

ISSUE #136

ה' תמוז תשפ"ו
20/06/26



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת קרח

דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְקַח מֵאֲתָם מִטָּה מִטָּה לְבֵית אָב וכו'. וְהָיָה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר אֶבְחַר בּוֹ מִטָּהוּ יִפְרֹחַ וכו'. וַיְהִי מִמַּחֲרַת וַיָּבֵא מֹשֶׁה אֶל אֹהֶל הָעֵדוּת, וְהִנֵּה פָּרַח מִטָּה אֶהֱרֹן לְבֵית לֵוִי וכו'. וַיֵּצֵא מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל הַמַּטֵּה מִלִּפְנֵי ה' אֶל כָּל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וַיֵּרְאוּ וַיִּקְחוּ אִישׁ מִטָּהוּ.
(במדבר יז, יז-כד)

Speak to the Bnei Yisroel and take from them one staff for each father's house ... It shall be that the man whom I will choose – his staff will blossom ... The next day, Moshe came to the Ohel Moed and behold! The staff of Aharon of the house of Levi had blossomed ... Moshe brought out all the staffs from before Hashem to all Bnei Yisroel; they saw, and they took, each man his staff.
(Bamidbar 17:17-24)

In this week's *Sidrah*, after Korach and his followers were swallowed by the earth, Klal Yisroel were convinced that Moshe was the Divinely chosen leader and Aharon was the rightful Kohen Gadol. However, some people still believed that the firstborns should not have been disqualified from performing the *avodah*. They wanted all the *shevatim* to participate and have a share in the service of the Mishkan through their firstborns.

To address this, Hashem performed another miracle to clearly demonstrate His selection of the tribe of Levi. Hashem commanded Moshe to take one staff from each *shevet*, inscribed with the name of its Nasi. On the staff of Levi, Aharon's name was inscribed. Moshe was instructed to place all the staffs in the Ohel Moed, the designated place for the *avodah*. The staff that blossomed would symbolise which *shevet* was chosen to perform the *avodah* in the Ohel Moed. The next morning, when Moshe entered the Ohel Moed, he found that Aharon's staff had blossomed. This was undeniable evidence of the Levi'im being chosen for the *avodah*.

The *possuk* interestingly concludes this account with the phrase, וַיִּקְחוּ אִישׁ מִטָּהוּ, *and they took, each man his staff*. This detail requires further explanation. Each of these seemingly ordinary sticks was merely a piece of dry wood. Surely, the Torah would not simply mention that each Nasi took his staff home for disposal. So, what is the significance of each Nasi taking his stick? Why would they want a constant reminder of their unsuccessful attempt to be chosen for serving in the Mishkan?

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* shares a remarkable insight from the Ozna'im LaTorah that sheds light on this topic and addresses the previous question. R' Zalman Sorotzkin begins by examining the intense competition among the *shevatim*. What were they fighting for, and why was there so much interest in this status? The tribe of Levi was not allotted any land in Eretz Yisroel because they were meant to be wholly dedicated to the service of Hashem. Instead, they would rely on gifts of *ma'aser* from the rest of the nation for their sustenance. This situation posed a grim financial outlook, as they were dependent on the charity of others. Historically, there were times when the Jewish people strayed from the Torah, leading to situations where the Levi'im struggled for basic necessities and were starving for bread.

This raises the question: why were all the tribes so eager to obtain this role, which entailed a life of service in the Mikdash without financial security? It's unlikely that their desire for the *avodah* was simply due to their circumstances in the *midbar*, where they were sustained by manna and had no financial worries. They understood that eventually, they would enter Eretz Yisroel, where the unfortunate reality would be that those committed to serving Hashem would lack a stable income. Given this understanding, why was the status of the Levi'im so fiercely contested?

R' Zalman explains that the sincere desire of the entire nation to be chosen indicates the elevated spiritual state of Klal Yisroel at that time. Their ambition to grow closer to Hashem and serve Him more profoundly outweighed any other considerations. They were willing to relinquish their share of the land and endure lives of poverty and hardship, all for the tremendous spiritual privilege of serving in the House of Hashem.

When Aharon's staff was ultimately chosen, their greatest dreams and hopes were shattered, leaving them heartbroken. Nevertheless, they wanted to take their sticks home as a memento, a reminder for generations to come that they had participated in the great competition to bring themselves closer to the service of Hashem. Each Nasi took home this reminder of how eager they were to give up financial security and accept a life of hardship in the name of serving Hashem.

Although the Levi'im were ultimately chosen, every *shevet* had been prepared to sacrifice material comforts for this elevated status. This aligns with what the Gemara (*Berachos* 6a) states: חָשַׁב לַעֲשׂוֹת וְלֹא עָשָׂה מַעֲלָה עָלָיו הַכְּתוּב כְּאִלּוּ עָשָׂה, *If someone intends to perform a mitzvah but is unable to do so, the Torah regards them as if they had performed it.*

The Rosh Yeshiva emphasises that this perspective of the *shevatim* underscores a teaching from the Gemara (*Kiddushin* 82a): רַבִּי נְהוֹרַאי אוֹמֵר מִנִּיחַ אֲנִי כָּל אוֹמְנוֹת שְׂבָעוֹלָם וְאִינִי מְלַמֵּד אֶת בְּנֵי אֶלָּא תוֹרָה, *R' Nehorai says, 'I abandon all professions in the world, and I do not teach my son anything but Torah.'* The *shevatim* understood that the value of spiritual growth far exceeds any material gains.

The account of each Nasi taking his "unlucky" stick home teaches us an important lesson about a Yid's outlook on life. An opportunity to serve Hashem in a greater capacity is more valuable than anything else. Just as all of Klal Yisroel were willing to forfeit their material security to grow spiritually, may we strive to draw ever closer to Hashem, recognising that Avodas Hashem is the greatest pursuit possible!