

Num 16-11 to 18-32 Torah Reading (Parshat Korach)
Torah Readings for Parshat Korach
English version to be sung to the Torah tropes by Len Fellman
Latest version June 24, 2020

16:1 Now began Korach, son of Yitzhar, son of Kehat, son of Levi,
(and Datan and Aviram), [who were the sons] [of Eliav], and On son of Peleth, descendants of Reuben:
2 —they rose up before Moses with men from the sons of Israel: two hundred and fifty:
[they were leaders] [in the community], summoned to the council, [men of stature].
3 [They gathered together] [against Moses] [and against Aaron], [and they said] [to the two of them], “[Too much is yours!]”
Indeed, [the whole community]—all of them—are holy, [and in their midst] is YHWH. So why do you set yourself over the assembly of YHWH?
4 [When it was heard] by Moses, he fell on his face.
5 And he spoke to Korach [and to the whole community], saying, “[In the morning] [it will be made known] [by YHWH] [who truly is His];
[him who is holy] He will bring [close to Him], [and anyone such] that God chooses him, He will bring close to Himself.
6 This [you must do]: [take for yourselves] [fire-pans]—Korach, [and all your community],
7 and place [upon them] [fire taken from the hot coals], [and you must place also] upon them | some incense, before YHWH tomorrow,
[and it will be] [that the man] who is chosen by YHWH—it is he who is holy. Too much do you have, you sons of Levi.”
8 Further spoke Moses to Korach, “[Listen, pray], sons of Levi.
9 Is it [too little for you] [that you have been distinguished]—the God of Israel [set you apart] [from the community] of Israel
to bring you close to Him, [that you may work] in the service of the tabernacle of YHWH,
[and that you may stand] before the community [to serve them]?
10 [Close to Himself] [God brought you], and all your brothers the sons of Levi, [with you]. [And do you seek] [also the priesthood]?
11 [Truly it is] that you and your whole community [do band together] [against YHWH].
[And as for Aaron], [who is he] that you should murmur [against him]?
12 [Then sent out] by Moses [was a summons] for Dathan and Aviram, sons of Eliav. [Their reply]: “We will not go up!
13 [Is it a small thing] [that you] [brought us up] from a land flowing with milk and honey, [just to kill us] in the desert,
[end aliyah], lording it over us—[playing the prince]?”

16:14 [Surely we can all see] that not [to a land] flowing with milk and honey [have you] [brought us], [nor have you given to us] possession of field or vineyard. [And the eyes] [of the men]—[of all these men]—[will you gouge them out]? We will not go up!”

15 [This angered] Moses exceedingly, and he said to YHWH, “Do not accept their offering. [Truly there has never been] a donkey—even one—of theirs [that I took away]. I have done no harm to any one of them!”

16 [Again there spoke] Moses to Korach, “You [and all your community] must appear before YHWH—you [and all of them], [along with Aaron], tomorrow.

17 [And each one will take] |—[each man] [his own fire-pan], and proceed [to place over it] incense, [and he shall bring it near] before YHWH, [each man] his fire-pan—fifty and two hundred of them, and you and Aaron, each man his fire-pan.”

18 [And so they took]—[each man] [his fire-pan], and proceeded [to put in it] fire, and he then placed over it incense, [and he then stood] [there at the entrance] of the Tent of Meeting, with Moses and Aaron.

19 And gathered [against them] by Korach was the whole community at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, [end aliyah] when there appeared the glory of YHWH [to all the community].

20 Then spoke YHWH to Moses and to Aaron as follows,

21 “Withdraw yourselves from the midst of this community here, and I will consume them in an instant.”

22 [And they fell] on their faces, [and they said] this: “El, God of the spirits of all flesh, [if a man]—[just one man]—[commits a sin], then against the whole community, [will you be enraged]?”

23 And replied YHWH to Moses, thus:

24 “Speak to the community and say, ‘Get away from around [the tents of Korach], Datan, and Aviram.’ ”

25 Then stood up Moses, [and went up to] Datan and Aviram, and following after him were the elders of Israel.

26 He spoke to the community, [saying these words]: “[Turn away], [I do implore you], [from the midst] of the tents of the men—[those bad men]—over there. [Do not touch] anything that is theirs, lest you be swept away [on account of their sins].”

