

The World's Greatest Mutiny

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Korach

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Weekly Video: Parshas Korach

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What Appears Iniquitous Is In Fact Just

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1. Moshe attempted to defuse the opposition by approaching Dasan & Aviram to address the issues.
2. They rejected his overtures of concern.
3. Moshe realized there was no hope for reconciliation.
4. He supplicated G-d that their share in the communal offering that will be brought should be rejected.
5. He was concerned that the merit of the sacrifice would protect them from G-d's wrath, which they deserved.
6. Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh: If a person is truly evil, the devoutly righteous can decree that the small degree of merit that is on record should be revoked & annulled.
7. Moshe's evaluation of Korach and his community was truly evil therefore whatever good deeds they may have should be revoked.
8. King David's greatest antagonist was Doeg, whose envy of Dovid was all consuming.
9. His actions and ill speech brought havoc and great tragedy upon Dovid personally, King Saul and his family, and Nov the city of Kohanim.
10. He asked of G-d that the Torah of Doeg shouldn't be studied by Jews after he passes away so no merit should accrue to him.
11. Doeg shouldn't merit descendants who are Torah scholars.
12. Dovid's assessment of Doeg was that he epitomized evil therefore he can deny him all opportunities of mitzvah.

Rejecting The Irrefutable When Ego Calls

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1. Korach attempted to usurp Moshe's authority.
2. Amrom, Moshe's father, was the eldest of Kahas' four sons.
3. Korach's father was the 2nd to the eldest.
4. Laws of Inheritance: The first born receives a double portion.
5. Moshe assumed the position of king and Aharon as High Priest.
6. Korach felt he should receive the 3rd appointment.
7. Moshe, by Divine dictate, appointed Elitzaphon as Prince (family of Kahas).
8. Korach's claim: If appointment is based on inheritance he should be Prince; if on qualification—he should be High Priest.
9. Rambam: The authenticity of Moshe's prophecy is that every Jew at Sinai witnessed G-d speaking to Moshe.
10. After Sinai, Moshe's prophecy will not be questioned.
11. Korach and his cohorts were at Sinai, yet questioned his word.
12. Because of one's conflict of interest, one may reject something that is irrefutable.

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The Wealthy Strata Incites A Mutiny

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1. Dasan and Aviram were key players in the mutiny against Moshe.
2. Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh: Korach attempted to usurp Moshe's authority; Dasan and Aviram instigated the rebellion.
3. 4/5 of the Jews died in the plague of darkness in Egypt; they were classified as evil.
4. Dason and Aviram continued their evil until they were destroyed with Korach.
5. They were the ones who informed that Moshe killed the Egyptian.
6. Their wealth enabled them to do so.
7. Moshe could return to Egypt as redeemer when they lost their wealth and no longer had relationships within government circles.
8. The Jews who perished during the days of darkness were the ones who had no interest in leaving.
9. Dasan and Aviram wanted to leave to go to a land flowing with milk & honey and the unlimited wealth they'd take out of Egypt.
10. As a result of the sin of the spies, it was decreed that they perish in the desert.
11. Dasan and Aviram's dream of renewed wealth & power was realized.
12. The intensity of hate for Moshe drove the mutiny and attempt to discredit him.

A Flash of Clarity Secures A Dynasty

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1. Chazal: How did Korach, renowned as wise, act so foolishly?
2. Moshe told Korach & his assembly of 250 to take firepans with incense to burn.
3. The one chosen to be High Priest would live, the others would die.
4. Korach's holy vision: Shmuel HaNavi, equal to Moshe, Aharon & 24 groups of Leviim, would descend from him.
5. This made it evidently clear he'd be the one to survive.
6. Actually, his sons would repent, thus being spared from destruction.
7. Midrash: Before the destruction of Korach and community, Moshe entered the tent of Dasan and Aviram; his sons sat alongside him.
8. His sons' quandary: If they stand for Moshe they'd disgrace their father; if not, they'd be violating the commandment to acknowledge a Torah Sage.
9. They chose to stand.
10. Because they stood for Moshe they had stirrings of repentance and repented.
11. In the merit of acknowledging Moshe they extricated themselves from evil.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Korach

A photograph of a rugged, rocky landscape under a dramatic, cloudy sky. The rocks are light-colored and jagged, with some sparse vegetation. The sky is filled with dark, heavy clouds, creating a somber and intense atmosphere.

