

On the next morning...and behold the staff of Aharon had blossomed it brought forth a blossom, sprouted a bud and almonds ripened. (17:23)

Finally, the people were privy to clear, unequivocal truth - Aharon was Hashem's choice for *Kohen Gadol*. Alas, the miracle of Aharon's staff occurred after Korach and his followers met their terrible end -- and over fourteen thousand Jews perished in a plague. Would it not have been more advantageous that the miracle of Aharon's selection take place in the presence of his detractors, so that they could witness the truth? Perhaps it would have inspired them to repent. Such action might have circumvented the ensuing tragedy.

Obviously, proof would have had little or no effect upon Korach and his people. Even clear evidence from Heaven would have made no difference to Korach. He was recalcitrant; the envy he felt for Moshe was so overwhelming that nothing was going to stop him. But why? Korach was not a fool. Surely, he would have realized that he was wrong when the truth glared directly at him.

We suggest that a *rasha*, wicked person -- or one who is involved in an evil endeavor -- will not stop to think unless he has first been sensitized to do so. In the *Talmud Berachos 5A Chazal* tell us that an individual should always incite the *yetzer tov*, good inclination, to fight against the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination. If he is victorious, well and good. If not, let him study *Torah*. If by studying *Torah* he does not achieve his goal, let him recite *Krias Shma*. If that also does not help him, let him remind himself of the *yom ha'missa*, day of death. A man has within himself two impulses, good and evil. He must make every attempt to subdue his evil impulse. *Chazal* have given us the recipe for success. If studying *Torah* and reciting *Krias Shma* are not sufficient to catalyze the fortitude to quell his physical desires, let him confront his own mortality. Let him come to grips with the fact that he is not here forever. By deferring to the passions of the fleeting moment, he will be held eternally responsible. The ultimacy of death should raise one's consciousness from the nadir of sin, bringing him face to face with the reality that what he is about to do is wrong.

Upon examining the words of *Chazal*, we are immediately confronted with the obvious question: If reminding oneself of the *yom ha'missa* is known to be the prime weapon in one's confrontation with the *yetzer hora*, why should it be employed only in case of a last resort? If we know that it works, why wait? **Horav Zalmen Sorotzkin, zl**, gives an insightful answer to this question. In order that the day of death should leave an impression upon a person, it is essential that he first study *Torah* in order to formulate a concept of the value of life. *Torah* refines a person as it opens his eyes, giving him perspective. How often do we see people flirt with death without flinching? They have no fear of death or its implications because they do not know what it is to fear! Only after one studies *Torah* does he have an idea concerning reward and punishment and their implications.

We now refer back to Korach and his group. They had become so obsessed with their mission to "salvage" the *Kehunah* and to usurp the *Torah* leadership from Moshe and Aharon that miracles

would not have impressed them. They were driven by error and fortified with arrogance. Their *chutzpah* knew no bounds. To demonstrate miracles to them would have been an exercise in futility. For the remainder of *Klal Yisrael*, however, it was still not too late.