

"And Korach took ... they gathered together against Moshe and Aharon and they said to them, 'It is too much for you ... why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of Hashem?'" (16:1,3)

Korach's rebellion stands alone as the most vicious rebellion against Rabbinic authority. Korach's attempt to usurp the leadership of *Klal Yisrael* from Moshe in order to undermine Divine authority over *Klal Yisrael* established his reputation as the paradigmatic *baal machlo'kes*, one who initiates conflict. What rationale can we find to explain Korach's reprehensible behavior ?

Chazal teach us that Korach maintained a prominent position in the hierarchy of the *Leviim*. His traits were a combination of superior qualities which few people could emulate. Descending from the family of Kehas, the most distinguished of the Levite families, he had an illustrious pedigree. He was chosen to be one of the transporters of the *Aron Ha'Kodesh*. Not only was he a brilliant scholar, he was also blessed with *ruach ha'kodesh*, Divine inspiration. His remarkable wealth undoubtedly also afforded him access to unparalleled distinction. The interaction of these attributes must have catalyzed an attitude of arrogance which motivated Korach's impudence towards Moshe and Aharon. Nevertheless, where did he go wrong ? Korach was not the first or last Jew to have been blessed with such distinction. What caused him to go astray ?

We suggest the following novel idea. In recounting Korach's attributes, *Chazal* note that he was one of the select few to be chosen to carry the *Aron*. This remarkable honor should surely have elicited Korach's sense of humility and reverence. In Korach's case, however, due to his base arrogance, what might have encouraged constructive spiritual growth, instead nurtured the growth of evil.

The *Aron Ha'Kodesh* symbolizes the *Torah* and *Torah* study, while the carrying poles and those who actually carry the *Torah* represent the supporters of *Torah*. Regrettably, the supporters of the *Torah* can at times forget that *uhtaub ,t taub iurt*, "the *Aron* carries those who carry it." This means that due to its extreme weight, the *Aron* could not conceivably have been lifted by its supporters. Miraculously, as soon as the carriers endeavored to raise the *Aron*, it raised itself together with its carriers! The *Aron* carried its carriers! Imagine what type of sublime experience this must have been.

The *Torah* supports those who endeavor to support it. Korach, however, suffered from myopic vision. He lacked foresight and discernment. He thought that **he** supported the *Torah*. Consequently, he felt that the Divine should listen to him! Korach must have realized that he was being lifted off the ground when he helped carry the *Aron*. He assumed, however, that it was **his** endeavor that effected this miracle.

Korach's mistake lay in misinterpreting the mission of the *Torah* supporter. He does not mandate or make demands. He is there to nurture and encourage, to lend a listening ear or a helping hand. He should at all times reflect humility and reverence at having the opportunity to share in the *mitzvah* of *limud ha'Torah*, the study of *Torah*.

We may suggest another thought which lends insight into Korach's seditious behavior. In the Hebrew text of the *Midrash* the word used to describe Korach's function of carrying the *Aron* is *vhu iurtv hbguyv*, "he was from the carriers of the *Aron*." The *Torah* used the word *iguy*, and not the usual term, *taub*. We suggest that the word *iguy* is applied to carrying a material load, while *taub* is more applicable to instances in which the subject is being "raised" or "uplifted", not simply "carried."

Korach's attitude to this most prestigious appointment was to simply "carry" or "shlep" the *Aron*. He should have reflected upon this lofty function and approached it with trepidation and awe, excited about the remarkable opportunity to achieve unparalleled closeness with Hashem. Korach, however, was a slave to arrogance; he was completely immersed in the furtherance of one goal - his own prestige. His preoccupation led to a loathing of anything which would relegate him to a secondary position. This attitude ultimately led to his downfall.