

Don't Be Fooled!

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Korach was no ordinary fellow. He was the leading Levite, a close relative of Moses, a tremendously clever fellow, and also enormously wealthy. In fact, he was so great that 250 members of the Sanhedrin followed him into open rebellion. So how could the great Korach openly rebel against Moses, who was doing nothing other than following the directive of God? How could such a Torah scholar fall so low?

Spiritual growth is like arm-wrestling. The more you press forward, the greater the resistance you encounter. In order to rise from one spiritual level to the next, the *dinim* associated with the new level must first be mitigated. *Dinim* are harsh judgments; they are the protective forces maintaining the balance of good and evil. These forces challenge you to prove that you are sufficiently worthy of reaching this new level. They force you to prove your

resilience and worthiness.

Furthermore, Rebbe Nachman explains that even those who have totally eliminated their sensual temptations and purified themselves from the pleasures of this world must still face an even higher level of challenge, one which the Rebbe refers to as a “holy angel,” a completely spiritual *yetzer hara*. As a tzaddik advances from level to level, he must continually face these ever more difficult, spiritual-only challenges.

Unfortunately, Korach didn't realize this. He reasoned that the Jewish people had achieved universal prophecy at Mount Sinai. Each person had heard God speak to him directly. Korach therefore claimed, “The entire congregation is holy, and God is in their midst. So why do you raise yourselves above God's community?” (Numbers 16:3). Korach was arguing: “Haven't we all made it? At our level, we have subdued our *yetzer hara* and certainly no further *dinim* remain.”

Because Korach truly was at a mighty level, the *dinim* at his level were enormous. Additionally, the defining character of his Tribe of Levi is *din*. Everything created by God is holy and for ultimate goodness, including harshness. However, this is realized only when the harshness is combined with kindness. It is for this reason that the Levite is to serve the Kohen, whose job is to atone for the Jewish People and exhibit kindness. When the Levite serves the Kohen, the former's harsh nature is subjugated to the latter's kindness in a way that the correct balance is achieved. However, because Korach was egotistical, he did not realize that there was still much more room to grow and many *dinim* to conquer. He therefore separated himself from Aaron the Kohen and the *dinim* were unleashed, overpowering him into openly rebelling against and harshly criticizing the entire concept of the priesthood.

At every new level, we are faced with challenges and difficulties. Many mistakenly believe that they have fallen and are upset, expecting that had they truly risen to new

heights, they would now find themselves on the easy road. However, this is the universal experience and the path to greatness. These arguments are nothing but a product of the very *dinim* attempting to suppress our growth and fool us into complacency. We have the power to mitigate them by remembering that everything God does is for our best. The difficulties we feel are not because we have failed, but because God is orchestrating a process created to bring us closer to perfection. Rebbe Nachman himself once said that had he realized in his youth that even the tzaddikim encounter this experience, he would have found it tremendously encouraging. Let us not be fooled!

Korach's fault was that he did not humble himself and subjugate his harsh judgmental nature to the Kohen, so that it could be used in a balanced, positive way. We, too, must learn to humble ourselves, allowing our own critical nature to be subjugated to the encouragement and loving advice of the tzaddikim so that we may continue to grow from level to level. By living this way, we can mitigate all of the harshness and difficulties in our lives. Amen!

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