

## **And Korach separated himself. (16:1)**

Throughout the millennia, the name Korach has personified one idea: *machlokes*, controversy, strife, dispute for the sake of destruction. As Korach succeeded in destroying himself and his followers, so, too, do the modern-day heirs to his ignominious title destroy themselves and all those who chose the ill-fated path of following him.

In a letter written in 5760, *Horav Aharon Leib Shteinman, Shlita*, bemoans the fact that disputes among individuals – and even among institutions – have risen to epic proportions. The *Rosh Yeshivah* expresses his extreme pain and anguish over this tragedy. Each party thinks that he is justified, not only in his claim, but he even conjures up a dispensation to speak *lashon hara* and slander the other party. The only ways to put an end to this pandemic are: to adopt the *middah*, character trait, of *vittur*, tolerance, forbearance – to look away, to ignore and often swallow one's pride, so that a full-scale flare-up of tempers does not take place.

*Horav Hersh Palei, zl*, was well-known as an individual who went out of his way to distance himself from any form of *machlokes*. He viewed controversy as a flaming fire which would singe anyone who came within its proximity. In a similar vein, *Horav Feivel Epstein, zl*, son of *Horav Moshe Mordechai Epstein, zl*, *Rosh Yeshivas Slabodka* was wont to say, "If I had before me two possibilities: on one side a burning fire and on the other side the fire of *machlokes*, I would choose to walk into the actual fire, because it is cooler!"