

Menachem Persoff

From Father to Son? - NO!

There are many aspects to the tragic episode of Korach's rebellion against Moshe and Aharon. But one of the most unfortunate appears to revolve around the personality of Korach himself.

Notably, our rabbis reviewed Korach's character, motivations, and oratory techniques. They found him to be wealthy, intelligent, and knowledgeable. And in an incisive analysis, Zvi Broker sums up Korach's negative attributes, including vanity, megalomania, arrogance, and self-delusion. Furthermore, as a devious demagogue, Korach has also been perceived as a master manipulator.

If all said about Korach is accurate, we have to marvel that his children did not follow in his footsteps. True, they were swallowed up alive into the ground. But in the Book of Bamidbar, it is written, "And the sons of Korach did not die" (26:11).

Why not? Because, unlike their father, who resented his family's "lowly" task of carrying parts of the Mishkan, the sons appear to have borne the holy Ark with composure. Moreover, in their fervor, the sons composed no less than eleven psalms, described as "awakening in Israel a recognition of God and

inspired love for Him" (Hirsch).

It is said that Korach knew his descendants would make their mark on the historical Jewish trail. For the Midrash indicates that the prophet Shmuel descended from Korach. That alone, the rebel would claim, was sufficient merit in his favor (cf. Bamidbar Rabba 18:15). Moreover, with respect to his prime motif that "all of Israel are equal in the eyes of the Lord", Korach would further insist that he had as much right to lead as Moshe and Aharon.

Of course, Shmuel was no usurper; he did not seek power. Indeed, he anointed the first two kings of Israel (albeit with a heavy heart, believing the people were losing their trust in Hashem).

That was not Korach's strength. Like many people today, Korach felt everyone could become a leader, especially those with intellect, wealth, and power. He failed to realize that in his time, the leader was the one appointed by Hashem, whose spirit was aroused. Indeed, his sons said it all:

"To the chief musician, an instruction for the sons of Korach: As the hart pants after the water brooks, so my soul pants after You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalm 42) MP