



לקוטי שיחות
PROJECT
LIKKUTEI
SICHOS

Divine Individual Providence — No Matter What

Sicha Summary

Chelek 18 | Korach | Sichah 2

The Context:

After Korach and his followers challenged Moshe's leadership, G-d told Moshe to move away from the camp and allow G-d to "consume them in an instant." (*Bamidbar* 16:21) Moshe and Aaron protest: "Oh G-d, G-d of the spirit of all flesh, if one man sins, shall You be angry with the whole congregation?" (16:22)

The Rashi:

G-d of the spirit of all flesh (i.e. G-d who knows the thoughts of every person) — Your attributes are not like those of earthly beings. A mortal king against whom part of his country transgresses does not know who the sinner is, and therefore, when he is angry, he punishes them all. But as for You, all thoughts are revealed before You, and You know who the sinner is.... The Holy One, blessed is He, said, "You have spoken well. I know and will make known who sinned and who did not sin." (*Midrash Tanchuma Korach* 7, *Bamidbar Rabbah* 11)

The Question:

G-d... of all flesh refers to G-d's intimate knowledge of *every* human being. Moshe and Aaron only needed to argue that G-d knows the thoughts of **the members of the Jewish people** who participated in Korach's rebellion. Why do Moshe and Aaron need to invoke G-d's **universal** knowledge?

The Preface to the Explanation:

Moshe's appeal is based on G-d's detailed awareness of each individual's thoughts. G-d knows the difference between the one who deliberately instigated the rebellion ("*You know who the sinner is*") — Korach, and those who were lured in unawares — his 250 followers. Accordingly, in meting out punishment, G-d should differentiate between Korach and his followers.

This is difficult, however, in light of Rambam's statement that G-d's individual providence only applies to righteous individuals whose intellect cleaves to G-d. The wicked, by contrast, as well as all other species of life, are only governed by G-d's general, indiscriminate providence. (*Moreh Nevuchim*, sec. 3, ch. 17-18) According to Rambam, there is no particular meaning to events in the lives of the wicked; the wicked are only broadly, nor particularly, supervised.

If so, how can Moshe have expected G-d to differentiate between various categories of sinner — between Korach the instigator and his followers?

In truth, however, Rambam *does* maintain that even sinners have individual Divine providence. But this providence is hidden within the patterns of nature. The righteous, on the other hand, experience "miraculous" Divine providence; they see the hand of G-d outside of nature. (*Derech Chaim, Shaar HaTeshuva*, ch. 9)

The Explanation:

Moshe, therefore, invokes G-d's detailed awareness of *all flesh*, even his awareness of gentiles, in order to argue that G-d surely *can* discern an individual sinner's motives and intentions.

The Lesson:

When personal Divine providence recedes into the cloak of nature, a Jew is inspired to search for G-d more deeply. The Jew knows that G-d is still directing every step of his or her life; Divine providence is only hidden within the natural world. The absence of the palpable presence of G-d is meant to motivate a person to seek greater closeness with G-d.

