



## Offence against the tabernacle

*Parashat Qorah (38) – Qorah*

**Torah:** *Bemidbar* 16:1 to 18:32

**Haftarah:** *Shemu'el Aleph* 11:14 to 12:22

**Apostolic Scriptures:** *Romiyim* 13:1-7

During last week's study we mentioned the new generation being the most obedient generation, something that is not in dispute. We also learned last week how the people, especially those who were numbered beforehand, rebelled against *YAH* when they refused to enter the promised land because of the negative reports of ten of the spies. All of them were sentenced to death and would die in the wilderness. However, there are still people who do not understand the seriousness of *YAH's* rules, or simply resist them. This time, though, it is not only against *YAH* that they rebel, but also against the appointed leaders.

Immediately after the dedication of the tabernacle, when *Aharon* and his sons were inaugurated as high priest and priests respectively and the tasks of every other *Lěwite* were outlined, however, this was not good enough for some of them. Keep in mind that all the *Lěwites* would also take the place of first-borns, while *Aharon* and his sons would hold the highest offices. Unfortunately, there was another first-born, *Qorah*, who was not happy with this arrangement and within a short time stirred up 250 more men to confront *Mosheh*.

We must realise that many things are happening here. Many of the people are at a low point. Their morale has been broken by the negative report of ten spies and now *YAH* has sentenced many of them to death and they will die in the wilderness. They are therefore psychologically susceptible to a popular deception to overthrow the leadership and return to *Mitsrayim*. In this narrative we are looking at four different rebellions:

- 🥂 the *Lěwites* against *Aharon*;
- 🥂 *Dathan* and *Abiram* against *Mosheh*;
- 🥂 tribal leaders against *Aharon*;
- 🥂 all the people against *Mosheh* and *Aharon*.

Where there had been challenges to the leadership of *Mosheh*, the leadership and office of *Aharon* are now also being challenged. Although it was the mixed multitude that had previously caused discord, this time they are innocent, for the problems now come directly from some of the *Lěwites*. Even the tassels do not remind them of any high calling and privilege compared to the rest of the people (8:5-26). *Qorah* is from the family of *Qeath* and a cousin of *Mosheh* and *Aharon*, as their parents were brothers, direct descendants of *Qeath* (cf. *Shemoth* 6:18). This family camped on the south side of the tabernacle and a short distance

away from them were the tribes of *Re'ubēn*, *Shim'on*, and *Gad*. *Re'ubēn* has forfeited his birthright due to possible adultery with his stepmother, *Zilpah*. *Qorah* was enraged because he had to give up his birthright to his brother, *Eltsaphan*, who was born second. The brothers, *Dathan* and *Abiram*, along with *On*, all from the tribe of *Re'ubēn*, may still feel resentment because their grandfather had to make way for *Yehudah*, the fourth son of *Ya'aqob*. So we see here an ideal recipe for a wonderful spiritual soap opera in which enraged men begin to support each other against the authority placed over them.

With all these events it was certainly not difficult for *Qorah* to put a plan of action in place to try to overthrow the leadership and he quickly got the necessary support. We know how *Yishma'el* acted towards *Yitshaq*, as well as *Esav* towards *Ya'aqob*. When the younger brother was chosen over the older, the older brothers, in both cases, became jealous and bitter. Unfortunately, no form of harmony was ever achieved, forgiveness did not take place and this bitterness was passed on from generation to generation. As a result, we still have problems today between Arabs and true *Yehudim*, Islam and true *Yehudim*, Romans and true *Yehudim* as well as christianity and true *Yehudim*. It is almost ironic that Islam, christianity and Rome do not have a problem with each other; on the contrary, they rather try to merge into one type of faith, as they call it these days: Chrislam!

Some commentators are convinced that *Qorah* had to be given an important and responsible position by *YAH* so that he would have no reason to become jealous and rebellious. However, this is not how it works in *YAH's* Kingdom! The problem doesn't lie with *YAH*, but with the fleshly desires of man: jealousy and lack of humility. When a power-hungry person is given any form of responsibility, it only strengthens his ego, when in fact he should learn to submit himself in a spirit of humility to the leaders appointed over him by *YAH*. Two good examples of older brothers who were not jealous of their younger brothers are *Mosheh* and *Aharon*, as well as *Ephrayim* and *Menashsheh*.