27 [And they got up] [from standing around] [the tents of Korach], Dathan and Aviram—on every side. [Datan and Aviram] [had come out], [and were standing there] [at the entrance] [of their tents], with their wives, their sons, and young children.

16:28 [Then spoke Moses], saying: “By this [you will know] that YHWH has sent me [in order to] do all of the things you’ll see here; [that it was not] [from my heart].

29 [If like the death] of all humans there die [these men], and the fate of all humankind is visited [upon them], then it is not YHWH, who has sent me.

30 [But if something new is done], a creation [by YHWH], [and there opens up] the earth’s very mouth which swallows them and all that is theirs, and they go down alive, to *Sheol* (or: the pit),

[then you shall know] [that in fact] [the one they provoked]—all of these men—was YHWH.”

31 And it was, [when he had finished] speaking, all of the words we just heard, then split open the ground, that lay beneath them.

32 And opened—the earth—[its very mouth], and swallowed the men and their households, as well as all the people [that were with] Korach, [along with] all of their goods.

33 So they went down—[all of them], [together with what] [belonged to them], alive, into the depths. [They were covered] over [by the earth], and they perished from the midst of the assembly.

34 [And all of the Israelites]—[the ones that were standing] around them, fled [at the sound of their cry], for they said, “[lest we too are swallowed] by the earth!”

35 A fire then went out from YHWH, [and it consumed] [the entire group] of fifty [and two hundred] (250) people [the ones who were offering] [the fragrant incense].

17:1 Then spoke YHWH, to Moses, saying:

2 “Speak to Elazar, son [of Aaron the priest], [that he should remove] [the fire pans] from among [the burned remains], and the fire-coals [he should scatter far and wide], because [they have been hallowed].

3 [But this is what he must do] [with the fire pans] of those who sinned, [against their souls], he should make of them beaten [metal plates] as a covering for the altar, since they were brought before YHWH, [and so became holy]. Let them be a sign, for the children of Israel.”

4 [And so he did take]—Elazar [the priest did take]—those [fire pans] of copper that had been offered [by the fire victims], [and he beat them flat], as a covering for the altar.

17:5 [It was a reminder] to the children of Israel [in order to ensure] that no man will approach—no one [from the outside]—[such a person] (not of the seed of Aaron should he be), to offer burned incense before YHWH, [so that he not] [become like Korach] and his community, [just as] [it had been spoken] by YHWH [through the hand of Moses] [concerning Korach].

6 [They began to complain]—[the whole community] [B'nei Yisrael] on the morrow, against Moses and against Aaron, by saying, "You have put to death, the people of YHWH".

7 [And it happened], [when there gathered] the assembly against Moses [and against Aaron], they turned to the Tent of Meeting, and behold: it had been covered by the cloud. [And there appeared] the glory of YHWH.

8 [And then came] Moses and Aaron [end aliyah] to the front of the Tent of Meeting.

9 Then spoke YHWH to Moses, saying,

10 "[Lift yourselves up] [from the midst] of this community, that I may consume them in an instant." And they fell [on their faces].

11 And then spoke Moses [to Aaron these words]: "[You must] [take a fire-pan] and put upon it some fire [taken from] the altar, [and put in] incense. [Then you must take it] [as fast as you can] to the community, as expiation for them, [since there has gone out] [the fuming rage] from before YHWH. Now begun is the plague."

12 So he took it—Aaron—[just as he had been] instructed [by Moses], and he ran into the midst of the assembly, [and it could be seen]: there had begun the plague for the people. He offered the incense, [making atonement] for the people.

13 He stood there between the dead and the living, [until stopped] was the plague.

14 [The number of those] who died in the plague was four [and ten or fourteen] thousand seven hundred (14,700), besides those who died [on account of Korach].

15 [Then returned] Aaron to Moses at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. [end aliyah] [And the plague] [was held back].

16 Then spoke YHWH to Moses, saying:

17 [You must go and speak] to the children [of Israel], and take—[you must take from them]—a staff: [one staff] per father's house, from each of their chieftains, by the house of their fathers, two and ten staffs. [For each one]: his name [you must write] on his staff.

18 Thus the name of Aaron you must write on the staff of Levi. Indeed, one staff [for each head] of the house of their fathers.

19 [You must place them] in the Tent of Meeting before [the Ark of the Testimony], [since that is the place]: I commune with you there.

17:20 [And it shall be] [that for the man] whom I will choose—[his staff] will sprout.

