

## **PARSHAT KORACH**

What did Korach 'TAKE'? For some reason, the Torah prefers not to tell us.

Likewise, Korach definitely had many complaints, yet Chumash never clarifies what he proposed instead.

In fact, as we study Parshat Korach, we will notice how many other important details appear to be 'missing!' In this week's shiur we attempt to explain why.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Parshat Korach opens with a pasuk that seems to be grammatically incorrect:

"Va'yikach Korach..." - And Korach, the son of Yizhar, the son of Khat, the son of Levi, **TOOK**; and Datan and Aviram [the sons of Eliav] and Oan [the son of Pelet] the sons of Reuven." (16:1)

This opening sentence simply states that Korach **TOOK**, without explaining **WHAT** he took! In fact, this pasuk is so ambiguous that almost every commentator offers a different interpretation. For example:

Rashi - Korach took himself to a 'different side';  
Ramban - he took an "eytzah" (counsel) into his heart;  
Ibn Ezra & Chizkuni - he took 'other people';  
Seforno - he took the 250 'national leaders'.

[Note as well how just about every translation of this pasuk attempts to 'improvise' in some manner or other.]

However, no matter which interpretation is most accurate, a more basic question remains, i.e.: Why does the Torah begin this parsha in such an ambiguous manner? After all, one would assume that the Torah's message would have been clearer had this pasuk been written 'properly'!

In the following shiur, we will show how this 'opening ambiguity' may be intentional, as it will draw our attention to the unique style that the Torah uses to describe this incident – a style that the Torah uses deliberately - to convey its underlying message!

Let's begin our study of Bamidbar chapter 16 by paying careful attention to the various 'complaints' that Korach raises.

### **FIGHTING FOR A COMMON CAUSE**

From a cursory reading of Parshat Korach it seems that Korach, Datan & Aviram, and the 250 men all unite behind a common cause. Their joint criticism of the leadership of Moshe and Aharon, voiced in their opening protest, demonstrates this united opposition:

"...and they gathered against MOSHE AND AHARON saying: You have taken too much - for the ENTIRE COMMUNITY IS HOLY and God is in their midst, why then do you RAISE YOURSELVES ABOVE God's congregation?" (16:3)

However, it remains unclear from this opening complaint precisely what they want instead:

- \* Are they calling for 'new democratic elections'?
- \* Do they want Moshe & Aharon to 'step down'?
- \* Do they themselves want to 'step up'?
- \* Are they simply demanding 'spiritual equality'?
- \* Are they just 'chronic' complainers, without any goal?

In response to this opening complaint, Moshe offers a 'test' that sounds (at first) like some type of 'showdown' (see 16:4-7). By examining the details of this suggested 'test', we should be able to arrive at a more precise conclusion concerning what they

are truly complaining about: Let's carefully study the psukim that describe Moshe Rabeinu's suggestion:

"Come morning, and God will make known who is His and who is holy... and he whom He has chosen..."

This you shall do, take fire-pans, Korach and his entire group, ... and put on them **KTORET** before God [i.e. at the Mishkan]... and he [who's offering] God shall choose will be established as "kadosh"... (see 16:5-7)

As you review these psukim, note how it remains rather unclear concerning the precise purpose of this 'ktoret test'!

First, let's discuss what this test cannot be!

It can't be a test to determine who is God's true choice to be the **LEADER** of Bnei Yisrael, for if so – then only **ONE** offering could be accepted – and Moshe (as well as Aharon) should participate!

Furthermore, if this is simply a 'showdown' between Moshe and Korach, why should the 250 men participate?

More likely, the purpose of this 'test' is to determine who is entitled to **OFFER KORBANOT**. This would explain why Aharon (to the exclusion of Moshe) participates together with the 250 men, as one possible outcome of this test would be for God to accept the offerings of all (or at least some) of these participants.

In other words, the purpose of the "ktoret" test is to determine the validity of Korach's claim that everyone in Am Yisrael is "kadosh" (see 16:3), and hence everyone should be allowed to offer korbano. Moshe is suggesting that Korach & his 250 followers should 'give it a try'. If God accepts these offerings, then Korach would be proven correct - if not, then Moshe will be proven correct.

