

Everyone in Korach's ancestry is listed except for Yaakov. Of course, that is because Yaakov didn't want his name mentioned with Korach's. But why was Yaakov correct to make that request? Why should his name not be mentioned with Korach, while Levi's name and Kehat's name are?

A lot can go wrong in Klal Yisrael because of the inclination to self-deception. The worst kind of self-deception occurs when someone thinks that what they are doing is a Mitzvah, but it really is not. Korach is a prime example. He no doubt intended to determine who the most qualified people to lead the service of Hashem were. His intentions may have seemed pure, even to himself. But he was not innocent. He was guilty of self-deception. How could he have known that he was fooling himself?

Rabbi Zvi Elimelech Shapira Zt"l of Dinov suggested that anytime one wonders whether their intentions are pure, just ask yourself, "Am I as zealous about other Mitzvot and Chassadim as I am about this? Because if I'm much more motivated about this one issue than I am about the myriad of other great and important ways to serve the Almighty, there's a good chance that some measure of self-interest is motivating me." If someone is seeking to do a Mitzvah that seems to have so much of that person's self-esteem hinging on his or her fulfillment of just that Mitzvah, something is not quite right. The test is simple: "Am I as motivated to do other important good deeds as much as I am to do this deed?"

In order to ask that question one needs to be a Mevakeish Ha'emet - one who seeks truth. Truth - Emet - is the Midah of Yaakov. His glorious trait of Tiferet is a celebration of the perfect measure and balance of both, Avraham's Chesed and Yitzchak's Gevurah, both L'shem Shamayim and both driven by truth.

Because Korach did not recognize the absence of self-interest in what he was doing, and because he failed to test himself by examining his level of zeal, he was acting in the absence of Emet. Because Yaakov was the personification of Emet it was only right for his name to be absent from among Korach's ancestors.

Good people of faith seek to serve God by fulfilling His Mitzvot with zeal, with excitement, with verve. When we notice that we are far more excited about one specific, seemingly noble goal or plan, we have to ask ourselves why that is so. Remember, there is one thing worse than trying to fool God, which we can't succeed in doing, anyhow. Worse, is to succeed in fooling ourselves.

Shavua Tov.

Moshe Teitelbaum

Young Israel of Lawrence-Cedarhurst
Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum
President, Baruch Weinstein
Executive Director, Marvin Schenker
8 Spruce Street
Cedarhurst, New York 11516
Phone: (516) 569-3324
www.yilc.org