



GROWTH

At The SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT KORACH

The Unchanging Struggle

If you could choose one thing to improve your generation's spiritual condition, what would it be? Better schools? Better communities? Better role models?

What if you were offered something even greater: a Moshe Rabbeinu?

Most, if not all of us, would jump at the opportunity. *A tzaddik and navi like Moshe Rabbenu in our generation? In a world filled with so much madness, confusion, and darkness, just imagine the unbelievable light and clarity this would bring!*

The Torah portions that we have been reading over the past few weeks have been exceptionally startling. From complaining about food and water to Korach's rebellion – the end of which involved the Jews actually *blaming Moshe* for the subsequent calamities that befell them – it's hard to even swallow such persistent ingratitude and rebellion in the face of G-d's evident miracles and guidance. They witnessed the greatest events to unfold in all of human history – from each and every plague in Egypt to G-d Himself speaking to them directly as the whole nation stood at the foot of a mountain to receive the Torah from Heaven. They were sustained in the heat of a desert with miracle clouds and Godly food delivered to their doorstep, shipped faster than Amazon Prime. They were led by the greatest leader to ever walk the earth – a man who the Torah itself describes as the closest any human ever achieved to divinity. Their repeated failures seem almost unfathomable – a relentless cycle of sin, rebellion, and complaint played out again and again.

A mentor of mine once made the following point. Suppose it were possible to place a Moshe Rabbeinu in our generation. Would that solve our spiritual struggles? Most of us instinctively think it would. At times, a person may look honestly at his spiritual shortcomings and conclude that the real problem lies in his circumstances. If only he were in a different yeshiva, a different shul, a different neighborhood, or surrounded by different people, he imagines, then serving Hashem would come naturally and his struggles would disappear. He begins to believe that his spiritual challenges are merely the product of an unfavorable environment, and

that under different conditions he would be the person he aspires to be. He may be led to believe that having a "Moshe Rabbenu" in his life would solve all his problems, and he would be the "perfect Jew."

However, as narrated by the Torah itself, history would make a strong argument otherwise. After all, the Jews in the desert had everything. They had the leader, they had the open miracles, they had the direct involvement of G-d in their life. Yet they turn repeatedly to sin, defiance, and dissatisfaction despite everything they had experienced, despite having a Moshe Rabbenu. Not only that, but they have the gall to end up *blaming* him for their own problems.

Many people look at a problem in their life and throw up their hands in blame and forfeit. It could be anything – a spouse struggling in the relationship, a parent facing difficulty with a child, a student having a hard time in school. A patient battling a disease, a person drowning financially, an individual struggling with mental health. While we automatically look to pin any issue on underlying factors, be them internal or external, the underlying truth is that Hashem knew exactly what He was doing when He created you, and knows exactly what He is doing by continuing to infuse life into you with every breath you inhale and every moment that you exist. He knew exactly where to place you, what background you needed to fulfill your unique mission, and He knows exactly what you need right now to step up and fulfill your *tikkun*. There are times when He places you in the darkness, but perhaps the goal is not to identify with the shadows but to instead *become* the light. The natural pull towards blaming things on our upbringing or surroundings may be appealing, but it's just an illusion. The Jews in the desert arguably had the perfect environment for pure greatness, having their every need catered to by the Almighty Himself, yet they repeatedly choose problems. What we really need is not an external, fantastical "Moshe Rabbenu" to make our troubles go away, but to ignite the spark of Moshe Rabbenu within our own hearts.

(Based on a d'var Torah shared with me by R' Menachem Goldberger)

"Don't just aspire to make a living. Aspire to make a difference."