



## **Sicha Summary**

Chelek 19 | Vayelech | Sichas 3

### **The Verse:**

Then Moshe wrote this Torah, and gave it to the Kohanim, the descendants of Levi, who carried the Ark of the covenant of G-d, and to all the elders of Israel. (*Devarim* 31:9)

### **The Question:**

The Rogetchever asks: Why does the verse add that the Kohanim are the “descendants of Levi”? How does this additional information add clarity?

### **The Explanation:**

This question can be answered by examining Rashi’s comment on this verse. Rashi writes:

“When it was entirely completed, he gave it to the members of his tribe [i.e., Levi.]”

Rashi seems to depart from the literal reading of the verse by saying that Moshe gave the Torah to “the members of his tribe (Levi),” since the verse only states “the Kohanim.” How did Rashi come to the conclusion that the Torah was given to the entire tribe of Levi?

Yet, since Moshe gave a Torah scroll to each tribe — as this verse continues, “and to all the elders of Israel,” referring to the representatives of each tribe — it stands to reason that the tribe of Levi would not be the lone exception. Therefore, Rashi explains that Moshe *did* give a Torah to the tribe of Levi, but he gave it to the Kohanim as representatives of the entire tribe of Levi.

This explains why the verse says, “the Kohanim, the descendants of Levi” — the Kohanim accepted the Torah on behalf of the entire tribe of Levi.

### **The Three Exceptions:**

Generally, the Kohanim are considered distinct from the rest of the tribe of Levi. This episode is one of three where the Kohanim are considered part of the larger tribe of Levi, to the extent that the Kohanim were able to accomplish something on behalf of the rest of the tribe.

The other two episodes:

- 1) When all of the tribes offered a sacrifice at the inauguration of the Mishkan, the tribe of Levi did not participate. Aharon lighting the *menorah* was considered to be the contribution of the tribe of Levi. (*Bamidbar* 8:2 and *Rashi* there) Thus, Aharon acted not only on behalf of the Kohanim, but on behalf of the entire tribe of Levi.
- 2) After Korach’s rebellion failed, G-d performed a miracle to illustrate the validity of the Kohanim and Levites being appointed to the *Mishkan* service. Twelve rods were inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes, with Aharon’s name inscribed on the rod of the tribe of Levi. Aharon’s rod blossomed in the morning, demonstrating that G-d chose the tribe of Levi. Once again, Aharon represented the entire tribe, not just the Kohanim.

### **The Significance:**

Kohanim and Levites differ in the spiritual tasks: Kohanim are forbidden from becoming ritually impure, while Levites are permitted to come into contact with the dead. In spiritual terms, Kohanim do not engage with evil; they sublimate it. In contrast, Levites wrestle with evil, and attempt to subdue it.

These three areas where the Kohanim represent the Levites are concerned with rejecting evil, and therefore, the Kohanim did not perform them for themselves, but for the Levites whose task is the rejection of evil. In doing so, however, the Kohanim contributed their spiritual ability — the complete

eradication and transformation of evil — aiding the Levites in totally rejecting the forces of negativity.

- 1) Accepting the Torah scroll: the role of the Torah scroll given by Moshe to the tribes was not for the purpose of studying and adding light, but to be wary of, and dispel, the evil in the world. This is why the scrolls were given after the curses — to aid the people in avoiding behavior that would lead to horrible outcomes.
- 2) The light of the Menorah shined outward into the world, combatting the darkness.
- 3) Aharon's staff cemented the status of the Kohanim and the Leviim, concluding the debate with Korach. It was in response to Korach's negativity.