

## **"And Korach took." (16:1)**

The *Targum Onkelos* interprets Korach's "taking" as "*and Korach separated (himself)*." The *Sfas Emes* applies this concept in the following manner. In *Tana D'vei Eliyahu 25*, *Chazal* teach that one must always strive to attain the standard established by his ancestors. He must always ask himself, "*When will my actions reach those of my ancestors?*" One who is consistent in this self-expectation demonstrates the motivation which is so essential for continued spiritual development.

The *Sefas Emes* cites *R' Simcha Bunim of Paschischa* who states that the behavior of a Jew must be in consonance with that of the Jews throughout the ages. When one lives a traditional Jewish life, he thereby becomes a part of the continuum of Jewish life. He, in turn, becomes linked to the *Avos*, Patriarchs, and their remarkable way of life. Reciprocally, this relationship serves as an everlasting *zechus*, merit, in the individual's behalf.

Korach's tragedy emerged when he "separated himself" from the chain of tradition. His attempt to develop a lifestyle independent of *Torah* mandate represented his first break in the chain of *Mesorah*, tradition. By severing the chain of tradition, he severed his relationship with *Klal Yisrael* and, consequently, sealed his own tragic destiny.