



PARSHAS NOSSO – MICHAEL LEBRETT

‘Take a census of the sons of Gershon, **also them**’ (Bamidbor 4:22)

Many meforshim are perplexed regarding these last two words. Having counted the sons of Kehos in last weeks sedra (4:2), it is only natural that his brother, Gershon, should have his turn, and be counted now. The words ‘also them’ seem unnecessary. It seems to suggest that there is a special emphasis to count them – not just Kehos but **even** Gershon.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein suggests the following thought. There are people who underestimate themselves in the realm of Torah and mitzvos. They take it for granted that they will never be able to grasp the complex arguments of the Gemorro or fully understand the minutiae of halocho – so they don’t bother learning. Equally tragic, are those who feel that keeping the mitzvos correctly is far beyond their capabilities – so they don’t bother keeping the mitzvos either.

The answer to those who doubt their abilities, is to be found in the words ‘**also them**’. Gershon was in fact the firstborn of Levi. Yet Kehos was counted first (Bamidbor (4:2). The Kli Yokor is amongst those that comment on this, and say, that this order was due to the fact that Kehos carried the Aron and other holy vessels of the Mishkan. Out of deference and respect for this, Kehos was listed before his older brother, Gershon, whose occupation was ‘merely’ to carry the curtains and coverings of the Mishkan.

However, lest Gershon feel that they are no match for Kehos, or that their efforts are less worthy than Kehos and they do not deserve to be counted as Kehos was, the Torah stresses that they are to be counted too – ‘**also them**’ is added for extra emphasis. The lesson is, that so long as whatever is asked from a person he does to honour Hashem, he is as valuable as the next man, though it may not seem so. The person who teaches children to read the aleph-beis is as vital as the one who teaches the more complex and difficult material.

Perhaps more so!

The Divrei Chaim of Sanz was conducting his weekly ‘tisch’ when he noticed his aleph-beis rebbe enter the large hall. He indicated that he wished that man to come and sit beside him at the head of the table – a special honour. The rebbe who taught the Divrei Chaim gemorro noticed this and was somewhat aggrieved that he had not been similarly honoured.

The Divrei Chaim explained that in truth he owed a great deal to both of them. However, the aleph-beis rebbe had taught him something that was irrefutable. On the other hand, the gemorro rebbe had taught him how to understand particular gemorros that could always be challenged. It is quite natural for the same gemorro to be understood differently by different people. It was not irrefutably true.

Teaching aleph-beis should not be viewed as a lesser job, just as Gershon’s role in the Mishkan was not inferior to Kehas.

Every person has his place, his honour and his value.