

**PARASHAS NASO**

# The Measure of Our Worth

The job of transporting the disassembled Mishkan during the travels of the Jewish people in the Desert was too much for one family alone. The Torah therefore divided it among the three clans of the tribe of Levi. The clan of Kehas carried the holy furnishings, such as the ark and the *menorah*. The clan of Gershon carried the draperies and hangings. The clan of Merari carried the beams.

The Torah relates that God told Moses with regard to each clan individually to count them and delineate their assignments. Strangely, however, the Torah speaks about the clan of Kehas at the end of last week's portion and the other two clans at the beginning of this week's portion. This is highly unusual. The Torah does not normally divide one cohesive subject between two weekly portions. What is the message here?

Furthermore, when God tells Moses to "count" the Levite clans, he does not use the standard word *pakod*, as one might expect, but the word *naso*, which literally means "lift up." What is the significance of this unusual term in this context?

The commentators explain that the Torah is showing special deference to the clan of Gershon, descended from Levi's oldest son. Nonetheless, we find that the choice assignment of carrying the ark, the menorah and the other sanctified furnishings of the Mishkan was given to the clan of Kehas, descended from Levi's second son. Why was this so? Because Moses and Aaron, the great Torah leaders of the Jewish people, were members of the clan of Kehas. Still, the clan of Gershon might have felt slighted and offended that they had been passed over for the first honors. Therefore, the Torah interrupts this section after the assignment of Kehas and begins a new weekly portion with the assignment to the clan of Gershon to show that they were also important.

For the same reason, the command to count is given with the unusual word *naso*, lift up. This was the message to the clan of Gershon. Lift up your spirits. Do not feel disheartened because you were given a lesser assignment. It is not a reflection on your worth. It does not mean that you are inadequate. Do not be discouraged. You too are descended from the great Levi. You too have royal blood flowing in your veins and immense spiritual energy in your hearts. You too have a great and glorious destiny. For whatever reason, one brother may

sometimes be given preference over another, but you must never use this as the measure of your own worth. Doing so will only cloud your own judgment and cause you to lose sight of your own inherent greatness. Focus on how you can improve yourself. Concentrate on your own spiritual growth, and you will never go wrong.

*A young man dozed off in a chair while he was reading a book. When he awoke he groped on the night table for his glasses, but they were not there. He looked around the room, but without his glasses, everything was a blur. He could not see where his glasses were. He got down on the floor and fumbled for his glasses near his chair and under it, but without success.*

*With a sigh, he walked into the bathroom to wash his hand and face. As he splashed water on his face, he cried out in surprise. He had found his glasses! They were perched on his forehead. He must have pushed them up before he fell asleep and forgotten about it.*

*“What a fool I was,” he declared. “I looked everywhere around me, but I did not look at myself.”*

In our own lives, no more how skilled and talented we are, we often cannot resist comparing ourselves to siblings, friends or associates who are even more skilled and talented. What is the point? What can we gain by measuring our worth according to the measure of those around us? Each of us is a world unto himself, infinitely valuable, with his own mission in life, endowed with all the skills and talents he will ever need to accomplish that mission. Only we are the measure of our own worth.