



honors. He then could have conquered this desire by choosing not to act upon that disappointment. By repeatedly engaging in kibbush hayetzer and choosing not to act on the impulse to lash out, he would improve his chances of minimizing his jealousy.

In .ussa r we learn that everybody always has some sort of choice. Developing a behira (choice) practice allows you to keep spotting and making choices that bring you closer to God and closer to who you want to be in the world. The more frequently you recognize opportunities to choose, the more you shape your path and orient it toward service to God. Korah had several choice points, however he mainly did not recognize them as choices. Identifying these moments as choices and then choosing different reactions could have led him to a different outcome that did not involve being swallowed up by the earth, along with his followers.

We learn in Ethics of the Fathers 2:4 that we should not separate ourselves from the community. Korah did separate himself and he took 250 leaders of the community with him. Instead of fomenting rebellion, he could have gathered those people and asked them what keeps them up at night. It is possible that as he heard people's troubles he would have reconsidered whether his own trouble—that he was not the kohen gadol—was a cause worthy of rebellion. He was envious, but was that real trouble? Instead of separating himself and privileging his own needs, he could have strived to gain a fuller perspective of the community's needs and acted for the greater good.

Moses also offers us an opportunity for mussar learning in this parashah. When Korah challenges him for taking too much power for himself, Moses' first reaction is to fall upon his face humbly. Later in the parashah he does not act quite as nobly, urging God to punish Korah and his supporters in a public and deadly spectacle. Moses' choice to urge God to act that way was likely driven by his ego. According to the Mussar tradition, well-cultivated humility means knowing when and how to make oneself small, and when and how to act boldly. Korah seems to lack humility entirely in the story as we know it. Moses has it, but it is a practice, and in this story, we see him model it both well and poorly.

We are living at a time with numerous threats and challenges and each of us must be involved in repairing the world. Informed by Korah and his followers and Moses, I invite us to ask ourselves the following questions daily:

- x What is really in my heart? Have I communicated it in conversation with God, laying my heart bare and honestly speaking my yearnings into being? Hopefully, this naming of feelings and motivations will take away some of the power of the hardest ones. It will also reveal the feelings on which we need to work because they do not represent our best selves. Finally, it will clarify what is in our hearts at the core, on which we can act.
- x Did I regularly make choices today that advance my connection to God?
- x How am I managing humility?

May the .ussa r lessons we learn from Korah and his followers, as well as Moses, help us to know ourselves and summon our best intentions and skills to create a just world.