

# Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Korach 5784

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Korach and his followers challenged Moshe. Moshe responded.

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-קֹרַח שְׁמְעוּ-נָא בְנֵי לֵוִי:

“And Moshe said to Korach, ‘Hear me now, please, sons of Levi.’” (Bamidbar 16:8).

If Korach was the only Levi there, as his other followers were from the kehal in general and from shevet Reuven, who are the “sons” of Levi? Why did Moshe call “el” Korach and not “I’Korach?” Also, why did Moshe specifically mention Levi?

The Korach rebellion was at the same time with the scouts. To quickly reiterate what occurred in Parshas Bamidbar and Naso, at first, the firstborns were to serve in the Mishkan. Then Hashem announced that He was taking to Him Shevet Levi in their stead. That is why when Moshe sent scouts to Eretz Yisroel he did not send anyone from Shevet Levi. He only sent those that would be getting stakes in the Land of Eretz Yisroel. It is while the scouts are gone that Korach begins his squirming. When the scouts come with their bad reports, he jumps to the cause and adds onto the problems.

The scouts talked about the inhabitants of the Land. (Shmos 13:27). They complained about all their enemies living in the Land. (Ibid 13:29). They also complained about how insignificant they were compared to the inhabitants. (Ibid 13:33). The community was so moved by this that they even turn to pelting Moshe, Aharon, Yehoshua, and Calev with stones. (Ibid 14:10). Why was the entire community so moved to anger? And why did the Torah then say, that Hashem will make pestilence and a plague among them and destroy them all? (Ibid 14:12). It is because the complaints of the scouts were combined with the complaints of Korach.

וַיִּקְהָלוּ עַל-מֹשֶׁה וְעַל-אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם רַב-לָכֶם כִּי כָל-הָעֵדָה בְּלָמָּה קֹדְשִׁים “And they gathered upon Moshe and upon Aharon and they said to them, ‘It is too much for you, because the entire nation is holy.’” (Ibid 16:3). Korach and his rebellion joined up upon Moshe and Aharon with the ten wanton scouts, and they removed themselves from the kahal, from the nation. Moshe fell on his face (ibid 16:4) when he heard the Korach rebellion joined in with the complaints mentioned by the scouts in Parshas Shelach. Hashem caused the ground to open up for Korach and his inner circle (ibid 16:31), and a fire went forth to consume the two-hundred and fifty rebels (ibid 16:35). The two-hundred and fifty rebels were the scouts and their followers who were: מְנַשְׂיָא עֵדָה קְרָאִי מוֹעֵד אֲנָשֵׁי-שָׂם: “Princes of the congregation, chosen in the assembly and men of renown.” (Ibid 16:2). This is the same people called earlier, כָּל-אֵלֶּיָם אֲנָשִׁים רָאשֵׁי בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל הָמָּה, “All of them men of importance, heads of Bnei Yisroel.” (Ibid 13:3). That is why the people cried, wanted to stone Moshe’s contingent, and why Hashem caused a plague in their midst.

The scouts’ issue was that they did not believe in Hashem’s power and signs, they lost their faith. (Ibid 14:11). They turned a sightseeing mission to see how wonderful the

Land was into one where they thought it was their job to assess how they could conquer it. They forgot about Hashem's signs and wonders, how Hashem does battle for them. What was Korach's issue?

הַמַּעֲט מִפֶּם כִּי־הִבְדִּיל אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתְכֶם מֵעַדְת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַקְרִיב אֶתְכֶם אֵלָיו לְעֲבֹד אֶת־עַבְדֹת מִשְׁכַּן הַן לְעֹמֵד :הַמַּעֲט מִפֶּם: “Is it a small thing for you that the Lord of Yisroel separated you from the congregation of Yisroel, to bring you close to Him, to serve in the service of Hashem's Mishkan, and to stand before the congregation and attend them?” (Ibid 16:9). Moshe pointed out that Hashem already made Shevet Levi something special by switching them for the firstborn. Does Korach seek the priesthood / kahuna, too? (Ibid 16:10). Shevet Levi were to serve in the Mishkan for all generations by special decree of Hashem.

However, it really is a seemingly strange response, considering that only Korach was a Levi. The rest of his group were Reuven and then the scouts and their followers. How did Korach coming from Shevet Levi pacify the others? And if Korach wanted the kahuna for himself, why would others care about that to follow him?

The problem Korach and his followers had was the same problem the scouts had. They forgot the signs and wonders of Hashem. They lost faith, somehow, in Hashem. Korach responded to Moshe, “Is it a small thing to you that you brought us from a land that was flowing with milk and honey to die in the wilderness?” (Ibid 16:13). Even if they can believe the scouts that the Land had milk and honey, the cost to conquer it was too great. (Ibid 16:14). Korach and his contingent were saying that the power of survival for Bnei Yisroel depended on their leaders. It did not depend on Hashem. They thought that entering Eretz Yisroel (and rightly so) would mean losing the manna and the quail. It would mean death by war and death by starvation. It would be injury and disease by toil. Thus, Korach and his followers wanted Korach to be the leader, where he would not lead them to a Land they could not conquer. He would keep them in the wilderness with all its comforts. They would serve Hashem in the wilderness and have manna and quail – guaranteed food.

Moshe's response to him was “sons of Levi.” Levi was *kannoi*. (Bereishis 34:25). That was used for good when Amram defied the decree of Pharaoh and still married and had children—a “man from the House of Levi took a daughter of Levi.” (Shmos 2:1). When Moshe asked who was for Hashem, by the Molten Calf, Levi answered. (Ibid 32:26). Moshe reminded Korach that he was of the sons of Levi. He did merely send messages to Korach. He called “el” to Korach. That means he spoke directly to him. “L’Korach” would be a message sent by a third party. (See the same with Pharaoh, e.g. Shmos 12:31). Moshe reminded Korach, face to face, that he was one among the special shevet that Hashem brought close to Him because of their allegiance and loyalty. He was telling Korach to back down, to remind himself of his special status, and to return to his loyalty. If Korach would disband then the entire rebellion may have disbanded and there might have been no forty-year wandering and death of that generation. He could have reminded them all of the signs and wonders, that Hashem controls everything in Mitzrayim and in the Midbar, and He will control it all in Eretz Yisroel.

However, Korach did not get the message. The rebellion failed miserably and the people suffered the consequences.