

בס"ד
ד' תמוז תש"פ
June 26th, 2020

פרשת קרח

At the start of the *Parsha*, after Korach and his men begin their rebellion against Moshe, he calls to Korach by saying, “שְׁמַעוּנָא בְּנֵי לֵוִי”.¹ But why does Moshe call the people of Levi if the *pasuk* says that his words were specifically directed towards Korach? Furthermore, why does the *pasuk* start in singular form, continue in plural form, and then finish in singular form?

Rashi comments² that Moshe was first speaking softly to just Korach, but once he noticed Korach's obduracy, he came to the realization that others may join him, and figured that it would be best to speak to the entire tribe.

The Chasam Sofer says that Moshe wanted to show the people that their argument demonstrated an unworthiness of being called “בני יעקב,” and as a result, he decided to attribute their lineage to only that of Levi. Indeed, we see that when Yaakov blessed Shimon and Levi, he says, “בְּסוּדָם אֶלְתַּבּא נַפְשִׁי בְּקֹהֶלֶם אֶלְתַּחַד כְּבָדִי”,³ which translates to “do not let my person be included in their council or my being counted in their assembly,” and Rashi quotes a Bereshis Rabbah⁴ that this was specifically referring to when Korach's ancestry was to be mentioned later on in time. In fact, the Gemara in Sanhedrin⁵ actually says that “בְּסוּדָם” is a reference to the Meraglim, and “בְּקֹהֶלֶם” is referring to Korach. Yaakov was a person who prided himself on his ability to maintain peace⁶ with others, and seeing this domestic discord did not bode well for him.

People often speak on a larger scale than necessary so that way their message is properly conveyed over. Moshe was intensely trying to curb the pandemonium and clamoring from the people, and ended up having to call out the entire tribe. Additionally, he was showing the people the legacy that they should try to live up to; by saying “בני לוי,” Moshe was indicating to them that they were failing to emulate Yaakov's harmonious tendencies. The insurgents were acting as a counterexample of behavior, rather than the ideal paradigm of cooperation; they were causing a sense of discord instead of concord.

Time and time again, we find ourselves in moments and instances that can go in either a direction of peace or one of friction, and the spotlight is hoisted upon us as a people to provide the right answer. It is imperative for Klal Yisrael to continue being רודפי שלום, and hopefully we should embody the pursuit of cooperation and accord that the Avos were able to typify so well, and continue to be an אור לגויים for many generations to come.

¹ במדבר טז:ח

² במדבר טז:ח ד"ה ויאמר משה אל קרח שמעו נא בני לוי

³ בראשית מט:ו

⁴ בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשת ויחי פרשה צח ד"ה בסודם אל תבא נפש

⁵ סנהדרין קט:

⁶ בראשית לג:יח, בראשית לד:ה