The World's Greatest Mutiny

The Unconscionable Behavior of Dasan And Aviram

Torah: *Dasan* and *Aviram* were part of the assembly of *Korach* that attempted to usurp *Moshe's* authority. "Moshe sent forth to summon *Dasan* and *Aviram*... they said, 'We shall not go up! Is it not enough that you have brought us up from a land flowing with milk and honey to cause us to die in the Wilderness...'" The Jewish people were slaves in Egypt where they were subjected to torturous bondage. If so, how could *Dasan* and *Aviram* refer to Egypt as "a land flowing with milk and honey...?" How could they even consider seeing Egypt in a positive vein?

Chazal: During the plague of darkness that came upon Egypt, forth fifths of the Jewish people perished, because they did not want to leave Egypt. Despite the evilness of *Dasan* and *Aviram*, they merited to be part of the one fifth that left Egypt, because they wanted to leave.

Why did *Dasan* and *Aviram* want to leave Egypt? Clearly, it could not be because they valued the special relationship that the Jewish people would have with G-d in the future (Sinai, to be taken as His people). They were the one's who initially informed on *Moshe* to Pharaoh causing him to flee to *Midian* for many years. In addition, they continuously challenged *Moshe's* authority and incited the people to complain and rebel in the desert. They continued to be the antagonists of *Moshe* until they were ultimately swallowed up by the earth, along with *Korach* and his congregation.

Torah: When *Moshe* came out of Pharaoh's palace in Egypt to see how his brethren were faring, he witnessed an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Jew (after the Jew had become aware that the Egyptian had defiled his wife.) Witnessing this injustice, *Moshe* killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand.

Dasan and *Aviram* were the ones who informed on *Moshe*, causing him to flee to *Midian* for many years.

Before *Moshe* fled from Egypt, he was living in the palace of Pharaoh as his adopted grandson. One would think that having a Jew that had an intimate relationship with Pharaoh would be an invaluable asset to the entire Jewish people. He would be their advocate in the palace. Regardless of this great value, *Dasan* and *Aviram* informed on him, despite the consequence of their action. This was a confirmation that they were fully absorbed in themselves without any concern to any degree for their brethren. Their actions were considered to be unconscionable. All that mattered to *Dasan* and *Aviram* was their own glory and existence. Their behavior established them as truly being evil.

Torah: After *Moshe* was in *Midian* for many years, G-d appeared to him at the burning bush and said to him that he should return to Egypt as the Redeemer. G-d said to *Moshe* that he should no longer be concerned for his life because “the men who had informed on you are no longer alive.”

Gemara in Tractate *Nidarim*: Although *Dasan* and *Aviram* were still alive, they were considered as if they had died, because they had lost their wealth and thus were no longer in a position of power. Initially they were able to inform on *Moshe* because of their relationship with the upper echelon of the Egyptian government, which was no longer the case after they had lost their wealth. G-d promised the Jewish people that He would take them out of Egypt to a Land that was flowing with milk and honey.

Dasan and *Aviram*, although they had no interest in the spiritual opportunity of advancing themselves spiritually, were interested in leaving Egypt because they believed that the material wealth that they had lost in Egypt, would be restored in the Promised Land that flowed with milk and honey. However, before they had lost their wealth, Egypt was for them the location that was flowing with milk and honey.

After the sin of the spies, G-d decreed that all Jewish males between the ages of twenty and sixty would perish in the desert over a forty year period. After the decree of the spies, *Dasan* and *Aviram* understood, that their reason for wanting to leave Egypt to be restored to their former material state would never be. It was when they understood that their future was doomed, they became enraged due to their disappointment and thus accused *Moshe* for their predicament. They said, “Is it not enough that you have brought us up

from a land flowing with milk and honey to cause us to die in the Wilderness...?” Their only interest to leave Egypt was the material glory that they had anticipated acquiring in the future.

