

## And the Land Opened Up - Perashat Korach

### Source 1: Bamidbar Ch. 16

- יב** וַיִּשְׁלַח מֹשֶׁה, לִקְרֹא לְדָתָן וְאֶבְיָרָם בְּנֵי אֱלִיאָב; וַיֹּאמְרוּ, לֹא נֵעֲלֶה.
- יג** הֲמֵעַט, כִּי הֵעֲלִיתָנוּ מֵאֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבֶשׁ, לְהַמִּיתָנוּ, בְּמִדְבָּר: כִּי-תִשְׁתַּרְרַר עָלֵינוּ, גַּם-הַשְּׂתֵרֶר.
- יד** אִם לֹא אֶל-אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבֶשׁ, הֵבִיאָתָנוּ, וְתַבְּנוּ-לָנוּ, נַחֲלֹת שָׂדֵה וְכַרְם; הֲעֵינֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים הָהֵם, תִּנְקַר-לָא-נֵעֲלֶה.
- טו** וַיַּחַר לְמֹשֶׁה, מְאֹד, וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-יְהוָה, אֶל-תִּפְּוֹן אֶל-מִנְחָתָם; לֹא חָמַר אֶחָד מֵהֶם, נִשְׂאָתִי, וְלֹא הִרְעִיתִי, אֶת-אֶחָד מֵהֶם.
- טז** וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר. **כד** דַּבֵּר אֶל-הָעֵדָה, לֵאמֹר: הֵעֲלוּ, מִסְבֵּיב, לְמִשְׁכַּן-קִרְחַ, דָּתָן וְאֶבְיָרָם.
- כה** וַיָּקָם מֹשֶׁה, וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל-דָּתָן וְאֶבְיָרָם; וַיֵּלְכוּ אַחֲרָיו, זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.
- כו** וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל-הָעֵדָה לֵאמֹר, סוּרוּ נָא מֵעַל אֲהֲלֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים הָרָשָׁעִים הָאֵלֶּה, וְאַל-תִּגְעוּ, בְּכָל-אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם: פֶּן-תִּסָּפוּ, בְּכָל-חַטָּאתָם.
- כז** וַיַּעֲלוּ, מֵעַל מִשְׁכַּן-קִרְחַ דָּתָן וְאֶבְיָרָם--מִסְבֵּיב; וַדָּתָן וְאֶבְיָרָם יָצְאוּ נֹצְבִים, פֶּתַח אֲהֲלֵיהֶם, וַנְּשִׂיהֶם וּבְנֵיהֶם, וְטַפָּם.
- כח** וַיֹּאמֶר, מֹשֶׁה, בּוֹאֵת תִּדְעוּן, כִּי-יְהוָה שְׁלַחְנִי לַעֲשׂוֹת אֵת כָּל-הַמַּעֲשִׂים הָאֵלֶּה: כִּי-לֹא, מִלְּבִי.
- 12** And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab; and they said: 'We will not come up;
- 13** is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, but thou must needs make thyself also a prince over us?
- 14** Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards; wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up.'
- 15** And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the LORD: 'Respect not Thou their offering; I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them.'
- 23** And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying:
- 24** 'Speak unto the congregation, saying: Get you up from about the dwelling of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.'
- 25** And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him.
- 26** And he spoke unto the congregation, saying: 'Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be swept away in all their sins.'
- 27** So they got them up from the dwelling of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side; and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood at the door of their tents, with their wives, and their sons, and their little ones.
- 28** And Moses said: 'Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works, and that I have not done them of mine own mind.'

- כט** אם-כמות כל-האדם, ימתון  
אלה, ופקדת כל-האדם, יפקד  
עליהם--לא יהוה, שלחני.
- 29** If these men die the common death of all men, and be visited after the visitation of all men, then the LORD hath not sent Me.
- ל** ואם-בריאה יברא יהוה, ופצתה  
האדמה את-פיה ובלעה אתם  
ואת-כל-אשר להם, וירדו חיים,  
שאלה--וידעתם, כי נאצו האנשים  
האלה את-יהוה.
- 30** But if the LORD make a new thing, and the ground open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down alive into the pit, then ye shall understand that these men have despised the LORD.'
- לא** ויהי, ככלתו, לדבר, את כל-  
הדברים האלה; ותבקע האדמה,  
אשר תחתיהם.
- 31** And it came to pass, as he made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground did cleave asunder that was under them.
- לב** ותפתח הארץ את-פיה, ותבלע  
אתם ואת-בתיכם, ואת כל-האדם  
אשר לקרח, ואת כל-הרכוש.
- 32** And the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods.
- לג** וירדו הם וכל-אשר להם,  
חיים--שאלה; ותכס עליהם  
הארץ, ויאבדו מתוך הקהל.
- 33** So they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit; and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the assembly.
- לד** וכל-ישראל, אשר סביבתיכם-  
נסו לקלם: כי אמרו, פן-תבלענו  
הארץ.
- 34** And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them; for they said: 'Lest the earth swallow us up.'

