

BH

## **Harmony, Expulsion, Frustration**

**The three Levite families and their various forms of labor symbolize three stages in Jewish history and in each of our lives**

**By Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson**

~~~

Dedicated in honor of

**Eda Schottenstein**

With much appreciation and respect

By her husband

**David Schottenstein**

~~~

### **1. Class Description:**

One of the axioms unique to traditional biblical scholarship is the idea that each event recorded in the Torah is not merely limited to its historical context, but is to be understood also from a psychological and spiritual point of view, granting them timeless significance.

In this week's Torah Portion, Naso, we read in meticulous detail about the three families of the Levites--Gershon Kehos and Merari--and their jobs in transporting the Tabernacle, the Mishkan, through the desert. While on the surface, this bears no relevance to our lives today, a deeper look at the spiritual meaning behind their respective roles allows us to glean wisdom and inspiration for our daily challenges and struggles. Their three distinct characters and themes will also parallel three different statuses and stations Jews have experienced throughout their history and which each of us encounters in our own labor to discover the spark of G-d within our hearts.

2. Sources:

<p><b>1. Numbers</b> Chapter 4</p> <p>1. The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron saying:</p> <p>2. <u>Lift the heads</u> (i.e. take a census) of the sons of <u>Kehos</u> from among the children of Levi by their families, according to their fathers' houses</p> <p>3. From the age of thirty until the age of fifty, all who enter the service, to do work in the Tent of Meeting...</p> <p>21. The Lord spoke to Moses saying:</p> <p>22. <u>Lift the heads</u> (i.e. take a census) of the sons of <u>Gershon</u>, of them too, following their fathers' houses, according to their families...</p> <p>29. [As for] the sons of <u>Merari</u>, you shall count them by their families, according to their fathers' houses.</p>	<p><b>א. במדבר</b> פרק ד</p> <p>(א) וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: (ב) נִשְׂא אֶת רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי קֹהַת מִתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי לֵוִי לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם: (ג) מִבֶּן שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וְנִמְעָלָה וְעַד בֶּן חֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה כָּל בָּא לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלָאכָה בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד...: (כא) וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: (כב) נִשְׂא אֶת רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי גֵרְשׁוֹן גַּם הֵם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם...: (כט) בְּנֵי מֵרָרִי לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם תִּפְקֹד אֹתָם:</p>
<p><b>2. Genesis</b> Chapter 49</p> <p>10. The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the student of the law from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him will be <u>a gathering of peoples</u>.</p>	<p><b>ב. בראשית</b> פרק מט</p> <p>(י) לֹא יִסּוּר שֵׁבֶט מִיְהוּדָה וּמַחֲקֵק מִבֵּין רַגְלָיו עַד כִּי יָבֹא שִׁילּוֹ וְלוֹ יִקְהַת עַמִּים:</p>
<p><b>3. Midrash Rabba</b> Nasso, 6:4</p> <p>When discussing the [counting of the] children of Kehos and Gershon, the verse writes "Lift (i.e. count) their heads," because G-d showed honor to the descendants of Kehos because they carried the Holy Ark, and to Gershon because he was the first-born.</p> <p>However Merari was a not the first-born, and his descendants carried merely the beams, poles, pillars, and sockets therefore it is not written about them "Lift their heads."</p>	<p><b>ג. מדרש רבה</b> נשא פ"ו פ"ד</p> <p>בבני קהת ובני גרשון נאמר בהן נשיאות ראש שחלק להם הקב"ה כבוד לקהת בעבור כבוד הארון ולגרשון על שהיה בכור. אבל בבני מררי שלא היו אלא בני פשוט ועבודת משאם לא היה אלא קרשים ובריחים ועמודים ואדנים לא נאמר בהם נשא את ראש.</p>

### 3. Questions and Exercises

1. In what areas of your life would you define yourself as Kehos? As Gershon? As Merari?
2. When in life do you experience: 1) Kehos- peace of mind, 2) Gershon- discipline and control  
3) Merari- frustration and irresolvable issues?
3. Why does specifically Merari carry the foundations of the Mishkan?
4. What are the three stages of Gershon, Kehos, and Merari in Jewish history, and what is the unique value in each?

~ ~ ~

#### מקורות להשיעור:

- א. לקוטי תורה, לכ"ק אדמו"ר הזקן, פרשת נשא
- ב. אור התורה, לכ"ק אדמו"ר הצמח צדק, פרשת נשא
- ג. שיחת שבת פרשת נשא תשל"ב, ושיחת שמחת בית השואבה תשכ"א, לכ"ק אדמו"ר מליובאוויטש
- ד. לתורה ולמועדים, להגאון ר' שלמה יוסף זוין, פרשת נשא