

דרכים בפרשה קרח

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ויקה קרח בן יצחר בן קהת בן לוי ודתן ואבירם בני אליאב ואון בן פלת בני ראובן

And Korach son of Yitzhar son of Kehas son of Levi separated himself, with Dasan and Aviram sons of Eliav and On son of Peles, the children of Reuvain (16:1)

At first glance, Korach's words seem completely off. He refers to the land of Mitzrayim — the place of slavery and suffering — as a land flowing with milk and honey?! As if Klal Yisroel had left a utopia, when in reality everyone knew we were running from persecution and death. And then the way he attacks Moshe and Aharon with such open chutzpah — it sounds like the talk of a fool.

But we know that Korach wasn't a fool. Chazal call him a *pikayach* — a brilliant person. So how do we make sense of that? Rav Aharon Kotler zt"l commented that Korach was a *tarta d'sasri* — a walking contradiction. On one hand, he wanted to reach the highest levels of serving Hashem. But on the other hand, it didn't matter to him how he got there. The end justified the means.

The *Shem MiShmuel* explains that Korach's downfall was rooted in a lack of boundaries. He didn't know how to say "this is not for me." He saw greatness and assumed it should be his — even when it wasn't.

Rav Hai Gaon — who, according to Rav Dessler, was the greatest of the Geonim — brings a *mashul* in one of his teshuvos (Teshuva 13):

A lion wanted to eat a fox. The fox pleaded for his life: "What good am I? I'll show you someone fatter and more satisfying to eat." He led the lion to a man who was seated near a pit, cleverly covered over with branches. The lion hesitated — "What if that man harms me?" The fox reassured him: "Don't worry. Even if there's any danger, it won't come to you or your son. Maybe your *grandson* will suffer — but until then, there's plenty of time."

That was enough to convince the lion. With his eyes on the food, he charged — and fell straight into the trap. Trapped and angry, the lion shouted, "Didn't you promise that punishment would only come to my grandson?" To which the fox calmly responded, "Maybe your *grandfather* did something, and now you're the one paying for it." The lion cried out, "Is that fair? *The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.*" The fox answered, "So why didn't *you* think about your grandson before acting?"

Rav Hai Gaon concludes: *How much mussar there is in this mashul!*

This isn't just a nice children's story. There are many connections to our parsha.

When the lion thought the consequences wouldn't affect him, he didn't care. He was willing to bring harm on his own

grandchildren just to get what he wanted now. But once *he* got hurt, suddenly it all seemed unjust. That's how personal bias — *negi'us* — works. You lose the ability to see clearly, because your own interests are blocking the view.

Korach couldn't think through the impact of his rebellion. He was too close to it. His personal drive blinded him to the long-term consequences. And in the end, he didn't just destroy himself — he dragged down his entire group.

Rav Dessler in *Michtav M'Eliyahu* (Vol. 4) offers another angle. He sees the lion in the mashul as someone who already had so much — strength, leadership, honor. But the moment he saw something "better," it all felt worthless. He had to have more.

Korach, too, was from the greatest of the generation. He was from the most prestigious family, extremely wealthy, and already held an elevated position. But once he saw Moshe and Aharon on a higher level, he couldn't be satisfied. He needed to climb higher — even if it meant breaking everything along the way.

This is exactly what Rav Elazar HaKappar meant in *Avos* (4:28): **הקנאה והתאוה והכבוד, מוציאים את האדם מן העולם** - Jealousy, desire, and the pursuit of honor take a person out of this world.

There's also a deeper understanding of Rav Hai Gaon's mashul, based on a beautiful vort from Maran Harav Shach zt"l: Rashi notes that when listing Korach's *yichus*, the Torah stops at Levi and does not mention Yaakov. Why not? Because Yaakov had davened that he not be associated with Korach's actions. But what does that help? Was Yaakov just trying to protect his name?

Harav Shach points to the Rambam in *Hilchos Teshuvah* (3:2), where he says a person's judgment is based on the overall balance between merits and sins — but only Hashem knows how much weight each act truly carries. And the Rambam adds that we can be judged not only for what we do ourselves, but for what comes from our actions down the line.

So a person might be held responsible if his grandson doesn't keep Shabbos — because had he raised his own son more carefully, the next generation might have stayed stronger.

When Yaakov asked that his name not be linked to Korach, he was asking that the sins of Korach not be charged against his account. And Hashem agreed. The Torah doesn't trace Korach's rebellion back to Yaakov — because Yaakov had done all he could.

Now the mashul of the lion makes even more sense: When we make decisions, it's not just about *our* generation. The choices we make ripple forward. Korach's downfall didn't begin with a sin — it began with a perspective. He saw greatness and assumed it should be his. He didn't think long-term. He didn't see how much damage he could cause. And even someone as great as Korach — a *pikayach*, a leader, a visionary — could fall into a pit of his own making.

Good Shabbos, מרדכי אפפלי