### Source 2: Shemot Ch. 3

- א** ומשה, היה רעה את-צאן  
יתרו חתנו--כהן מדן; וינהג  
את-הצאן אחר המדבר, ויבא  
אל-הר האלהים חרבה.
- 1** Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the farthest end of the wilderness, and came to the mountain of God, unto Horeb.
- ב** וירא מלאך יהוה אליו,  
בלבת-אש--מתוך הסנה;
- 2** And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and,

וַיֵּרָא, וְהִנֵּה הַסִּנֵּה בֵּעֵר בְּאֵשׁ, וְהַסִּנֵּה, אֵינָנוּ אֲכָל.  
 behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

ג וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה--אָסְרָה-נָּא וְאֶרְאֶה, אֶת-הַמִּרְאָה הַגָּדֹל הַזֶּה: מִדּוּעַ, לֹא-יִבְעַר הַסִּנֵּה.  
 3 And Moses said: 'I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, **why the bush is not burnt.**'

ד וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה, כִּי סָר לְרְאוֹת; וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו אֱלֹהִים מִתּוֹךְ הַסִּנֵּה, וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה--וַיֹּאמֶר הַיָּנִי.  
 4 And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, **God called unto him out of the midst of the bush**, and said: 'Moses, Moses.' And he said: 'Here am I.'

### Source 3: Midrash Shemot Rabba 2:5

שאל גוי אחד את ר' יהושע בן קרחה: מה ראה הקב"ה לדבר עם משה מתוך הסנה? אמר לו: אלו מתוך חרוב או מתוך שקמה, כך היית שואלני! אלא להוציאך חלק אי אפשר. למה מתוך הסנה - ללמדך שאין מקום פנוי בלא שכינה".

"A certain gentile asked R. Yehoshua ben Korcha: 'Why did God choose to speak to Moshe from the midst of a bush [a lowly form of vegetation]?' He answered him: 'Had He spoken to him from the midst of a carob tree or a sycamore, you would have asked the same question! But since I cannot leave you without an answer, [I will respond]: Why from a [lowly] bush? To teach you that there is no place that is devoid of the Divine Presence.'"

- According to this midrash, is there any specific reason why Hashem chose to reveal Himself in a thorn bush?
- Why, then, according to R. Yehoshua, did Hashem reveal Himself in a bush?

**But there are some additional approaches in the midrash:**

Just as this bush is lower than all the other trees in the world, so had Israel stooped to the lowest possible level, and the Holy One descended with them and redeemed them”.

”Because it is pure: the nations of the world do not use it in their idolatrous practices”.

”Just as the bush is hardier than all the other trees in the world – no bird that enters it will emerge safely, for it tears her limb from limb – so was Israel's subjugation in Egypt more difficult than any subjugation in the world”.

”This bush – if a man puts his hand into it, he does not feel it, but when he tries to take his hand out he is scratched; likewise, when Israel went down to Egypt no one noticed them, but when they came out it was with miracles and wonders and war”.

”Just as this bush is used as a fence around a garden, so Israel is like a fence for the world”

”מה הסנה הזה שפל מכל אילנות שבעולם, כך ירדו ישראל למדרגה התחתונה, והקדוש ברוך הוא ירד עמהם וגאלם”.

”מפני שהוא טהור, שאין אומות העולם עושין אותו עבודה זרה”.

”מה הסנה קשה מכל אילנות שבעולם, שכל ציפור שנכנסת לתוכו אינה יוצאת מתוכו בשלום עד שמחתכת אברים אברים, כך היה שיעבודן של ישראל במצרים קשה מכל שיעבוד שבעולם”.

”מה הסנה הזה - כשאדם מכניס את ידו לתוכו אינו מרגיש, וכשהוא מוציאה מסתרטת, כך כשירדו ישראל למצרים - לא הכיר בהן בריה, כשיצאו - יצאו באותות ובמופתים ובמלחמה”.

