



When my family sits around the Friday night Shabbat table, with or without other guests, it is always a time to catch up on the week, share our thoughts and create traditions. I have always looked for ways to engage my children around *parshat hashavua*, the weekly torah portion; I realized that if I asked a "thought-question," on a verse or a story or a mitzvah, everyone had a chance to think and then share his/her idea. Each child was involved and was connecting Torah to his/her own life's experiences. There's nothing like that moment when they have their idea and begin to articulate their thoughts. Watching my children feel passionate about Torah and become invested in its texts and lessons is a highlight of my Shabbat. When they suggest an answer that one of the traditional commentaries has given, I can let them know that they are tapping in to the wisdom and teachings of their ancestors, thus connecting them to their past, their heritage and their Torah. If it is something unique and "new" that I have not seen written out anywhere, I can praise them for their originality and thank them for their thought that enriches those of us around the table.

I would like to give the readers of [challah.com](http://challah.com) a question or two each week on the Torah portion, enabling this opportunity to make Torah relevant, real and part of you and your children's relationship. Enjoy!

## Table Talk: Parshat Beha'alotcha

Question, part 1: While reading over chapter 8 verse 19 about the service of the Levites, what phrase repeats itself over and over?

וַאֲתַנְּהוּ אֶת הַלְוִיִּם נְתֻנִים לְאַהֲרֹן  
19 And I have given the Levites--they are given to Aaron and  
to his sons from among the **children of Israel**, to do the  
עֲבוֹדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד service of the **children of Israel** in the tent of meeting, and  
וּלְכַפֵּר עַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא יִהְיֶה to make atonement for the **children of Israel**, that there be  
בְּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶגֶף בְּגִשְׁת׃ **בְּנֵי** no plague among the **children of Israel**, through the  
**יִשְׂרָאֵל** **children of Israel** coming nigh unto the sanctuary.'

Answer, part 1: The phrase Bnei Yisrael, children of Israel, is repeated 5 times! Clearly there is an emphasis here on the general population of the Jewish People, as we specify the job for the Levites to help in the service of the *Mishkan*, Tabernacle.

Question, part 2: Why would the Torah want to emphasize over and over again Bnei Yisrael as the Levites are being given this special role and their responsibilities are being defined. This moment is about the Levites – not Bnei Yisrael – right??

Answer, part 2: Hashem wants to make very clear that when the Levites do their “special job” that they have been chosen for, they must not forget why they are doing it and why they’ve been chosen. They represent the rest of the nation and are coming before G-d on their behalf. They cannot let this power get to their head; rather, they must remember who they represent and what their responsibilities are meant to accomplish – atonement for Bnei Yisrael and a better relationship with G-d.

Relevancy/application: Can you think of a job where someone can forget that he/she has been chosen in order to represent a group and not just because they are so special? President, class representative, chazzan in shul, and valedictorian.

One must remember, when in these roles, to think humbly about their positions and do their job – appreciating the opportunity and with pride and self-respect, but with the intentions of the greater group (country, class, *tzibbur*) and with the sense of obligation to “get the job done”!

Bracha Krohn, mom to an 11-year old boy, 7-year old girl and 5-year old boy, made aliyah to Efrat, Israel from Cleveland, Ohio in Summer 2008, with her husband Adi. She is Director of Guidance and faculty member at Midreshet Moriah in Jerusalem, a one year post-high school program for young women, and she teaches weekly for the Women's Beit Midrash of Gush Etzion. Her family spends the summers in camp where she teaches daily classes for camp staff. "Table Talk" is based on the ideas she and her husband, also a Torah educator, discuss with their children around their weekly Shabbat table.