

Dvar Torah Outline — Parashat Korach: When “Equality” Is True, and Why the Torah Records Korach’s Claims

Abstract

Rabbi Shulman raises Rabbi Tzadok’s fundamental question: how can the Torah—*divrei emet*—record the falsehoods Korach spreads, especially when they fuel machloket rather than peace? He explains that Korach’s claims are not “random lies” preserved as history; rather, they express a profound truth that applies in a different spiritual mode: moments of “circular” revelation (like Kriyat Yam Suf and Matan Torah) and the future world, where every Jew relates directly to Hashem without hierarchy. Korach’s error was weaponizing that truth prematurely—using a real ideal of equality in a world that still operates by process, gradation, and necessary distinction.

I. Rabbi Tzadok’s question: how can the Torah write Korach’s “sheker” if Torah is truth?

A. The Torah is not a neutral history book

- Rabbi Shulman cites Rabbi Tzadok: if something is written in the Torah, it cannot be treated as mere reportage (“this is what he said”) the way a history book might.
- Since the Torah is Hashem speaking, *every written word must be emet*.

B. A Midrash proves the rule: exceptions exist only for shalom

- Rabbi Shulman brings the Midrash: “גדול שלום שדברה התורה דברי בדאי בשביל שלום”
 - (How great is peace, that the Torah spoke “untrue words” for the sake of peace.)
- Example invoked: the brothers tell Yosef that Yaakov instructed forgiveness—presented as a “שינוי” “בדיבור” for peace.
- Rabbi Tzadok’s inference (as Rabbi Shulman presents it):
 - The Torah can record something not literally true **only** under a special dispensation like *darchei shalom*.
 - Korach’s words, which drive machloket, seemingly do not qualify—so why are they in the Torah at all?

C. The implication: if Korach's claims are recorded, they must contain truth

- Rabbi Shulman frames Rabbi Tzadok's "revolutionary" lens:
 - Apply this principle broadly: if the Torah includes it, there is an aspect of truth embedded within it.
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II. Chazal's "tallit shekulah techelet" and "bayit malei sefarim": where did this come from? (3:01)

A. The classic Korach-Midrash images

- Rabbi Shulman asks: how did Chazal arrive at Korach's taunt:
 - A garment entirely of תכלת—does it still need a תכלת thread on the corners?
 - A house full of ספרים—does it still need a מזוזה on the doorway?

B. The surface claim Korach *does* state

- Korach's explicit argument is framed as:
 - "כי כל העדה כולם קדושים" (for the entire congregation—כולם—are holy)
- Rabbi Shulman notes: they all experienced Sinai; they all "saw" and "heard"—so why hierarchy?

C. The question sharpened

- If Korach's stated motivation is collective holiness and equality, why introduce these particular symbols (tallit/house)?
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III. The deep framework: two "world-structures" — עיגולים and יושר (4:30)

A. Two modes of Divine revelation

- Rabbi Shulman explains a lofty concept (with practical lower-level manifestations):
 1. עיגולים — "circles": an encompassing reality where all points are equidistant; no "top" and "bottom."
 2. יושר — "line": a staged, step-by-step reality with beginning/middle/end; progression and hierarchy.

B. What circles mean: equality as an end-state truth

- In a circle, every position is equal—this symbolizes the reality where “everyone is on the same level” in the relevant sense.
- Rabbi Shulman cites the image that in the future, צדיקים will dance in a circle around Hashem—circle as non-hierarchical closeness.

C. What lines mean: growth requires gradation

- In this world of process (יושר), people are at different stages:
 - some “ahead,” some “behind”
 - leaders and followers exist because development unfolds over time.
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IV. Korach’s claims are “true”—but only in the wrong world/time (7:30)

A. Momentary “circle-revelations” already appeared in history

- Rabbi Shulman gives an example of a temporary הבל-עולם-like disclosure:
 - “ראתה שפחה על הים מה שלא ראה יחזקאל בן בוזי”
 - (A maidservant at the sea saw what Yechezkel did not see.)
- His point: at the ים, the revelation was so encompassing that it leveled distinctions—everyone was seeing the same “disclosure,” not via rank.

B. Kriyat Yam Suf: “עתיקא תליא מילתא” and “מה תצעק אלי?”

- Rabbi Shulman references the idea that at Kriyat Yam Suf the matter “depends on” Hashem’s transcendent will—beyond worldly structure.
- He connects it to Hashem’s statement to Moshe:
 - “מה תצעק אלי?” (Why are you crying out to Me?)
- This is framed as a disclosure of Hashem’s transcendence—above the normal system of cause, rank, and process.

C. Matan Torah and the future: the same equality-structure

- Rabbi Shulman links:
 - Kriyat Yam Suf → a revelation meant to usher the people toward Matan Torah
 - Matan Torah → another such revelation of directness
 - לעתיד לבוא → that equality becomes the stable reality

- Therefore, Korach's statements like "כולם קדושים" are **true in the register of עיגולים**, but not in the day-to-day world of יושר.

D. The seductive power of Korach's message

- Rabbi Shulman explains why Korach "hooked" people:
 - people want to hear equality; it resonates deeply
 - it sounds moral and compelling (he even analogizes to political egalitarianism)
 - The deception: presenting an eschatological/ideal truth as present-day operational truth.
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V. Why specifically a tallit and a house? "Makif" symbols vs. required distinctions (11:03)

A. Both examples are *encompassing* (מקיף)

- Rabbi Shulman explains Chazal's choice:
 - A **tallit** surrounds/encircles the person.
 - A **house** surrounds/contains the person and his space.
- These are physical metaphors for an עיגולים-world: everything is included; no particular "point" is singled out.

B. But in this world, you must designate a specific point/feature

- Because we live in יושר (process), holiness is expressed via *selected markers*:
 - In a house: because you enter/exit, you need a **mezuzah**—a designated place (the doorway) receives a designated text.
 - In a garment: you need **tzitzit/techelet** specifically on the **corners**—a designated strand on a designated edge.

C. The underlying principle: leadership and differentiation are necessary in a world of becoming

- Rabbi Shulman states the broader takeaway:
 - the "ideal" may be universal equality (עיגולים), but until the world reaches that end-state, it must function through roles, steps, and distinctions (יושר).
 - Korach's sin: he "hijacked" an ultimate truth and used it prematurely—ultimately for personal power—turning it into machloket.
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VI. In Summary

- Rabbi Shulman (via Rabbi Tzadok) reframes Torah's truth-commitment: what the Torah records is not mere history; it must convey אמת, with limited exceptions for שלום.
- Korach's egalitarian rhetoric is not pure fabrication; it reflects a real truth of עיגולים—seen briefly at Kriyat Yam Suf and Matan Torah, and destined to be permanent לבוא לעתיד.
- The tallit and house metaphors express “encompassing holiness,” but our current world (יושר) requires designated points—mezuzah at the entrance, tzitzit on the corners—because growth and governance demand differentiation.
- Korach's corruption was timing and intent: using a future ideal to dismantle present structure, recruiting people with a message they long to believe.