

## "And the earth covered them over, and they were lost from among the congregation." (16:33)

The commentators offer various explanations for Korach's bizarre punishment. The **Kol Yehudah** gives a rationale based upon an incident that occurred with the *Ohr Same'ach*. Once, two litigants came before the *Ohr Same'ach* with a *din Torah*, dispute, regarding a piece of land. Each one claimed that the entire parcel of land belonged to him. Of course, neither one had witnesses to attest to the veracity of his claim. The *rav* was having a difficult time resolving the dispute. Finally, he said to both people, "You will each have to compromise in order to resolve the issue." They were extremely obstinate and each refused to budge from his position regarding total ownership of the land.

*Rav Meir Simcha* decided that he would like to see the land in question before he rendered a decision. When they arrived at the place, *Rav Meir Simcha* went to a side, bent over to the ground and began whispering to the ground! The two men were shocked to see their *rav* having a conversation with the ground! After he was finished, they asked him what had transpired. He replied, "I told the ground that each one of you claims ownership over the land. What should I do? The land responded, 'It does not belong to them, it belongs to me, since ultimately they will both end up here.'" When the two men heard what the *rav* said they understood that he had intimated that they were both destined to die and end up in the ground. Is it truly worth fighting over something so transitory as ownership over a small piece of land?

This is the reason that Korach was swallowed alive into the earth. Had he used his mind, had he reflected upon his ultimate end, death and burial in the ground, he would not have been so utterly foolish as to ruin everything just so that he could be "king for a day." Life consists of more than fleeting *kavod*, honor. One gains no value from involvement in a dispute that is perfidious and destructive. Korach's last conscious lessons addressed the importance of setting one's priorities and the ethics of dispute.