



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

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Maggid Shiur, Daf Yomi, OU.org
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Internalizing Torah Values

Three times in Sefer Bamidbar Bnei Yisrael are counted. In fact, the name of the sefer is translated as “numbers” due to these censuses. Typically, the men were counted from the age of twenty, worthy of being drafted into the army. The tribe of Levi, however, were counted from the age of 30 days. Rashi points out that from the age of thirty days one has a “*chezkat chayim*” and as such they are considered potential future laborers in the *mishkan*.

Shevet Levi may be used to being counted at a young age. We are told at the beginning of Sefer Shemot that 70 individuals descended to Egypt, yet only 69 people are identified. Chazal resolves the mystery by stating that Yocheved, a descendent of Levi, was born as they entered the gates of Egypt. Here too an infant was included in the calculation.

When asked to count the children of the tribe of Levi, the Torah tells us:

וַיִּפְקֹד אֹתָם מֹשֶׁה עַל־פִּי ה' כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה - *Moshe counted them according to God's word, just as he was commanded.* (Bamidbar 3:16).

Rashi is troubled by the insertion of the phrase **according to God's word**, which seems superfluous, given that the following phrase illustrates that he acted as “he was

commanded”. Rashi explains that Moshe was troubled by a practical complication. How could he enter the tents of the tribe of Levi to count the infants? He was concerned with potentially intruding while a mother was nursing her child. Hashem told Moshe to do his part and God will do the rest. What transpired was that Moshe would stand by the doorway of a tent and the *shechina* would inform Moshe of the number of males above the age of 30 days in each tent.

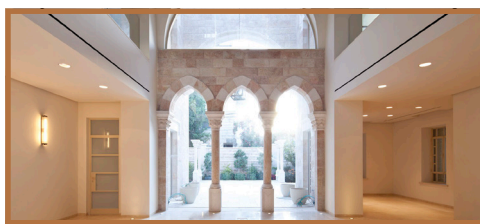
The Eish Tamid raises an intriguing question. If Moshe was commanded to count the tribe of Levi, why did he hesitate? Moshe should have immediately fulfilled Hashem's command! There is a significant message to derive from Moshe's behavior.

Moshe acted with *derech erez*. He has embedded in him the characteristic of respecting others and their privacy. Moshe conditioned himself to be an *oved Hashem*, to act in a way that reflects “*ratzon Hashem*” and to always conduct himself in a *tzanua* and modest manner. This command to count the infants seemed to contradict the Torah values with which he was imbued. He therefore asked Hashem for assistance with resolving this dilemma.

A story is told about Rav Moshe Feinstein that illustrates how one's devotion to Torah and mitzvot prevent them from acting in a seemingly contradictory fashion. Rav Moshe was once at a wedding and before the chuppa there was a minyan for mincha.

After Rav Moshe completed his *shemona esrei* the chazan waited for Rav Moshe to take three steps backwards before beginning *chazarat Hashatz*. There was an individual that was still davening behind Rav Moshe and so he refrained from taking three steps backwards, in accordance with the halacha, to avoid distracting that individual's concentration. He did not take steps sideways, or diagonally, but rather waited patiently in his place until the individual behind him completed his *tefilla*. Afterwards people asked Rav Moshe why he did not just take three small steps back rather than wait in his place. Rav Moshe responded- how could I have taken three steps backwards, it was like there was a brick wall behind me! In other words, if halacha forbids a certain movement, there is no way Rav Moshe could comprehend acting in a way that may be perceived as violating such a restriction.

Moshe Rabbeinu could not fathom infringing on one's privacy. Such conduct was not becoming of a ben Torah and so he needed guidance from Hashem as to how he would be able to accomplish the task at hand. May we emulate Moshe's behavior, always internalizing the Torah's precepts so they guide our every act and result in our constant portrayal of a kiddush Hashem! ■



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