### **SPIRITUAL EQUALITY**

To support this interpretation, we simply need to take a look at Moshe's second response to Korach (see 16:8-11), i.e. in his additional censure to the Levites who have joined Korach:

"Hear me, sons of Levi - is it not enough that God has designated you to come close [i.e. to assemble and carry the Mishkan]... and now you and your fellow Levites **DO YOU SEEK THE KEHUNA** [priesthood] as well.... - why then do you complain **AGAINST AHARON**." (see 16:8-11)

This censure of "bnei Levi" - especially the phrase of 'do you seek the priesthood as well - proves that Korach and his 250 men are challenging the decision to limit the offering of "korbanot" to Aharon and his sons. These dissidents demand that anyone who so desires should be allowed to offer "korbanot", for ALL members of Israel are 'spiritually equal' ["ki kol ha'eydah kulam kedoshim..."] (see 16:3).

This also explains why this extra censure is directed specifically to "bnei Levi". Moshe's criticism focuses on the hypocrisy of these Levites - for if they were so worried about 'spiritual equality' why didn't they complain earlier when they themselves were chosen over any other tribe to carry the Mishkan!

Apparently, these dissidents believe that the limitation of offering korbano to Aharon's family stems from Moshe's nepotism, rather than from a divine command. [See Chizkuni 16:15.] Hence, this 'ktoret test', as Moshe suggests, will determine who indeed is capable of offering korbano - i.e. it may be only Aharon, or possibly all (or at least some) of the 250 men as well. [See also 16:16-17.]

### **ENTER - GROUP TWO**

Up until this point, we are left with the impression that everyone mentioned in the opening two psukim - i.e. Korach, Datan, Aviram, and the 250 men - join together in this protest. Hence, we should expect all of them to participate in this 'showdown'.

However, as the narrative continues, a very different picture emerges. Note from 16:12 that Datan & Aviram, for some reason, are singled out:

"And Moshe sent for **DATAN & AVIRAM**, but they answered: **WE WILL NOT COME UP...**" (see 16:12-14)

Why must Moshe SEND for Datan and Aviram? After all, were they not together with Korach & Company when they first gathered against Moshe (see 16:2-3)? Furthermore, for what purpose does Moshe call them? Does he want them to participate in the 'ktoret test'? At first glance, it remains quite unclear concerning what this summons is all about.

However, their response to Moshe - "we will not COME UP" - already suggests that Datan & Aviram may comprise an independent group. Note how they remain in their own camp [recall that they are from shevet Reuven] and refuse to even come near the Ohel Moed (where the 'ktoret test' is being conducted).

Furthermore, from their censure of Moshe that accompanied their response to his summons (see below), it becomes quite clear that Datan & Aviram have a more 'political' agenda (and aren't terribly interested in 'spiritual equality').

"Is it not enough that you took us out of a land flowing with milk and honey [referring to Egypt!] to die in the desert and NOW - YOU CONTINUE TO ACT AS LORD OVER US! You have not even brought us to a land flowing with milk & honey (as Moshe had promised)... [therefore] we will not come up!" (16:13-14)

In this brazen defiance of Moshe's summons, Datan & Aviram totally reject Moshe's political LEADERSHIP. In their eyes, Moshe has failed as the nation's leader. After all, when Bnei Yisrael first accepted Moshe as their leader in Egypt, he had promised to bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey (see Shmot 3:16-17, 4:30-31). Now that Moshe has informed Bnei Yisrael that entering the Promised Land is no longer on the horizon, Datan & Aviram (and most likely many others) reject the legitimacy of his leadership and authority.

Clearly, this complaint differs drastically from Korach's initial objection to the KEHUNA! Korach and the 250 men challenge Aharon's exclusive status, but never question Moshe's leadership. After all, they all agree to the 'test' that Moshe himself initiates. Datan and Aviram, however, challenge specifically Moshe's leadership.

### MOSHE'S PRAYER

Conclusive proof of this distinction can be found in Moshe's immediate reaction to Datan & Aviram's complaint. Pay careful attention to how Moshe turns to God in prayer:

"And Moshe became angry and said to God - 'al teyfen el MINCHATAM' - Pay no attention to their 'oblation' - I did not take from them a single donkey, nor have I wronged anyone of them." (see 16:15)

At first glance, it appears that Moshe now begs God not to accept the "ktoret" offerings. However, this cannot be for two reasons:

1) Datan & Aviram chose not to participate in the "ktoret" test, so why would Moshe request that God not accept an offering that they aren't even bringing?

[See Ramban!]

2) The Hebrew word "minchatam" refers either to a 'meal offering' (see Vayikra chapter 2) or a gift of some sort (see Breishit 32:13,18). Certainly, it is not another name for "ktoret" (incense).