*Yoseph* raised his two eldest sons according to *Torah*, the rule of their household, so that there was no discord between them. In this way, he built a character of harmony between the sons that later spilled over into *Qorah's* descendants. We see about 11 poems (42; 44; 45; 46; 47; 48; 49; 84; 85; 87; 88) recorded in the book of *Tehilim by the sons of Qorah*. The prophet *Shemu'el* was a descendant of *Qorah* (cf. *Dibrei haYamim Aleph* 6:33-38) as we will get to a little later.

At the beginning of this *sidrah* we see one of the biggest mistakes most people still make and something that always causes trouble: the sin of presumption. Yes, it is a serious offense against *YAH* to presumptuously assume, to ascribe to yourself or imagine something that is not part of the gifts with which *Ruach HaQodesh* has endowed you. *Qorah* had a valid point in his opinion that the entire assembly is set apart (cf. *Wayyiqra* 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:26; *Kēpha Aleph* 1:15-16 et al), but he applied it incorrectly. Although the whole nation is set apart, *YAH* assigns specific tasks to certain people. This compares to the words of *Sha'ul*:

*Qorintiyim Aleph* 12 <sup>16</sup>And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," does it therefore not belong to the body? <sup>17</sup>If all the body was an eye, where would be the hearing? If all hearing, where would be the smelling? <sup>18</sup>But now *Elohim* has set the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He pleased. <sup>19</sup>And if they all had been one member, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup>And now, there are indeed many members, but one body. <sup>21</sup>And an eye is unable to say to the hand, "I have no need of you," or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

If it were not for the sin of the golden calf, all first-born of all the tribes would have been priests, something that most of the people conveniently seemed to forget (cf. *Bemidbar* 8:16-19). Now, with his rebellious attitude and the support of 250 men, all tribal leaders, *Qorah* accuses *Mosheh* and *Aharon* of arrogance and

of elevating themselves above the rest of the nation, something that is entirely untrue. *Mosheh* is stunned by this accusation:

*Bemidbar 16* <sup>4</sup>And when *Mosheh* heard, he fell on his face,

What *Mosheh* does here is a humble sign of defeat and a serious desire that *YAH* will intervene to free him from these false and hateful accusations. However, he also realises the seriousness of this daring action and the accompanying sin that *Qorah* himself and his supporters are now bringing upon themselves. *YAH* hates sin and to be presumptuous is sin. We place a short English description of presumption at addendum A. A power-hungry *Qorah* managed to enchant even the leaders of the people with words that he twisted and deliberately misinterpreted, something that reminds us of the words *Yeshua* spoke:

*Mattithyahu 24* <sup>24</sup>“For false messiahs and false prophets shall arise, and they shall show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the chosen ones.

To be set apart is not a given; it is a privilege and should be the goal of every *Torah* believer. For this reason, *Mosheh* gives all the rebels a chance to straighten themselves out and ask for forgiveness for their recklessness. In his humility, he decides not to point out those who will be chosen by *YAH*, but that *YAH* will only designate “who is His and who is set apart” the next morning. He sets out the arrangements that everyone should put fire in their fire holders, also known as censers, with incense on them and then *YAH* will choose those that are really set apart. Apparently, *Qorah* and his men seem to have already forgotten about *Nadab* and *Abihu* and their fire holders...

*Mosheh* also calls for *Dathan* and *Abiram*, but they refuse to obey, with many accusations and reproaches. On the contrary, they make all of *YAH*'s miracles to naught with insinuations that *Mitsrayim* would rather be the promised land. We notice many similarities with christianity, because they consider themselves set apart just because they each own a bible, can perhaps recite a verse or two and sit in a sun god temple every sunday, listening to lies from the *Ba'al* statue:

*Yehudah 1* <sup>11</sup>Woe to them! Because they have gone in the way of *Qayin*, and gave themselves to the delusion of *Bil'am* for a reward, and perished in the rebellion of *Qorah*. <sup>12</sup>These are rocky reefs in your love feasts, feasting with you, feeding themselves without fear, waterless clouds borne about by the winds, late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots, <sup>13</sup>wild waves of the sea foaming up their own shame, straying stars for whom blackness of darkness is kept forever.

