



Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת and חזקוני דעיר אנפין collections of maamarim given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Seuda Shlishis and Melave Malka

### *Seudah Shlishis Parshas Korach*

The *Midrash Rabbah* (במדבר י"ח:ח) describes one of the factors that led to Korach's downfall.

“What did Korach, who was a *pikeach* (clever person) see, that led him to this foolishness? His eye deceived him. He saw the great line that would descend from him, including Shmuel, who is compared to Moshe and Aharon, as the *pasuk* says, (תהילים צ"ט:ו), *משה ואהרן בכהניו, ושמואל בקוראי שמו*. (He saw) twenty-four *mishmaros* of his descendants, all of whom prophesied with *Ruach Hakodesh*. He said, ‘Could it be possible that all of this greatness is destined to arise from me, and I will remain silent?’”

However, he didn't see properly, for it was from his children who did *teshuvah* that these would arise. But Moshe did see.”

The Sfas Emes (תרנ"ה ד"ה נסמך) writes that, “They said in the name of the Holy Rav of Lublin, that from this Midrash we can prove that even *Ruach Hakodesh* can harm a person if he doesn't guard himself as he should.”

In other words, Korach, who was a very great person, saw that his descendants were destined to serve as *kohanim*. This led him to believe that his decision to rebel against Moshe Rabeinu couldn't possibly be mistaken. It was this vision of the future, that was revealed to him by *Ruach Hakodesh*, that led to his terrible downfall.

The Midrash teaches us a frightening lesson. Even a person who is capable of ascending to such a high level that he experiences *Ruach Hakodesh*, can fall into the abyss, specifically because of his *Ruach Hakodesh*. This is a *nisayon* (test) of “spiritual wealth” that is extremely difficult to withstand.



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The Sfas Emes references this idea in two other places. In the *Likutim* on *Parshas Korach*, he addresses the miraculous nature of Korach's gathering of the people.

"ויקהל עליהם קרח את כל העדה אל פתח אהל מועד" - And Korach gathered all of the nation against them in the entrance of *Ohel Moed*. (במדבר ט"ז:י"ט). There is a question that must be asked. In *Parshas Tzav*, when the Torah describes Moshe Rabeinu gathering all of Am Yisrael in the entrance of *Ohel Moed*, ואת כל העדה הקהל אל פתח אהל מועד (ויקרא ח:ב), Chazal describe that event as one of the times where a small space miraculously contained a great multitude. If so, Korach's gathering of the people in that same small space must also have been miraculous. Could it be possible that Hashem would do something miraculous on behalf of a falsehood?

I also saw that the *Baal Haturim* commented that Korach gathered the nation just as they were gathered during the *miluim*, when Aharon began to serve as *Kohen Gadol*.

It seems that it is possible to elaborate on the words of the *Baal Haturim*, and explain that this (the miraculous gathering of the nation) was done *min hashamayim*, in order to once again clarify the *kehunah* of Aharon. That is why the miracle occurred in *Parshas Tzav*, and why it happened once again in *Parshas Korach*. Korach mistakenly thought that the miracle took place because a new position of *kehunah* was being created for him. He didn't view (the miracle) correctly, for the opposite was true. Its purpose was to clarify the *kehunah* of Aharon and to dedicate him anew in the *kehunah*."

We find that by mistakenly assuming that the miracle of a small space being able to contain the entire nation took place in his honor and for his purposes, Korach felt empowered and justified to brazenly oppose Moshe Rabeinu and Aharon Hakohen. This was a grave error. The occurrence of the miracle was a test, a *nisayon min hashamayim*. By deciding that the miracle came to support his rebellion, he failed the test.

Further in the *Likutim*, the Sfas Emes quotes a *Midrash*, (במדבר רבה י"ח:ו) that explains Korach's statement - כל העדה כולם קדושים (במדבר ט"ז:ג) - the



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entire nation are all *kedoshim*. Korach meant to say that all of them heard the first of the *Aseres Hadibros*, אנכי ה' אלוֹקִיךָ directly from Hashem at Sinai.

The Sfas Emes points out that it's difficult to understand Korach's argument, because Moshe Rabeinu heard *all* of the *dibros* whereas the rest of the nation did not. As we see in the *pesukim*;

וַיֵּרָא הָעָם וַיִּנָּעוּ וַיִּצְמְדוּ מֵרָחֵק  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל מֹשֶׁה דַּבֵּר אֲתָה עִמָּנוּ וְנִשְׁמָעָה וְאַל יְדַבֵּר עִמָּנוּ אֱלֹקִים כֹּן נָמוּת  
(שמות כ"ט: ט"ו-ט"ז)

And the nation saw and trembled and they stood from a distance. And they said to Moshe, You speak with us and we will hear, and Hashem should not speak with us lest we die.

