

## **Korach separated himself. (15:1)**

*Parashas Korach* stands alone as the *parsha* which is *yafeh nidreshes*, expounded well, presenting many details. In his *Teivas Gome*, the author of the *Pri MeGadim* explains *Rashi's* statement rationally.

Most *halachos* of the Torah are time-sensitive, applicable during specific times. For instance, one does not lecture about *Pesach* during the Three Weeks, or about *Chanukah* during the month of *Shevat*. *Parashas Korach*, in which much of its theme touches on the deleterious effects of *machlokes*, controversy, sadly applies constantly. We are aware of no geographic or chronologic limitations to *machlokes*. It happens more often than we care to acknowledge, and is not restricted to a specific group of people. Korach is the villain of the *parsha*, because he instigated the rebellion which infamously became known as *machlokes Korach*, and we remember him as the progenitor of controversy. He had everything, and he threw it away. We could have remembered him as one of the great *tzaddikim* who carried the *Aron HaKodesh*, but, instead, we remember him as the one who was *kofer*, denied the veracity of *Toras Moshe*. [The *Brisker Rav*, *zl*, was wont to say that Korach has no excuses, no manner to justify his actions. He was, through and through, a *kofer*.]

*Chazal* refer to Korach as a *pike'ach*, a clever and smart man. His actions do not bespeak shrewdness. He did not simply act iniquitously; his was an act of lunacy. Perhaps this defines how *machlokes* occurs: one loses control of his senses and acts despicably and foolishly. *Chazal* ask the question: What did Korach – who was a *pike'ach* – see that provoked him to act so foolishly? He was on an elevated spiritual plane; carrying the *Aron HaKodesh* meant being exposed to the miracle of *Aron nosei es nosav* -- the *Aron* carried its carriers. They say that he was envious of *Aharon HaKohen's* position as *Kohen Gadol*, and the clincher came when *Elitzaphan ben Uziel*, his cousin, was appointed as *Nasi*, Prince, of *Bnei Kehas*. He blamed *Moshe Rabbeinu*, claiming that he was guilty of nepotism. Envy led to slander, which laid the groundwork for open rebellion.

*Horav Yeruchem Levovitz*, *zl*, teaches that studying the *parsha* superficially is a grave error, because one can lose sight of the real issues. Korach was no fool. He may have acted foolishly, but he was far from a fool. We must look at what provoked him to act inanelly. Otherwise, we might think, "It could not happen to me. I am not a fool." Indeed, Korach's original desire to be *Kohen Gadol* or to be *Nasi* had its roots in a desire to elevate himself spiritually. This situation quickly soured when he saw that it was not happening. This, in and of itself, is an indication that the roots of his desire were murky.

Envy is an emotion characterized by a sense of discontent or resentment towards someone else's possessions, qualities or achievements. A person compares himself to the subject of his envy and either sees no difference or thinks that he excels over him. Envy can serve as a motivator when channeled positively. It may inspire him to strive to achieve his goals by using another person's success as a motivational tool. Korach did not. He allowed the envy to consume him.

The *Mashgiach* sums it up with the well-known Chazal (*Yalkut Shimoni*97b): *Ein bein Gehinom l'Gan Eden ela k'chut ha'saarah*; "The divide between purgatory and paradise is a hairsbreadth." Ambition – regardless of its lofty goals -- requires purity. Korach's ambition had that slight flaw which caused him to plummet to *Gehinom*. One drop of *negius*, self-centeredness, despite his desire to come closer to Hashem, can take a person down to the depths of infamy.

The statement that Korach was envious of Elitzaphan's newly-appointed position as Prince begs elucidation. Is a person not permitted to look out for his own spiritual interests? Was not Aharon *HaKohen* envious of the contributions of the *Nessiim* to the *Chanukas HaMishkan*? It troubled him that neither he nor any member of *Shevet Levi* was involved in the inauguration. True, he felt that it was his fault for allowing the sin of the Golden Calf to materialize. Nonetheless, it troubled him. Korach also was troubled that he did not have greater spiritual representation in the hierarchy of *Klal Yisrael*. A great difference exists between Aharon's envy and that of Korach. Aharon was concerned that neither he nor his *shevet* was involved. He would have been more than satisfied if his *shevet* had been included. It was not about him, but about his brothers whom he felt he might have let down. Korach, however, was a demagogue whose self-interest and narcissism pushed him over the brink. He could only talk about himself, including others only for the purpose of using them to promote his own self-centered agenda.