[Note how the commentators dealt with this problem.

Even though the first opinion of Rashi claims that "minchatam" indeed refers to the KTORET offering, Ramban (rightly so) disagrees - suggesting that it refers to any type of prayer (or offering) that they may offer. See also Ibn Ezra & Seforno who explain this pasuk in a similar manner.]

Furthermore, the reason that Moshe advances - "for I have not taken anything from them" - clearly relates to Moshe's counter-claim that his leadership has been without corruption.

Therefore, this entire prayer relates to Datan & Aviram's complaint against his leadership. Moshe simply turns to God to affirm the legitimacy of his own [divinely appointed] leadership that has now been challenged. Moshe reminds God that he has been a faithful leader who never abused his power.

### TWO GROUPS - TWO GRIPES

Let's summarize what has emerged thus far. We have identified TWO independent grievances, raised by TWO independent groups, situated in TWO different locations:

**GROUP ONE** - the 250 men ["adat Korach"]- protest Aharon's exclusive rights to the KEHUNA. They stand ready for their 'test' at the OHEL MOED;

[Note that the Torah consistently refers to this group as "adat Korach" (see 16:5,6,11).]

**GROUP TWO** - Datan & Aviram (& followers) - complain against the POLITICAL leadership of MOSHE. They gather in the territory of shevet Reuven.

[This location is later referred to as "Mishkan Korach Datan v'Aviram" (see 16:24-27).]

Of course, it remains to be seen where Korach himself stands on these two issues, but there can be no doubt that there are two groups with two very different agendas.

### RE-ENTER GROUP ONE

Up until this point (i.e. 16:1-15), the narrative, although a bit complex, has flowed in a logical order: it first presents both groups, followed the presentation of the individual complaints of each faction. But now, for some reason, the narrative begins to 'see-saw,' seemingly randomly, between Moshe's confrontations with each of these two groups.

Note how in 16:16 the narrative abruptly switches from Moshe's response to Datan & Aviram (group II) back to his original confrontation with "adat Korach" (group I):

"And Moshe said to Korach, tomorrow, you and all your company [the 250 men] be before God [at the Mishkan], you and they and Aharon..." (16:16-17 / compare with 16:5-7)

Then the narrative continues to describe this confrontation: The next morning, all 250 men assemble at the Ohel Moed ready with their "machot" (fire-pans) and "ktoret" (16:18), while Korach rallies a mass crowd to watch (16:19). But then, just as we expect to find out the outcome of this 'showdown', again we find an abrupt change in the narrative.

### RE-ENTER GROUP TWO

Precisely at this critical point in the narrative, we find a new 'parshia' (note 16:20-22), which describes God's [first] direct intervention (in relation to this incident), and Moshe & Aharon's reaction.

"And God spoke to Moshe & Aharon: 'Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.' And they fell upon their faces, and said: 'O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall - "ish echad" - one man sin, and You will be wroth with - "kol ha'EYDAH" -the entire congregation?' (16:20-22)

Review these psukim once again, noting how it is not so clear concerning who "ish echad" and "ha'EYDAH" refer to:

Does "ish echad" refer to Korach, and hence the "eydah" refers to the 250 men? Or, does "ish echad" refer to the entire group of complainers - i.e. Korach, and his 250 men. If so, then "eydah" must refer to the entire nation of Israel, or at least the large group of followers who Korach had gathered to watch (see 16:18-19).

Furthermore - what about Datan & Aviram? Should they also be considered as part of the "ish echad" in Moshe's prayer?

Finally, if "eydah" refers to the entire congregation - does this imply simply the 'gawkers', i.e. those who gathered around to watch (see 16:19), or does it really imply the entire congregation, including women & children etc.?

How we understand these words directly affects how we understand Moshe's prayer in 16:22. In other words, is Moshe asking God to save the 250 men from Korach (if so, then God doesn't answer this request), or is he asking God to save the entire nation from Korach and his 250 men (if so, then God answers this request)?

To answer this question, let's see how God answers this prayer, noting how it seems to totally confuse our understanding of what is happening:

"And God told Moshe, speak to the EYDAH and warn them - WITHDRAW yourselves from the area of MISHKAN KORACH DATAN V'AVIRAM." (16:23-24)

To our surprise, God's answer introduces a location that we have never heard of before: i.e. MISHKAN KORACH DATAN V'AVIRAM. This cannot be the Mishkan itself, rather the word "mishkan" in this context refers to their dwelling site, i.e. where Datan and Aviram reside.