[Thus will be quieted] [from before me] the grumbling of the children of Israel, [because of which] they are complaining to you.

21 Thus spoke Moses to the children [of Israel]; [and they gave] to him— [[each of the leaders did give]—[one staff] for each of the chiefs— a staff for each chief by the house of their fathers—two and ten, [or twelve staffs]. And the staff of Aaron was among their staffs.

22 [He placed them]—[Moses laid out]—the staffs before YHWH in the Tent of the Testimony.

23 And it happened [on the next day], [when there came] Moses into the Tent of the Testimony, [that—behold]— there had sprouted the staff of Aaron of the house of Levi. [There had opened up] buds, and flowers had blossomed; [there had ripened] almonds.

24 [Then brought out] Moses [all the staffs] from before YHWH [to all the children] of Israel.

[end aliyah] They saw them, and they took each one his own staff.

25 Then said YHWH to Moses, “[You must now return] the staff of Aaron [before the Ark] of the Testimony as a keepsake and a sign [for sons of rebellion]. [Let there be an end] [of their complaining] [against Me], and they shall not die.”

26 [He did this thing]—Moses: [just as] [it was commanded] [by YHWH] [to him]—thus did he do.

27 Then spoke the children of Israel to Moses, by saying, “Surely [we’re going to die]! [We are lost]—we are all lost!

28 Whoever [so much as comes near]—[who does venture near] to the tabernacle of YHWH will die. Alas, doomed we are to perish.”

18:1 Then said YHWH to Aaron: “[You yourself] and your sons [and the house of your father] [along with you] must bear the iniquity [involving the sanctuary]. And you and your descendants [after you] must bear the sins of your priesthood.

2 And also [your brothers], the stock of Levi, the tribe of your father: [bring them] [close to you], to be joined to you [and minister to you].

Both you and your sons [along with you] [must be before] the Tent of Testimony.

3 [They shall keep] your charge, and the charge [of the whole tent].

Nevertheless to the furnishings [that are sacred] and to the altar [they must not] come near, lest they die—both them, [and also you].

4 [They will be joined] to you, [and they must keep] the charge of the Tent of Meeting, [including all] the duties of the tent.

An outsider must not come near, *with* you.

18:5 [Thus they must keep]—[and take on]—the charge [of the holy place], [as well as] the charge of the altar, [that there should be] [endured no more] fury against the children of Israel.

6 [And know that I] hereby am taking your brothers the Levites from the midst of the children of Israel. [For you indeed] as a gift [they are give over] to YHWH [that they should do the work] of service [for the Tent of Meeting].

7 [Now you] [and your sons] [who will be serving with you] shall watch over your priesthood [in all that pertains] [to the *mizbeach* (altar)] and for inside the curtain, [you shall do service].

[This service] [is truly a gift] [that I have given] [for your priesthood]. Any stranger who comes near [will be put to death].”

8 Then spoke YHWH to Aaron: [Know that I] hereby am giving [to you] the charge of My donations: [for all the holy things] [of the children of Israel]. To you [I have surely given] [them as a share] [to your sons] [as a law for the ages].

9 The following things [will be for you], of things holy of holies, from the fire: [all of their offerings], [every *minchah* (grain offering) that is theirs], [every *chattat* (sin offering) that is theirs], [and every *asham* (burnt offering)] that they return to Me—holy of holies [it will be] to you [and to your sons].

10 In the holy of holies, [you must eat it]. Every male shall partake of it. Holy [it will be to you].

11 [And this shall be yours]: the donation [of their gifts], [even all the wave offerings] of *B'nei Yisrael*.

To you [I have given them] [and to your sons] [and to your daughters] [with you], [as a law for the ages].

All who are pure in your household, may eat it.

12 All the choicest of the oil, [and all the choicest] of the wine and the grain: [the premier part] that they give to YHWH, to you I have given them.

13 [The first fruit of what grows]—[of all that does grow] [there in their land], that they present to YHWH, for you it will be.

All who are pure in your household, may eat it.

14 All that is proscribed (*cherem*) in Israel, for you it will be.

15 [Every breacher]—[the first issue of every womb]—[of every living creature] [that must be presented] [to YHWH], whether from human or beast, will be yours. [On the other hand] | [there are some] [that must be redeemed]: namely the first-born of humans, [and in addition] first-born of beasts that are unclean, [must be redeemed].

