



Stay Connected

“*Vayikach Korach*” (Bamidbar 16:1). Targum Unkelos translates “*vayikach*” to mean “separated”. What did Korach separate? The Noam Elimelech explains, that the soul of a person was taken from underneath Hashem’s Heavenly Throne. Therefore, his main thoughts and actions must be directed toward the spiritual world. When a person commits a sin, he separates himself from the Heavenly Throne. He has severed his connection with Hashem. He and his body remain cut off in the mundane physical world. The Gemora (Sanhedrin 109b) expounds on Korach’s name. “Korach” (meaning bald), whose name became a “bald spot”. No Jew was ever named Korach after him. “Ben Yitzhar” (meaning the bright shining of the sun), who caused anger to burn within the Jewish people. “Ben Kehas” (meaning blunted), who blunted the teeth of his descendants. “Ben Levi” (meaning funeral) who made a funeral into gehennom, when the earth opened to swallow him up. These are the terrible things that can happen when a person cuts himself off from Hashem.

Kinderlach . . .

Your soul comes from under the Heavenly Throne. Every mitzvah that you do brings you closer to your source. It increases your connection and relationship to Hashem. Like a big thick rope, which is made of many thin strings. Each strand makes the rope stronger. Hashem wants to have a good, healthy strong relationship with you. Do His mitzvos. Stay connected.

Absolutely Terrible

“Let’s figure something out, Avi. How could Korach get such a terrible punishment?”
 “Okay, Chaim. The Shelah explains that Korach had two very good reasons to escape punishment.”
 “What are they?”
 “First, Korach was the ancestor of many great people. Shmuel HaNovi was a descendant of Korach, as well as twenty four divisions of Kohanim who were all blessed with *ruach hakodesh*.”
 “Impressive.”
 “Secondly, Korach himself had a very high position. He was one of the bearers of the Aron Kodesh!”
 “Unbelievable.”
 “Now let’s consider the other side. Do you realize how terrible Korach’s punishment was? The Heavenly *Beis Din* (Court) only punishes offenders over the age of twenty. And the *Beis Din* (Rabbinical Court) in this world only

punishes criminals over the age of thirteen. However, in the *machlokes* of Korach, the earth swallowed up one-day-old infants. As the verse states, ‘their women, children and babies’ (Bamidbar 16:27). ‘They and all that was theirs descended alive to the pit’ (ibid. 16:33).”
 “Amazing. Why was such a terrible punishment given to such an important person?”
 “This shows us how serious *machlokes* (argument) is. Korach and his followers were the first to challenge the *Gadol HaDor* (Torah leader). Until then it was unthinkable. Arguing with Moshe was like arguing with Hashem. Korach changed all that, lowered the respect for Moshe and caused a massive *Chilul Hashem* (Desecration of the Holy Name). For that he was punished.”



“What about Moshe and Aharon?”

“Their actions teach us how much we must love peace and pursue peace. Aharon did not speak at all during this *machlokes*. Korach wanted to make him lose his self-respect, but he would not get involved. Moshe Rabbeinu did even more. He tried to make peace by going to Korach’s allies, Dasan and Aviram.”
 “Really? Moshe Rabbeinu was a king. He was the greatest *novi* (prophet) who ever lived. He, in all his glory, went to them?”
 “Yes. That shows how much he loved peace.”
 “What a lesson for all of us.”

Kinderlach . . .

Machlokes is one of the most terrible things in the world. It carries a very serious punishment. We must avoid machlokes at all costs. Listen to your opponent’s opinion. Consider what he has to say. Look for areas of agreement. Explain your side patiently. Try to compromise wherever possible. Speak softly. Smile. Make machlokes a thing of the past.

Smarter Than Smart

How could Korach start an uprising against Moshe Rabbeinu? Who would join him? They would kill him on the spot. Was he a fool? The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that Korach was a very smart person. His plan was carefully thought out and executed. The verse relates his lineage, “Korach the son of Yitzhar, the son of Kehas, the son of Levi” (Bamidbar 16:1). Yitzhar was the oldest son of Kehas. The two younger sons of Kehas would not have the *chutzpah* to speak against him because his father was the oldest. Kehas was the most prominent of the three sons of Levi. They tended to the holiest part of the Mishkan. Korach himself was one of the bearers of the *Aron Kodesh* (Holy Ark). The other two sons would not dare to speak out against him. Levi was the most distinguished tribe. No one would contradict them in front of Moshe Rabbeinu.
 “Korach took (himself) along with Dasan and Aviram” (Bamidbar 16:1). They were the leaders of the tribe of Reuven, Yaakov’s firstborn son. Korach cleverly gathered all of this prestige on his side and stood before Moshe Rabbeinu. However, he was so smart that he outsmarted himself. “You shall be wholehearted with Hashem” (Devarim 18:13). The Pele Yoatz explains that a person should not resort to trickery and corruption to get his way. Rather, he should walk in perfect faith with Hashem.

Kinderlach . . .

Don’t outsmart yourselves. “I know that I must be in school on time. However, if I sleep 30 minutes late, I can skip parts of the morning prayers, gulp down breakfast, say Bircas HaMazone while I am running to school, and sneak in the back way. If I get caught, I can use the note that my mother wrote last week.” You may think that you are so smart because you thought out such a clever plan. However, is this the right way to go to school? Hashem wants us to do things the straight way. Use your intelligence for learning Torah, not to outsmart the rules.

Parasha Questions:

- Whom did Korach take? (Rashi 16:1)
- Which bad *middah* did Korach use to gain a following? (Rashi 16:19)
- Who were the first people to die by being swallowed up by the earth? (Rashi 16:30)
- How did Aharon stop the plague? (17:11-13 and Rashi)
- How many gifts did the Kohanim receive? (Rashi 18:8) What were they? (18:8-19)