Darkness certainly lies ahead for these rebels, something they do not expect, because incense may initially only be offered by the high priest (*cf. Shemoth 30:7-8*), but was later also done by priests (*cf. Luqas 1:9*). When *Mosheh* now tells *Qorah* and his companions to put fire in their fire holders, he is actually challenging them to remember what happened to *Nadab* and *Abihu*. *YAH* only uses those He has chosen, not those who put themselves in those positions. Incense is a representation of our attitude and character. Each of us is made in the image and likeness of *YAH*, therefore the only incense we may bring to Him is the fruit of our way of life, as we will see again later and explained by *Sha'ul*:

*Galatiyim 5* <sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustworthiness,

Those who follow our annual study plan will notice a few weeks from now what *Yirmeyahu* teaches us in chss. 42 and 43. It is almost as if the nation, after the generation in the wilderness, never wanted to heed *YAH*'s promises or the curses that might befall them. Since incense may only be brought by messengers of *YAH*, the offering of *Qorah* and his messengers would not be accepted. However, he is like many of the christians who believe that they can do anything and *YAH* will simply accept it. Starting points such as “we do it to the best of our ability” or “this comes from my heart” mean nothing if not accompanied by

obedience to YAH's Word. Good intentions are exactly that, but they are not obedience to YAH's Word. Feel free to read and study the [Afrikaans article](#) by Johan Kriel on this subject.

It is remarkable that *Qorah* displays a very bold and courageous attitude, because he invites everyone to gather with him at the tent of meeting (16:19)! YAH instructs *Mosheh* that everyone is to move away from the tents of *Qorah*, *Dathan* and *Abiram*; the other people must also not touch anything of these people, because it will make them unclean. *Mosheh* proves once again through this gesture that YAH's Creation is still ongoing, with the following words:

**Bemidbar 16** <sup>29</sup>"If these die as all men do, or if they are visited as all men are visited, then יהוה has not sent me. <sup>30</sup>"But if יהוה creates what is unheard of, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into *She'ol*, then you shall know that these men have scorned יהוה."

Just like the miracle of the parting of the Sea of Reeds, we see the earth opening up and swallowing everyone – people, families and their possessions. The rest of the nation is terrified and scurry away from the place, afraid that they too might be swallowed up. This is where we see another distinction: all those who offered incense were consumed by fire, as what had happened to *Nadab* and *Abihu*; the others were swallowed up by the earth. Once again we see something like lightning that does not consume the body, but only causes immediate death.

We learn a very important lesson from these events. The incense that *Qorah* and his followers brought presented two problems. First, it was not done according to YAH's requirements, for it was an imitation of the truth that rightly exposed the vanity and sin of man. Second, as we mentioned, the offering of incense was assigned to the high priest or anyone else appointed by YAH. The high-mindedness of the tribal leaders who came forward with *Qorah* doomed them. No tribe, except the tribe of *Lewi*, was chosen to handle any of the set-apart items of the tabernacle, let alone even look at them (cf. *Wayyiqra* 4:20).

Secondly, we must also keep in mind that rebellion is sin and any form of sin makes a person unclean. No one who is unclean may enter the tabernacle or perform any form of service (cf. *Wayyiqra* 12 to 15 in its entirety). *Qorah* and his gang thus harmed themselves in two ways by doing what was unlawful and by their uncleanness. YAH instructs *Mosheh* to make sure that the rest of the assembly gets away from the tents of the rebels. With full confidence he knew that YAH would perform a miracle, similar to what happened at the Sea of Reeds. This would be the sign that *Aharon* and *Mosheh* had been appointed by YAH, for we learn:

