



דרכים בפרשה

קרח



ולא יהיה כקרח וכעדתו

And you shall not be like Korach and his congregation (17:5)

As the school year comes to a close, many of us have already attended or will be invited to attend a graduation ceremony that honours a relative or a friend. At these events, it is customary to call upon the valedictorian to give a speech representing the class. Having attended more than one graduation and having perused a class list or two, a thought can sometimes cross one's mind. "Are the valedictorian's chosen based on grades and merits, or perhaps, a parent or a grandparent may have pulled some strings to "help" the principals and teachers see who is really the most worthy of this award."

Undoubtedly, the chosen valedictorian worked tirelessly and effortlessly with consistency for many years to achieve this highly coveted honour. But still, many will think about it. Then of course, there will be others that will even claim that they have firsthand knowledge of a "scandal" and proof of what actually went on and why this person was eventually chosen over the other.

Sounds dramatic? If anything, it sounds quite familiar. This is actually the story of Korach and his rebellion. On the surface, the story doesn't begin to make any logical sense. Why would Korach wage a war against Moshe

Rabbeinu's authority when it was HaShem that appointed him? Wasn't Korach a great man that was looked at by all as one of the leaders of that generation? The only reason why Korach was able to make such an impact was because he was so highly regarded by everyone. So what was it that caused this "fight" to occur?

Looking at the family tree of Kehas ben Levi, we note that Kehas had four children. The oldest was Amram who had two sons, Aharon and Moshe as well as his daughter, Miriam. Moshe became the leader of Klal Yisroel and Aharon was the Kohen Gadol. The next son of Kehas was Yitzhar, the father of Korach. With Moshe turning to his own brother to award him with the next most prestigious position, the idea of nepotism could not have been far from the mind of Korach. He had no problem assuming that the positions would go to the grandchildren Kehas, but just not to only one family. This was seemingly a power grab that should not have taken place. At this point, Korach still kept quiet.

But then came the next position to be given out which was yet another disappointing blow for Korach. Korach had assumed that at least he would receive a consolation prize of being

appointed the Nasi of Shevet Levi. Instead, Moshe skipped over Korach, moving to Elitzafan, the son of Uziel, Yitzhar's youngest son. At this point, Korach completely lost it feeling that his father's household had been disgraced by this great indignity.

Korach viewed this as a personal attack on his own character. "Am I not as qualified as my cousins are to be a leader of Klal Yisroel? Why shouldn't I also be a leader, serving HaShem in my own unique way?"

Korach was mistaken in assuming that the decisions that were made were those of Moshe Rabbeinu. Moshe was only following the order of Hakadosh Boruch Hu. Moshe did not choose himself to be the leader; on the contrary, he tried to get out of the job. Aharon was not chosen because he was a brother. In fact, the entire assumption on Korach's part that the grandchildren of Kehas would receive the positions was baseless. HaShem told Moshe who to appoint based on whom HaShem deemed worthy. DNA played no role in the choice.

Korach's error was that he had jumped to a conclusion making bold assumptions. As understandable as it may have seemed from a logical standpoint, in reality, he was picking a fight with HaShem's choices.

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and you shall not be like Korach and his congregation, the Torah does not just tell us that there is a prohibition of engaging in machlokes. The Torah adds that the actual behavior of Korach is forbidden. This comes to include the behavior that leads up to the actual argument, i.e. jumping to conclusions and being overly judgmental.

There are never any "chazakas" or guarantees. The position that one receives is based on whom HaShem chooses for that role. Those that make the appointments are merely shluchim of HaShem, but in the end, no matter what considerations we may think play a role, the person standing at the podium will be the one that HaShem chooses.

מרדכי אפפּעל, Good Shabbos,

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