Why did G-d cause *Dasan* and *Aviram* to lose their wealth? G-d could have caused their relationship with the upper echelon of government to be terminated for some other reason other than them losing their wealth. If *Dasan* and *Aviram* had retained their wealth, they would not have had any interest to leave Egypt. Consequently, they would have died during the plague of darkness along with the others who did not want to leave Egypt.

If *Dasan* and *Aviram* would have died at that time, they would not have been *Moshe*’s antagonists in the desert and part of the assembly of *Korach*. It was necessary for them to leave Egypt so that they could play their essential role in the mutiny of *Korach* where ultimately they would be swallowed up by the earth and declare, “*Moshe* is true and his *Torah* is true.” The subsequent demise of *Dasan* and *Aviram* was essential to establish the veracity and Divinity of *Torah* until the end of time.

Sinai, Establishing the Credibility of Moshe

Korach attempted to usurp the authority of *Moshe*. He believed that it was *Moshe*’s decision to choose *Elizafon* the son of *Uziel*, a cousin of his, to be the prince of the family. *Korach*’s father was a brother of *Amram*, the father of *Moshe*. *Amram* was the eldest son of *Kahas*.

Yitzhar, the father of *Korach* was the second brother. *Yitzhar*, the father of *Korach* was the second of the four sons of *Kahas*. *Uziel* was the youngest son. According to the laws of inheritance *Korach* believed that *Moshe* and *Aaron* being the sons of *Amram* (the eldest) should receive two appointments – *Moshe* was the king and *Aaron* was the High Priest. The third appointment, the prince of the family, should have been given to *Korach*, being the son of the second oldest brother. However, *Moshe* passed over *Korach* and gave that appointment to *Elizafon Ben Uziel*. This incited *Korach* and caused him to believe that this was not the Will of G-d, but rather *Moshe*’s own decision.

Korach thus believed that many of the laws that were transmitted to the Jewish people in the Name of G-d, were not His Word, but rather the word of *Moshe*. He

posited that if the appointments were not based on the laws of inheritance, then he should be the one to be appointed as High Priest because he was more qualified than *Aaron*. Yet, *Moshe* chose his brother over *Korach*. This caused *Korach* to mutiny against *Moshe* and he influenced two hundred and fifty men who were qualified to be the leaders of the *Sanhedrin* to question the authenticity of *Moshe's* word to be accepted as the Word of G-d. Ultimately, *Korach* and his assembly were destroyed by being swallowed up by the earth to go into the oblivion.

Gemara in Tractate *Bava Basra*: *Korach* and his assembly are being punished in *Geheinom* and several times a day they declare, "*Moshe* is true and his *Torah* is true and we are liars."

Rambam in The Laws of the Fundamentals of *Torah*: If one's faith and belief is based on witnessing miracles, then it is fickle and subject to contested. This is because it is possible say that the miracles that were performed by *Moshe* were not acts of G-d but rather acts of sorcery. For example, the miracle of the splitting of the Sea, although it was the most spectacular of all the miracles, was brought about by *Moshe* himself because he was a greater sorcerer than all those in Egypt.

Rambam: In order to establish *Moshe* to be His incontestable spokesman, G-d openly communicated to him in the presence of the entire Jewish people. Every Jew heard G-d say to *Moshe* "Go tell them such and such." As a result of what they had witnessed, *Moshe* was designated as His spokesman. G-d said to *Moshe*, "They (the Jewish people) will believe in you forever." Meaning, the word of *Moshe* will never be contested until the end of time, and his word will always be believed to be the Word of G-d. If this is so, how could *Korach* and his assembly question the credibility of *Moshe's* word if they had stood at Sinai and witnessed G-d's open with him? Despite this fact, *Korach* succeed in influencing 250 heads of the *Sanhedrin* to usurp *Moshe* and undermine his authority. How do we reconcile the mutiny of *Korach* and G-d's statement at Sinai that the Jewish people would believe in *Moshe* forever?

