

## *Korach: No Questions?*

*“And they and all that belonged to them descended, alive, into the abyss/she’olah [שאלה].”<sup>1</sup>*

When Korach was alive on earth, everything was clear to him. He asked himself no questions/*she’ailot* [שאלות]. After all, as the sages say, “Korach was wise,”<sup>2</sup> sure that he was right, with no room for questions or re-evaluation of his outlook. He is always the first to speak, and he has an answer for every question. He is like a *tallit* [a prayer shawl] that is entirely dyed in *techelet* and a home that is filled with holy books—the subjects of two questions he posed to Moses, using them to attempt and prove his claims against Moses. As he was extremely wealthy, Korach also did not have to resort to borrowing—*lish’ol* [לשאול], another word that is cognate to *she’ol*—anything from anyone until the earth opened its mouth and he went down, alive, into *she’ol*.

Did Korach even notice that he was in *she’ol*? It is not clear. He descended, alive, to *she’ol*. Perhaps even there, he continued to live, sure of himself and pleased with his wisdom—“I am right and everyone else is mistaken,” he would think to himself.

Is there a way out of *she’ol*? As above, *she’ol* is cognate to *she’eilah*/question. If you understand that you do not know everything, if you will only cast a doubt on your perfection and start asking questions—you can rectify your situation.

In Psalms 139, King David wrote, “And as I approach *she’ol*, here You are”<sup>3</sup> (ואציעה שאול הנֶרֶךְ). This verse can also be translated as: “If I propose a question, here You are.” Even if you are in *she’ol*, if you begin to question your perfect wisdom, G-d will reveal Himself to you. Even there, “here You are”.

The entire verse reads, “If I ascend to the Heavens, you are there. And if I propose a question, here You are” (אם אֶסַק שָׁמַיִם שָׁם אַתָּה וְאֶצִּיעָה שְׂאוֹל הַנֶּרֶךְ). If you think that you can ascend to the Heavens (*shamayim*) by virtue of your own wisdom, then the truth will always be “over there” *sham* – far from you. In this case, *shamayim* can also be understood as the plural of *sham*/there. If you are flying high on your own wisdom, all that you will find up above is more distance between

---

<sup>1</sup>. Numbers 16:33.

<sup>2</sup>. *Bamidbar rabbah* 18.

<sup>3</sup>. Psalms 139:8.



yourself and the Divine truth. But if you just start to question yourself and your wisdom—behold, God Himself is with you.