



Korach – Who Wants a Happy Life?

Parshas Korach narrates the revolt instigated by Korach against Moshe. Fueled by jealousy, Korach challenges Moshe's leadership and Divine appointment. Korach felt aggrieved by Moshe, reasoning that their grandfather, Kehas, had four sons: Amram, Yitzhar, Chevron, and Uziel. The sons of Amram, the eldest, received two distinguished roles: Moshe as the king and his brother Aharon as Kohen Gadol, which Korach found acceptable. However, Elitzaphun, the son of Uziel, was appointed as the Nassi of the family of Kehas. This decision ignited intense jealousy in Korach, who felt that, as his father was the next son of Kehas, it was only fair for him to be appointed as Nassi of the family of Kehas. This jealousy led him to believe Moshe made these appointments of his own accord, rather than by Divine command.

Korach understood that convincing the Jewish People, especially the leaders, to join him in his rebellion would be difficult. He used the power of Laitzanus (mockery) to entice them. The Medrash tells us that he donned a four-cornered garment made of techailes and asked Moshe if he still needed to put a thread of techailes on the corners. Moshe said, "Yes, such a garment still requires techailes." Korach laughed at Moshe, claiming that Moshe must have made these rules up; Hashem could not have instructed such a garment to need tzitzis. He reasoned that if one techailes string on each corner exempts a garment, then certainly if the entire garment is techailes, it would not require tzitzis. The next question he posed to Moshe was as follows: Korach filled a room with Torah scrolls and asked Moshe if the room needed a Mezuzah on the doorpost. Moshe once again responded in the affirmative. Korach again scoffed, saying, "If two small chapters put on the doorpost exempt a room, then a room filled with the entire Torah cannot possibly need a mezuzah on the doorpost."

After inciting a tumultuous reaction among the people through jealousy and ridicule, he initiated his ambition of toppling Moshe and the kehuna. Korach contends that if Moshe fabricated the regulations concerning mitzvos and asserted that they represent the Word of Hashem, he was not above granting leadership roles influenced by his biases.

Jealousy and Honor– What is So Bad?

The Mishna in Avos (4:21) identifies jealousy and the quest for honor as two characteristics that separate an individual from this world. This assertion can be comprehended quite readily. A person engulfed by jealousy will never attain happiness or contentment in their own life, irrespective of what they gain or accomplish. Their life will continuously revolve around the desire to obtain what others possess and, even more regrettably, what they believe others have. Consequently, such an individual will remain devoid of satisfaction.

Every individual possesses an innate desire for validation and acknowledgment. Being a 'doormat' and permitting others to walk over us is neither an ideal nor a healthy approach to life. Where is the balance between the pursuit of honor, which the Mishna speaks negatively of, and the desire for respect? The line separating these two aspirations is often ambiguous. A person must cultivate self-respect, which permits them to be treated with the basic courtesy and respect that all individuals deserve. The pursuit of honor that the Mishna condemns involves seeking recognition from others for one's actions and achievements. It illustrates the difference between earning respect and demanding it.

Both of these characteristics are rooted in selfishness. Jealousy arises from the belief that everything a person desires or observes is intended for them. When another individual



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possesses something they wish for or lack, a jealous person will attempt to rationalize why that individual does not deserve it, feeling that possession by the other is a loss for themselves. The pursuit of honor has the same origin. It reflects an emotional desire for others to recognize their greatness and achievements. We are brought into this world to participate in society. People are inherently social beings who do not live in isolation from one another. Jealousy and the quest for honor create divisions among people; thus, as noted in the Mishna, these traits alienate a person from this world.

The Cost of Jealousy and Pursuing Honor

The consequences of neglecting to protect against these characteristics were most evident in this week's Parsha, which recounts the narrative of Korach and his followers. His jealousy and desire for honor drove him to scorn Moshe, the appointment of the Kehuna, and ultimately Hashem and the Torah itself. Korach was an immensely wealthy individual. He was a highly regarded Torah scholar. Yet, his craving for honor led to jealousy, which resulted in mockery of the Hashem and His Torah. This spurred him to challenge Moshe and ultimately caused the deaths of over 250 leaders of the Nation. It also led to the deaths of men, women, and even children who were innocent of any wrongdoing, all due to the conflict he instigated. This is the price of these negative traits.

The rewards of leading a life with contrasting characteristics are just as significant, if not more so. Being satisfied and thankful for what one has leads to a life filled with genuine happiness. A tale is shared about a wealthy yet unhappy Chassid who consults his Rebbe for advice on attaining happiness. The Rebbe instructed him to find a destitute shoemaker residing in a rundown dwelling on the town's periphery and inquire how he manages to have such joy despite having nothing. Upon encountering the shoemaker and posing his inquiry, the bewildered shoemaker responds, "I am perplexed as to why the Rebbe has sent you to me? I possess all that I require." The affluent man grasped the underlying lesson. True happiness does not stem from material possessions. An individual who harbors no envy towards others and finds satisfaction in his circumstances will rejoice in all he possesses.

Our Sages tell us that one who runs away from honor will have honor chase after him. A person who lives a proper, honest life and is pleasant to be around, and not one who lives to get honor but to show honor and respect, will certainly be honored by others. Such people will lead happy lives. Lives that are free of quarrels and fights.

The third characteristic the above Mishna listed was desire. A person that is overly concerned with fulfilling their desires will also be removed from this world. The three Parshiyos of Behaalosecha, Shelach and Korach form the lesson of how these characteristics can destroy a person. Behaalosecha, which details the Asafsuf desire for food other than the Man, Shelach, the Nesiim did not want to lose their leadership positions, and finally, Korach with his jealousy tie the Mishna directly to the Parshiyos in the Torah.

Have a wonderful Shabbos,

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