

# BOSTONER TORAH INSIGHTS

BOSTONER 'CHASSIDUS' TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

PARSHAS KORACH – 2 TAMUZ 5781

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The Ramban is of the minority opinion that the rebellion of Korach occurred before the Chet HaMeraglim. That it was the dissatisfaction of Korach, Datan and Aviram, and others, that the role and prestige of the firstborn was transferred to the Leviim. Those who rebelled and their followers believed that Moshe did this of his own accord for the egocentric reason to give his tribe honor. Korach was unique in that he was both a firstborn and a Levi, and his grievance was that Moshe honored his brother Aharon as the Kohen Gadol and passed over Korach as the head of Kehat and gave that honor instead to his younger cousin Elitzafan ben Uziel (Bamidbar 3:30)

It is interesting to note that Aharon was not a firstborn, since he had an older sister Miriam. One may suggest that Hashem purposely wanted the first Kohen Gadol not to be a Bechor, to show that the sanctity of the Kohen has no basis in the sanctity of the firstborn. Similarly, the Meshech Chachma points out that when the Leviim were exchanged with the firstborn in Parshas Bamidbar, Aharon and his sons were not counted among them (see Rashi to Bamidbar 3:39). He says that the Leviim had a status of Temura Bechor, or an exchange of a firstborn, and the exchange of a firstborn animal may not be offered as a Korban. Accordingly, the Leviim were not fit to do any Avodah in the Mikdash, only the Kohanim, which is why their sanctity needed to be independent and not a derivative of their exchange with the firstborn.

There were 22,273 firstborns (Bamidbar 3:43), which meant that there were 273 more Bechorim than Leviim that needed to be exchanged with five Shekel (Bamidbar 3:46). I would suggest that the 250 additional men that Korach was able to muster to stand with him against Moshe (Bamidbar 16:2) were from this group of 273, who were led to believe that human sanctity could not be exchanged with money and that they were able to offer the Ketores. Alternatively, Gershon had 7500 males (Bamidbar 3:22), Kehat had 8,600 (3:28) and Merari had 6200 (3:34) for a total of 22,300, however the Pasuk says there were 22,000 males (3:39). This is because 300 of the Leviim were also firstborn and were not exchanged at all. Perhaps it is from this group of 300 that Korach himself was a part of, that he was able to recruit over 80% to join him in his rebellion against Moshe.

Rashi is of the majority opinion that the rebellion of Korach happened after the Sin of the Spies, following the straightforward progression of events recorded in the Torah. When Moshe "falls on his face" (Bamidbar 16:4), Rashi remarks that this was already the fourth incident where Bnei Yisroel had disparaged themselves and he no longer had the strength to defend them to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. After the Sin of the Golden Calf, Moshe prayed on behalf of the nation (Shemos 32:11). After they complained Moshe prayed and advocated on their behalf (Bamidbar 11:12). When the Sin of the Spies angered Hashem, Moshe once again prayed on their behalf. However, Moshe had had enough when it came to the rebellion of Korach and could not advocate for them before Hashem.

There is a parable of a young prince who continued to embarrass his father the king with his Improper behavior. Time and again, the prince's royal tutor, who was a friend of the king, who appeased the king not to be too harsh on the young prince. However, after the fourth impropriety, the royal tutor could no longer defend the boy, as he was afraid the king would no longer accept his petitions.

Based on this approach that the rebellion of Korach happened after the Chet HaMeraglim, one could suggest that Korach knew that Moshe Rabbeinu had the choice to send the spies and it was not an absolute obligation from Hashem (see Rashi to Bamidbar 13:2). Thus, it was Moshe's decision as the leader that was to blame for the entire generation to be prohibited from entering Eretz Yisroel. Additionally, if this decision was made by Moshe himself, it called into question every other directive implemented by Moshe that perhaps originated from Moshe's will and was not directly commanded by Hashem.

There was once a Chassid who complained to the Pnei Menachem that the Bracha he received from the Rebbe did not come to fruition. The Pnei Menachem responded that the fact that one of his Brachos did not achieve their desired effect does not invalidate his status as a Rebbe.

The takeaway here is that we are all human beings, and no human being is perfect. Even those as accomplished as Korach are susceptible to errors in judgment. Furthermore, if and when our accepted Torah leaders, like Moshe Rabbeinu, make a decision based on their understanding, even if not absolutely obligated by the Torah, as long as it does not directly contradict the Torah, it is proper for the congregation to follow even if they do not understand the benefits.

May it be Hashem's will to give insight and understanding to the leaders of our generation so that we may all greet the Moshiach Tzidkeynu speedily in our days.