



**RABBI SHALOM**

**ROSNER**

Rav Kehilla, Nofei HaShemesh  
Maggid Shiur, Daf Yomi, OU.org  
Senior Ra"m, Kerem B'Yavneh

# Path to a Positive Impact

In this week's parsha we encounter Korach challenging Moshe's leadership. Korach does not act alone, rather he seeks to convince others to join him in his endeavor. Moshe, threatened by the very individuals whose lives he saved, realizes that only Hashem can defend the authenticity of Moshe's authority. Moshe's humbleness enables him to refrain from getting dragged into a *machlokes* (dispute) and he quietly removes himself from the camp. Moshe could have easily reprimanded the rebellious individuals for their lack of gratitude for all he has done and sacrificed on their behalf and this is the way they express their gratitude – by challenging his authority? Yet, Moshe remained silent.

God then determines to not only punish the rebels but to do so in a manner that would clearly portray that it was an act of God, thereby convincing the nation that Moshe is indeed the selected leader of the nation.

A miraculous event occurs – the earth opens and Korach along with 250 rebels are swallowed alive. One would have thought that witnessing this extraordinary event would be de facto evidence of God's defense of Moshe. Yet, following this ground-breaking event (literally), the people turn to Moshe and accuse him and Aharon: "You have killed the people of God." (Bamidbar 17:6). Upset by their response, God inflicts the nation with a plague – killing 14,000, which later subsides only after Aharon sacrifices the Ketores (incense).

Again, one would have thought that this sequence of events – a plague and miraculous ending of the plague, would have proven that Moshe and Aharon were selected by Hashem and the rebels were punished by the hand of God. Yet, one additional step is required. The *nasi* of each tribe had to bring their staff along with Aharon's staff and the nation was told that they will be given a sign as to whom

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יצחק יוסף בן יהושע מנחם מנדל ז"ל

is chosen by God to serve in the *mishkan*. Only after Aharon's staff blossoms, bearing forth almonds, did the nation understand that act as a confirmation that Moshe and Aharon's authority was in fact directed by Hashem. This was so significant that the staff that blossomed was then stored in the Aron for safekeeping as evidence for eternity.

Why were three stages required? Why was it not enough for the people to witness the earth swallowing Korach and his rebels, or the plague and its abrupt ending with Aharon's offering of the Ketores? Why was it only following the blossoming of the almonds on Aharon's staff that the nation was convinced of the authenticity of Moshe and Aharon's authority?


Rav Pelkowitz in "Torah Talk" explains as follows. Miracles rarely have a lasting impact. They may capture the attention of the people and arouse man's marvel momentarily. However, miracles do not captivate the heart. Divine punishment does not create conviction in one's heart or mind. As the navi Zecharia stated (4:6): "Not by military force and not by physical strength, but by My spirit..."

That is why the earth swallowing Korach and the plague inflicting the people did not convince the nation of Moshe and Aharon's authority. A positive, "fruitful" act, the blossoming of Aharon's staff, is what eventually convinced the people of the legitimacy of Moshe and Aharon's authority. That is why we never instituted any remembrance of the awesome miracle of the earth opening its mouth to swallow the rebels. We did, however, set aside Aharon's staff *limishmeres* - for safekeeping



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(Bamidbar 17:25), in the Aron to preserve the lesson of positive growth and productivity fresh and meaningful forever in the conscience of Am Yisrael.

This is a lesson for us to internalize. When confronted with rebellion by our fellow Jews, who are less affiliated, threats of divine punishment will have little impact on them. Attention, however, is paid and admiration (albeit begrudgingly), is evoked when the Torah community builds institutions, educates a generation and establishes homes and families that live lives based on Torah values, which are productive, decent and serve as models for society in general. Let's use the "constructive" rather than threatening approach to be able to influence others by serving as a positive example for those around us to mimic and from which to blossom. ■