

# LOVE CHILD

*by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky*

This week, Moshe is commanded to count each tribe and tally the numbers -- thus the name of the Sefer BaMidbar is appropriately translated as The Book of Numbers. In a separate counting, the tribe of Levi is also enumerated. However, before the Torah counts the members of the tribe of Levi it reckons a subdivision of that tribe, the four children of Ahron who were designated as Kohanim (priests).

The Torah mentions those children by name, Numbers 3: 1-3: "These are the offspring of Ahron and Moshe on the day that Hashem spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai. These are the names of Ahron's children: Nadav, Avihu, Elozor and Isamar. These are the names of the children of Ahron who were Kohanim (priests), who were anointed to serve and minister."

An obvious question arises: the four children are also identified as sons of Moshe. They were not. In fact, Moshe's offspring are not mentioned in this section at all.

Moshe's mention as a forebearer of Ahron's children is in the context of a phrase that is seemingly out of place. "These are the offspring of Ahron and Moshe *on the day that Hashem spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai.*" What does speaking to Moshe at Sinai have to do with Moshe's relationship to his nephews?

The Talmud in Sanhedrin 19b derives from this verse that if one teaches someone else's children Torah it is as if he bore them. Thus, it is understandable that the Torah considers the children of Ahron, Moshe's offspring, "on the day that Hashem spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai."

Yet it is troubling. Why is Moshe considered a parent because he taught Torah to his nephews? Is that the greatest reason for the adulation that is due Moshe? He led the Jews, his nephews included from, Egypt. He orchestrated the splitting of the sea, and he saved them from heavenly retribution time and time again. Why is he considered as a parent only in the role of an educator? Why can't Moshe be considered as a savior or a patron, "as if he bore them?"

**Rav Lazer Gordon, the Telshe Rosh Yeshiva, had a man visit his Yeshiva to find a suitable match for his daughter. The man pointed to a boy who seemed very steeped in his studies and inquired about him. "Oh," said Reb Laizer. "He is my Yankele. He is one of the most brilliant students in Telshe."**

The man assumed it was the Rav's son and gestured toward another student. "That is my Dovid'l. He

has extremely fine character." The man was puzzled until he kept hearing from the Rav a description of each boy was preceded with the words, "my." "My Avrohom. My Meir. And My Chaim'l."

"Are all these students your family?" he asked.

Rav Lazer smiled, "everyone who is in my Yeshiva is a dear child. That is the only way I will have it."

The Torah is not telling those who are being *taught* Torah, "consider your teacher as if he were your father." There are many sorts of role models who may be considered as dear as a parent.

The Torah is telling a message to the *teacher* of Torah. It is impossible to mold a student and teach him the greatness of Torah unless you love him and treat him as if he were your child.

A teacher in our Yeshiva was asked, "Rabbi, how are your children?" In all sincerity he replied, "do you mean the ones I see at night or the ones who I see by day?"

Moshe is identified as a forebearer of Ahron's children in a very specific context: when he had to show supernatural love for them. When teaching them Torah.

If you don't love your student as your own child, you may have read to him. You may have lectured him. But you certainly did not teach him.

***Dedicated by Berny and Tova Fuchs in memory of Chana Mindel Fuchs  
Good Shabbos!***

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