**Bemidbar 16** <sup>30</sup>"But if יהוה creates what is unheard of, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into *She'ol*, then you shall know that these men have scorned יהוה." [emphasis added for further description]

The original text states it as follows: "וְאִם בְּרִיאָה יִבְרָא יְהוָה" (*v'im b'ri-'Ah yiv-Ra* יהוה), which translates as "and if יהוה were to create a new creation", i.e. something that had not existed before. The word "*she'ol*" does not mean 'hell' as we have learned in christianity, but rather a place where the dead souls are preserved until *Yeshua* returns. This is unfortunately also one of those topics for which we will not have enough time during this study, but a good reason for a *midrash* at another time.

Scripture is a little unclear about the specific order of events, as well as who died and who lived. When we approach it logically, the 250 men suffered a double punishment. They were first consumed by fire and then swallowed by the earth, for their fire holers were still left behind. The rest of their families were only swallowed by the earth. However, *Qorah*'s children did not die, as we will confirm in a later study:

**Bemidbar 26** <sup>11</sup>but the sons of *Qorah* did not die.

*El'azar* is told to gather the fire holders of the rebels and they are beaten into a covering for the altar. This would remind everyone that no stranger, someone not appointed by *YAH* or from the descendants of *Aharon*, would bring incense before *YAH*'s Presence. *Shelomoh* makes this clear (cf. *Shemu'el Aleph* 15:22):

*Qoheleth* 5 <sup>1</sup>Guard your steps when you go to the House of *Elohim*. And draw near to listen rather than to give the slaughtering of fools, for they do not know that they do evil.

This is a serious warning to every *Torah* believer: never try to bribe *YAH* with gifts, offerings, or anything He does not ask for – it is extremely dangerous. If you are involved in adultery, lying, or stealing, do not even try to beg for health for your body or blessings in your finances. First, set your case right with *YAH* and submit to His authority. Only in this way will you receive His approval, as well as people who know Him and walk the Way of Truth. Anyone who exalts himself or herself will be humbled by *YAH*, and anyone who humbles himself or herself will be exalted by Him.

We are not to have any relationship with people who are negative towards the Word of *YAH*. He commanded that the entire assembly of *Yisra'el* should be exterminated because of *Qorah*'s rebellion. Only through the intervention of *Mosheh* was the nation's lives spared and they could remain part of the chosen people, but on condition that they cut themselves off from the rebels. The next day, however, the entire nation complain to *Mosheh* and *Aharon* and accuse them of the death of *YAH*'s people!

When *YAH* sends a plague among them, *Aharon* risks his life at the command of *Mosheh* to put incense on his censer and move among the people. In this way the plague is stopped after 14 700 people have died, but instead of blood, atonement is made this time by means of fire:

🚰 *Marqos* 9 <sup>49</sup>For everyone shall be seasoned with fire, and every offering shall be seasoned with salt.

🚰 *Ib'rim* 1 <sup>7</sup>And of the messengers indeed He says, "... who is making His messengers spirits and His servants a flame of fire." [emphasis original]

🚰 *Mizmor* 104 <sup>4</sup>Making His messengers the winds, His servants a flame of fire.

*Aharon* risked his life when he went among the people to stop the messenger of death. It is as if he sacrificed himself for the sake of the rebellious people, but the messenger of death respected *Aharon*'s office as anointed and moved away from the people. We do not learn what the plague was, but we know that all have sinned and sin is deadly. However, the promise that *YAH* made, now begins to take effect:

*Bemidbar* 14 <sup>29</sup>The carcasses of you who have grumbled against Me are going to fall in this wilderness, all of you who were registered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above.

The fact that the plague stopped when *Aharon* moved among the people with his censer and incense should already be enough proof that he is *YAH*'s choice as high priest. However, undeniable proof will now be brought when *Mosheh* asks for the staff of each tribal leader and places it before the ark of the covenant. Here the tribe's name is written on the staff of every leader; *Aharon*'s name is written on the staff of *L'ewi*. We see once again the richness of the Hebrew language, for the word *מִטָּה* (*ma-Teh*) used here is translated as staff or rod (42 times), but also as stem (162 times) and can even be seen as branch or ramification. A man's staff is seen as the sign of his leadership in a household or community; in the case of a prince it is considered a scepter, the orderly sign of leadership (cf. *Bereshith* 49:10).

