

FRIENDSHIPS AND ASSOCIATIONS

by Rabbi Dovid Green

If the story we encounter in this week's parsha was not in the Torah, it would be too fantastic to believe. Korach, a prominent member of the tribe of Levi disputes the validity of Moshe's choice for Kohain Gadol, The High Priest. "The entire congregation is holy, with G-d among them. Why do you raise yourself up over the congregation of G-d?" Moshe creates a situation in which G-d's real choice can prove himself. 250 men, mostly from the tribe of Reuvein bring a sacrifice of a mixture of spices called K'tores, and a heavenly fire burns them all to death. Korach, Dasan, and Avirom are miraculously swallowed alive by the earth, and the dispute is decisively clarified.

Why did the 250 men from the tribe of Reuven get involved? Rashi, the great medieval commentator, writes that just as Korach's family camped on the southern side of the Tabernacle, so did the tribe of Reuven. Rashi quotes the words of Chapters of the Fathers, "woe to an evil person, and woe to his neighbor." This means that these men had an opportunity to spend time with their neighbors and be negatively influenced by them.

Rabbi Shalom Noach Brezovsky, the present Rabbi of Slonim, writes that the three main influences on our characters come from family, habits, and friends. He quotes Maimonides, who says that the way of a person is to be drawn after the ways of his peer group. We see from this week's parsha an incredible insight; that the 250 men knew that the one who would be chosen as High Priest would be the only one to live through the test. Still, they were willing to go through with it, even putting their lives on the line as they did.

A student of Torah understands the power of friendships and associations. He chooses them carefully, considering what the outcome of his friendships will be. His friends and his children's friends can have a profound effect on the way he himself and his generations will look even years from now. How are we positively or negatively influenced by our friends and associations? What can we do about it? This week's parsha teaches us that this is an important question we all need to ask ourselves. Where are our friendships and associations leading us?

Good Shabbos!

Text Copyright © 1997 [Rabbi Dovid Green](#) and **[Project Genesis, Inc.](#)**

