

## נגיעות של קרח הרב בערל וויסברד

In this week's *parsha* there is an obvious question that all the *meforshim* deal with to understand. The question is what was Korach's thought process in his challenge to Moshe Rabbeinu?

Just a short while before Bnai Yisroel received the Torah at Har Sinai. Before Hashem gave the Torah, he guaranteed to Moshe that everyone would accept and believe Moshe's *nevuah* as being *dvar Hashem*. They would know that Moshe was the unquestioned messenger of Hashem. Then, when Moshe relayed this to Bnai Yisroel they responded, "*ritzoneinu lir'os es malkeinu*"- they wanted to hear it directly from Hashem. They didn't want an intermediary, or to observe Hashem saying the Torah to someone else, they wanted the direct connection that comes in hearing it personally. Hashem acquiesced and gave them instructions to prepare themselves for three days in order to be ready to receive the Torah directly from Him.

When Korach approached Moshe, and requested to be *Kohen Gadol*, it cannot be that he challenged Moshe's authority as the messenger of Hashem. Hashem had already guaranteed that everyone would know that to be true without a shadow of a doubt. What then, justified his challenge? The Rosh Yeshiva zt"l, HaRav Weinberg, had the following *mehalech*:

Korach fully accepted from Moshe that Hashem chose Aharon to be the *Kohen Gadol*. However, Korach wanted to also experience the closeness of performing the *Avodah*. He knew that Aharon had the job of *Kohen Gadol* as a lifetime appointment and was not originally seeking to usurp it. He simply wanted an equal opportunity to have that close connection to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, even if it meant giving up his life. Moshe, as we know, said no but Korach insisted.

How could Korach insist on this? How could he come to argue against Moshe Rabbeinu? I would like to suggest a possible *smach* that would validate Korach's behavior as legitimate. Just a short time before, at Har Sinai, Hashem said the Torah was going to be given a certain way but Bnai Yisroel insisted on something else and Hashem heeded them. To the extent that when Bnai Yisroel heard the first two of the *Aseres HaDibros* they died and Hashem performed *techiyas hameisim*. It was only after this did they relent and hear the rest through Moshe.

Based on this, Korach made the same claim. He wanted to be *Kohen Gadol* in order to have the same *dveykus*, even if it meant he would die. Furthermore, it cannot be that he should not be able to because Bnai Yisroel had just lived through the same experience. Hashem told them He wanted only Moshe to receive the Torah directly, they protested and insisted, and Hashem listened and gave them what they wanted. Hashem even performed *nisim giluyim* to give them what they wanted and it was only because Bnai Yisroel said it was too much did He stop.

So, what was Moshe's answer to this and what was behind Korach's insistence (that boiled over into the infamous outcome)?

There is another difficult *parsha* in the Torah and that is the story of Shaul Hamelech and Amalek. Shmuel Hanavi told Shaul, *bshem Hashem*, that he must completely wipe out Amalek, including the children and animals. When Shaul told the people this before they went to war, still they spared Agag (the king of Amalek) and the healthy animals in order to be used as *korbanos*. When Shmuel him the first thing Shaul said was, "*hakimosi es dvar Hashem*." However, when Shmuel asked him why there were still sheep alive when Hashem had commanded everything to be killed, Shaul replied that Bnai Yisroel had *rachmanus* on them and that is why they weren't killed.

Then, when Shmuel told him that Hashem was not happy with him, Shaul insisted that he did accomplish what Hashem said. Shmuel told him once more that he failed Hashem, and finally after arguing two times about it Shaul admitted that he sinned because he was afraid of the people.

We can all see that there was no ambiguity in what Hashem wanted and directed Shaul to do. Shaul himself clearly understood because he repeated Shmuel's explicit instructions to Bnai Yisroel. Shaul clearly did not follow through on them, so how could he argue with Shmuel?

Maybe we can explain as follows: Shaul told Shmuel he understood the initial directive and that Bnai Yisroel had *rachmanus* despite the instructions not to. However, he told Shmuel that his whole premise of being king was because Bnai Yisroel wanted one. They saw Shmuel Hanavi growing old without a successor, so they wanted to anoint a king to be their leader. Following this request, Hashem told Shmuel not to take it personally. Bnai Yisroel weren't insulting Shmuel, rather they were insulting Hashem by asking for a specific replacement when Hashem is the One to provide a *madrish* for Klal Yisroel. Despite this insult, Hashem gave them what they wanted. (The only caveat being that the king wouldn't be as amazing as they believed. He would take their sons to war, their daughters for cooks, their property for the government, etc.)

Shaul told Shmuel that he saw how Hashem dealt with Klal Yisroel. Hashem tells us what to do and what is right, but if we decide to do otherwise He doesn't stop us. Therefore, Shaul told Bnai Yisroel the *ratzon Hashem* and when they wanted to do differently Shaul went along with it.

What was wrong with Shaul's *svara* and *cheshbon*? There can be many explanations, and the one that I thought might be possible is the following: While Shaul's reasoning might have been correct, he was not approaching his decision from an objective stance. He finally realized this after arguing with Shmuel about the episode. He realized that he had personal bias in the *psak*, that being his fear of the people.

This same phenomenon could have occurred with Korach. He made a *psak* based on reality and *emes*, as shown by the events of Har Sinai. However, he did not realize that which *Chazal* tell us, that he was jealous of Elizaphan ben Uziel. Therefore, his whole judgement became null and void because it contained self-interest.

Both of these cases show us the importance of decisions being made completely devoid of *negiyos* because if they have them, the whole validity dissipates. The most reasonable, correct, compelling *cheshbon* is nothing if it's not totally objective. This is an unbelievably important lesson for us.

The *Ribono Shel Olam* should *bentch* us that we should be able to work out and understand when we do have *negiyos* and to then stay away from trying to *pasken* on our own. Instead, we should rely on someone else, our *rebbe* or *chaver*, to help us make decisions without *negiyos* and help us identify the *negiyos* to remove them before a decision is made.