

# Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Korach 5785

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Hashem redeemed the firstborn of Yisroel through the Leviim.

וְעַבְד הַלֵּוִי הוּא אֶת-עֲבֹדַת אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְהֵם יִשְׁאוּ עֲוֹנֵם תִּקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם וּבְתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יִנְחָלוּ נַחֲלָה:

“And the Levites shall perform the service of the Ohel Moed. And they shall lift up the sins as an eternal statute – for generations. And from amongst all Bnei Yisroel they shall have no territorial inheritance.” (Bamidbar 18:23).

Coming out of bondage in Mitzrayim, Hashem commanded that every firstborn of Yisroel were to be sanctified. (Shmos 13:2). They were to belong to Hashem. Hashem, was taking them for His service, in exchange for not killing them along with the rest of Mitzrayim. (Incidentally, this corroborates that Bnei Yisroel were not exempt from the strikes in Mitzrayim, except for the ones specifically mentioned that they were not touched – like pestilence). Then, because of their loyalty, the entire tribe of Levi earned their spot to serve in the Ohel Moed. “Behold! I have taken the Levi Tribe from among Bnei Yisroel in exchange for the first issue of every womb from Bnei Yisroel, and the Levites should be unto Me.” (Bamidbar 3:12). Our pasuk, and the segment here, gives further details of the service that the Leviim were expected to do.

This segment is explained after the segment discussing Korach’s rebellion. They are tied because the rebellion of Korach was based on Korach being a Levi but not having enough power. Moshe confronted Korach and his gang, and challenged them: “It is beneath you, [this challenge to authority] because the Lord of Yisroel already separated you from the congregation of Yisroel, for you to offer to Him, to serve Him in the service of the Mishkan of Hashem, and to stand before the congregation to minister to them.” (Ibid 16:9). Clearly, the rebellion took place after Hashem designated the Leviim for service. This designation took place already by the first day of the first month of the second year that Bnei Yisroel left Mitzrayim. The Korach rebellion took place after Bnei Yisroel were already on the move away from Har Sinai. “And Bnei Yisroel traveled on their travels, from the wilderness of Sinai, and the Cloud of Glory rested in the wilderness of Paran.” (Ibid 10:12). This means they traveled away from Har Sinai. They left the wilderness of Sinai, after almost a year, on the twentieth day of the second month of the second year. (Ibid 10:11). But when did the Korach rebellion take place?

“And the people took to complaining ill in the ears of Hashem. Hashem heard, and His anger flared up, and Hashem caused a fire to come forth to consume the rabble at the edge of the camp.” (Ibid 11:1). This, although stated then, is the Korach rebellion. “And a fire came forth from Hashem and it consumed the two hundred and fifty men who had offered up the ketores.” (Ibid 16:35). This coincided with their arrival in Paran (ibid 12:16) and the sending of the scouts (ibid 13:2). It was when the scouts returned – or towards the end of the forty days that they were gone – that Korach stages his contest.

Upon the scouts' return, Korach, Dasan, and Aviram joined with the ten ungrateful tribal leaders. Then two hundred and fifty of Reuven joined with them. The rabble was made up of those who were leaders but did not feel they had enough power. Korach (a Levi), Dasan (a firstborn), men from Reuven (Yisroel's firstborn), and the ten tribal leaders. It was Korach, Dasan, Aviram, and the ten tribal leaders that were swallowed by the ground. (Ibid 16:32). After this joint rebellion, the people were subject to a decree to wander for forty-years (ibid 14:33) so that the generation would not see the Land of Yisroel (ibid 11:30).

The tribe of Levi did not lose their earnings. They did not join in the Korach rebellion. Therefore, they kept their special status. Thus, Hashem had already designated them when the service in the Mishkan began. However, something did change. Originally, Hashem said, "They shall guard my charges and the charges of the entire congregation before the Ohel Moed, to serve in the service of the Mishkan." (Ibid 3:7). That is what Moshe tells Korach, that he was in the service of the Mishkan. (Ibid 16:9). However, when it reiterates the service of the Leviim, the Torah says, "And to the Levites, behold, I have given all tithes of Yisroel for an inheritance, a change of their service that that they shall serve, of the service in the Ohel Moed." (Ibid 18:21). Some translate תַּלְתָּ as "exchange." However, that is not its translation. It means change as in Lot changed the wages of Yaakov many times. (Bereishis 31:7, 31:41). It means a change as in change of clothing. (Ibid 35:2, 41:14, 45:22). It means to change the commands as given. (Vayikra 27:10). The Torah again uses the word in regards to the Levites service. Once the Levi removes the best portion of the tithes he receives, he can eat the remainder as he wishes. "Because it is the wages for you. A change of your service in the Ohel Moed." (Ibid 18:31).

The change of the service was that they would no longer be in the Mishkan. The Mishkan refers to the sanctuary, the Kodesh and Kodesh Kedsahim. The Ohel Moed refers to the entire complex. The Leviim, despite not losing their service and not really being part of the Korach rebellion, did lose their ability to enter into the Kodesh. That, now, was reserved for the Kohanim. They originally were given the ability to bring forth korbanos. (Ibid 16:9). However, ultimately, the Torah predicted their true service. "They shall guard all of the vessels of the Ohel Moed and the charges [offerings] of Bnei Yisroel." (Ibid 3:8). That verse ends off, "to serve in the Mishkan." That part was now left out. That is why our verse says, "And the Levi shall do service in the Ohel Moed and they shall lift up their sin." (Ibid 18:23). Simply it can mean the sin of Bnei Yisroel. That is one of the main purposes of the Mishkan. However, it refers to their own sin. They did not stop Korach from his rebellion. While they did not join in, they did not gather around and stop him. They sat idly by while Moshe had to quell it. Areivim zel laze – responsibility for each other – means that the whole should quell the evil outliers. Even if a leader gets up, but the masses know its wrong, then the masses have to rise up to stop him. Bnei Yisroel cannot be sheep. They have to know they can gather together to do what is right. The Leviim should have stopped Korach. Later, a different Levi – the grandson of Aharon – Pinchas got up to do what is right. That is an example of proper zealous behavior. The leaders lead correctly and the masses have to follow correctly, too.