

They stood before Moshe with two hundred and fifty men from Bnei Yisrael, leaders of the Assembly, those summoned for the meeting, men of renown. (16:2)

Perhaps we do not give enough credit to the average Jew. People are capable of deciding between right and wrong. Those who err do not necessarily lack astuteness; rather, the decision might have been more difficult than we think. Let us take the Korach controversy as an example. I say Korach, rather than Korach/Moshe, because Moshe *Rabbeinu* was passive. He did not enter the fray. He responded to the vitriol, but did not become a partner with Korach in the dispute. It was Korach against Moshe. It takes two participants to make a full-scale controversy. The Korach dispute had one participant – Korach.

Let us return to the scenario that confronted the average Jew. Moshe *Rabbeinu* and Aharon *HaKohen* were on one side. It would seem that it was a no-brainer. Korach, however, brought along with him 250 heads of the *Sanhedrin*. These were not average citizens. They were all *gedolim*, Torah giants, leaders without peer. Now the deck was no longer stacked in favor of Moshe and Aharon – or so one who did not know better might think. What should a simple Jew do? On one side stood Moshe, the man who was Hashem's Divine agent for: executing the miracles in Egypt; splitting the Red Sea; facilitating the *manna*; leading them through the Wilderness. On the other side, crying "foul", were the *gedolei ha'dor*, greatest Torah leaders of the generation. They, too, had something with which to contend, and it was not in agreement with Moshe. What does the average Jew do in such a circumstance? Can we really place such a heavy onus of guilt and blame on the poor Jew who was impressed by the fact that 250 Torah leaders had sided with Korach?

Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl, offers a practical reply which serves as a lodestar for us all whenever a dispute arises in which we are confronted with (what appears to be) distinguished Torah giants on each side. Observe to which side the *archi parchi*, vagabonds, tramps, low, base people attach themselves. *Gedolim* on this side; *gedolim* on the other side. What does one do? Take a look to which side Dathan and Aviram, the two miscreants whose life's work was to impugn the integrity of Moshe's leadership and to undermine Hashem's every command to *Klal Yisrael*, attach themselves. At every dispute, we must take a penetrating look at who else has joined the fray. If it is the trouble makers, stonethrowers, slanderers, then no Torah Jew may be a part of it. Once the *archi parchi* enter the scene, it is our cue to leave.