

המוסד למען קדושת חיי אדם



TORAH READING:

Korach: Numbers 16:1 - 18:32

This week's Torah portion, Korach: Numbers 16:1 - 18:32, features Korach, who incites a rebellion against the will of G-d to usurp the power and position given to Moses and Aaron. Moses is the leader of the liberation movement, highly respected, trusted, and close with G-d. Aaron, named high priest, and his sons are in charge of the Sanctuary, a spiritually elevated and enviable position. As priests, their daily sustenance and needs come from the ritual sacrifices provided by the Jews.

Korach feels that his station in this new emancipated life is beneath his birthright, He wants to replace Aaron as high priest and he convinces 250 highly respected men of distinction from the Tribe of Reuben to join in the rebellion against the recent Divinely structured social and religious order. These men want to replace Aaron's sons as priests.

Another group of followers attaches themselves to Korach. These are discontents who resent the effort of daily mitzvot recently given to them, and troublemakers hoping to cash in on the chaos.

It doesn't end well. G-d warns Moses of the consequences of the defiance. In turn, Moses warns Korach and his followers. The warnings do not dissuade the rebels. The group who covets the priesthood is consumed by fire. The other group is swallowed up by an earthquake! Korach is both consumed and swallowed. Afterwards, another contingent blames Moses and Aaron for causing the loss of life, which results in a plague that threatens to kill hundreds more. Aaron intercedes and the plague stops.

This portion clearly shows the tragedy that follows arrogant defiance of G-d's will in our lives. Our motives may be acceptable to our peers, our ego bolstered by traditional reasoning, but dissatisfaction with G-d's will, coveting the status and reputation of others, and attempting to force our will upon the natural order of the Divine has consequences: When attempting to live by our own rules we are consumed with the fire of resentment and get swallowed up by self-pity. Lives are lost and lives are ruined.