

## You shall appoint the Leviim over the Mishkan of the Testimony, over all of its utensils and everything that belongs to it. (1:50)

The *Leviim* were first appointed to their service in the *Mishkan*, and later they were counted. Why were they not counted immediately, like the rest of *Klal Yisrael*? The *Shach* explains that had they been counted prior to receiving their positions, they might have become disheartened by their census in proportion to the rest of the nation. There were only twenty-two thousand *Leviim* from the age of thirty days, in comparison with much larger numbers for each tribe – who were counted from the age of twenty years old. Once they were given their lofty positions serving in the *Mishkan*, their “stock” rose. They now realized that *eichus*, quality, exceeds *kamus*, quantity. Their numbers might not be impressive, but their function and spiritual status compensated for it.

Why were the *Leviim* so many fewer in number than their cousins? *Ramban* explains that this was by Heavenly design. The Egyptians slandered the Jews’ family purity, claiming that they controlled the lives of the Jewish women. After all, if they had control over the men, making them slave day and night, they certainly held reign over their wives. To counter this scurrilous attack on Jewish family purity and to clear the Egyptians’ maligning of our bloodlines, Hashem miraculously had the Jewish women give birth to sextuplets. That every Jewish birth consisted of six children was clearly a miracle. Why did Hashem do this? He taught the Egyptians an important lesson, one which all anti-Semites should heed: *Kaasher yaanu oso – kein yirbeh v’chein yifrotz*, “But as much as they would afflict it, so it would increase and so it would spread out” (*Shemos* 1:12). The Egyptians sought to persecute the Jews with their malignant slander. Hashem wrought miracles to counter their besmirching. Certainly, the Jewish G-d would not want to multiply the offspring of illicit unions. It must then be that the Egyptians were making up lies in order to denigrate the Jews. *Shevet Levi*, the Tribe of *Levi*, was not included in the Egyptian slavery. The Egyptians did not slander them; thus, they did not benefit from the miraculous facility of multiple births. This miracle was provided only for those who were slaves under Egyptian domination.

Hashem never forgets the trials and tribulation to which we are subjected. For every bit of pain that we experience, for every word of slander, for every tear, for all the grief – we will be “compensated.” A delicate Heavenly balance guides each of our lives. We do not take the time to see how the events of our lives, the parts of the puzzle, all seem to come together and fit; the grief and joy, the failures and the successes – all come together in perfect harmony, as only Hashem can do. We just have to be patient, but it would be wise to open our eyes and look.

An inspirational story (related by Rabbi Yechiel Spero/*Touched by a Story*2), underscores this idea. When *Horav Aryeh Leib Gunzberg, zl*, popularly known as the *Shaagas Aryeh*, ascended to the position of *Rav* of Metz, he was already seventy years old. This caused a number of the lay leaders concern, because they were not interested in searching for another *Rav* in the near future. The *Shaagas Aryeh* allayed their fears when he gave his word to serve them for the next twenty-five

years – a promise that Hashem “allowed” him to keep.

When the *Rav* came to assume his post, the community’s laymen took him on a tour of his new house. The house was not magnificent, but compared to his old house, it was a veritable palace. The *Shaagas Aryeh* had in the past lived in utter abject poverty, his family deprived of the basic necessities to which the average person was accustomed. The strain on him and his family was overwhelming. Nonetheless, he did not allow his physical and material deprivation to impugn his ascendance up the ladder of spiritual and Torah scholarship.

As they went from room to room, the *Shaagas Aryeh* was amazed at the spaciousness and cleanliness of the structure and its furnishings. The laymen, however, could not help noticing that as he walked from room to room and observed each object, his lips kept moving, almost as if he was whispering to himself. This concerned the people, since, as an elderly man, he gave the impression that he was talking to himself. They began to murmur among themselves, wondering what were they getting into.

Finally, one of the men who was escorting the *Shaagas Aryeh* gathered the courage (or perhaps *chutzpah*) to ask the *Rav* what he was saying. The *Rav* looked at the questioner through pensive eyes and said, “David *Hamelech* pleads, ‘*Samcheinu kimos inisanu*’ which I feel means, ‘Please, Almighty, grant me happiness commensurate to the pain which I suffered’ (*Tehillim* 90:15). I am merely asking Hashem to permit me to enjoy my surroundings in proportion to the suffering, pain and deprivation that my family and I have endured.”

There is a balance. When we suffer, we seem to forget the good times. When we are enraptured with joy, the pain that has preceded this moment is forgotten. Hashem maintains a Heavenly account of all that occurs in one’s life: what preceded it and what will follow. We believe and trust *b’emunah sheleimah* that everything which occurs is decreed by Hashem. Nothing is happenstance. Life is one long generational continuum. The joy that we receive might quite possibly have been generated by the pain endured by our ancestor. There is a balance.