18:16 [And its redemption price] [from age one month] [you must redeem] [with an assessment of] [an amount in silver] of five shekels by the shekel of the sanctuary. Twenty grains (0.8 oz) it is.

17 However [the first-born of an ox] [or as well] first-born of a sheep [or the first-born] [of a goat], you shall not redeem; holy are they. [Their blood you must therefore] dash on the altar, and their fat turned to smoke—[an offering by fire] of pleasing fragrance to YHWH.

18 [And their flesh] will be yours, [like the breast] [of the wave offering] and like the right thigh. Yours it will be.

19 [All the contributions] | —the donations [of the holy things] that are offered [by the children of Israel] to YHWH—these [I have given to you] [and to your sons] [as well as your daughters] [with you], [as a law for the ages].
[It is “a covenant] of salt”: everlasting it is, before YHWH, for you, and for your seed with you.

20 Then said YHWH [to Aaron], “[In their land] you shall have no inheritance; [an allotted portion], there will be none for you [in their midst]. [I Myself] am your portion and your inheritance [end aliyah] among the children of Israel.

21 To the sons of Levi, [know that] [I have given] every tithe in Israel as an inheritance in exchange for their work [that they offer] in service: the work of the Tent of Meeting.

22 [There will not encroach] [from this point on] *B'nei Yisrael*, on the Tent of Meeting, to be guilty of sin, and to die.

23 Rather serving will be the Levite—[he alone], [to do the work] of the Tent of Meeting. It is they who will bear their guilt.
[It is a law] for the ages, throughout their generations. But among the children of Israel, they will not inherit an estate.

24 [For it is indeed] the tithe [of *B'nei Yisrael*] that [they offer up] to YHWH as a donation, that I have given to the Levites as an inheritance. Therefore did I say to them, ‘In the midst of the children of Israel you shall not inherit an estate.’

25 Then spoke YHWH to Moses, saying,

26 [To the Levites] [you must speak], saying to them, “[When you take the tithe] from the children of Israel, [when you take the tithe]—the one [that I am giving] [over to you]—[from them], as your inheritance, [you must set aside] [from it] a contribution to YHWH—a tithe from the tithe.

27 [It will be reckoned to you] as your contribution, like grain [from the threshing floor] or like wine [from the wine vat].

28 [In this way], set aside [as your portion] the contribution of YHWH, from all of your tithes [that you] have taken [from the children] of Israel. [You must give] [from them] as the contribution of YHWH to Aaron the priest.

18:29 From all of your contributions [you must set aside] every contribution of YHWH
[from all of its choicest parts], [its sanctified portion], [taken from it].

30[You shall say] to them, “[When you donate] [the choicest part] [of it], [it will be accounted] [for the Levites]
like the yield from the threshing floor, and like the yield from the vat.

31[And you may] consume it anywhere—you and your households
since payment it is to you in exchange for your work in the Tent of Meeting.

32[You will not bear] [for it] any sin when you have donated the choicest parts from it.

[And sacred offerings] [of *B'nei Yisrael*] [end aliyah] you shall not profane, so that you shall not die.”

Len Fellman's English readings with tropes

The purpose of this project is to translate *THE SONG OF THE TORAH* into English.

I work by comparing as many as ten English translations of a *pasuk* and creating a cantillated English sentence that sounds as much as possible like the Hebrew. They follow the Hebrew as closely as possible, word for word and trope by trope. The English language has an amazing flexibility, making it possible to make the English word order match that of the Hebrew quite well, allowing for some “poetic licence”, and some willingness on the part of the listener to be “carried” by the melody more than by the English syntax. The translation needs to sound good when *chanted*, but not necessarily when *spoken or read*.

Unlike most translations, these “transtropilations” are not intended to be a substitute for the Hebrew. On the contrary, they are meant to provide a “window” into the Hebrew text and its musical expression. My ideal listener knows enough Hebrew and has enough interest to follow the Hebrew in a bilingual text while the *leyner* is chanting the English version, to bring the Hebrew text to life, both *verbally* and *musically*. For this purpose I use *exactly* the same tropes in the English as in the Hebrew (almost always on the corresponding English word).

The texts can be used to do **consecutive translation**, i.e. leyning a phrase in Hebrew, followed by the corresponding phrase sung in English. Some of my recordings demonstrate this. I do this frequently when leyning for groups that either know little Hebrew, or that don't have a *chumash* in front of them.

