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PARSHAS
KORACH 5777

בְּשִׁיטְיָחָא

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS

The *Parsha* begins with the words, "And Korach took..." However, as Rashi¹ points out, it is not clear what Korach actually took. Rashi explains that he took himself – meaning, he mentally set himself apart from the rest of *Klal Yisrael*, and only then was he able to start an altercation with Moshe Rabbeinu.

The *Sifsei Chachamim*² elaborates that Korach didn't actually take anything. Rather, he himself was 'taken' by his feelings. As Rashi explains later³, Korach experienced the feeling of jealousy. The feeling 'took' Korach away from *Klal Yisrael*, setting him against the nation. That feeling gave rise to the thought that Moshe Rabbeinu was actually acting of his own volition, and that thought caused him to react, and challenge Moshe's authority.

This chain of events, which eventually took the life of Korach and his followers, was inspired by a single feeling. The fact that people act on their feelings is not a revelation. However, what we might not realize is how far-reaching the effects of our feelings are on our actions. We often perceive that we act in a logical thought out manner, not recognizing the 'thoughts behind the thoughts' that are governing our daily activities.

Korach was not a foolish man. In fact, we know that Korach was extremely wise⁴, and had *Ruach HaKodesh*⁵. He was certainly not given to acting on impulse, or changing his life based on a whim. He constructed cogent and compelling arguments against Moshe Rabbeinu⁶, and was able to incite two hundred and fifty leaders within *Klal Yisrael* to join him. He must have been convinced that his approach was correct, as he put his life on the line based on his reasoning. Yet, in the end, he and his followers lost everything. What could he have done? He could have recognized that all of his logical arguments and rational rationales were based on a feeling of jealousy. The thoughts and actions of even the intelligent Korach arose from that feeling.

The more aware we are aware of our feelings, and then the thoughts those feelings cause, the more we will be able to recognize what are the real goals of our actions. Are we reacting in order to resolve a situation, or are we really out for vengeance? The knowledge of what we are feeling will undoubtedly lead to better outcomes and more comfortable solutions.

1 *Bamidbar* 16:1 s.v. ויקח קרח

2 *ibid.*

3 *ibid.* s.v. ואתן ואבירים

4 *Bamidbar Rabah* 18:3

5 *Bamidbar* 16:7

6 *Bamidbar Rabah* 18:3

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Being aware of our feelings might sound simple. Don't we all know when we are joyful, happy, satisfied, angry or sad? It is true, we are often aware of what we are feeling. However, there are times when we are not, and sometimes we act on those 'hidden' feelings in ways that we wouldn't have acted had we been aware of our true motivations. Is there any way for us to dig into ourselves, and highlight the feelings behind our thoughts, and deeds?

One way to understand ourselves better is to focus on different possible reasons for our course of action¹. Perhaps our activity is motivated by jealousy? No? Maybe anger? Maybe exuberance? Maybe shame? As we go through the possible motives one by one, we cut through the cloudiness of our hidden thoughts, allowing us to shine a light on our inner conversations. In doing so, we can begin to change our actions and attitudes, and strengthen the decisions that we make.

1 *Chiddushei HaLev Vayigash* s.v. ויסע ישראל

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Dovid* was feeling pretty good. It's true, his debts were piling up, and he didn't see a way to pay back his debtors, but he didn't have to. Every bill that came in went into a large black bag. He didn't even open the envelopes. He knew he didn't have to, because he had *Bitachon* that Hashem will take care of the problem.

In fact, he was so confident that his debts will disappear, he didn't change his lifestyle in any fashion. So, the debts kept getting larger. Soon, though, he started to run into some difficulties. The credit card stopped working. The yeshivos were calling, as were banks, doctors, and anyone else he owed money to. His wife was told at the supermarket that they're going to have to pay down some of the balance, or she won't be able to shop there anymore. Trouble had come to Dovid's doorstep, and he wasn't sure what to do. He truly didn't have the money to pay everything back – but he had *Bitachon* that everything will work out.

Dovid's wife insisted that he speak to their Rav. Rabbi Weinstein greeted Dovid with a smile. "Good evening, Dovid. What can I do for you?" Dovid made himself comfortable on a couch in the living room. He explained the issue, the debts, the calls, and the pressure his family has been feeling. "But what I don't understand," said Dovid, "is why Hashem isn't helping me. I have 100% *Bitachon*, and I thought that if you have *Bitachon* in Hashem, he reciprocates, and helps. What am I doing wrong?"

Rabbi Weinstein thought for a bit. "Let me ask you Dovid – when you think about that large bag you told me about, what feelings do you have?" "Feelings? About the bag?" Dovid contemplated that for a moment. "I've never thought about that, but... I guess when I think about the bag, I feel anxious."

"And what do you feel when you think about all the bills? Or better yet, what do you feel when you think about the responsibilities of running a household?"

"I have to be honest, I never really thought about it, but when you bring it up, I feel rather nervous. Very nervous – like I don't have what it takes to run a house, to manage being a father, a husband, and an executive director!"

Rabbi Weinstein nodded in sympathy. "As children, we think our parents have all the answers. When we get older, we sometimes feel poorly equipped to deal with the uncertainties of life. I have bad news for you, Dovid. I don't think you were feeling *Bitachon*, I'm afraid you might have just been trying to hide from responsibilities, and blaming it on trusting Hashem. *Bitachon* is a beautiful thing, but a person must be honest with themselves, and know what is *Bitachon* and what is not."

Dovid looked stricken. He nodded slowly. Rabbi Weinstein was correct, perfectly correct. But now what? "Dovid, there are organizations that help people in situations like yours. It might be a good idea to reach out to them."

On his walk home, Dovid's mind swirled. So much to do, he wasn't sure he could do it all. "Trust Hashem," he told himself. And then he felt something – something he hadn't felt before... this time, his feeling of relying on Hashem felt real. Yes, he has his responsibilities, and he will certainly attend to them. But by digging into his own feelings, he was able to remove the façade of trust, and actually bring out something genuine.

*Based on a true story. Names have been changed.

DID YOU KNOW?

- There are layers and layers that make up our emotions and generally speaking we are only aware of the outermost one.¹
- Reb Yisroel Salanter discovered the concept of the unconscious about 60 years before it was discovered in the psychology field.²
- It is extremely difficult to simply stop feeling a certain way. The *Nevi'im* used outside means to help them change their moods.³

1 *Seridei Aish, Chelek 4, page 333*

2 *Alei Shur, Chelek 2, page 140*

3 *Rashi, Radak, Raibag, Metzudos Dovid, Melachim 2 3:15*