

Count the sons of Levi according to their father's household... every male from one month of age and up shall you count them. Moshe counted them according to the word of Hashem. (3:15,16)

Perhaps the infants of *Shevet Levi* were precocious, but they certainly did not perform the service in the Sanctuary at the age of thirty-days old. **Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl**, explains that the members of other tribes were occupied with guarding and working the land. Thus, they were unable to devote as much time to their children's education as were the *Leviim*. Therefore, they were counted when they reached the age of twenty years. When they were still young, it was difficult to know if they would achieve the spiritual level required to represent the nation. At age twenty, the way in which they leaned was discernible. *Shevet Levi* grew up in homes that were replete with *kedushah*, sanctity. From day one, the suckling babies were imbued with a proclivity towards serving Hashem with all of their hearts and souls. Thus, they were counted as soon as they became viable human beings.

Rav Moshe concludes that, if the parents are *bnei Torah*, observant Jews devoted wholly to Torah ascendancy, who strive to grow from strength to strength in Hashem's service; if Torah is their life, then it is possible to say that from birth the child will follow in their ways. Children gravitate towards the values they perceive in their home. When children grow up in a home in which duplicity is acceptable, in which spiritual hypocrisy is not frowned upon – it will be reflected in the children. Conversely, when children sense their parents' commitment, devotion and sacrifice for Torah observance – it, too, will be reflected and, quite possibly, enhanced.

Chazal point out the difficulty for Moshe *Rabbeinu* in executing this census. It is not as if the infants could stand outside of their parents' tent and convey their pedigree and other vital information. For Moshe to enter the Levite tents to count the suckling babies would have been inappropriate. *Chazal* note Moshe's dialogue with Hashem. "How can I enter the tents to count the infants?" Moshe asked. Hashem replied, "You do yours, and I will do Mine." Moshe went to the tent and presented himself outside of it. Hashem preceded him, and a Heavenly Voice proclaimed the number of babies in the tent. Why was it necessary to do it this way? Why did Moshe have to stand outside while Hashem gave him the count? Since it was Hashem Who was doing the counting, Moshe could have sat in his "office" and received the total from Hashem.

Hashem was teaching Moshe an important principle in Jewish service: "You do yours, and I will do Mine." We must not refrain from performing a *mitzvah* because it appears difficult or because the conditions surrounding it seem precarious. Our function is to do, to make the attempt. If we fall flat on our face – at least we have made the attempt. When we refuse to make the attempt, we are indicating that we really do not want to do it.

It is all about attitude. One either wants to perform the *mitzvah*, or he does not. If he wants to, he will do it, and if Hashem wants him to succeed, he will. Otherwise, he will sit back and conjure up all kinds of excuses for his failure to carry out the *mitzvah*. In the end result, it all amounts to one reason: he did not really want to do it.

When *Horav Aharon Kotler, zl*, came to America, he was told by many that, in a land where materialism and physicality dominated the mindset of people, he had absolutely no chance of establishing a Lithuanian type *yeshivah* where Torah was studied *lishmah*, for its sake, with no other ulterior motives, off the ground – let alone have it succeed and impact the country. *Rav Aharon* paid no heed to the doomsayers and established Beth Medrash Govoha, the *yeshivah*, which, amongst a few others, transformed the spiritual landscape of America.

The *Alter, zl, m'Novorodok* was wont to say, “The notion of whether I can achieve the goal never enters my mind; the only question I ever have is whether it is necessary.” If something is required, if it has to be done, it is done. Nothing stands in the way of one’s will and determination. The *Toldos Yaakov Yosef* says, “One who claims that he is unable to do something, it is because he does not want to do it. Had he wanted to, he would have been able.”

If one believes in Hashem, he will ultimately also believe in himself. Our faith in the Almighty carries us through the most difficult times, the most compelling challenges. *Horav Ezriel Tauber* writes about his parents’ faith, a faith which sustained them throughout the war years. Prior to World War II, the family resided in Pressburg, Hungary. The Germans entered Hungary in 1940, and his family moved to Czechoslovakia until 1942, when they returned to Hungary, hoping that the situation had become more bearable. In 1944, it all came to an end, as the Germans overran the country and sent the survivors to the death camps. During the war years, *Rav Tauber’s* mother gave birth to three sons. Indeed, on the Friday night in 1944 when the family was transported to Auschwitz, his mother was pregnant with his sister!

Understandably, people thought that she had lost her mind. The ghetto was neither conducive to pregnancy, nor was it a healthy place to raise infants and children. Yet, this saintly woman did what was necessary to protect her family. As they hid in bombed out buildings and scrounged for morsels of food, she would say, “We are Jews. And, as such, we must do what is demanded of us. We will do ours – Hashem will do His.” This was her maxim, a belief which guided her through the war, as she gave birth and raised four more children. While his sister did not survive the war, his mother and brothers did.

Rav Tauber once asked his mother about her thoughts during the war: “Did you really think that we would survive the war? Why were you determined to increase your family at a time when you were acutely aware that people were dying, and that the chance that an infant would survive was a dream? Where did you conjure up the strength of faith to have children, when everyone else worried about locating the next morsel of food?”

His mother replied, “We are *Yehudim*; we believe in *Techiyaas HaMeiseim*, the Resurrection of the Dead. A child that is born is not only here for *olam hazeh*, this world. He remains a child *la’netzach*, for eternity! I have done what is expected of me. It is up to Hashem to do as He sees fit.”

Horav Moshe Shapiro, Shlita, employs a similar concept in explaining the *mitzvah* of *Sefiras HaOmer*, counting of the *Omer*. The Torah says, *Tisperu chamishim yom*, “You shall count fifty days” (*Vayikra* 23:16). Veritably, we count forty-nine days/seven weeks. Where does the fiftieth day come into the picture? The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that the fifty levels of purity coincide with an equal number of levels of impurity. *Klal Yisrael* was rushed out of Egypt because they were becoming perilously close to that fiftieth level of *tumah*, spiritual impurity, from which there is no return. It was necessary that they be expelled immediately from the spiritually corrupt, morally decadent land of Egypt. They were that close to spiritual extinction. Likewise, fifty levels of knowledge correspond to fifty levels of ignorance. We work our way up, rung by rung, until we reach the maximum that man alone can achieve – forty-nine levels – forty-nine days. Hashem tells us to count forty nine days – forty nine levels, because that is all we can attain. We prepare ourselves, however, for that which is humanely impossible – the fiftieth level. When we make it through the forty-ninth level, Hashem gives us a taste of the fiftieth. We are to do ours; He will do His and take us over the top.