Tosfos in Tractate *Shabbos* citing a *Midrash*: "At Sinai G-d opened all the heavens and the depths of the earth to show the Jewish people that no one exists in existence other than Himself." Witnessing what G-d had shown them, that no one exists outside of Himself, how

is it possible that after forty days after hearing the ten commandments that the Jewish people chose to see things in a distorted context and sin with the golden calf? If the Jewish people could not unquestionably believe in G-d forever (as we see with the sin of the golden calf), how could they believe in *Moshe* as His spokesman forever?

When G-d openly communicated with *Moshe* at Sinai, He established *Moshe* as His spokesman forever. This is uncontestable and irrefutable on a factual basis. Meaning, regardless of circumstances or questions, the fact is, *Moshe* was chosen by G-d to be His spokesman when He openly communicated with him before the entire people. However, based on the principle of free choice, if one chooses to ignore or deny truth, and decide to believe whatever he wants to believe due to his conflicts of interest or lack of faith, it does not change the credibility or cogency of the fact that was established. Although the sun may be shining, one has the prerogative to choose to believe that it is not, due to his own conflicts of interest.

Regarding the authenticity of *Torah*, G-d uncontestably established at Sinai, that the word of *Moshe* is the Word of G-d. During the mutiny of *Korach*, he and his assembly of leading *Torah* sages chose to believe otherwise, based on their own personal conflicts of interest. After *Korach* and his assembly were swallowed up by the earth and declared, "*Moshe* is true and his *Torah* is true..." the fact of its authenticity was revealed to be undeniably true. When G-d said to *Moshe* at Sinai that the Jewish people would believe in him forever, it was not that G-d was withdrawing free choice from the Jewish people to believe otherwise, but rather, He was establishing a credible and undeniable fact that could be rejected if one chooses to exercise his free will.

Sforno: Initially the spies were "men of distinction and special status" before they were sent to scout out the Land. It was necessary for them to be men of special stature and integrity, because the reports that they would bring back needed to be factually accurate. No detail of what they had witnessed should be overlooked and not reported. When the spies had returned and slandered G-d and the Land, it was due to their lack of faith. Their interpretation of the facts were distorted, although they communicated the facts accurately to the Jewish people. After they were punished, their interpretation was proven to be false but the facts

that they had communicated did not change. It was only their interpretation that was refuted. Thus, when the truth was revealed, the accuracy of the facts was crucial to see that the Land was truly good and flowed with milk and honey.

However, if the spies were ordinary people and the facts not accurately reported, the truth would have never come to light, even after they would have been punished. Therefore, when G-d had said at Sinai "In you they will believe forever..." it means that the truth of Sinai is irrefutable; however, the denial of what took place is possible, due to one's own free choice.

Repentance, a Monumental Task

Torah: *Korach* together with *Dasan* and *Aviram* led a mutiny to usurp *Moshe's* authority and cast dispersion on the divinity of the *Torah*. In order to determine the truthfulness of *Moshe's* position, that the appointment of *Aaron* as the High Priest was in fact the word of G-d and not his own decision, a test was presented to prove this point. He presented the test to *Korach* and his assembly of 250 great *Torah* sages who were qualified to be the heads of the *Sanhedrin*. Each one was meant to take a firepan and burn incense upon it. The only one who would survive this test, would be the one who was truly chosen by G-d to be the High Priest. Everyone else would die. Although *Korach* knew that his chance of survival was 250:1, he nevertheless accepted *Moshe's* challenge.

Rashi citing the *Midrash*: "*Korach* was a wise person. How did he allow himself to enter into such foolishness? It was because his eye had misled him. He saw through his prophetic vision that *Shmuel* the Prophet, who was the equivalent of *Moshe* and *Aaron* was to descend from him. He also saw that twenty-four families of Levites will descend from his children that will have prophetic abilities. *Korach* had said, 'Is it possible that all of this greatness will emanate from me and I should be destroyed?' However, *Korach's* eye misled him.

