

Meshech Chochma

- Jacob Solomon

Korach

The Parasha opens with Korach's uprising against Moshe's authority. After failing to persuade Korach and his company to drop their agenda, Moshe placed the whole matter into G-d's hands. As R' Yaakov Kame-netsky explains, Moshe's entire position and work, including the authenticity of the Torah that he instructed Israel was at stake:

Moshe then said to the congregation [elders of Israel]: "Turn away from the tents of these wicked men... If they [eventually] die as people normally die... then it is not G-d who has sent me. But if G-d makes something new in the Creation: namely, the land opens up and swallows [Korach and his company]... alive into the grave, then you shall know that those men indeed have provoked G-d (16:26-30).

In effect, Moshe was invoking G-d to demonstrate to the EIDA, the congregation, that He was behind him. The Ohr HaChayim points out that that distinguished body included people who at the time had their doubts whether Moshe was G-d's chosen to the extent that he said he was.

The Meshech Chochma supports the idea that Moshe's entire credibility was being doubted, as he pays attention to the words Moshe used to invoke G-d's help. He points out that the words "If they [eventually] die as people normally die, then it is not G-d who sent me" are not followed with the logical "the land opens up and swallows... alive into the grave, then it is G-d who sent me." Instead of "then it is G-d who sent me", it is "then you should know that those men indeed provoked G-d".

The Meshech Chochma thus suggests that EIDA were not sure whether Korach's agenda was right or wrong. Did Korach and his party have a case in "all are holy, G-d is with them, and why do you exalt yourself over the congregation of G-d?" (16:3).

Moshe understood their thinking, which he took into account in the precise way that he invoked G-d's help. If G-d decided not to support him, then "it is not G-d who has sent me". He did not have His support. That possibility, which they already suspected, they could readily accept. But if G-d did decide to intervene in such a way, they might well attribute it to something else. Not that Moshe was G-d's chosen, but that those clamoring to be in the elite were evil

people who provoked G-d. For such is the mentality of those with what psychologists call confirmation bias. If what they see fits in with their doubts, they will tend to interpret what they see as supporting their doubts. But if what they see contradicts their doubts, they will not abandon their doubts completely, but extend the theory behind the doubts to accommodate recent events. Thus G-d's sudden obliteration of Korach and his company would show G-d's wrath against their behavior, but would not by itself restore Moshe's credibility as G-d's chosen and communicator, as the events in the wake of the swallowing-up of Korach (17:6-26) were to show.

And as the Rambam explains, the miracles that Moshe effected were necessities for the situation, not to create faith (Yesodei HaTorah 8:1). The only miracle that was specifically designed to create faith was the Giving of the Torah: "so that people will believe in you for ever" (Sh'mot 19:9). Which Korach sought to negate with the words "all are holy": arguing that Moshe was not so special, as all had sensed G-d's communication at Mount Sinai (Rashi to 16:3). But real emuna, faith, the Rambam explains is something that comes from within the person, in interacting and

reflecting while progressing through life's journey, as he introduces in Yesodei HaTorah 2:2... A vital area beyond the scope of this piece. e