Since Datan & Aviram did not come to the "ktoret" test, we must conclude that their "mishkan" must be located in the area of the Tribe of Reuven. Most probably, this site served as 'party headquarters' for this group of people who have openly rebelled against Moshe's political leadership.

With this in mind, let's attempt to identify whom "eydah" refers to in God's reply to Moshe's prayer (in 16:24). To save the "eydah" from this "ish echad", Moshe must instruct the "eydah" to evacuate the area surrounding Mishkan Korach Datan & Aviram. Hence, the "eydah" must refer to a group of people who have gathered around Mishkan Korach Datan v'Aviram in the Tribe of Reuven. However, this conclusion is rather baffling, for only five psukim earlier, the word "eydah" was used to describe a group of people who had gathered around the OHEL MOED to watch the "ktoret" showdown (see 16:19)!

Once again, we find how the narrative has 'jumped' from Group One [the 250 men offering ktoret] to Group Two [Datan & Aviram].

To prove that there are indeed two groups involved, simply note what takes place in the next pasuk, as Moshe fulfills God's command.

Recall that Moshe must issue a warning to the EYDAH that has gathered around the campsite of Datan & Aviram. As this "eydah" refers to Group Two, Moshe must now LEAVE the area of the OHEL MOED (where Group One has assembled) and GO to the area where Group Two is located - i.e. Mishkan Korach, Datan & Aviram:

"And Moshe GOT UP and WENT TO Datan & Aviram... and he said to the people: MOVE AWAY from the tents of these wicked people... lest you be wiped out for all their sins..." (16:25-26)

Note that Moshe must LEAVE his present location (at the Ohel Moed) and GO TO "Mishkan Korach Datan v'Aviram" (conclusive proof that two separate groups exist). This location, to which the Torah refers as "Mishkan Korach Datan v'Aviram", serves as 'party headquarters' for this rebellious group. Most likely, an alternative leadership group has already formed at this new center.

[Note the Torah's use of the word "mishkan" [dwelling place] to describe their headquarters. Most likely, this term was specifically chosen to indicate that these NEW headquarters stand in defiance of the Moshe Rabeinu's leadership, whose headquarters are the "mishkan" at the Ohel Moed!]

Because Group Two challenges Moshe's leadership (and not Aharon's priesthood), it must be Moshe himself (and NOT Aharon) who confronts this group. Note that Aharon does not accompany Moshe (in 16:25). Instead, he remains at the Ohel Moed, prepared for the showdown with the 250 men (Group One), i.e. the group that questions his KEHUNA.

## TWO GROUPS - TWO PUNISHMENTS

At this point, God must prove to the political dissidents that Moshe's leadership was by divine appointment. Therefore, God Himself must 'create' a "beriya" - a new form of creation - to punish this group. Those who distance themselves from this group are saved (see 16:27-34). However, note that the ground miraculously devours only the members of Group Two - i.e. Datan & Aviram and their staunchest followers.

But what happened in the meantime to "adat Korach" (Group One), i.e. the 250 men. Note that the last time they were mentioned was back in 16:17-19, as they prepared to the "ktoret" showdown; but we were never told what happened to them! For some reason, the Torah leaves us in suspense about their fate; until the very last pasuk of this narrative (and in a very incidental manner):

"And a fire came forth from God and consumed the 250 men who were offering the ktoret." (16:35)

This final pasuk proves not only that there were TWO groups in TWO separate locations, but that there were also TWO distinct forms of punishments:

### GROUP ONE –

the 250 men at the Ohel Moed - CONSUMED by fire.

### GROUP TWO –

Datan & Aviram & Co. - SWALLOWED by the ground.

So where is Korach in all of this? Was he consumed by fire in the Mishkan together with Group One; or swallowed up by the ground - together with Group Two?

He couldn't be **two** places at the same time, could he?

## KORACH - THE POLITICIAN

To appreciate the nature of Korach's involvement, we must understand his connection to each of these two groups. Before we begin, let's use a table to summarize our analysis thus far:

	<u>GROUP ONE</u>	<u>GROUP TWO</u>
Members:	250 men	Datan & Aviram + followers
Claim :	priesthood	new political leadership
Against:	Aharon	Moshe
Reason:	spiritual equality	failure of leadership
Location:	Ohel Moed	shevet Reuven
Punishment:	consumed by fire	swallowed by the ground

At first glance, it appears that each group has some basis for a legitimate complaint.