He did not see accurately. In fact, *Shmuel* the Prophet and all of the great families that will descend from his progeny were only as a result of *Korach's* sons repenting at the very last moment." Because of *Korach's* sense of self and ego he would never consider the possibility that his special descendants would descend from his children who would repent, but rather he was truly qualified to be the High Priest.

Torah: "*Moshe* sent forth to summon *Dasan* and *Aviram*... they said, 'We shall not go up!' Although *Korach* was not willing to go up, *Moshe* was willing for the sake of peace, to forego his honor and approach *Korach* in a final attempt to reason with him to understand that *Aaron's* appointment was by Divine Decree.

Midrash: "Because *Moshe* had gone to the entrance of the tent, he saved four *tzaddikim* from the judgment of *Geheinom*. These four *tzaddikim* were the three sons of *Korach* and the son of *Pelles*. What merit did the sons of *Korach* have that they should be saved? When *Moshe* entered into the tent of *Korach*, his sons were seated next to him. When his sons saw *Moshe* they covered their faces with the ground (they were embarrassed to face him). They were in a quandary.

If they were to stand for *Moshe* (as the law dictates that they should) they would disgrace their father because it would be a dishonor to him to acknowledge their father's adversary. However if they were to remain seated, they would be in violation of the *Torah* law which dictates that one must acknowledge the presence of a *Torah* sage by standing. They decided to stand for *Moshe* and acknowledge his presence despite the disgrace to their father. At that moment, they had stirrings of repentance in their heart." In the merit of standing for *Moshe* they had merit the Divine Assistance to have the capacity to repent and thus were able to extricate themselves from the congregation of *Korach*.

Midrash: "King David writes about the sons of *Korach*, 'My heart has stirrings of something that is good.'" We see that it is not simple to repent. When one is so deeply entrenched in evil, it is almost impossible to extricate oneself from it, unless one merits special Divine Assistance. The sons of *Korach* embraced and supported their father's position regarding *Moshe*. They truly believed their father's claim that *Moshe's* presentation of the *Torah* was his own fabrication and not the Word of G-d.

Regardless of their previous commitment to their father, the sons of *Korach* chose to acknowledge *Moshe's* greatness as a *Torah* sage by standing for him. The only reason the sons of *Korach* were in a quandary to stand for *Moshe* or not, was because they considered him as one worthy of standing in his presence. Meaning, they regarded him as one who truly communicated the Word of G-d, thus obligating them to stand in his presence. If they were truly believed that their father's

position was credible, *Moshe* should have been seen as someone evil and the antithesis of the spokesman of G-d.

It was not that they merited to repent because they performed an ordinary *mitzvah*, but rather because their acknowledgement of *Moshe* was a conformation that *Moshe* is the true spokesman of G-d. The reason *Korach* and his congregation deserved to be destroyed was because they did not acknowledge *Moshe* as the spokesman of G-d. Because the sons of *Korach* acknowledged *Moshe*, they extricated themselves from their father's position and thus were not deserving to be destroyed. This sanctification of G-d's name caused them to merit the Divine Assistance that was necessary for them to repent.

Torah: One is obligated to honor one's father and mother. However, if one's father were to tell him to violate the *Shabbos*, he should not heed his father's word. It is because the *Torah* states, "Revere your mother and father, I am *Hashem*." Meaning, the reason one is not permitted to heed the word of one's father commands him to violate the *Torah*, because he and his father are bound to honor G-d. Although one may disgrace his father, one must adhere to the edicts of the *Torah* because all existence only exists to bring glory to G-d. This was the basis for the position of *Korach's* sons that the honor of G-d supersedes the honor of their father, although they were disgracing their father.

Korach's Perversion of Truth

Torah: *Korach* and his congregation gathered against *Moshe* and *Aaron* and said to them, "It is too much for you! For the entire assembly – all of them- are holy and *Hashem* is among them; why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of *Hashem*?"

