

Who is Supporting Whom?

"The sons of Kehas shall come to carry (the Aron Kodesh and kelim)" (Bamidbar 4:15). The *avodah* of the Bnei Kehas was carrying the Aron Kodesh on their shoulders when the nation traveled from place to place (Bamidbar 7:9). The other parts of the Mishkan were transported on wagons. However, the Aron Kodesh, due to its great holiness, was carried on the shoulders of these Leviim. The Gemora (Sota 35a) relates an awesome miracle that occurred. The bearers of the Aron never felt its great weight. They did not carry it, rather it carried them! In the days of Yehoshua, it even carried them across the Jordan River (Yehoshua 4:18).

There is a beautiful drasha based upon this Gemora. Talmidei Chachomim and institutions of Torah learning are supported by generous donors who contribute money to pay for expenses. It appears that the benefactors are supporting the Torah, however, in reality; the Torah is supporting its benefactors. The following moving story dramatizes this point.

The residents of a certain small town in Europe came to Rav Yitzchak Elchonon Spector zt"l, the famed Rav of Kovna, to find a suitable candidate for the position of Rav of their town. Rav Yitzchak Elchonon recommended a certain young talmid chochom who was fit for the position. The people approached the young man with their offer. "I am ready to accept the job," he replied. "However, my father-in-law is supporting me, and I must ask his permission to leave." The young man related the proposal to his father-in-law and received the following reply. "Why do you need this? Do you need more money? If so, I will give you more money each month, on condition that you remain here with me." And so, the young man turned down the position and stayed.

One year later, representatives from a city came to Rav Spector for a candidate to fill the position of Rav. The Rav of Kovna sent them to the very same young talmid chochom. Again, he asked permission from his father-in-law, received the same answer, and continued learning in his town.

After some time, a contingent from a large major city came to Rav Yitzchak Elchonon, seeking a man to fill the prominent position of Rav of their city. Again, Rav Spector sent them to this same young man. When this prestigious contingent came to the home with the offer of the Rabbonus in their hands, the wife of the talmid chochom could not

keep silent. "This time I will not give in to my father. He must agree to let us go!" Her husband asked his father-in-law, and received the same answer. The wife answered her father, "How long can you support us? The time has come for us to go out on our own." The father replied with a short answer, "Who knows who is supporting whom?" Several weeks later, the young couple finished packing their belongings, boarded the moving wagon, and began their journey to the big city. No sooner had they left the outskirts of the town, that they were overtaken by a messenger who brought them the shocking news. "Your father just passed away." *

הארון נושא את נושאי



*Kinderlach . . .
Who is supporting whom? Torah institutions are like the Aron Kodesh. When we give tzedaka to a Yeshiva or Talmud Torah, are we supporting the institution, or is it supporting us? Hashem decides if a Torah institution will continue existing. You decide whether you will be His shaliach (agent) to keep the light of Torah burning. If you help Him (so to speak), He will reward you by supporting you. Who is supporting whom? The Aron carries those who carry it.*

*This story is from Moreshe Avos - Devarim p. 75.

A Gentle Pull

"The families of the sons of Kehas camped on the south side of the Mishkan" (Bamidbar 3:29). Rashi adds that they were near the tribe of Reuven. "Oy to the *rasha* (evil person) and oy to his neighbor." Who is the *rasha*? Korach - the grandson of Kehas. He rebelled against Moshe Rabbeinu. Who were his neighbors? Dasan and Aviram, great grandsons of Reuven. Korach pulled his neighbors Dasan and Aviram into his rebellion. Oy oy oy.

Rashi uses the word "*nimshachu*" (to be pulled along) when describing Dasan and Aviram's entrance into the uprising. The sefer "Heoros" points out the significance of this word. "*Meshicha*" usually expresses the action of being pulled gently, little by little, without even a desire or intention to go. The one who

is pulling intends that the other follow him. However, the follower may not even be aware that he is being led. That is the nature of a person - he is "*nimshach*" - drawn after his friends and companions. They influence him, without any desire or intention on his part. They commit an *aveyra* (sin) in his presence. Just seeing the evil deed makes an impression on him. He may be shocked initially. However, the second time he will be less shocked. The third time he is accustomed to it already. What was initially so strange and revolting to him slowly becomes familiar until he is not far from doing it himself. Then he actually commits the *aveyra*, something that was unimaginable before he joined the company of these *reshayim*.

This idea is expressed in the following verse. "And you saw their abominations and their foul idols - of wood and stone, of silver and gold that were with them" (Devarim 29:16). The idols are first referred to as abominations. The people feel revolted when they encounter them. Next, the verse calls them foul idols - they are merely idols. With the second exposure, they are no longer disgusting. Finally, they are referred to as wood and stone. After more contact, they are not even seen as idols anymore - just wood and stone. The person is now not very far from worshipping them. That is the subtle negative influence of the bad environment. It drags you down little by little. You do not even notice it. Until finally - you are lost, and you do not even know how it happened. Oy oy oy.

*Kinderlach . . .
"Imma, I want to go to a special dance and drama class. The students put on a big performance at the end of the year."
"Tammy, we must investigate where the group meets, who the teachers are, and who the students are before we can let you go." A few days later, the investigation reveals that the group meets in a building next to a pub. Certain members of the group are not the type of friends that Tammy's parents allow their daughter to be with. "Tammy, we have checked out the class, and unfortunately it has some big disadvantages. It is in a bad location, and some of the girls attending are not for you." "But Imma, I won't pay any attention to them." "You may think so Tammy, but the Torah does not agree. Bad company only leads to one thing. Oy oy oy."*

Parasha Questions:

- What were the names of the princes of the twelve tribes? (1:5-14)
- What was the total number of Jews counted? (1:46) Did it match the total mentioned in verse 32?
- Which tribes were in Machane Yehuda and on which side were they camped? (2:3-9)
- What was the job of the Bnei Aharon? (4:5-14)