

And you shall appoint the Leviim over the Mishkan of the Testimony. (1:50)

Upon perusal of the *pesukim*, it is evident that the Torah instructed Moshe *Rabbeinu* to appoint the *Leviim* for their mission concerning the *Mishkan* of Testimony even **before** he was told to count them. Whereas the rest of the nation was immediately totaled into the census, *Shevet Levi* was first presented with their unique function and then counted. The *Shach* explains this from a practical standpoint. *Shevet Levi's* census was quite small in contrast to the other *Shevatim*, Tribes. Initially, this might have caused them *chalishas ha'daas*, a somewhat downcast feeling. After all, why should *Shevet Levi* be the smallest in number? I must add that it is not just a quantitative issue. Every child that is brought into *Klal Yisrael* is unique. Every parent wants to play a role in increasing the quantitative effect of the Jewish People. Every Jew is a world. Why should *Shevet Levi* have less? Thus, the Torah precludes their census by first calling attention to their lofty position. When they realized their sublime calling, it assuaged their negative feelings regarding their lower numbers in *Klal Yisrael's* total census.

After all is said and done, does their increased role in the *Mishkan* ameliorate their decreased progeny? *Horav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita*, explains that indeed *Shevet Levi* had a comparatively diminished family size for a very good reason – one for which they could all be proud. *Klal Yisrael's* miraculous growth in Egypt was due to a special Heavenly blessing of *kein yirbeh v'kein yifrotz* – “so it would increase and so it would burst forth” (*Shemos* 1:12). The evil Pharaoh was concerned that his Jewish citizens would one day rise up and rebel against his rulership. He felt that by subjugating them to hard and degrading labor he would minimize their growth. When Pharaoh voiced his concern: *Pen yirbeh u'pen yifrotz*, “Lest they multiply; lest they burst forth,” Hashem responded, *Kein yirbeh v'kein yifrotz*; “The more you afflict them – the more they will grow and increase.” Thus, *Klal Yisrael* multiplied, increasing their numbers by leaps and bounds in a manner that was miraculous. There was, however, one drawback: their growth was commensurate with their labor and affliction. *Shevet Levi* remained in Goshen, seeing to it that the *bais ha'medrash* was kept spiritually verdant. Whereas *Klal Yisrael's* physical growth was supernatural, *Shevet Levi* had to settle for the “natural.” As an aside, this provides us with an inspiring lesson. Life is ultimately balanced. The “haves” and “have nots” will, in the final analysis, all balance out. It might even take a few generations, but at the end, they are all equal.

Returning to the reason that *Shevet Levi* were not immediately counted like the other *Shevatim*, *Rav Kanievsky* explains that this was due to their distinction. *Shevet Levi* was different. They were in a league all their own, due to their function as guardians of the *Mishkan*. The concept of *minyan*, census, is that everyone is included together as a single unit. Since *Shevet Levi* was different, they were not counted together with the rest of *Klal Yisrael*. They were their own distinct *minyan*. Thus, the Torah defers the count to single out *Shevet Levi* as the appointees to oversee the *Mishkan*.