain?"

"Well" Ben said "The point is that Hashem told everyone what they were supposed to be. Like Moses was the leader and Aaron the High Priest. Korach was wrong to mix in. He was trying to start a rebellion".

"Right," said the coach. "Now obviously, when you have a team, like we are together, no one is perfect. Hashem told the Jewish people who should be the leader and obviously no one could complain against that and Korach was clearly wrong. In our case it's different. We had a discussion last week and on the basis of that there was a vote and there was a tie between Ben and Samuel and I felt that Samuel should be captain."

The boys were nodding as they listened to him speak.

"So we have a structure and Samuel is the captain of the team, and if you put yourself with him I believe he's going to do a very good job."

"You mean, don't be like Korach", said Ben.

The coach smiled at him, thinking that Ben himself would also make a very good captain, perhaps next term. Then he said, "You're right!", and Year 8 relaxed. It was time to stop complaining and to get on with things, to move forward...

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