

Count the Bnei Levi (according to their fathers' household, according to their families) every male from one month of age and up shall you count them. Moshe counted them according to the word of Hashem as he had been commanded. (3:15,16)

Rashi cites a dialogue between Moshe *Rabbeinu* and Hashem. Moshe asked the Almighty, "How do I enter the tents to determine the number of infants in their home?" It would have been improper for Moshe to enter the Levite tents to count the number of suckling infants. Hashem responded, "You do yours and I will do mine." Moshe would go to the entrance of each tent and wait outside while the *Shechinah* preceded him, after which a Heavenly voice would proclaim the number of babies in the tent. We must understand how it was that Moshe decided to do things "his way." What prompted him to imply that he could not enter the tents of women with infants? Hashem instructed him to take a census; he should assume his responsibility and do what must be done!

Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl, posits that the *middah*, character trait, of *derech erez*, proper manners and behavior, is an integral component in *Torah* study. Human decency and moral behavior demand that one does not enter a private home where there is a nursing mother and child. Consequently, this cannot be Hashem's command. If it is against the rules of *derech erez*, then obviously Hashem meant for Moshe to count the infants from outside the tent. Proof of this thesis is the fact that the *Torah* recognizes Moshe's act as consistent with Hashem's command. Although we do not find Hashem commanding him to remain outside, if it is not *derech erez* to enter, then it is as if he were commanded to remain outside.

Perhaps if we would all realize that *derech erez* is not simply something we learn about in a *mussar sefer*, but rather an integral component of our *Torah* study and achievement, we would present ourselves in a different manner and view others in a different light.