

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת נשא

נשא את ראש בני גרשון גם הם לבית אבתם למשפחתם

“Take a census of the sons of Gershon, as well, according to their fathers' household, according to their families” (4:22)

Why did Hashem instruct Moshe to count Gershon "as well" as Kehas? R' Moshe Feinstein writes that Hashem was teaching that there is no difference between Kehas and Gershon. Even though Kehas carried the sacred vessels and Gershon carried the curtains of the Mishkan, they are equally important in the eyes of Hashem because they were both carrying out their jobs in order to give honor to Hashem. Each person's task in this world is unique. It does not matter whether that task looks important or not. As long as each individual intends to do what Hashem desires and bring honor to His name, then that person has succeeded in life. Whatever position a person has, whatever stage of life a person is in each one of us has to make sure that we are doing what Hashem wants of us and are on the path to achieve those goals.

ויפקד משה ואהרן ונשיאי העדה את בני הקהתי למשפחתם ולבית אבתם

“Moshe and Aharon and the leaders of the assembly counted the sons of the Kehasites, according to their families, according to their fathers' household” (4:34)

The Midrash asks two questions on this posuk. First, why do some pesukim say that the Nesiim helped count the Leviyim while other pesukim do not mention them at all? Additionally, why were they even involved in the first place if Hashem did not tell Moshe to enlist their help in this counting? The answer is that Moshe felt that since the Nesiim were part of the counting of the rest of the Jewish people, they would think that their exclusion from this counting meant that they had gone down in their spiritual level and did not deserve to be part of counting the Leviyim. Even though this would not have been true, Moshe decided to take the Nesiim along with him so that they should not have such thoughts. This is why the Nesiim are sometimes mentioned and sometimes left out. In truth, the Nesiim were not there for the counting, only out of respect. Therefore, the posuk lets us know at the beginning of the numbers that they were present but does not record them as having an active role in the counting of the Leviyim anywhere else. This story shows us the type of sensitivity that a leader has to have. This sensitivity is what made Moshe Rabbeinu such a great person.

דבר אל בני ישראל איש או אשה כי יעשו מכל חטאת האדם למעל מעל בה' ואשמה הנפש ההוא

“Speak to the Children of Israel: A man or a woman who commits any of man's sins, by committing treachery toward Hashem, and that person shall become guilty” (5:6)

The Torah teaches how one can return an item that he stole from a convert after the convert's death. Normally, when the victim of theft is no longer alive, the stolen item is returned to his heirs. However, since a convert who has no children has no Jewish heirs, the thief is instead commanded to return the item to a Kohen and to bring a Korban Asham as an atonement.

Hashem loves gerim so much that He provided a special method of restitution for those who wronged them. Why does Hashem love converts so much? The Midrash records a posuk which we say every day in Pesukei D'Zimra (Tehillim 146): "Hashem loves the righteous." Why does Hashem love the righteous so much? A righteous person is, in a sense, a self-made man. He has attained a higher spiritual level because he has made an effort to work on himself and

become a better person. A person does not become a tzadik overnight. It takes a lifetime of effort, hard work and perseverance. Other people in the Jewish nation have a higher status by birth. A Jew is born a Jew, a Kohen is born a Kohen, but a tzadik is not born a tzadik. Because of the effort that a person invests in becoming a tzadik, Hashem has a great love for him. This is why the posuk (Tehillim 135:19-20) says: "House of Israel, bless Hashem; House of Aharon, bless Hashem; House of Levi, bless Hashem; those who fear Hashem, bless Hashem." While the others are referred to as a "house" because their stature is based on birth, "those who fear Hashem" are not referred to as a "house" because they achieved their level based on their own efforts. This is the reason why Hashem loves a tzadik.

The same is true of a convert. Hashem loves a ger because he decided on his own to become closer to Hashem. He earned the special love of Hashem by making himself into a different person and reaching higher levels. Hashem loves converts and the Torah warns us many times to be kind to converts and not to upset them. Hashem provides a special method for injustices toward converts to be rectified because he loves them so much.

Every day when we read the pesukim mentioned above, we should think about why Hashem loves tzadikim. They went out of their way to reach this level so Hashem reciprocates with His love. When we say these words, we should be mindful of what we are saying and try to reach that level ourselves.

**והתודו את חטאתם אשר עשו והשיב את אשמו בראשו וחמישתו יסף עליו ונתן לאשר
אשם לו**

“And they shall confess their sin that they committed; he shall make restitution for his guilt in its principal amount and add its fifth to it, and give it to the one to whom he is guilty” (5:7)

This posuk is the source for the mitzvah of confession and repentance. R' Moshe Sternbach asks why this mitzvah is taught in the context of returning a stolen object? When a thief does teshuva, he must return the stolen item in order to completely sever any connection that he may have to his sin. Through taking this action, he shows that he is distancing himself from his previous erroneous ways. This should be the model for every teshuva process. Repentance cannot be just lip service. A person must actively express his regret for what he has done and truly mean what he says.

יברכך ה' וישמרך. יאר ה' פניו אליך ויחנך. ישא ה' פניו אליך וישם לך שלום.
“May Hashem bless you and safeguard you. May Hashem illuminate his countenance for you and be gracious to you. May Hashem lift his countenance to you and establish peace for you” (6:24-26)

Why is Birchas Kohanim written in singular form if it is directed to the entire nation? The Meam Loez answers that there is a pre-condition which must be fulfilled in order for the bracha to be effective. Only when there is unity among the people will the blessings work. When the entire nation is like one such that they can be addressed as an individual, only then are the people worthy of blessing.

The first bracha contains three words because we receive blessings in the merit of the three avos. The second posuk contains five words because we receive blessings in the merit of the five books of Torah. The third posuk contains seven words because the blessings descend to us from the seven heavens.

Birchas Kohanim is referred to as a threefold bracha because it contains three pesukim. Another possible reason for this name is because of the trio that contribute to the blessing: The

makri (the chazan who calls out the words), the Kohen and Hashem.

ויאמר ה' אל משה נשיא אחד ליום נשיא אחד ליום יקריבו את קרבנם לחנכת המזבח
“Hashem said to Moshe: One leader each day, one leader each day shall they bring their offering for the dedication of the Altar” (7:11)

The Midrash records that Nesanel ben Tzuar suggested that all the Nesiim should bring the same korban so that there should be not fights and jealousy amongst them. Hashem was so pleased with this decision that he allowed them to bring korbanos on Shabbos. Since they were concerned for each other's honor, Hashem was willing to forego His honor on Shabbos. Additionally, because they gave honor to each other, they each merited their own parsha of honor in the Torah, as the korban of each individual Nasi is recorded in its own section. The Chofetz Chaim writes that this shows us how we should be sensitive to others. When we think about other people and their feelings, this causes great pleasure for Hashem and He is very happy with us.

Kesharim Baruch College/NYU Parsha Shiur

Shiur given by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

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