

# **LINE OF LINEAGE**

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Today's Learning:

Shevi'it 3:3-4

Orach Chaim 110:5-7

Daf Yomi: Beitzah 3

Yerushalmi Megillah 11

In this week's parasha we read of the commandment that the kohanim should bless the Jewish people. The berachah which the kohanim say before performing that mitzvah is, "Asher kedishanu b'kedushato shel Aharon. . ."/ "Blessed are You Hashem . . . Who has sanctified us with Aharon's sanctity. . ."

R' Yaakov Moshe Charlap z"l (died 1952) taught: This formulation reminds us that just as the greatness of the Jewish people is not a product only of their deeds, but is primarily inherited - indeed, our good deeds are possible because of our lineage, so the sanctity of the kohanim is inherited. One who denies this principle denies the fundamentals of Judaism ("mekatzetz be'netiot" in Rav Charlap's words).

This was Korach's mistake. As we will read in three weeks, Korach said, "All Jews are holy." He maintained that anyone who prepared himself could be a kohen. Moshe replied, "In the morning Hashem will show who is His." Just as Hashem established clear boundaries in time, so He created boundaries in lineage and between different people's (and groups of people's) missions on Earth. (Mei Marom XIII p.129)

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*"Take a census of the sons of Gershon, as well . . ." (4:22)*

Many commentaries wonder about the purpose of the phrase "as well." R' Moshe Feinstein z"l explains it as follows:

Levi had three sons - Gershon, Kehat and Merari. In last week's parashah we read that the descendants of Kehat carried the holiest of the mishkan's implements, e.g., the aron/ark, the menorah, and the shulchan/table. In the verses which follow, we read that the descendants of Gershon carried the mishkan itself, i.e., the columns, the curtains, etc. These objects had less holiness than the items carried by the family of Kehat.

The family of Gershon could become dispirited by being assigned a seemingly less important role than their cousins. In order to prevent this, the Torah equates the sons of Kehat and Gershon. This is the meaning of "Take a census of the sons of Gershon, as well."

This lesson has practical implications, says R' Feinstein. Some people refrain from studying Torah because they know that they will never be great Torah scholars. Others refrain from donating money to the construction of a yeshiva because they feel that their donation would be insignificant; after all, they cannot afford to dedicate an entire wing. This is wrong - just as the Torah equates the roles of Gershon and Kehat, so Hashem equates great Torah scholars and philanthropists with those who do less, so long, of course, as they do their best.

There is another lesson here. Why was carrying the mishkan and its implements restricted to Levi'im between the ages of 30 and 50? These objects were not heavy; indeed, Chazal teach that the aron was weightless and actually "carried those who carried it." (In other words, not only did carrying the aron require no physical energy, even walking all day long with the aron was effortless). For most of the other objects, there were wagons.

R' Feinstein answers: The Torah is hinting to us that no matter how easy a mitzvah is, one should approach it as if it calls upon every ounce of his strength. One should not perform a mitzvah in an off-handed way, but rather should imagine himself to be a Levi in the prime of his life preparing to lift the seemingly heavy mishkan objects. (Darash Moshe)

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*"[Kehat's descendants'] numbers according to their families were two thousand, seven hundred and*

*fifty."* (4:36)

R' Yehonatan Eyebchutz z"l (died 1764) observes: The family of Kehat carried the aron (which contained the Torah), the menorah, the shulchan/table and the golden incense altar. The number 2,000 alludes to the Torah, which the Sages say existed for 2,000 years before the world was created. Seven hundred alludes to the seven-branched menorah, and, therefore, also to the Torah. (The gemara says that if one turns slightly to the south - in the direction of the menorah - when he prays, he will become wise.) The number 50 alludes to both the golden altar and the shulchan, both of which are symbolic of wealth. Just as 50 is only "half" a number (i.e., half of the more "complete" one-hundred), so wealth is not as important as Torah knowledge. (Tiferet Yehonatan)

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"On the seventh day, the leader of the children of Ephraim, Elishama ben Amihud." (7:48)

The midrash (Midrash Rabbah 14:3) on this verse states that because Yosef resisted the overtures of Potiphar's wife (see Bereishit, ch. 39), Hashem repaid him by allowing his descendant, the leader of Ephraim, to bring his sacrifices on Shabbat.

How does this reward fit Yosef's deed? R' Shlomo Ganzfried z"l (1804-1886; author of Kitzur Shulchan Aruch) explains as follows:

Yaakov's excessive mourning for Yosef requires explanation. However, the truth of the matter is that Hashem established the Patriarchs and the Twelve Tribes to parallel the upper spheres, and all twelve of the tribes are essential in order to complete this "building." Thus the midrash teaches that when Yosef was about to give in to Potiphar's wife, Hashem told him, "If you touch her, I will destroy the world." Hashem did not literally speak to Yosef at that moment; rather, Yosef recognized that if he forfeited his position as one of the tribes, all hope would be lost for the world's future.

The midrash states that the seven days of the mishkan's dedication paralleled the seven days of creation. This is why Hashem instructed that the leaders of the tribes should offer sacrifices at the dedication of the mishkan [and on the following eleven days], for Hashem wanted to confirm that the twelve tribes are an essential part of creation.

In general, a private offering may not be brought on Shabbat. However, Hashem made an exception on this day so that just as Yosef confirmed the importance of the twelve tribes to the continued existence of the world, so too could his descendant. (Apiryon)

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Letters from Our Sages

The following is an excerpt from the last will and testament of R' Moshe Sofer z"l (1763-1839; the "Chatam Sofer"). R' Sofer dates the document in the year "rufz sug ubrfzt"/"I will yet remember him" (i.e., [5]597/1837).

R' Sofer's will is printed together with Lev Ha'lvri, a running commentary on the will by R' Akiva Yosef Schlesinger z"l (died 1922).

Because man does not know his time [Kohelet 9:12], therefore, it is time to act for Hashem [Tehilim 119:126].

Study much Torah in order to glorify the house of our G-d and to raise its ruins. You, my sons, daughters, sons-in-laws, grandsons, and their children - hear me and live. Do not turn your hearts to conspire evil with those who do evil. Those who have recently instituted new things - they have distanced themselves from Hashem and His Torah because of our great sins - do not live in proximity to them and do not join with them at all. . .

Study Tanach with Rashi's commentary. Study the Torah with Ramban's commentary and teach it to your children, for it is the head [i.e., the source] of emunah/faith, and through it you will become wiser than Calcol, Darda and Heiman [three wise men of old - see Melachim I 5:11].

If, G-d forbid, you will be tested by hunger, thirst or poverty - may G-d grant you success - withstand that test, and do not turn to other gods. Do not turn to your own wits [rather, have faith that G-d will provide]. . .

If G-d will cause your light to shine and will have mercy on your fortunes, as I hope, with G-d's help, do not turn up your heads in haughtiness against any kosher person, G-d forbid. Know that we are the sons of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, the students of Moshe Rabbenu a"h, and the servants of King David. Our father [Avraham] said [Bereishit 18:27], "I am but dust and ash." Our teacher [Moshe] said [Shmot 16:8], "For what are we?" Our King [David] said [Tehilim 22:7], "I am a worm and not a man." The king for whom we hope [mashiach] will be a poor man riding on a donkey. Therefore, how could we feel haughtiness?

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah"), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at Project Genesis start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the Hamaayan page. Text archives from 1990 through the present may be retrieved from <http://www.acoast.com/~sehc/hamaayan/>. Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.

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