

They stood before Moshe with two hundred and fifty men from Bnei Yisrael, leaders of the assembly, those summoned for meeting, men of renown. (16:2)

The two hundred and fifty men that rallied with Korach were not ordinary people. They were from among *Klal Yisrael's* spiritual elite. This, of course, did not prevent them from making the mistake of their lives. Perhaps their distinguished position, thinking themselves infallible, might have led to the error which cost them their lives. No one should think that he is above reproach. One who does is in serious trouble. Who were these two hundred and fifty men? *Rashi* claims that they were all from the Tribe of *Reuven*. *Ibn Ezra*, however, contends that they were representatives of all of the tribes. He posits that when the *bechorim*, firstborn, were demoted and exchanged for *Shevet Levi*, some among them felt slighted. They were the ones who joined Korach's rebellion. The numbers, however, do not seem to correspond. Certainly, there were more than two hundred and fifty misplaced *bechorim*.

The **Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh** says that during the sin of the Golden Calf, when Moshe *Rabbeinu* called *Mi l'Hashem elai*, "Who is for Hashem, should stand by me!" all of *Shevet Levi* joined, and individual members of the other tribes also came forth. Applying the interpretation of the *Ohr HaChaim*, the nation understands why such a small group of *bechorim* joined the fray. Those who did not stand by Moshe felt that they did not deserve preferential treatment. They had been given their chance, and they chose to ignore it. The two hundred and fifty were those who had joined *Shevet Levi* in support of Moshe. They now wanted recognition for their valiant and dedicated efforts to stand up to the Golden Calf sinners. They were not a large group, but ones who felt they deserved a position of spiritual leadership.

Regardless of their earlier allegiance, their present support of Korach over Moshe cost them their lives. Where did they go wrong? **Horav Moshe Tzvi Nariyah, zl**, explains that it all reverts back to their attitude when they responded to Moshe's call. *Mi l'Hashem – elai* represents two statements: "Who is for Hashem?"; "should stand by me." These *bechorim* accepted the *Mi l'Hashem*; they were one with the Almighty. They were, however, not prepared to commit to the *elai*, to "me." They were prepared to die for Hashem, to sacrifice their lives in order to demonstrate their devotion to Him. They were not yet prepared to accept Moshe as their leader. At that point, it did not present a glaring problem. At the nadir of the dispute, however, it revealed itself in all of its repugnance. When one makes a commitment, he must do so wholeheartedly; when he is "in," he should be completely in. Otherwise, later on, when challenges present themselves and the "going gets tough," his lack of full commitment will manifest itself in his downfall.