Rashi citing the *Midrash*: "What is the meaning of 'all of them are holy'? The entire Jewish people stood at Sinai and heard the direct communication from G-d." They claimed that it was not reasonable that only *Moshe* and *Aaron* be qualified to be the leaders of the Jewish people, because all of the people are special and holy, since they too had a direct communication from G-d. Meaning, every Jew has the same level of prophetic abilities as *Moshe*. Therefore, they should be allowed to have a direct relationship with G-d, and thus be His officiants.

Midrash: "You (*Moshe*) were not the only one who heard the commandments at Sinai. We all heard, 'I am *Hashem* your G-d....' If so, how could you lord over us since we too are the congregation of G-d?" Factually, the only prophet to prophesize in a wake state was *Moshe*. All other prophets experienced prophecy in a sleep state. When one experiences prophecy, it involves the totality of the individual. *Moshe* was able to prophesize in a wake state with all of his faculties because his physicality was fully integrated with his soul, and thus totally spiritualized. He was thus able to receive G-d's communication in a wake state.

However, the Jewish people (as all other prophets) who were not at that level of *Moshe* were only able to experience prophecy in a sleep state, because their physicality was not fully integrated into their spiritual essence. They needed to be in a sleep state because the prophecy needed to be communicated through their soul and had no relevance to their physicality. If the Jewish people were not at the special level of *Moshe*, how could they have experienced prophecy in a wake state at Sinai (when they had heard the first two commandments)?

Sforno: In order for the Jewish people to accept that *Moshe's* prophecy was face to face and thus was able to transmit the *Torah* to them, they needed to experience prophecy at his level (in a wake state) in order to understand that it was humanly possible to do so. Although they were not qualified because they were not totally spiritualized, G-d allowed the Jewish people to hear the first two commandments at a level of face to face in a wake state only to establish *Moshe's* credibility in their eyes. Based on their own dimension of person and qualification, the Jewish people had no relevance to *Moshe's* level of prophecy.

Korach came with the claim that all the Jewish people are holy and qualified to be officiants of G-d since He communicated directly with them. *Moshe* denied the people the opportunity to attain positions of leadership because he wanted to lord over them. But in fact, he was no more qualified than they. The proof of this, is that the Jewish people experienced prophecy in a wake state at Sinai. Although G-d only allowed the Jewish people to prophesize in a wake state to establish that the word of *Moshe* as the word of G-d, *Korach* took that experience and turned it around to prove that all the Jewish people are as qualified as *Moshe* because they openly experienced the word of G-d.

Torah: After hearing the first two commandments directly from G-d the Jewish people pleaded with *Moshe*, "You speak to us and we shall hear; let G-d not speak to us lest we die." Although the Jewish people understood that they were not at the level to communicate with G-d face to face, *Korach* used the Sinai experience as a proof that all the Jewish people are no less qualified than *Moshe*.

Understanding that it was not possible for the Jewish people to continue to hear the voice of G-d after the second commandment and especially after they had been tainted by the sin of the golden calf, how could *Korach* believe that all the Jewish people were at the same level of holiness as *Moshe*? The firstborn were disqualified to be the officiants of G-d after the sin of the golden calf. Only the tribe of *Levy* who did not participate in the sin, were qualified to be the officiants of G-d. Although the entire congregation may have initially been holy at Sinai, after the sin of the golden calf it was clear to *Korach* that only the tribe of *Levy* was qualified to be His officiants. If so, how could he claim that the entire Jewish people are holy?

It is because *Korach* acted irrationally due to his own conflicts of interest. Due to his distorted understanding, he was convinced and was able to convince others that they were as holy as *Moshe*.

A Time to Take Action

Based on the laws of inheritance, *Korach* should have received the next official appointment as the leader of the family of *Kahas*; however, that position was given to *Elitzafon Ben Uziel* (the son of the youngest brother) rather than *Korach* the son of *Yitzhar* (who was the second brother). As a result of his not being chosen, *Korach* understood that he was denied something that was rightfully his. He had decided to undermine and usurp *Moshe's* authority. However, *Korach* did not attempt to incite the mutiny against *Moshe* immediately after the appointment of *Elitzafon Ben Uziel*. *Ramban* explains the reason *Korach* chose to launch his mutiny at a later time.