I favor literal translations (e.g. “cut a covenant”) to call attention to Hebrew idioms, and towards simpler (even if less accurate) words (e.g. Ex. 12:7 “beam above the door” rather than “lintel”) to be easier to follow. If my readings provoke a discussion of the Hebrew, I consider that as justification for using less-than-idiomatic English. I try to find just the right balance between “literalness” and “listenable-ness”. A primary goal is throwing light on the Hebrew syntax.

In order to adapt the trope symbols to a left-to-right language like English, I *reversed* the direction of the trope symbols:

mercha tipcha munach tevir mapakh *or* yetiv kadma *or* pashta geresht gershayim telisha katana telisha gedola

(Generally speaking the *conjunctive tropes* such as mercha, munach, mapakh, kadma, and telisha katana “lean toward” the words they “conjoin” to, while the *disjunctive tropes* such as tipcha, geresht, gershayim, and telisha gedola “lean away” from the words that follow, so as to create a sense of separation.)

The trope symbol is normally placed under the accented syllable, unless it is a *pre-positive* accent (telisha gedola, placed *at the beginning* of the word or phrase) or a *post-positive* one (telisha katana or pashta, placed at the *end* of the word or phrase).

The Hebrew text frequently puts a *makkeph* (which is like a hyphen) between words in order to treat them as a single word to be chanted. I use a different system for English: If an entire English phrase is to be chanted to a single trope melody, I place it between grey brackets, as in this phrase from the Book of Lamentations:

[clings to her skirts]

The *leyner* is invited to fit this phrase to the *Eicha* “rivi'i” melody in whatever way seems most natural.

As a variant of the “grey bracket” device, I indicate the following pairs of tropes by “wrapping them around” the phrase which will have the combined melody:

mercha/tipcha	kadma/geresh (<i>or</i> : azla, etc.)	mercha siluk
⏟Renew our days⏟	⏟‘She weeps bitterly’⏟	⏟a fire-offering to God⏟

Again, the *leyner* should decide on the most natural way to fit the phrase to the combined trope melody.

I put words in gray which I consider essential but which don’t strictly match the Hebrew. I also “pad” some phrases with extra words in gray to fill out a musical phrase nicely. Different trope systems vary widely in the length of the musical phrase used, so the words in gray may or not be used depending on the *leyner*’s cantillation system. In particular, the tropes *telisha g’dola* (ר), *legarmeh*, *metigah-zakef*, and *pazer* vary widely in the musical phrases used for chanting. (And please indulge me in my whimsical treatments of *shalsholet*.)

“*Metigah-zakef*” is a special trope combination which can be recognized by a kadma and a zakef katon appearing on the same Hebrew word (again, a *makkeph* makes two words into one). (There are several examples in Genesis 18 & 19, beginning with 18:16). I indicate this by placing the corresponding English phrase in grey brackets:

[Take heed—take care for yourself]

In some trope systems (notably cantor Moshe Haschel in “Navigating the Bible II”) this is given a very distinctive melody—for which purpose extra syllables fill out the musical phrase (as in “take care” in this example). Haschel’s system also chants the trope *munach* as *legarmeh* more often than other systems do.

I don’t write a single word of translation without first hearing the melody of the phrase in my mind, following one of two trope systems: The one by Portnoy and Wolff (*The Art of Cantillation*) or the one by Joshua R. Jacobson (*Chanting the Hebrew Bible*).

I transcribe the name יהוה as YHWH (in small caps). I almost always chant this as *yud-hey-vav-hey*, which I have discovered fits marvelously into several of the trope melodies. But of course the *leyner* can choose to pronounce it as “*God*” or “*Adonai*”.

The English translations I mostly use (besides several scholarly commentaries) are the following:

Aryeh Kaplan, ‘The Living Torah’ (1981) (also my source for proper names & transliterations)
Richard Elliott Friedman, ‘The Bible With Sources Revealed’ (2003)
Everett Fox, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (1997)
The Stone Edition ‘Tanach’ (1996)
JPS ‘Hebrew-English Tanach’, (2nd Ed. 2000), *along with* Orlinsky, ‘Notes on the New Translation of the Torah’ (1969)
Robert Alter, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (2004)
Commentaries in the ‘Anchor Bible’ series
Rotherham, The Emphasized Bible (1902)
The Jerusalem Bible (1966) (also my source for topic headings)
The New King James Bible (1982)