The miracle that occurs here is manifold. The next day, when *Mosheh* comes to the 12 rods, the one on which *Aharon*'s name was written, not only has blossoms on it, but even ripe almonds! Every rod was wood and wood is dead. However, the dead wood of *Aharon*'s rod came to life and brought forth fruit. The power



of revival was a sign that proves who has the right to act as high priest. This gives us a preview of our heavenly high priest, because we know who YAH has chosen to act in the heavenly tabernacle. *Yeshua* is not dead, but he has been raised from the dead and lives forever. He is the one who has been chosen as the anointed one, first as the heavenly high priest and then as king on earth, a day that is fast approaching.

Almonds are the first trees to blossom; the blossoms are white and the fruit is highly sought after (cf. *Berēshith* 43:11). White in Scripture always symbolises purity, set-aparthood, and also refers to YAH (cf. *Yeshayahu* 1:18; *Dani'el* 7:9; *Hazon* 20:11). *Yirmeyahu* connects the almond with something that keeps watch (cf. *Yirmeyahu* 1:11-12). All these qualities are personified in *Aharon* and the tribe of *Lēwi*. They were the set-apart tribe *par excellence*, people who represent the people before YAH and also YAH before the people. They are responsible for watching over the nation and raising them up in the teachings of YAH. (cf. *Wayyiqra* 10:11). The staff of *Aharon* was to remain with the ark of the covenant at all times, even if the rest of the nation could not see it – they would know that it was there and that no one could claim priesthood except *Aharon* and his descendants.

Many years later, *Shemu'el* is in a similar position as *Mosheh*. The people complain that other nations have kings and insist on having a king of their own. Ironically, *Shemu'el* is a descendant of *Qorah*, but he acts completely differently. Just like *Mosheh*, *Shemu'el* tries to show the people that YAH is their King. At the nation's insistence, *Sha'ul* is appointed and the nation experiences another miracle, something that frightens them greatly. During the wheat harvest it is dry, but *Shemu'el* asks YAH to send thunder and rain, so that the people can realise who their King really is. Just as *Mosheh* had to do regularly, the people ask *Shemu'el* to pray to YAH so that the miracle can stop and they not die. They acknowledge their sins and wickedness, but do not yet get to the point where they repent – no *t'shuvah*. These people are described well:

*Yehugah* 1 <sup>12</sup> These are rocky reefs in your love feasts, feasting with you, feeding themselves without fear, waterless clouds borne about by the winds, late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots, <sup>13</sup> wild waves of the sea foaming up their own shame, straying stars for whom blackness of darkness is kept forever.

When everything seems to have calmed down in the camp of *Yisra'el*, the duties of the priests are clearly spelled out. Even rules that were mentioned earlier, are now repeated, perhaps for the information of the new generation that will enter the promised land. The priests will not have their own territory and must be cared for by the community. In contrast to how modern churches and preachers demand certain things, YAH determines here what the priests are to receive. In addition to certain portions of offerings that they may eat, they also receive one tenth of all the produce of the land. In turn, the priests would also give one tenth of their tithes as an offering to YAH.

A very important institution that we have already learned earlier, and is now repeated, is the covenant of salt (cf. *Wayyiqra* 2:13). The heave offering and the wave offering are both part of the peace offering and an everlasting institution for every generation. These offerings are linked directly to the covenant of salt through the grain offering, since all grain offerings were to be salted. Together, they represent *Yeshua*, the Bread of Life, our firstfruits peace offering, and something that is set apart. We have learned that the covenant of salt is directly linked to the tithe and the order of *Malkitsedeq*. Salt and oil are always part of the grain offering. We also learn that the practice will continue into the millennium:

*Yehezqel* 43 <sup>24</sup> And you shall bring them [sacrificial animals] before יהוה, and the priests shall throw salt on them and offer them up as an ascending offering to יהוה.

