

Mussar HaTorah

Torah Insights into Human Nature – Dedicated in memory of Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz zt"l

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Parashas Korach

“AND KORACH TOOK ...” (BAMIDBAR 16:1)

**Korach and his followers
knew they would not
succeed, and so
they waited**

OUR SAGES TEACH US that Korach’s rebellion was motivated by personal factors. Korach was angry because his cousin Elitzafan was chosen instead of him to head the Levite family of Kehas. Korach was also jealous of Aharon being selected as Kohen Gadol – high priest. However, Korach and his followers did not revolt immediately, the Ramban tells us. The reason? The Jews initially had no negative experiences in the desert. Even when the Golden Calf occurred, there were few deaths and the people were spared through the prayers of Moshe, who *davened* for forty days and nights to save them. The Ramban testifies that the Jewish people loved Moshe “as their own souls” and obeyed his leadership. Had anyone tried to rebel against Moshe at that point in time, the people would have stoned the perpetrator to death. Korach and his followers knew they would not succeed, and so they waited.

Once the people came to the desert of Paran, many Jews died in the incidents at Tav’era and Kivros HaTa’ava. Finally, when the Jews sinned with the spies and their evil report, the Ramban says that Moshe didn’t pray for them. (The Ramban earlier (14:19) tells us that Moshe did pray, as the *pasukim* indicate, but he knew that the judgment was so strong against the Jews that the decree couldn’t be eliminated, so he only *davened* for an extension to postpone the punishment, which was granted.) Hashem decreed that the entire nation would have to stay in the desert and eventually die. Only their children would inherit the Land of Israel. At this point, the nation became bitter and began to think that Moshe was the source of their misfortune. Korach saw that the time was ripe to rebel and he would succeed in finding a receptive audience.

**His whole being was
selflessly devoted to the
Jews**

Moshe did pray very strongly to save the Jews, and in fact averted the immediate annihilation of the people. His whole being was selflessly devoted to the Jews, who loved him so dearly that they would have stoned any rebels just a few weeks earlier. Moshe was blameless. The people’s sins were clearly the cause of their punishment, and they even mourned their actions. That the Jews would be frustrated or depressed about the tragedies that befell them is understandable; but how could they feel that Moshe was the source of their troubles? How could such a powerful love for Moshe turn into a rebellion against him?

We see the amazing power of bitterness and frustration. When someone is suffering, his bitterness can cause him to react in completely illogical directions. He can turn against the person he loves the most, who has given his heart and soul for him, and blame him for all the misfortune, despite his complete innocence. Someone in pain often seeks an outlet, a scapegoat upon whom to vent his bitterness. Had Hashem not miraculously disrupted Korach’s rebellion, this depression could have destroyed our entire Mesorah from Moshe Rabbeinu.

**We can make the terrible
mistake of blaming those
who are closest and most
beloved to us**

Let us be aware of the effects of negative situations in our own lives. Whether it is just a bad day or a more tragic event, we can make the terrible mistake of blaming those who are closest and most beloved to us – our spouses, our family and our friends. In our suffering, we can sometimes blame Hashem, Who loves us beyond our comprehension. Understanding the explosive power of anguish and depression can help us withstand this formidable challenge, keep our emotions under control and retain our appreciation and loyalty to those who love and care for us.