

Our father died in the wilderness, but he was not among the assembly that was gathering against Hashem in the assembly of Korach. (27:3)

The daughters of Tzafchad approached Moshe *Rabbeinu* concerning their father's inheritance. Moshe replied that he would present their case to Hashem. Our quintessential leader rarely had an issue with proffering an immediate response to a *Halachic* query. Why was he reluctant to answer *Bnos Tzafchad*? Furthermore, the women added a caveat to their identity of Tzafchad, claiming that he had not been a member of Korach's mob of usurpers. Their father was not guilty of impugning Moshe's authority. What did this introduction have to do with the case?

The *Minchas Chinuch*, who asks this question, replies practically by employing an incident in which he was personally involved. Two litigants came to the *Minchas Chinuch* and asked him to adjudicate a dispute they had between one another. During the discussion, one of the litigants mentioned as an aside that the *Minchas Chinuch's* father was his *mesader kedushin*, officiated at his wedding ceremony. Hearing this, the *Minchas Chinuch* turned to the other litigant and asked, "Did my father, likewise, officiate at your wedding?" The man replied that he had not. When the man rendered his negative response, the *Minchas Chinuch* declared that he must recuse himself from the case. He felt that, since he was now aware that his father had officiated at the wedding of one of the litigants, he subconsciously would be predisposed to helping that litigant. Thus, he was no longer fit to render judgment.

With this vignette in mind, we approach the Tzafchad incident. A judge may not rule in a case if he accepts any form of bribe – money or anything which might in some way alter his line of thinking. The daughters of Tzafchad mentioned that their fate was not bound to the Korach insurrection. Was this their way of currying a favorable reply from Moshe? Probably not, but, quite possibly, Moshe felt compromised enough to recuse himself. This case required the adjudication of a Higher Authority.