Even with incense, a symbol of worship to YAH, salt must be added because true worshippers worship YAH in spirit and truth (cf. *Shemoth* 30:35; *Wayyiqra* 2:13; *Yohanan* 4:23-24). The covenant of salt was also

confirmed with King *Dawid* by which he received everlasting kingship over *Yisra'el*. We see therefore that salt, the tithe, and the priesthood are all synonymous in Scripture through the covenant. Together, the set-apart ones, those who are in covenant with *Yeshua*, represent a covenant of set-apartness (cf. *Shemu'el Bet* 7:12-16; *Wayyiqra* 2:13; *Ib'rim* 7:1-28):

*Dibrei haYamim Bēt 13* <sup>5</sup>“Do you not know that יהוה *Elohim* of *Yisra'el* has given the reign over *Yisra'el* to *Dawid* forever, to him and his sons, by a covenant of salt?

A covenant of salt is, in fact, the fruit of our lips. We are created in the image of *YAH* and must walk in the Way of Truth like *Yeshua*, came to teach us, the main purpose of his coming to earth. When we decide to lay aside the vain things of the world, the sinful lifestyle to which we were accustomed, we enter into a new life and also receive a change in status. We receive a new garment with *Yeshua*'s heavenly attributes, the fruit of the Spirit, as he destined it for us through his death and resurrection.

It is extremely important that we never stop bringing our tithes to *YAH*. We are aware of the cliché that is constantly brought by prosperity preachers when they quote *Mal'aqi* 3:10 *ad nauseam*, but this does not necessarily include finances, only the produce of the land. Although most people are more concerned with finances than anything else these days, every *Torah*-believing person should ask himself or herself how and where to bring their tithes. There is nothing wrong with giving a portion of your offerings to a local congregation or place of gathering, provided the funds are managed properly, with full transparency and utilised correctly at all times. However, this may never be required of any person in the congregation, so each person should contribute as guided by *the Ruach HaQodesh*.

It is striking that *Mosheh* largely remains out of the latter part of the narration of these lines and is only mentioned again towards the end. We see from this that his role is not limited to priest, as *Aharon* must bear most of the responsibility. This once again points us to *Mosheh*'s role as mediator and as his role develops throughout the books of *Torah*, we see the close connection it has with our future Messianic leader, the priest, prophet and king after the example of *Malkitsedeq*. Without *Torah* we would never have been able to understand the good news of *Yeshua*'s *talmidim*, much less have any clue of what the prophets spoke of. *Torah* is and remains the foundation for healthy, spiritual growth in *YAH*'s Kingship.

*Shabbat shalom!*

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#### Sources:

We prefer to not use the word 'God', because of personal conviction. In most cases, unless quoted from another source, it will be replaced by '*Elohim*' or inflections of the same word.

All citing of Scripture is taken from The Scriptures 2009, unless indicated differently.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://isr-messianic.org/>

John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

The Expository Notes of Dr. Thomas L. Constable

Faithlife Study Bible

Adam Clarke's 1810/1825 commentary and critical notes on the Bible

*The Word of יהוה is free, therefore this study may be  
distributed free of charge, provided no changes are made.*



## Addendum A

**Presume/presumption:** To suppose that something is the case by probability before any proof. To take for granted that something exists or is the case. To be arrogant or impertinent enough to do (say) something. To make unjustified demands, take liberties. To unjustifiably regard (something) as entitling one to (superior) privileges. Behaviour perceived as arrogant, disrespectful, conceited, insolent, and transgressing the limits of what is permitted or appropriate. Assumes a position that is not rightfully his/hers. Takes for granted or makes up fictitious accounts to appear appropriate. To undertake without permission. Presuming to speak for another. The spirit of presumption is self-opinionated, audacious, vain, overbearing, overconfident, centre of attention, crewed, brash, conceited, pompous, pretentious, prideful, self-important, insecure, self-centered, disrespectful, rude, flippant, false humility, airs, persuasive, suspicious, controlling, manipulative, non-repentant, arrogant, self-worshipping, superior, egotistical and aloof.