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Enough vs. Exalted

There are multiple levels of understanding for every word of Torah. The beauty of Torah study is that a single phrase can evoke a positive message, and at the same time, can also be viewed with a lens of critique. Such an example is found in Parshat Korach. Korach and his entourage confront Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon Hakohen with a serious accusation of taking too much honor for themselves, “*rav lachem ki kol ha’eida kulam kedoshim* — It is too much for you! For the entire assembly — all of them

— are holy!» In response, Moshe Rabbeinu performs the test of the *Ketoret*, and echoes Korach’s words as he replies, “*rav lachem b’nei Levi* — it is too much for you, *b’nei Levi*”. This phrasing is understood by the *mepharshim* in diametrically opposite ways.

Chazal note that Hashem uses this same phrase, “*rav l’cha*,” when Moshe Rabbeinu is begging to enter into Eretz Yisrael.

Rav Shmeulevitz *zt’l*, in *Sichos Mussar* explains that Hashem’s response is *midah k’neged midah*. Although Moshe Rabbeinu was correct in chastising Korach, he should not have used this language of “you have enough”. When a person has a spiritual quest to grow further, to become greater, one should not quell this desire. Therefore, measure for measure, Hashem tells Moshe Rabbeinu, “you have enough, and it is not necessary to go into Eretz Yisrael and gain even more mitzvot.”



Rabbi Shimshon Pincus zt'l

Moshe Rabbeinu should have encouraged them to see how they could develop themselves as *b’nei Levi* to an even higher degree. Indeed, this is one explanation of the Rambam’s teaching that everyone can become as great as Moshe Rabbeinu. It is not that we can become a Moshe Rabbeinu, but rather, we can develop ourselves to our fullest potential, just as Moshe Rabbeinu developed himself.

In contrast, one can see this phrase in a positive light. Rav Pincus *zt’l*, in *Tiferet Shimshon* lauds Moshe Rabbeinu for this expression. He notes that normally, when a person is upset, they lash out, and a stream of complaints ensue. Moshe Rabbeinu, however, weighs his response very carefully. In this short phrase, Moshe Rabbeinu is reminding them of their greatness. How elevated and special they are — “*rav*” — and

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how conscious they should be of their exalted status, and therefore, act appropriately. Moshe Rabbeinu models for us how to focus on the positive elements within a person, and not to get drawn into the specifics of the argument.

Fascinating, how one word can be understood completely differently. "Rav" as "enough", or "rav" as "how great". Our mandate is to see how great we are, realize that we can never say "enough" in our *avodat Hashem*, and be continually inspired to move forward. ■



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