

# The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

Korach

## Teachers All

The Talmud (Ta'anit 27a) tells us that the Early Prophets enacted a system of 24 MISHMAROT, "guards", kohanim, who, over the course of the year, would rotate to perform the various kohanic duties in the Beit HaMikdash. Each MISHMAR would serve for two weeks a year and within each weekly rotation, every individual kohen would only serve for one day. This apportionment also included LEVIYIM who, alongside the kohanim, performed many of the additional Temple services. The question is clear. A variety of gifts were given to the kohein and levi in lieu of not owning and working a portion of the Land. The MATNOT KEHUNA included: t'ruma, t'rumat ma'aser, challah, portions of the sacrifices, pidyon haben, and ma'aser rishon for the levi. It certainly seems somewhat unwarranted for the kohen and levi to receive such gifts for only a few days of work each year!

Rav Soloveitchik suggests an answer which contains an important charge for each of us. (Chumash Mesoras HaRav, Bamidbar p. 149) "In fact, however, the kohen's [levi's] main function was not to serve in the Beit HaMikdash, but to teach Torah. 'For a kohein's lips shall guard knowledge, and teaching should be sought from his mouth, for he is a

messenger of the Lord of Hosts' (Malachi 2:7). His permanent job was to instruct the people, to teach the community." In a word, the members of the Tribe of Levi were the proto-rabbis in the ancient Jewish world, providing the spiritual guidance and religious education to the entire nation. And that, as any present rabbi will tell you, is a full-time job!

This explanation of the mission of the kohanim and leviyim, however, extends beyond the levitic family itself. Rambam (Sh'mita v'Yovel 13:13) makes the extraordinary claim that "Not only the tribe of Levi, but any one of the inhabitants of the world whose spirit generously motivates him... to set himself aside and stand before God to serve Him and minister to Him and to know Gd... he is sanctified as holy of holies. Gd will be His portion and heritage forever and will provide what is sufficient for him in this world like He provides for the Kohanim and the Leviyim." Amazingly, Rambam is inviting everyone to become "honorary kohanim/leviyim" which when understood as the Rav does, mandates all of us to assume the role of a teacher. A teacher, not in the limited pedagogic sense, but a teacher, broadly understood as one who feels committed to transmit, in word and deed, the knowledge and wisdom he has acquired to his children and beyond.

Indeed, this is how the Rav interpreted the Mishna (Eiduyot 2:9): "He [R. Akiva] used to say: the father endows his son with... the number of generations before

him, and this is [the secret of] redemption." As the Rav explained (Man of Faith in the Modern World, pp. 15-17), it is only when the parent bequeaths to his offspring the collective wisdom and traditions of generations past, it is only then, with this "generation awareness", this uniting of generations, that our ultimate redemption can be assured! The inescapable conclusion: All of us must assume - in one way or another - the great responsibility to be teachers for our future! 🙌