

## "And Korach took." (16:1) - "For all the congregation is holy." (16:3)

Referring to the controversy stimulated by Korach and his henchman, the *Mishnah* in *Avos* (5:20) remarks, "Any controversy that is *L'shem Shomayim*" (for the sake of heaven) will have a constructive outcome. Which controversy is considered *L'shem Shomayim*? This is the controversy between Hillel and Shamai. And which is considered not *L'shem Shomayim*? This is the controversy of Korach and his entire company."

The *Malbim* questions the use of "Korach and his company" as a paradigm of a "*machlokes she'lo l'shem shomayim*." Surely there were other infamous conflicts more appropriate to be mentioned. The disputes surrounding the lack of water and meat and the controversy in connection with the spies obviously fit into this category. Indeed, Korach's controversy even involved *halachic* discourse; i.e. Who is to be sanctified for service in the *Mikdash*? Who shall offer the *korbanos*? Does a *tallis* made entirely of *techeles*, "blue wool," require *tzitzis*?

*Horav Elchanan Sorotzkin, z.l.*, offers a profound solution to this question. It was precisely the *halachic* issues and the false facade which they engender that represents the core of this problem. These questions were no more than deceitful pretense, an attempt to veil the real miscreancy that was behind Korach's rhetoric. Korach did not have the dignity to come forward to directly debate the issues. His goal was social status and power. Every religious quotation was merely a method for concealing his true intentions.

The danger that subtly abounds in such a conflict is far greater than one which is overtly controversial. The Korach type of dispute is a rationalization of the evil within a person. Such a person presents actions motivated by self-aggrandizement as noble and altruistic. He veils the desire to obliterate religious tradition under the quest for modernity. When one is confronted face to face with evil, he can deal with the issues much more directly than when this evil is hidden behind righteous pretense.