

Korach took/separated himself. (16:1)

Korach did not wake up one morning and decide that “today” he was going to dispute Moshe’s leadership, thinking: “Today, I will mutiny against Hashem; today, I will demand that Aharon’s position as *Kohen Gadol* be transferred to me”. It certainly did not happen that way. Korach’s dissent had been festering for some time. He was biding his time, waiting for the most propitious opportunity in which he would have the greatest success. What was there about “now” that provided Korach with the fortuity for fomenting a successful revolt against our nation’s leadership?

Horav Bentzion Firer, zl, suggests that it was following the sin of the *meraglim*, spies, and the punishment which sealed the nation’s fate, that created the fertile environment for Korach to add the seeds of discontent which would germinate into an all-out revolt against Moshe *Rabbeinu*. Moshe sent the *meraglim* to *Eretz Yisrael* on a mission to reconnoiter the land. Instead of returning with a positive report, they slandered the land, due to their jaundiced perspective concerning everything that they saw. The nation reacted as the *meraglim* expected them to-- with uncontrolled, unwarranted weeping and complaining. Hashem saw that these people were not prepared to enter the Holy Land, and He removed the opportunity from the table. They were all going to die in the wilderness.

Against this backdrop of a nation smitten by loss of a goal, Korach saw a nation ripe for revolt: no longer aspiring to enter *Eretz Yisrael*; no ambition; nothing to look forward to. They would be putty in his hands, to be manipulated at will. When one has no ambition, no goals and objectives, nothing to do, he gets into trouble. He argues with people, finds reason to dispute everything, anything and anyone. When one has no goals, he becomes discontented and miserable. With nothing to do, he joins with other miserable people to sow the seeds of discontent, to reap the fruits of their misery.

This was one advantage of receiving the Torah in the desert, rather than waiting until *Klal Yisrael* entered the Holy Land. What would they do for forty years? Sit around all day fighting with one another? This way, they would learn all day and be occupied with spiritual endeavors. They did not have the excuse that they had to earn a living, since the *manna* was brought to their doorstep every day. Instead, now they had the Torah with its 613 *mitzvos*, a guide for life, a program for living every day – all day.

Korach understood this. A nation that was actively involved in Torah study would have little time and less desire to listen to his diatribe. Thus, he disputed the Divine Authorship of the Torah. He employed the medium of *letzanos*, skepticism, to poke fun at and undermine the Torah. Why would a house filled with *seforim* require the protection of a *Mezuzah*? Why would a *Tallis* made of *techeiles* require *Tzitzis*? The people began to listen. Perhaps it was true, they thought – maybe Moshe wrote the Torah; it was not infallible. There could be errors -- surely areas of concern. Once this type of deviation begins, there is no end to where it can lead. Korach knew this, so he waited; he plotted. He thought that he had succeeded; he was wrong.