

Mussar HaTorah

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

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Parashas Korach

“AND THE EARTH OPENED ITS MOUTH AND IT SWALLOWED THEM...”
(BAMIDBAR 16:32)

**Why didn't Moshe
Rabbeinu daven to
Hashem?**

THE REBELLION OF KORACH and his followers created a major rift among the Jewish people. By claiming that Moshe and his brother had taken positions of leadership without Hashem's command, they were guilty of heresy. Their sin of denying Moshe's authority as Hashem's chosen messenger was so severe that they were punished by being swallowed alive into *Gehinnom*. Rabbeinu Bechaye, in examining this episode (ibid. 16:29), is puzzled by a question that he cannot answer: Why didn't Moshe Rabbeinu daven to Hashem, asking for Divine mercy to spare Korach's life? Moshe, the faithful shepherd of *B'nei Yisrael*, davened for his people's salvation a number of times: after the sin of the golden calf, the spies, etc.,. Why did he not pray for Korach and his followers?

Why is Rabbeinu Bechaye confounded by this question? There is a simple answer why Moshe did not daven for Korach and his followers: They had attacked Moshe personally, claiming that he was a fraud, who lied about hearing Aharon's appointment from Hashem. How could one expect Moshe to now put aside the insult, the personal hurt and the challenge to his authority and simply daven for them as for any other Jew? Granted, Moshe was the humblest person who ever lived, but that doesn't mean he was unaware of the personal nature of Korach's vicious accusations. Even if Moshe would take the high road and try to pray for their welfare, could his prayers be truly sincere, from the depths of his being? Would Moshe be able to summon the same whole-hearted feelings for Korach that he had for *B'nei Yisrael* after the sin of the Golden Calf or the spies?

**Will you rush to save his
life with the same zeal?**

Imagine the following scenario: as the head of a communal organization, you are in the middle of chairing their annual dinner, when the featured speaker takes the microphone and launches into a half hour attack on your character, accusing you of betraying the public's trust and selfishly appointing your relatives to choice positions. The crowd is all abuzz about your wicked behavior, and the humiliation is excruciatingly painful. As he concludes by personally spitting in your face, he is struck with severe chest pains and falls unconscious from a heart attack. You are the only one in the audience trained in CPR. Will you rush to save his life with the same zeal you would use to save any other person? Would you find some reason to delay or even stay in your seat, and perhaps say that Hashem is giving him his rightful due?

**This is the love that a
Jewish leader has
for his people**

Rabbeinu Bechaye is opening our eyes to a whole new vista, a vision of the lofty standard of greatness that is expected of a Jewish leader. Moshe was able to ignore the affront to his honor and authority, the *chutzpa* and ridicule displayed by the rebels, and, as the "faithful shepherd" of his people, as Rabbeinu Bechaye described him. Moshe had the capacity to successfully focus the totality of his being to daven whole-heartedly for them. The dedication required of the leader of the Jewish people calls for him to totally sublimate his feelings for the benefit of his charges. This is the love that a Jewish leader has for his people.

May we try, in some small way, to emulate the dazzling character traits of our leaders. In our own leadership roles, let us strive to reach for Moshe's level of love for his flock and act energetically on their behalf and in their best interests. May our efforts be rewarded with the coming of another great leader, who will bring us back to Yerushalayim, speedily in our days.