The Sfas Emes has a novel explanation of the *pesukim*. He said that it could very well be that not every single Jew feared that they would die if they heard the rest of the *dibros* from Hashem. In fact, Korach, Dasan, and Aviram wanted to hear all of the *dibros* directly from Hashem. They claimed that the fact that Am Yisrael didn't hear all of the *Dibros* directly from Hashem led to all of Am Yisrael's subsequent transgressions.

However, everything Moshe Rabeinu did was *al pi Hashem*, in accordance with Hashem's instructions. The Sfas Emes concludes by saying that it wouldn't be unreasonable to say that Korach and his followers had no idea that it was all from Hashem.

The *chidush* of the Sfas Emes is that, despite the Torah's description of Am Yisrael asking to hear the rest of the *Aseres Hadibros* from Moshe Rabeinu rather than Hashem, a few special individuals wanted to hear the remaining *Dibros* directly from Hashem. It is even possible that they were on such a high *madreigah* that they would have been able to continue hearing the voice of Hashem, without fear of death.

When Hashem transmitted the rest of the *Dibros* via Moshe Rabeinu, they mistakenly assumed that Moshe Rabeinu independently decided that they shouldn't hear the remaining *Dibros* directly from Hashem. This led them to rebel against Moshe. Their assumption was totally mistaken. The *pasuk*, (דברים ה: כ"ה) relates that Hashem told Moshe אשר דברו - that Am



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Yisrael's request to no longer hear the *Dibros* directly from Hashem, but rather from Moshe, was positive.

We find that it was specifically the high *madreigah* of Korach and those with him that destroyed them. Since they truly would have been able to hear the remaining *Dibros* directly from Hashem, they assumed that it must have been Moshe Rabeinu who deprived them of that experience.

This teaches us a very important lesson. Even people of great stature can make mistakes. In fact, their mistakes often result from their greatness. Only with great purity and *temimus* can a great person avoid those pitfalls.

When speaking about this topic, I like to tell a story that I had the *zechus* to hear from the *Pnei Menachem zy" a*.

Among the *chasidim* of the Sfas Emes *zy" a*, was a particularly distinguished *chasid*. Not only did he have Torah knowledge and *yichus* - lineage, he was also wealthy and had the strong opinions that often accompany such wealth. He was so devoted to the Sfas Emes, that after the passing of the Rebbe, he didn't extend that same devotion to his Rebbe's son, the *Imrei Emes zy" a*. Only after his children pleaded with him did he agree to travel to the Imrei Emes.

At the same time that he travelled to the Imrei Emes, the *chasid* faced a critical decision that would determine the success or failure of one of his business ventures. When he went into the Imrei Emes, he asked for the Rebbe's advice. The Rebbe advised him and gave him a *brachah* for success.

The *chasid* followed the Rebbe's advice, and a few days later, that decision led to the failure of the venture and the loss of all the money he had invested in it. After that, the *chasid* decided not to visit the Imrei Emes again.

A while later, the wealthy *chasid* travelled to one of the towns where people would drink from natural springs of mineral water for their health. As he was walking down a narrow street, Hashem arranged for him to



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encounter the Imrei Emes who was walking in the opposite direction. The *chasid* couldn't escape. There was no where to turn.

The Imrei Emes began the conversation by quoting the Midrash, (במדבר רבה י"ח:ח) which asked, קרח שפקח היה, מה ראה לשטות זה? - What did Korach, who was very clever, see, that led him to such foolishness? The Imrei Emes said that it is possible to say that the Midrash refers to the fact that Hashem told Moshe Rabeinu - שלח לך לדעתך - Send (the *meraglim*) according to your understanding. This means that Moshe Rabeinu himself decided to send the *meraglim*.

When the mission of the *meraglim* ended in failure, and resulted in בניה לדורות - weeping for generations, it appeared to Korach that it was Moshe Rabeinu's misguided decision that caused the tragedy. Korach then decided that a leader who makes a mistake, forfeits his right to leadership, and rebelled against Moshe.

"This", said the Imrei Emes, "was Korach's mistake". Korach was very clever, how could someone so clever be so foolish as to believe that a Rebbe can't make mistakes? If he only would have understood that even a Rebbe can make mistakes, he never would have instigated the *machlokes* and rebelled against Moshe Rabeinu.

These words penetrated deep into the *chasid's* heart and from then on, he became one of the most devoted *chasidim* of the Imrei Emes.



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