



The Pardes Parsha Discussion by Rabbi Alex Israel

Korach - How to avoid Conflict and Negative Influence

Parashat Korach depicts the unrest caused by Korach's assault against the leadership of Moshe and Aharon. I want to focus upon three lessons that I gleaned from Rashi's commentary. They can each stimulate good discussion with people of any age around the Shabbat table.

1. Inviting conversation

16:12 - **Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab; but they said, "We will not come"!**

Rashi: We learn that a person should not persist in a dispute, just as Moses sought them out to conciliate them with peaceful words.

Moshe could easily have been personally insulted. After all, he is being accused of failing in his leadership (v.13-14), and of personal indiscretion (v.15). But Moshe rises above his emotions. He reaches out to them, attempting to open a discussion with his antagonists.

- Have you ever acted in this way during a fight or dispute?
- What makes this course of action difficult?



- Dathan and Aviram say “We will not come!” They refuse to talk. What should we do when our invitation to talk falls flat? If you were Moshe, what would you do next?

2. Patience, or – “Let’s talk this over tomorrow!”

16:5 – [Moses] spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, “**Come morning, the Lord will make known who is His and who is holy...**”

Rashi: Night is a time of drunkenness for us and we cannot appear before God. His real intention was to delay, with the hope that they might withdraw their dissent.

Sometimes, people say not to let a fight sit overnight. But that does not always work. Sometimes people are too upset, too agitated, too worked up to talk in a heated moment. They are “drunk” with their insult, their ego and what have you. Moses is saying, “Let’s take a Time Out”, “Let’s discuss this in the morning when we are not so tired, not so angry.”

- In a situation of rage and hurt feelings, does it help to wait and discuss it when people have calmed down?
- What could go right with this technique? What could go wrong?
- Can you recall a situation in Tanakh when leaving something longer agitated the situation further rather than calming it? (1 Kings, 12:5)

3. Social Influence. Who is your neighbour?

16:1 - **Korah ... of Levi ... along with Dathan and Abiram ... descendants of Reuben**

Rashi: The tribe of Reuben encamped to the south [of the Mishkan], next to Korach and the family of Kehat who also camped on the southern side of the Mishkan. Thus they joined Korach’s revolt. Woe to the wicked, and woe to his neighbour!

How did people of Reuben get swept up in the euphoria of Korach's revolt. Rashi explains that they lived in the same neighbourhood, and that we are influenced by our social environment. This is a blessing and a curse! When we live with good people, we are raised by our community, but when negative currents are prevalent in a society, we can be affected in a problematic way.

- Can you share a situation in which an associate has influenced you for good or for bad?
- How much are we affected by our environment (work, school, community) and how much do we establish and retain our own personal standards and lifestyle?
- Sometimes, we want to mix with people very different than ourselves. Can this at times generate unwelcome pressures? How does a person deal with this?

Shabbat Shalom!