

# *A Slick Agenda*

PARSHA INSIGHTS - KORACH (5759)

## **WHERE DID KORACH GET SUCH A RIDICULOUS IDEA?**

Each year we study and analyze Korach's uprising. A basic question needs to be addressed right at the outset. What reassuring thought entered the mind of Korach? What gave him the confidence to attempt a rebellion, and to undermine the authority of Moshe *Rabainu* [Moses our teacher] and the sacred establishment of Torah Judaism?

Rabainu Asher, known as the *Rosh*, asks this question. He answers that Korach took his father's name very seriously. In fact, he took it too seriously. Our *parsha* [Torah portion] begins by calling him "Ben Yitzhar" [the son of Yitzhar]. It is known that "yitzhar" means "oil" (like the term we mention in the second paragraph of *Shema*— "yitzharecha", "you will gather your oil" in abundance if you do Hashem's will). Oil is the "chief of all liquids", states the *Rosh*. If you place one drop of oil into any other drink, what will end up on top? That's right, the oil will rise above the other fluid.

Taking this into account, Korach reflected on his father's special name and related it to himself. Recall that a father's name means more than appears on the surface. "Ben so-and-so" does not only mean that the son is the biological offspring of the father. Rather, the son possesses the traits expressed by the father's name. In fact, "Ben so-and-so" sometimes has NOTHING to do with the father. Notice the times in *Tanach* that a person is called a "ben chayil" [man of valor]. We occasionally find a "ben biliyaal" [an unscrupulous individual]. The examples go on and on. Sometimes, the word after "ben" is the father's name and ALSO makes a statement about the son's personality. Explore *Tanach* on your own for more illustrations.

Consequently, Korach delved a little too deeply into his name, and he jumped to an evil conclusion: my destiny and name dictate that I will succeed. My *mazal* [destiny] and innate qualities guarantee me victory! I am oil, and I will surely rise to the top. With these fervent convictions, Korach Ben Yitzhar became totally immersed in *machlokes* [disagreement], vicious disobedience and rebellion.

We are hereby reminded to channel our emotions and character traits for noble causes, unlike Korach. Who knows? Korach was probably destined to be an outstanding leader, within the framework of *halacha* [authentic Jewish law]. It surely would have been better to be a master Torah educator and dynamic role model than to be a proven rebel. May we never fall to the temptations of the *yaitzer hora* [evil inclination] and the lust for public recognition and honor.

*By Rabbi Moshe Heigh*

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