

It is too much for you, O offspring of Levi. (16:7)

Korach was no fool (or, at least, that was not his reputation). *Chazal* say that Korach was a *pikeiach*, quite astute and wise. *Rashi* quotes the well-known baffling question: *Mah raah l'shtus zeh?* "What did he see that possessed him to undertake such a foolish endeavor?" He saw prophetically that among his descendants, would be: the *Navi* Shmuel, who was as great in his time as Moshe *Rabbeinu* and Aharon *HaKohen* combined; and the twenty-four groups of *Leviim* who would prophesy with Divine Inspiration. Korach rationalized that with such illustrious lineage descending from him, how could he go wrong?

The *Midrash* claims that Korach was a *pikeach*, which leads them to ask, "What possessed him to undertake such a foolish endeavor?" What is so foolish about the endeavor? Korach truly felt that the leadership of *Klal Yisrael* was his for the taking. He saw prophetically that Shmuel *HaNavi* would descend from him. Such a vision transforms his undertaking. With Shmuel *HaNavi* in his corner, one can no longer refer to this endeavor as a *shtus*. He saw greatness descending from him, so, therefore, he must be great and deserving of leadership. Can he be called a fool? I would think he was quite wise.

Horav Tzvi Bergman, Shlita, explains that Korach's error was in ignoring the fact that if he/Korach had this prophetic vision, then Moshe *Rabbeinu*, the *Adon kol ha'Neviim*, preeminent master of all prophets, surely was also privy to it. Nonetheless, Moshe was undeterred by its implication. Apparently, either it meant nothing or there was an explanation for it. Did Korach for one moment think that he was a greater *Navi* than Moshe? If he did, then he was truly a *shoteh*, fool. Korach's arrogance superseded his wisdom. Hence, the *shtus*: only a fool allows his ego to control his mind.

The *Yalkut Lekach Tov* quotes a question from one of the *gedolei Yerushalayim*, distinguished Torah sages of Yerushalayim. If Korach merited such an illustrious lineage, why was he not protected by their merit? Despite such wonderful, enviable descendants, Korach still descended to infamy. Why? Where was their merit? He explains that Korach merited such a lineage only because of-and as consequence of – the sin of rebelling against Moshe. Korach exhibited such malevolent audacity that he received a punishment that is without peer in the annals of history. The miracle that brought about Korach's death catalyzed a return to our belief in Moshe as the quintessential *Navi* and leader. As a result of his role in bringing *Klal Yisrael* to greater belief in Moshe, Korach was rewarded with descendants, such as Shmuel *HaNavi* and the twenty-four *Mishmaros*, groups, that would prophesy with Divine Inspiration. Korach was a scoundrel, a demagogue who sought to usurp Moshe's leadership. Nonetheless, his evil brought about a resurgence of faith. For that, he was rewarded.

A similar exposition may be advanced to explain *Chazal's* comment (*Gittin* 57b) that Haman's descendants studied Torah in Bnei Brak. How are we to understand such an enigmatic statement? Haman was the archenemy of the Jewish People, an individual who represented evil incarnate. Yet, his great-grandsons studied Torah in Bnei Brak! The reason for this follows the previous

explanation, which credits Korach's evil as spurring a reawakening of faith. *Chazal* teach (*Megillah* 14a), "Greater is the removal of the ring (Ahashveirosh removed his signet ring and transferred it to Haman, thereby granting him permission to destroy the Jews) than the reproach rendered by the forty-eight prophets that prophesied to *Yisrael*." Haman inadvertently catalyzed a return to Hashem via *teshuvah*, repentance, and *tefillah*, prayer. When the Jews became aware of the decree against them, facilitated by the "removal of the ring," they once again embraced a Torah way of life. Haman might have been evil, but, as a result of his malevolence, Jews returned "home." Haman received his due, being executed in a manner reserved for such an evil person. Nonetheless, he received his due reward in that his descendants converted and learned Torah in Bnei Brak. Everyone has his "day in court." We all receive our due. Good is rewarded, and evil is punished. Hashem "owes" no one.