By challenging the restriction of the KEHUNA to the family of Aharon, Group One asserts their right, as well as the right of others, to offer korbanot.

By challenging the political leadership of Moshe, Group Two voices their concern for the welfare and future of Am Yisrael. In their opinion, remaining in the desert is equivalent to national suicide (see 16:13).

Although Group One has little in common with Group Two, the Torah presents this story as if only one group exists, under Korach's leadership. The narrative accomplishes this by 'jumping back and forth' from one group to the other. The following chart (of perek 16) illustrates this 'textual zig-zag':

PASUK	GROUP	TOPIC
1-4	both	Introduction
5-11	ONE	Complaint of those who want 'kehuna'
12-15	TWO	Summons of Datan & Aviram & their refusal
16-19	ONE	The test of the "ktoret"
20-22	both?	Moshe's tfila that God punish only the guilty
23-34	TWO	earth swallows Datan & Aviram & followers
25	ONE	fire consumes the 250 men

Why does the Torah employ this unusual style? How does it help us better understand Korach's involvement with each group?

## KORACH - WHERE ARE YOU?

First, we must ascertain to which group Korach belongs. Clearly, he leads Group One, which demands the "kehuna" (see 16:6-8,16-19). Yet, at the same time, he is so involved with Group Two that his name appears first on the banner in front of their party headquarters - "Mishkan KORACH Datan v'Aviram"!

Furthermore, although Korach himself is never mentioned in the punishment of Group Two (scan 16:23-34 carefully to verify this), many of his followers, described by Chumash as "ha'adam asher l'Korach", are swallowed up by the ground (see 16:32) together with Datan & Aviram.

In fact, it remains unclear precisely how Korach himself dies. Was he swallowed by the ground or consumed by the fire?

The 'last time he was spotted' was in 16:19 together with the 250 men (Group One) at the Ohel Moed. But from 16:25 it seems that only the 250 men were consumed, but NOT Korach himself! On the other hand, 16:32 informs us that Datan & Aviram and ALL of Korach's men were swallowed up - but Korach himself seems to be 'missing'! Did he escape at the last minute from both?

Apparently not, for later in Sefer Bamidbar (see 26:9-10) we are told quite explicitly that Korach was indeed swallowed. But to complicate matters even further, Devarim 11:6 implies that only Datan & Aviram were swallowed up.

[Based on the complexity of these psukim, the Gemara in Sanhedrin 110a suggests that he received both punishments! First he was burnt by the fire at the Ohel Moed, and then his body rolled to the area of Datan v'Aviram and swallowed up by the ground.] (See also Ibn Ezra on 16:35.)

So why does the Torah describe these events in such an evasive manner? What can this manner of presentation teach us about the nature of Korach's involvement? Finally, why does Chumash attempt to give us the impression that Korach may be in two places at the same time?

One could suggest that this 'zig-zag' style reflects the nature of the coalition that exists between these two dissident groups, for they share only one common denominator- KORACH.

But what was Korach's motivation in all of this?

To answer this question, let's return to the opening pasuk of this Parsha (see introduction). By not telling us what Korach 'took', the Torah wants the reader to ask this very question - what did Korach take?

[If you didn't ask yourself this question when you begin reading, you most probably would have noticed the **existence** of these two groups as you continue.]

## COALITION POLITICS

Korach 'took' two ostensibly 'legitimate' protest groups and joined them together to form his own political power base. [See Ramban 16:1.] Whereas each group alone may have not dared to openly challenge Moshe and Aharon, Korach encourages them to take action. Datan and Aviram, 'inspired' by Korach, establish their own 'headquarters' - "Mishkan Korach, Datan, & Aviram" - in defiance of Moshe's leadership. Likewise, the 250 men, including members of shevet Levi, are roused to openly challenge the restriction of the KEHUNA to Aharon.

Rather than encouraging open dialogue, Korach incites these two factions to take forceful action. Korach probably saw himself as the most suitable candidate to become the next national leader. To that end, he involves himself with each dissenting group. [Anyone familiar with political science (i.e. current events and/or world history) can easily relate to this phenomenon.]

Korach is simply what we would call a 'polished politician'. His true intention is to usurp political power. Towards that goal, he takes advantage of private interest groups.

## A LESSON FOR ALL GENERATIONS

The Mishna in Pirkei Avot (5:17) considers the rebellion of Korach as the paradigm of a dispute that was "sh'lo l'shem sha'mayim" (an argument not for the sake of Heaven).

