

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Focus of The Levi'im

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR
 RABBI CHAIM TROPP

It was in that time that Hashem separated the tribe of Levi to carry the Ark of the Covenant of Hashem to stand before Hashem to serve him and to bless in his name until this day. Therefore, the Levi does not have a portion and inheritance amongst his brothers, Hashem is his heritage, like Hashem your G-d has spoken about him. (10:8-9)

Have you ever dreamed of a rewarding, fulfilling, and spiritually satisfying job with excellent hours and vacation time? How about a job which only required you to work 2 - 4 weeks a year!?

In this week's *parasha*, the Torah references the unique status of the tribe of Levi. The tribe, comprising *Kohanim* and *Levi'im*, are granted the exclusive privilege of serving in the *Bais Hamikdash*. Both the *Kohanim* and *Levi'im* are divided into a rotation of 24 groups, each performing their holy service for a term of two weeks per year. On the holidays, the entire tribe is welcome to serve. While their work was of the highest value, its quantity was limited because of this rotation system.

In light of this work schedule, Rashi's comments on these *passukim* seems puzzling. Rashi - in his comments on *passuk Tes* - explains that the Torah is stating here the reason the *Levi'im* were not granted a complete portion in the land of Israel. Since the *Levi'im* are tasked with serving Hashem in the *Bais Hamikdash*, they are not available to put in the requisite time and effort into working the land. However, as we mentioned above, the *Levi'im* only worked in the *Bais Hamikdash* for several weeks a year. If so, why are they not free

to work their land for the entire rest of the year? How could this be an explanation for why they are not granted a complete portion of the land?

I believe that the answer to this question can, perhaps, serve as a lesson for our own lives and the way we serve Hashem. True, the *Levi'im* only worked a few weeks per year, but this exalted work - in which a human being comes as close as he possibly can to the divine presence of Hashem - is an occupation that was the primary focus of their lives for the remaining 46 weeks of the year as well. The *Levi'im* could not engage in the physical livelihood of the common man. They had to maintain concentration on their spiritual mission of serving in the *Bais HaMikdash*, precluding their involvement in a typical agricultural lifestyle. Through their focus and concentration, they remained connected to their holy job throughout the year.

While we cannot change the tribe into which we were born, and we may not be able to reach the spiritual heights of *shevet Levi*, we can learn something about the way that we serve Hashem. Our daily lives seem to indicate an on-and-off relationship with Hashem. We pray several times a day and try to learn some Torah, but in between we engage in myriad other pursuits that ostensibly interrupt our spiritual service. However, if we can retain a primary mental focus on the service of Hashem, we remain connected to Him throughout the day just as the tribe of Levi remained connected to Hashem for an entire year. Our focus may not require us to quit our job, as in the case of Levi, but it can uplift and enrich our daily lives. 🕉️

A TIMELY HALACHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

We have been discussing the *halachos* and issues that come up while traveling. Here are a few interesting *halachos* regarding "what type" of trips can one go on.

- It would seem as though one cannot travel to a place where one will not be able to fulfill one's *halachic* obligations (*Pri Megadim*, *Eishel Avraham* 640:15 and *Igros Moshe O.C.* 3:93). However, many *Poskim* assume that if the only *mitzvah* that will be missed is *tefillah b'tzibur* (praying with a *minyan*), one can still make such a trip, especially for the purpose of doing a *mitzvah*, for business, or for health (*Halichos Shlomo Tefillah* 5:4, *Shevet Halevi* 6:21:3, *Ishei Yisroel* 12:2).
- Normally, one is not allowed to place oneself in a dangerous situation (*Shulchan Aruch C.M.* 427:8 and *Y.D.* 116, see also *Mesilas Yesharim* ch. 9). Therefore, traveling to a dangerous place or using a dangerous method of transportation should not be allowed. "Dangerous" can be defined as activities or places

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A RIDDLE FOR YOU

Mitzvos that one who transgressed them would be punished with *kareis* (excision) obligate a person to bring a sin-offering if they were done accidentally. What are the exceptions to this rule? 🕉️

See reverse side for the answer

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and his years of dedicated learning and teaching. We will miss you daily!

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A TIMELY HALACHA

CONTINUED

that the average person avoids due to the danger (*Shut Minchas Shlomo* 2:37). A certain amount of personal risk is also allowed to be incurred for the purpose of making a *parnassa* (livelihood) (*Igros Moshe Choshen Mishpat* 104).

