

Korach took/separated himself. (16:1)

The “Korachs” of every generation seem to be thriving. Sadly, there is no shortage of malcontents who rise up to usurp the authenticity and authority of our Torah leadership. What about their followers? How do these scoundrels always find individuals that follow their organized animus toward everything holy? Korach was able to lure 250 heads of the *Sanhedrin*. This was no simple feat. They were not the *shleppers* that hang around with nothing to do with their lives. They were distinguished leaders, men of stature and repute. Yet, they were ensnared by Korach’s invective, lured by promises of even greater positions. Korach was: a personality; an individual who descended from an illustrious lineage; a wealthy man who had no peer; one of the carriers of the Ark. Nonetheless, these men were no spiritual pushovers. Yet, they fell for him. Why? How?

Furthermore, **Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl**, adds that a simple test was available which would discern beyond any shadow of a doubt who was righteous and who was not. Korach claimed that Moshe *Rabbeinu* and Aharon did not deserve the positions of leadership in which they functioned; rather, he maintained that he and his henchmen were just as proper and suited for these positions. We know that the *manna* descended daily in front of everyone’s doorstep – if he were righteous. The individual whose spiritual affiliation was questionable was not so lucky. His *manna* was more difficult to obtain. He would have to walk all over looking for it. All he had to do was observe where Moshe and Aharon’s *manna* fell. Did it descend by the door of their tents, or did they have to search for it?

The simple explanation is that we do not decide based upon Heavenly miracles. Heaven does not play a role in human endeavor. A host of reasons might explain why the *manna* would or would not appear at the door of a certain individual. Determining the veracity of Moshe and Aharon’s spiritual appointment will not be determined by the *manna*. The fact that a person is worthy of miraculous intervention does not necessarily indicate that he is a *tzaddik*, righteous man.

Rav Galinsky quotes from the *Shevet Mussar*, who presents a lengthy discourse on the evils of controversy. He supports this with the fact that, when the Jewish People sinned with the Golden Calf, the *manna* was not halted. It still descended. The people had to eat. During the *machlokes*, dispute, of Korach and his congregation, the *manna* was halted for that day. The reason for this is (cited in the *Talmud Taanis* 9a,) that the *manna* descended in the merit of Moshe *Rabbeinu*. When Korach disputed Moshe’s authority, Hashem refused to send the *manna* – in support of Moshe. Nonetheless, Korach turned this Heavenly support for Moshe against him, saying, “Look, even Heaven has halted the *manna* in protest against Moshe!” Suddenly, it had become Moshe’s fault.

People get caught up in their beliefs – or at least in what they want to believe in—at the current time. As a result, they become shortsighted, often even blind, to what is readily apparent to the naked eye and cogent mind. Rav Galinsky related an incident that occurred concerning the *tzaddik* of Radoshitz, a saintly *Rebbe* who, despite living a life of abject poverty, devoting every waking moment to serving Hashem through Torah study and *mitzvah* performance, allowed himself one

activity, which was time consuming, but, in his mind, absolutely vital to his spiritual ascendance. Whenever the circumstances warranted it, he would travel to his *Rebbe*, the holy *Chozeh*, Seer, of Lublin. Without funds, one would be hard-pressed to purchase a coach ticket. The other mode of travel available to people of no means was walking. It was not a terribly far distance – by coach. By foot, it would take a few days of trudging on long, unpaved roads, through inclement weather and dark of night. What does one not do, however, in search of spiritual inspiration? The *Radoshitzer* began his trip. A few hours into his trek, a wagon and driver pulled up alongside him. In it was a critically ill Jew who had little hope for a cure unless he would reach Lublin and be seen by a specialist. The local physician, an all-purpose medicine consultant who prepared potions made of various herbs, had thus far been unsuccessful in finding a cure. The man's two sons, who were accompanying their father, helped the *Radoshitzer* onto the wagon, and the little entourage continued the trip. The young, soon-to-be *Rebbe* was overcome with compassion for the sick man, and he began to pray fervently for his return to good health. With every chapter of *Tehillim*, accompanied by the tears that he recited, the dying man began regaining his strength. Suddenly, he opened his eyes and asked why he was in the wagon. Where were they taking him? Why? He was not sick! He demanded that they immediately return home. He had work to do!

The sons were neither erudite, nor were they deep thinkers. They felt that the specialist in Lublin was so great that the *Malach* Raphael, Angel through whose domain Heavenly cures are channeled, was assisting the good doctor. Apparently, such an eminent physician saw only the worst cases. Raphael took care of the others. They turned to the *Radoshitzer* and said, "Sorry, my dear friend, we are returning home. There is no longer any need to travel to Lublin".

Whenever the *Radoshitzer* would relate this story, he would shrug his shoulders and comment, "I am not certain that it was the *Tehillim* in whose merit the man was saved, but why did the sons not even conjecture that it was their *mitzvah* of *chesed*, kindness, reaching out to a poor, young man trudging alone on the road, offering him a ride, that spared their father? Had they been thinking, they might not have discarded the *mitzvah* – and its merit".

The explanation is simple – but sad. Their ability to define the circumstances and what was taking place was restricted to their limited perspective. In other words, they saw what they wanted to see. Korach and his followers were no different. They saw what they wanted to see. Hashem halted the *manna*, not in support of Moshe, but against Moshe. They took the greatest Heavenly support of our quintessential leader and blatantly closed their eyes to the truth. Why? It was convenient for them.

I would like to suggest another reason for Korach's blindness to the truth. When a person is on a mission – regardless of its veracity or lack thereof – he is focused on a specific goal, which does not permit him to see anything else but the goal. Korach had a goal, which was antithetical to what Hashem had designated as our goal. Korach wanted to take charge. Hashem, however, had not chosen him. Yet, Korach stayed his course to impugn *Klal Yisrael's* leadership. Was he so obsessed with honor that he was prepared to lose everything? What prompted him to act so

foolishly?

Chazal say, *Eino hitaso*, “His eye caused him to err”. Foreseeing that Shmuel *HaNavi* would descend from him, Korach felt that he must be doing something right. Otherwise, how could he be the progenitor of someone of such stature as Shmuel? He was unaware that his sons would, at the very last moment, repent. I suggest that we take this one stage further. Korach saw that Shmuel *HaNavi* would descend from him. This bothered him. To think that his descendant would be greater than he was something this egomaniac could not tolerate. Thus, he had to undermine Moshe, so that he could become *Klal Yisrael*’s leader.

Chazal teach that a *rebbe* and a father are not jealous of their student/son. Love transcends envy, and how could one truly love someone, yet be envious of his success? Korach was into Korach, caring very little for anybody but himself. This envy brought about his own self-destruction. *Eino hitaso* – his jealous eye caused him to err.