



Parshas Korach 2022, spark of light

This Shabbos is the third of Tammuz, which marks twenty-eight years since the passing of the Lubavitcher Rebbe—Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson. Traditionally, this is a day for reflection, re-commitment, and positive action.

Our Parsha begins with Korach, a rich and influential man from the tribe of Levi staging a rebellion against Moshe and his brother Aaron. Together with a few ringleaders, he gathered 250 men and accused Moshe and Aaron of nepotism and power hoarding. They took specific issue with Moshe's appointment of his brother, Aaron, as the Kohen Gadol, the high priest.

Furthermore, they argued that since the Jewish nation were all holy, there was no need for any person to be higher than the other. Therefore Moshe Rabbeinu didn't have to be the leader of the Jewish people. In response, Moshe proposed that they all participate in a test the next day, which would determine who indeed was chosen to be the Kohen Gadol.

Everyone would bring an incense offering in the Mishkan, and then G-d would make His choice known. G-d was immensely angered by the nation's association with Korach and wished to destroy them. But Moshe and Aaron prayed on the Jewish people's behalf, and the decree was averted. Instead, G-d made the earth open up and swallow Korach and the rest of the rebels.

However, a question comes to mind: The the Parsha begins with the Pasuk (16:1) וַיִּקַּח קֹרַח בֶּן-יִצְחָר בֶּן-קֵהוֹס בֶּן-לֵוִי - *"Now Korach, the son of Itzhar son of Kehos, son of Levi took himself."* Many translate the word *"וַיִּקַּח- betook himself,"* because it is not clear what the Torah is referring to. So what did Korach actually **take**?!

The Rashbam (*Rav Shmuel Ben Meir, one of Rashi's grandsons from the 12th century*) gives a simple answer. He writes that the Torah alludes to the fact that it was Korach who took the initiative and began this mutiny against Moshe. He approached Dasan and Aviram and convinced them to support and join his rebellion.

The Rashbam explains that Korach was very persuasive and influential; therefore, he is individually "credited" for sparking this revolt. This indicates that much of the unusual punishment was directed at him and his family.

However, Rashi (*Rav Shlomo Yitzchaki, the leading commentary on the Torah from the 11th century*) gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that Torah hints that Korach took himself away from his tribe and congregation. As mentioned earlier, he was a high-level Levite who worked around Mishkan. But the Torah clearly writes that his fellow ringleaders were not from his tribe but from the tribe of Reuven.

Rashi explains that Korach needed to remove himself from his holy tribe to spread his rebellion. He could not convince or persuade his tribe to join his revolt; therefore, he went to another tribe. The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh (*Rav Chaim Ibn Attar, a Moroccan commentary and kabbalist from the 18th century*) adds that there were arguments among the ringleaders also. They argued about who would be the ultimate leader if their rebellion was successful.

As you can imagine, Korach wanted to be the predominant leader. But Dasan and Aviram challenged Korach. They reasoned that since they were from the firstborn tribe, they also had leadership qualities. This means that the unity between the ringleaders was shaky at best. Although they put up a united front, each one was vying for power over the other.

The Ohr Hachaim learns from here the significance and value of whom we surround ourselves with. But more importantly, **who do we allow to intellectually and mentally influence us.** This invaluable message rings true today as it did for the last three thousand years.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe consistently stressed the importance of surrounding ourselves with people who have similar values. Because they will motivate us to develop our connection with G-d and expand our horizons to discover His unlimitedness. But more importantly, **they will challenge us to search for the light within ourselves and share it with the world.**

**"If you see what needs to be repaired, then you have found
a piece of the world that G-d left for you to complete."**

-The Lubavitcher Rebbe

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*