Ramban: If *Korach* had attempted to usurp *Moshe's* authority at that time, people would have risen up against him because of their special love and reverence for *Moshe*. The Jewish people understood that after they had sinned with the Golden Calf, they deserved to be destroyed by G-d. It was only *Moshe's*

beseeching G-d that the decree was annulled and they were spared from destruction.

However, after the incident of the quail during which many Jewish people had died by the wrath of G-d and the decree upon the generation of the spies (who were between the ages of 20 and 60) that they should die in the desert over a forty year period; the Jewish people had become embittered with *Moshe*. They had said, "When we had sinned with the Golden Calf *Moshe* prayed on our behalf and we were spared; however, after the incident of the spies, he did not pray for us. Perhaps he is no longer the leader that he once had been." *Korach* understanding the vulnerability of *Moshe* at that moment, saw it as an opportunity to usurp his authority. Seemingly, the Jewish people had a reasonable question regarding *Moshe's* leadership. Why did *Moshe* not pray for them after the incident of the spies as he had done after the sin of the Golden Calf?

Torah: When the Jewish people were caught between the Sea and the Egyptian army, some of them along with *Moshe* began to pray for G-d to save them. G-d, however said to *Moshe*, "Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the Children of Israel and let them journey forth!"

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: If one is in a situation in which he can take the initiative in order to be saved, he should do so rather than remaining passive and beseeching G-d for Assistance. However, if one's predicament is of such a nature that it is clear that only G-d can help, it is not the time to take initiative, but rather it is time to pray. Seemingly, this was the situation of the Jewish people at the Sea. It was time to pray and not take an initiative. Why did G-d say to *Moshe* that it is not a time to pray but rather a time to travel into the Sea? When the Jewish people found themselves at the Sea, they said to *Moshe*, "Were there no graves in Egypt that you took us to die in the Wilderness?"

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: At the moment the Jewish people had made this statement, it aroused intense prosecution upon them. It was seen as a lack of trust in G-d after what they had witnessed in Egypt. It was because of this intense prosecution that their prayers would not arouse G-d's Mercy. G-d said to *Moshe* that the only thing that could quell the prosecution against them is for them to demonstrate their trust in Him by traveling into the Sea.

The sin of the spies was considered to be a public desecration of G-d's Name. As G-d had said to *Moshe*, "After all the miracles that they had witnessed how could the Jewish people believe the slanderous reports of the spies? How is it possible to have such a level of distrust in Me?" Because of this serious breach of faith, an intense level of prosecution came upon them. *Moshe's* supplications would have been rejected. They could not evoke G-d's Mercy. The sin of the Golden Calf was not as a result of a lack of faith but rather because of their miscalculation of *Moshe's* return, they believed that *Moshe* had died. They felt abandoned by *Moshe* and stranded in the desert with out a leader. They thus returned to their idolatrous ways from Egypt. This is the reason *Moshe* was able to prayed on behalf of the Jewish people after the sin of the Golden Calf to annul the decree.

Korach saw that the Jewish people did not make any distinction between the failing of the spies and the sin of the Golden Calf. All they understood was that *Moshe* did not pray on their behalf as he had done earlier. Thus causing an embitterment towards *Moshe*, which *Korach* took advantage of.

We learn from this that there are times that when prayer will be meaningful and effective; however, there are times when one needs to take the initiative to demonstrate one's unwavering faith in G-d to quell the prosecution. One must take the initiative despite the seeming ineffectiveness of that initiative. We live in time that there is great prosecution upon the world and the Jewish people because G-d's Name is being continuously desecrated. The Jew must take the initiative to do His Will at all costs, despite the position of humanity and remain steadfast in his commitment to *Torah* to bring about the ultimate Redemption.



Yad Avraham Institute