- One is not allowed to leave *Eretz Yisrael* (*Rambam, Melachim* 5:9, *Chachmas Adam Shaar Mishpetei Ha'aretz* 11:14) except for the purposes of marriage, Torah learning, teaching Torah, to make a living, and to honor one's parents (Y.D. 342:1). The same is true for performance of a *mitzvah*, and perhaps even visiting friends (M.B. 541:14).
- There is a prohibition to move to Egypt (*Rambam, Melachim* 5:8, *Sanhedrin Yerushalmi* 10:8), but most assume that this does not apply to visiting Egypt (*Radvaz* 4:73).
- A wife has a right to demand that her husband not undertake a particular trip, even if he says he must do so for business (*Shulchan Aruch E"H* 76:5).
- A student should ask permission from his teacher before embarking on a trip (Y.D. 242:16), even if traveling for the purpose of a *mitzvah* (*Kaf Hachaim* 110:17). 🌐

A SHINING EXAMPLE

In one town in Russia, there was a *shul* known as the Cantonist *shul*. It was attended by the unfortunate men who had spent 25 years or more in the czar's army. Because of their brutal treatment at the hands of their officers and superiors when they were conscripted, their knowledge of Judaism was basically nil. Most of the townspeople did not join the prayers there on a regular basis, as the atmosphere was not the most conducive to prayer. On Simchas Torah though, many came to watch as these men danced with the Torah. The energy of these men as they went around and around the circle had to be seen to be believed. When they reached the last *hakafa* (customary circuit of the synagogue done on Simchas Torah) all the Cantonists did something that at first glance seemed rather disrespectful. They took off their shirts. All of the men without exception were covered in welts and scars branching across their bodies, testimony to the evil treatment they received in the attempt to separate them from the heritage of their families and ancestors. With this, the dancing went

Mazal Tov to

Rabbi and Mrs. Ezra Stettin
on the birth of a baby girl! 🌐



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on recess from August 9th
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up another notch in its fervor, and with tears rolling down their cheeks, the men called aloud to the Torah scrolls they were holding, "We have not merited to know you dear Torah, but look! Look what we have given of ourselves to not be separated from you! You are our Torah too!" 🌐

RIDDLE ANSWER

🌐 .dliM bno rcbz9P nrdnoK

NEW DATE!

OUR TWENTY FIFTH YEAR

SILVER CELEBRATION

Twenty Fifth Anniversary
ANNUAL EVENT

Starlite

Sunday September 6th, 2020
AN EVENING AT THE STARLITE DRIVE-IN
LOOK OUT FOR MORE DETAILS!

Cincinnati Community KOLLEL

Please share with us your vision for the next 25 years of the Kollel. Email us at next25@cincykollel.org. You may be featured at the Event!

BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

In the early days of the Republic of Texas, even before its statehood, the city of Galveston began to attract Jewish settlers. One family of note was the three Dyer siblings, Isidore, Leon, and Rosanna (Osterman), who were all born in Germany. Their parents moved to Baltimore when they were young, where their parents were instrumental in founding Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. The three siblings would move west at different times. Leon had prior military experience in the U.S. army and was living in New Orleans when the Republic of Texas declared independence in 1836, and he promptly offered his services to Texas. He ended up leaving Texas ten years later and established the first congregation on the Pacific coast. Isidore was a merchant who moved to Galveston in 1840, where he hosted the first *minyan* in his home in 1856. Their sister Rosanna Osterman had moved to Galveston with her husband before Isidore and quickly became immensely successful. Her acts of kindness were legendary. During outbreaks of yellow fever, she volunteered her home to be used as a hospital to care for the sick. When the Civil War broke out, she donated medical supplies and food to both the Union and Confederate wounded soldiers. During the blockade of the city by the Union (Galveston is actually on an island), she subsisted on a vegetarian diet because she could not get shipments of kosher meat. She was tragically killed in a steamboat accident in 1866, and in her will she left money to 25 institutions across the country, including the Jewish Hospital and Talmud Yelodim School of Cincinnati. 🌐

SOURCES: Cohen, Henry Rev. "Settlement of the Jews in Texas." *American Jewish Historical Society*, No. 2. 1894.
Levine, Dr. Yitzchak. "The Early Jewish Settlement of Texas." *The Jewish Press*. 2012.

Cincinnati Community Kollel

2241 Losantiville Avenue, Cincinnati OH 45237 • 513-631-1118 • kollel@shul.net • cincykollel.org

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