”מה הסנה הזה עושין אותו גדר לגינה, כך ישראל גדר לעולם”.

**Rav Yonatan Grossman:**

A sort of middle path in between these two approaches would suggest that each incident should be evaluated individually. Does the text itself contain any hint of there being symbolic significance to the objects or phenomena mentioned, beyond their contribution to the story itself? Thus, for example, if we examine the verses describing God's revelation to Moshe in the bush, we note that the text itself emphasizes that God was revealed in a bush (in the space of two verses the bush is mentioned five times). Hence, it is not a minor detail in the story, but rather a subject worthy of our attention.

Compare to Source 4: Bamidbar 11:33

לֹג הַבָּשָׂר, עוֹדְנוּ בֵּין 33 While the flesh was yet between their  
שְׁנֵיהֶם--טָרַם, יִפְרֹת; וְאִף LORD was kindled against the people, and  
יְהוָה, חָרָה בָּעַם, וַיִּדֹּף יְהוָה the LORD smote the people with a very  
בָּעַם, מַכָּה רַבָּה מְאֹד. great plague.

Now compare to our Perasha, verses 28-30 (earlier in this source packet) "

The punishment in our perasha has **not just a punitive, but an educational component**; *what is that educational message?*

*What is the message?*

*How is the medium here THE message?*

*How is the earth personified in the incident? Verse 32 !*

*If the Torah had not used this particular imagery, what imagery would we have intuitively connected this punishment to?*

**Source 5: Bereishit 3:19**

יֵט בְּזַעַת אִפְיֶךָ, תֹאכַל לֶחֶם, 19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat  
עַד שׁוּבְךָ אֶל-הָאֲדָמָה, כִּי bread, till thou return unto the ground;  
מִמֶּנָּה לִקְחֹתָ: כִּי-עָפָר אַתָּה, thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.  
וְאֶל-עָפָר תָּשׁוּב.

- Also, the word בריאה reminds us of Sefer Bereishit!
- Or maybe another component of the **Bereishit story Ch.4... Source 6:**

י וַיֹּאמֶר, מָה עָשִׂיתָ; קוֹל דְּמֵי 10 And He said: 'What hast thou  
אָחִיךָ, צִעֲקִים אֵלַי מִן- done? the voice of thy brother's blood  
הָאֲדָמָה. crieth unto Me from the ground.

יא וְעַתָּה, אָרוּר אַתָּה, מִן-הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר פָּצְתָה אֶת-פִּיהָ, לְקַחַת אֶת-דַּמֵּי אַחִיךָ מִיָּדְךָ. 11 And now cursed art thou from the ground, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand.

### Source 7: Commentary of Abravanel on Perashat Korach:

והנה ראה משה לבקש שיהיה עונש דתן ואבירם וסיעתם בבליעת הארץ, לדונם מידה כנגד מידה: הם פשעו במה שפערו פיהם לבלי חוק לבלוע ולהשחית אדון הנביאים, להיותם בערכו נבזים ושפלים, ככה תפתח האדמה - שהיא השפל שביסודות - את פיה, ותבלע אותם.

Moshe requested that the punishment of Datan and Aviram and their cohorts would be that they would be swallowed by the earth, such that they would be punished 'measure for measure.' They sinned by opening their mouths without license, to devour and destroy the master of all prophets, they themselves being despicable and lowly. Likewise, the earth – which is the lowest of the elements – would open its mouth, and swallow them

- **מידה כנגד מידה - Measure for Measure – form of the punishment**
- **Source 8: Rashi's Approach – the language is the focus of the מידה כנגד מידה**

יד אף לא אל-ארץ וְבַת הַלֵּב וְדָבַשׁ,  
הביאתנו, ותתן-לנו, נחלת שְׂדֵה  
וְכַרְם; העיני האנשים ההם, תִּנְקַר-  
-לא נעלה.

14 Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards; wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up.'

”לא נעלה” -פיהם הכשילם, שאין להם אלא ירידה

Their mouths give them away: they can only descend.

The Torah is clearly drawing our attention to the interplay between “Aliya” and “yerida”

"ויאמרו - לא נעלה. המעט כי העליתנו מארץ זבת, חלב ודבש להמיתנו במדבר... לא נעלה..."

העלו מסביב למשכן קרח, דתן ואבירם... ויעלו מעל משכן קרח, דתן ואבירם מסביב...

