

"And Korach took... and they all rose up in the face of Moshe and Aharon men of renown. And they assembled against Moshe and Aharon and said to them, 'you take too much upon you... seeing that all the congregation is holy. And Hashem is in their midst, wherefore do you lift yourselves up above the congregation of Hashem?'" (16:1,2,3)

Korach's criticism of Moshe seemed to be a reaction to Aharon's assuming the role of *Kohen Gadol*. Thus, the two main personalities involved in this *machlokes*, strife, were Korach and Moshe. Korach was the classic scoundrel, evil throughout. An irate man may inflict damage upon an individual person, but others may nonetheless benignly attempt to understand the source of his anger and correct him. What makes a scoundrel such as Korach contemptible is his blatant hypocrisy. He hides his evil behind a sham of piety. He unabashedly claims noble motives for his despicable act. Indeed, he impudently attempts to enlist our sympathy for his ruthless offense.

Korach set the standard for such depravity. If we follow the text of the *pesukim*, we will notice Korach's surreptitious manner of ensnaring some of the finest Jewish leaders in his "holy" war against Moshe. This cunning demagogue does not at any time betray his hidden desire to add the asset of *kehunah*, to the prestige of *leviim* for his own personal benefit. He pleads, as one would hear it, everything is for the "*kehal Hashem*," Hashem's congregation. Moshe's reaction was to turn to Hashem to respond to such evil. The "*ha'mon am*," common man, must see Korach's demagoguery for the virulent evil that it represents. They must be enlightened by the *Ohr Hashem*, Hashem's light. Hence, Moshe responded, "*In the morning Hashem will show who are His.*" Hashem's light, as clear as day, will differentiate the holy from the evil.

Korach's example has found ready imitators in Jewish history. Countless demagogues have attempted to sway Jews away from *Torah* observance. They have articulated well developed arguments in the most dignified manner in an effort to veil their insidious aims. Their shameless methods have been used in an attempt to thwart the rise of *Torah* Judaism throughout the generations. The Moshes of every generation must be prepared to quell these incursions with patience at times, and with open condemnation at other times. They must spare no effort to repudiate those who would sabotage our *Torah* way of life.

Some individuals would advocate diluting *Torah* values or compromising *Torah* observance for the sake of that noble concept of harmony within the Jewish community. Regrettably, this approach only leads to but another method of distortion and perversion of *Torah* principles. The attitude Moshe exhibited towards Korach, his immediate band of recalcitrant sinners, and the unfortunate believers who succumbed to his guile and deception should serve as a paradigm for us.

At first, Moshe was sincerely determined to maintain unity. When all efforts at reason failed, he sent a message to Korach and company seeking a meeting in an attempt to arrive at a reconciliation. When they refused to appear before him, Moshe went to them, pleading with them to repent. Only after all attempts for a peaceful solution had been exhausted, did Moshe publicly condemn Korach and his followers. He entreated Hashem that only the sinners be punished, while the innocent members of the community be spared Hashem's wrath. At no time, however, was Moshe prepared to make concessions to Korach which would alter *Torah* principles for the sake of establishing a harmonious accord between them.

A perceptive interpretation by *Horav S.R. Hirsch z.l.*, one of the primary combatants for the maintenance of pure unadulterated *Torah* Judaism, is noteworthy. The *pasuk* in *Tehillim* 113 states "*turn away from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it.*" Only after one has done justice in carrying out his duties towards Hashem, *turn away from evil*, should he seek peaceful relations with his fellow man. One may never sacrifice the principle of *do good* for the sake of preserving peace. At no time may *shalom*, peace, be the one supreme goal for which everything else may be discarded. Whenever the possibility of transgressing *Torah* principles abounds, we must prepare to challenge the opposition, even the hostile reaction of an entire world. If necessary, we must stand alone, resolute in our commitment only to Hashem and His *Torah*.

We must ignore the rumblings of the self-righteous liberals who implore us to compromise sacred *Torah* principles for the sake of Jewish solidarity. A unified Jewish people who are disjoined with Hashem's *Torah* are not united, but rather they are privy to the most contentious form of discord. Only by upholding our commitment to the inviolability of *Torah* will we together merit ultimate unification with Hashem.