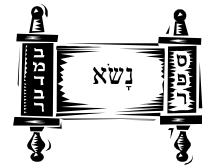




KINDER TORAH[®]



For parents to share with children at the Shabbos table

Parshas Nassos - Shavuos

Equal Opportunity

The sons of Levi were Gershon, Kehas, and Merari. Their families had the honor of carrying the various parts of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) during the travels in the desert. The census of these three sons and their families began in last week's parsha with the counting of Kehas' family. Gershon was the *bechor* (firstborn). Why was Kehas' family counted first, and the older brother Gerson's family counted second? The Keli Yakar answers this question by explaining the importance of honoring the Torah. The *Aron Kodesh* (Holy Ark) and the holy vessels were given to Kehas and his family to carry. These were the holiest vessels and therefore the job of carrying them was the most prestigious. Kehas was counted first because they carried the Aron, which contained the Torah. One must give proper honor to the Torah and those who learn it. If Gershon was counted first, one could mistakenly think that the honor of *bechora* (firstborn) is more important than the honor of Torah.

This answer raises another question. Why was the most prestigious job given to Kehas, and not his older brother Gershon? The Keli Yakar explains that this was done to show that the crown of Torah is free for all to take. If it were given to the *bechor*, he might think that he received it because he was older. Age has nothing to do with Torah. The crown of Torah is more precious than the crown of *Kehuna* (priesthood) or *Malchus* (Kingship). Those crowns are inherited, yet the crown of Torah is free for all to take.

Kinderlach . . . Honoring Torah and those who learn it is very important. We must stand up for our Rebbeim, and speak with them in a most respectful way. We must listen to what they say, and follow their halachic rulings. That great honor that is given to Talmidei

Chachomim *can be ours. It is not passed on from father to son. It is not dependent on wealth or political power. It is free for anyone to take. There is just one catch. You have to work for it. This Shavuos night take a big step towards greatness. Claim the crown of Torah for yourself.*

The Means is the End

"From thirty years of age and upwards until fifty years of age you shall count them" (Bamidbar 4:3). These are the years when a man is physically strongest. That is when he is best suited for the hard work of carrying the heavy parts of the *Mishkan* and its vessels. But wait a minute. It was all a miracle! The *Aron Kodesh* took no effort to carry. The *Aron* itself carried those who were carrying it! They needed only to appear to carry it. If so, why did only the strongest get to carry it? Since it took no effort, even the young and the weak old men could have carried the *Aron*.

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l answers this question with a beautiful insight. When it comes to Torah and mitzvos, a person must exert his full strength. The work itself is the mitzvah! A person should not complain that he had to work very hard to understand a *sugya* (Talmudic subject) or to build a *sukkah* or to find a kosher lulav. Mitzvos require hard work. Therefore, only the strongest were chosen to do the mitzvah of carrying the *Aron*, to teach us that although it required no effort, since it was a mitzvah, it demands full strength. So too, we must put our full strength into all of our mitzvos.

We may feel discouraged. Rav Moshe says that many people do not try their hardest because they feel that there is too much to learn. "I will never succeed in learning it all anyway. Why should I even try?" This is a big mistake. The Bnei

Gershon could have gotten discouraged with their mitzvah of carrying the boards of the *Mishkan*. After all, it did not appear as important as the carrying of the *Aron Kodesh*. That is why the Torah explains that the only sons of Gershon between the ages of 30 and 50 were counted. Their carrying was also a miraculous mitzvah like the sons of Kehas. It was also important. It also required their full strength.

Kinderlach . . .

Now you know one of the secrets of becoming a Talmid Chochom. Rav Moshe is telling us that learning Torah, like all mitzvos, requires hard work. But don't feel down if the work seems too hard. Even if a mitzvah appears to be small in our eyes, we must still give it our best effort. That itself is the mitzvah. This Shavuos night put your full strength into learning Torah. Give it your best effort. B'ezras Hashem you will all become big Talmidei Chachomim.

Becoming One

The wedding day. *Chosson* (groom) and *kallah* (bride) look forward to it with the greatest anticipation. This day they begin their new life together. This day they become united as one. Our sages compare *Pesach* to the *eirusen* (engagement) and *Shavuos* to the *nissuin* (wedding). Hashem is like the *chosson* and the Jewish people are like the *kallah*. *Shavuos* is a day of tremendous *kedusha* (holiness). This day, we have an opportunity to become as close to Hashem as a *kallah* is to a *chosson*. Let us use the opportunity properly.

Kinderlach . . .

Shavuos is a very holy day. Boruch Hashem Abba lets us stay up the whole night to learn. Don't run around outside the shul. We can get very close to Hashem this night. But only if we learn. Use your time well.



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