וירדו חיים שאלה, וידעתם כי נאצו האנשים האלה את ה'... וירדו הם וכל אשר להם חיים שאלה, ותכס עליהם הארץ ויאבדו מתוך הקהל". (ט"ז, יב-לג)

### Source 9: Rashbam

כלל ופרט וחזר וכלל: 'לא נעלה' אמר תחילה, ואח"כ פירש למה, וחזר וכלל - לפיכך 'לא נעלה'

In what way do they not want to "go up?" Why "up"?

### Source 10: Vayikra 11:45

כי אני יהוה המעלה אתכם מארץ מצרים להיות לכם לאלהים והייתם קדושים כי קדוש אני.

### Source 11: Amos 3:1

שמעו את הדבר הזה אשר דבר יהוה עליכם בני ישראל על כל המשפחה אשר העליתי מארץ מצרים לאמר.

**Rav Grossman:** Nechama Leibowitz z"l discusses the surprising use of the expression "a land flowing with milk and honey." Every other place in the Torah where this expression appears, it characterizes Eretz Yisrael. Thus, in the consciousness of Datan and Aviram's audience, that is the natural association of the image. But to our surprise – and that of their listeners – Datan and Aviram apply this image to Egypt, the "land of abominations, the house of slavery,"[9] from which Moshe had brought them out: "Is it not enough that you have brought us up from a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the desert..."

It is reasonable to assume that Datan and Aviram consciously and intentionally use an expression which is bound up, in the public consciousness, with Eretz Yisrael. In this way, they are turning the tables: "It is not to a land flowing with milk and honey that you – Moshe – are leading us, but rather from a land of milk and honey that you have removed us!"

Their speech challenges the very rightness of leaving Egypt, the very idea of leaving a land which, in their deceptive words, is referred to as "flowing with milk and honey." It is sufficient to remember the continuation of the journey that Bnei Yisrael have experienced since leaving Egypt – including standing at Sinai and receiving the Torah – to understand who and what the real subject of the rebellion is.

The declaration, "We shall not come up," should be read in its broader sense: it is not only to Moshe, standing in the Ohel Mo'ed, that they refuse to ascend. Their refusal pertains to the entire venture: the great ascent to Eretz Yisrael, which they hint to in their words, "Is it not enough that you have brought us up from a land flowing with milk and honey." Hence the reiteration and emphasis: "We shall not ascend!" Or, as Yisrael Rosenson recently formulated it:

"Accordingly, the words, 'We shall not ascend' should be interpreted... as encompassing the refusal to ascend to the Land of Canaan; it is as if in refusing to ascend to Moshe they are hinting at the deeper reason: the forced exodus [ascent] from Egypt

### Source 12: Bamidbar Ch. 13

**לב** וַיִּצְיֵאוּ דְבַר הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר תָּרוּ אֵתְּךָ, אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, לֵאמֹר: הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר עָבְרָנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֵתְּךָ, אֶרֶץ אֹכֶלֶת יוֹשְׁבֶיהָ הוּא, וְכָל-הָעָם אֲשֶׁר-רָאִינוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ, אַנְשֵׁי מְדוּת.

**32** And they spread an evil report of the land which they had spied out unto the children of Israel, saying: 'The land, through which we have passed to spy it out, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature.

**לג** וְשָׂם רָאִינוּ, אֶת-הַנְּפִילִים בְּנֵי עֲנָק--מִן-הַנְּפִילִים; וְנָהִי בְּעֵינֵינוּ כַּחַגְבִּים, וְכֵן הָיִינוּ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם.

**33** And there we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak, who come of the Nephilim; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.'

*There are different approaches in the Rishonim to explain both the reason and the timing of Korach's rebellion and the location in the Torah of Perashat Korach*



### Source 13: Ramban and Ibn Ezra on Perashat Korach

**ראב"ע:** מרד קורח התרחש אחרי מפקד בני ישראל שבתחילת ספר במדבר (לפני חטא המרגלים!), ועילת המרד הייתה החלפת הבכורות בלויים

**רמב"ן:** מרד קורח נכתב במקומו הכרונולוגי, ואדרבא - עילת המרד קשורה בעונש שבא על ישראל בעקבות חטא המרגלים "ונגזר על כל העם [בחטא המרגלים] שייתמו במדבר ושם ימותו. אז הייתה נפש כל העם מרה, והיו אומרים בלבם כי יבואו להם בדברי משה תקלות, ואז מצא קרח מקום לחלוק על מעשיו, וחשב כי ישמעו אליו העם"