Why is specifically Korach chosen for this paradigm? After

all, the arguments presented by Korach ("for the entire nation is holy", etc.) seem to imply exactly the opposite - that it was actually an argument "l'shem shamayim" (for the sake of Heaven).

Pirkei Avot may be teaching us the very same message that the Torah may allude to through its complex presentation of these events. Precisely because Korach and his followers claim to be fighting "l'shem shamayim," Chazal must inform us of Korach's true intentions. Korach may claim to be fighting a battle "l'shem shamayim," but his claim is far from the truth. His primary interest is to promote himself, to build a power base from which he himself can emerge as the new leader.

This doesn't mean that any form of dissent is evil. In fact, Korach's own great great grandson - Shmuel ha'Navi (see Divrei Ha'yamim I.6:3-13) - also acted 'against the establishment' as he initiated both religious reform [against the corruption of the "kehuna" by the sons of Eli] as well as political reform [in the appointment of David as King instead of Shaul]; however, his intentions and motivations were pure and sincere.

Parshat Korach thus teaches us that whenever a dispute arises over community leadership or religious reform, before reaching conclusions we must carefully examine not only the claims, but also the true motivations behind the individuals who promote them. On a personal level, as well, every individual must constantly examine the true motivations behind all his spiritual endeavors.

shabbat shalom,  
menachem

## FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. In 16:1-2, everyone is introduced: Korach, Datan, Aviram, and the 250 men. Read 16:2 carefully! Who are the leaders and famous people - just Korach, Datan, and Aviram, or also the 250 men? How does this question affect your understanding of the magnitude of the revolt against Moshe and Aharon?

B. Note the appellation with which Moshe opens his tfila: "kel elokey ha'RUCHOT l'chol BASAR" (16:22). Based on the context of this tfila, relate this appellation to the story of the "mitavim" and their punishment, as described in Bamidbar 11:1-35. How does the "basar" sent by the "ruach" in chapter 11 enable God to punish ONLY those who are truly guilty in the sin of the "mitavim"? [Note 11:33-34.]

Note that the only other use of this appellation is in Bamidbar 27:16, when Moshe asks God to appoint a leader to replace him. Relate that parsha and its context to Bamidbar 11:14-17!

C. Although Korach challenges the 'kehuna' and the political leadership for the wrong reasons, many generations later his great-grandson, Shmuel Ha'Navi, repeats this very same reform for the correct reasons. He challenges the corrupt 'kehuna' of Eli's sons, Chofni & Pinchus, and then later reforms the political leadership of the country by becoming a shofet and later establishing the nation's first monarchy.

1. Note the similarities between Parshat Korach and this week's Haftara, especially Shmuel 12:3. See also 3:19-20, 7:3-17.
2. What similarities exist between Shmuel and Moshe & Aharon?
3. In what manner does Shmuel, who is a Levi, act like a Kohen?  
(Relate to Shmuel 3:1-3, 13:8-12)

D. In earlier shiurim (Yom Kippur and Parshat Tzaveh), we discussed the special nature of the koret and its purpose as a protection from the consequences of "hitgalut shchinah". Recall also the events which led to the death of Nadav & Avihu.

1. Why do you think Moshe suggests that the 250 men offer koret as proof that they are chosen? Is this his idea or God's? (16:5-7)  
See Ramban (as usual).
2. Do you think Moshe is aware of the potential outcome- the consumption of all 250 men by fire, or was he merely trying to convince them to withdraw from Korach's revolt?  
Relate your answer to your answer to question #1.

3. Why do you think the nation immediately accuses Moshe of causing their death (see 17:6-15)? Why is 'davka' the ktoret used to save the people from their punishment?

4. Why do you think 'davka' this type of punishment is necessary?

E. Recall that in Shmot 2:14, when Moshe admonishes two quarreling Jews in Egypt, they answer: "mi samcha sar v'shofet ...". Chazal identify these two men as Datan & Aviram. Use the above shiur to support this Midrash.

F. Towards the end of the Parsha, the "mateh shel Aharon" is chosen over the 'matot' of all other tribal leaders.

1. Where is that 'mateh' to be kept afterwards?

For what purpose? (see 17:24-25)

2. Is this 'mateh' ever used later on for that purpose?

3. Before reading this question, which 'mateh' did you think Moshe used to hit the rock at "mei m'riva"?

Now look carefully at 20:8-11.

4. How does this explain Moshe's statement of "shimu na ha'morim"? [cute?]