

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Ki Savo 5784

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Bnei Yisroel's leaders give their instructions.

וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה וְהַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם אֶל כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הִסָּכֶת | וּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה
נְהַיִיטָה לְעַם לֵה אֱלֹקֵיךְ:

“And Moshe, and the Levitical Kohanim to Bnei Yisroel saying: ‘Seclude yourselves, and listen, O Yisroel; this day you will become a people for Hashem your Lord.’” (Devarim 27:9).

All kohanim were shevet levi, so who were the “Levitical priests” and why did they join Moshe? Also, what does the word הִסָּכֶת / haskas mean?

Moshe, at this point in his final days, taught many mitzvos to Bnei Yisroel. He reiterated ones that were recorded elsewhere in the Torah, providing more context to those mitzvos. He also taught ones that were given during the thirty-eight years of remaining in the wilderness that were not yet recorded in the Torah. Now, he is also joined by the leaders of the people. “And Moshe and the elders of Yisroel commanded the people, saying.” (Ibid 27:1). The reason why the elders were getting involved is because the nation was about to move on from Moshe. The Torah already established that the elders would have to help Moshe. Moshe had heeded advice from his father-in-law (Shmos 18:21), and Hashem commanded him to do the same (Bamidbar 11:16). Moshe recounts as much in his final instructions, too. (Devarim 1:13). These elders are now distributing the teaching that Moshe taught to the people.

The Leviim got involved in this, too. They were the teachers of Klal Yisroel. The “Levitical priests” are those from Levi that were fit to serve, from age thirty to fifty. (Bamidbar 4:3). Although the formal kohanim were all from Aharon's family, the Leviim had position in the service of the Mishkan. They also had position among Bnei Yisroel to go about to each shevet and teach the laws, rulings, and lessons that Moshe taught. There were more Leviim (at this point in history) than sons of Aharon, and they were more efficiently prepared to go out among the people and teach.

There is a contrast in leadership. The elders “commanded.” The Leviim “spoke.” The elders commanded – giving over the teaching in a firm manner – that upon crossing the Yarden River, Bnei Yisroel had to set up pillars and inscribe the entire Torah upon them. This teaching came from the elders whose authority had to be followed. Following this, the Leviim spoke to Bnei Yisroel. They taught the Torah in a softer yet firm manner. They were teachers and they gave it over in a way that the listener will understand and want to fulfill. Their authority came from the material not from their own position.

The Leviim were in a unique position to appeal to the public's intellect. Moshe and the Leviim said, “Heed the voice of Hashem, your Lord, and do the mitzvos and the

statutes, that Anoichi is teaching you today.” (Ibid 27:10). When was this taught? This is connected to: *רְאֵה אֲנֹכִי נֹתֵן לְפָנֵיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרָכָה וּקְלָלָה*: “See, Anoichi is giving before you today, blessing and curse.” (Ibid 11:26). The Leviim taught that as well. The later pasuk (ibid 27:10) says “that Anoichi is teaching you today.” Anoichi means “I” but it also means Hashem as in *Anoichi Hashem Elokecha* (I am Hashem, your Lord). The earlier psauk says, “that Anoichi is placing before you today.” They both use “Anoichi” and “today.” Further, the word “See!” is singular just as is “seclude and hear” are both singular. Why are they in the singular form? It is because they are directed at the nation as a whole—the nation being as if one being—and each individual, too. Moshe and the Leviim were doing two things. First, Moshe talked to the entire people. Second, the Leviim went out among the people teaching them in smaller groups and even individually. See! Each person had to be an individual and see on his own. This is also learned in the later pasuk, where the Leviim say “seclude and listen;” each individual and the nation as one.

Some, like Onkelos, translate *haskes* as “pay attention.” More specifically, it is related to the root word *סכח* *sukas* (samech, chaf, saf), meaning to cover, as in, cover up the Aron with a curtain. (Shmos 40:3). *Sukos* are outdoor booths like for animals (Bereishis 33:17) or people (Vayikra 23:42). The word rearranged is *כסת* (chaf, samech, saf) which means to cover up as in the kohen wore breeches to cover his loins (Shmos 28:42), and the holy vessels were covered while traveling (Bamidbar 4:15). Further rearranged the letters are *תכס* (saf, chaf, samech) which means to cover over. Tamar covered her face (Bereishis 38:14), the amphibians covered the entire Land of Egypt (Shmos 8:2), as did the quail cover the entire camp of Yisroel (ibid 16:13), and the earth covered over Korach and his evil band (Bamidbar 16:33). The common denominator in these words is that it means a separation. The curtain, the veil, the earth, all separate an object from other persons. Further, a *succah* is meant to be outdoors but also to separate one from physical matters. It is one’s own private spiritual booth.

Moshe’s name is not recorded in the parshios of Eikev, Re’eh, Shoftim, and Ki Seitzei. (It is not just in Tetzaveh that his name is missing). This is because while he is teaching the Torah, his instruction was disseminated among the public by the elders, the Kohanim, and the Leviim. The Leviim helped Moshe give over this important lesson to Bnei Yisroel because, like Moshe, they did not have rights to the Land. Further, they were taken by Hashem to His service, and they were supported on public funds. Combined, they had no incentive other than to teach the public the authentic Torah. From this point of unselfishness, they taught Bnei Yisroel how to be Land owners by the Torah’s guidelines.

The Leviim went around to Bnei Yisroel saying, “You are an individual. You, yourself, have to see that you are unique and you have to fulfill the commandments. At the same time, you are about to become a unified people. You will own your own land and own obligation to keep the Torah. You will also be part of a people and are responsible to join in with the entire nation. See, hear, seclude—all individually, and as one nation. Hashem gave the Torah to the entire people and each person that made up that entire nation.