

“Korach took/separated himself.” (16:1)

What caused Korach, a distinguished leader in *Klal Yisrael*, to alienate himself to the degree that he fell to such a nadir of iniquity? The *Bais Yisrael* comments that these two words, *Vayikach Korach*, “Korach took,” says it all. Korach’s approach to life was defined by “taking.” It was his goal; it was his *raison d’etre*. He took in *gashmiyus*, materialism, becoming one of *Klal Yisrael*’s wealthiest men. He also wanted to take in *ruchniyus*, spirituality. He was an *oveid Hashem*, one who serves Hashem, with great diligence. Among the carriers of the *Aron Ha’kodesh*, he represented the spiritual elite of *Klal Yisrael*. He was, nonetheless, a “taker” – whatever he did was for himself. He did not serve Hashem – he served himself!

In this area, Korach was exactly the opposite of Moshe *Rabbeinu*. The quintessential leader of *Klal Yisrael* never took a thing for himself. Indeed, he was prepared to give up everything – both physically and spiritually – for his people’s future. Korach saw himself in every endeavor. Moshe saw *Klal Yisrael*. This is underscored by *Rashi* in his commentary to the *pasuk*, “Is it too much for you, O offspring of Levi?” (16:7). Korach was a wise man. How could he have acted so foolishly? *Rashi* explains that his “eye” caused him to err. He saw prophetically that among his offspring would be Shmuel *HaNavi*, who, during his tenure, was as great as Moshe and Aharon combined, as well as twenty-four groups of *Leviim* who would prophesize with the spirit of holiness. Seeing this, he was certain that he would triumph over Moshe and Aharon. How did his “eye” cause his downfall? One who serves Hashem with fidelity, abrogating his personal interests and subordinating “himself” only to Hashem, merits that *Ein Hashem el yireiav*, “Hashem’s eye/looks out for those who fear Him” (*Tehillim* 33:18). He becomes worthy of Hashem’s perspective. He does not err because he views everything through a different spectrum. Korach took everything for himself. He, therefore, did not merit the ability to see with a spiritual perspective reserved only for the truly faithful. His eye misled him, just as he misled himself.