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On the Parsha

*"Take a census of the Bnei Gershon, **also them**, by their ancestral house and by their families... (BaMidbar 4:22)"*

The Midrash Rabbah (Nasoh, 6) asks the question as to why the extra words "gam haim" - also them, appear in the pasuk. The Midrash answers that in last week's parsha, Hashem instructed that Bnei Kehas be counted prior to the counting of the Bnei Gershon – even though Gershon was the firstborn and not Kehas. We might have erroneously thought that just as the firstborn of Klal Yisroel had "fallen spiritually" on account of the sin of the Golden Calf, so too did the firstborn of the tribe of Levi fall spiritually.

The Midrash explains that Bnei Kehas were counted first because of Kavod HaTorah as they were the ones who were placed in charge of carrying the Aron which contained the Luchos. Someone carrying a Torah always goes first. It was not because of any deficit in the conduct of the Bnei Gershon. That is why the Torah wrote the words, "gam haim" appear - to show that they were equal to the Bnei Kehas.

We see from here an amazing insight. One of the underlying aspects of truth of which we must be sensitive to are the implications of how we order things. For example, when listing a group of holy Rabbis, we will often see their names in alphabetical order. This is to say that no one should make any judgements or implications as to the stature of the Rabbis listed based on the order in which they appear. It seems that with the words, "gam haim" the Torah is teaching us this very important facet of every-day emes - never to allow for the implication of a non-truth – that the Bnei Gershon, chalillah, were on a lower level than the Bnei Kehas. When information is provided in a specific order, people can get an incorrect perception.

We must value truth in all that we do, even in relaying the order of how information is presented. Let us keep in mind that there is great reward for honesty as well. The Sefer Chassidim (Siman 1195 mahadurah chadasha) explains that one who is careful not to lie – the blessings that he gives others have a profound effect. Just as he is careful not to lie, in Heaven great care is taken to bring about things so that his words come true, meaning that every bracha he says will be fulfilled in the future.

Chizuk - Inspiration

It was the 1940's, and there was a Jewish family that lived in the Lower East side of Manhattan. They were a poor family, however, and struggled. Some of the boys in the family studied in the local Yeshiva – Mesivta Tiferes Yerushalayim. Rav Moshe Feinstein zatzal had arrived in the United States in 1937 and was the Yeshiva's Rosh Yeshiva. The boys became close to him.

But Nazi beasts began roaming all of Europe. One of the boys was drafted into the United States army and fought against Nazi Germany. Unfortunately, he was killed while fighting for his country.

In 1908, the US Department of Defense introduced something called the United States Military Death Gratuity. It was given to the family of the deceased and was set at an amount equal to six months of the decedent's salary. The benefit was repealed in 1917, only to be reinstated in 1920. For those who were killed in action during World War II, the minimum payout was \$800 and the maximum was \$3,000.

The family of the slain boy used the limited money they received to help launch a modest real estate business. They struggled, but eventually one of the sons purchased a small house in Flatbush on East 9th Street. It was built in 1915.

The previous owners were Jewish but not observant. One day, the new homeowner's children were jumping on the bed. Suddenly, there was a huge crash below them.

They discovered an entire safe below that was filled with diamonds, jewelry, and US Liberty Bonds. The total value was some \$40,000.

Although the sale contract clearly indicated that the new owners now owned everything, including the home, the furnishings and everything in it, the homeowner felt that he should return what was found to the sellers. They called the Gadol HaDor, Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l to double check. Rav Moshe agreed – they must return what they had found.

This remarkable family cherished the precious Torah values of honesty and integrity. They lived by emes. The second and third generations of this family are also known for their remarkable dedication to integrity and emes.

Hashem clearly rewarded this homeowner for his remarkable dedication to emes and for the kiddush Hashem that he continues to perform daily in his business dealings. His company's portfolio includes office buildings, nursing homes, a 16-building complex in Sunset Park known as Industry City; a stake in the bottom half of the Woolworth Building; and industrial properties across Long Island. In 2003, an investment group led by this paragon of emes paid \$705.6 million for a portfolio of about 6,000 outer-borough apartments purchased from the future president, Donald Trump. Other buildings he owns include a 521-unit rental multifamily building on Manhattan's Upper East Side.

This homeowner, Mr. Rubie Schron, is also one of the greatest supporters of Torah learning. He is a close confidant of numerous Gedolei Yisroel. Many have attributed these two rewards from Hashem to his remarkable dedication to everyday emes.

Halacha – Jewish Law

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MAY A JOURNALIST USE A FAKE NAME?

Rav Yaakov Moshe Hillel's Bais Horaah has ruled that technically, using nom deplumes is not a violation of Emes (Bais Hora'ah Ahavas Shalom OC Shailah 451), however, it is not recommended because the pasuk does say to stay far away from a matter that is false.

Some Poskim are more lenient if the fake name alludes to another truthful manner of referring to oneself such as "Ben Parentname" or "Avi Childname." In these cases, the fake name is not entirely false.

Rav Yaakov Chizkiyahu Fish in his Titein Emes L'Yakov (5:21) quotes a ruling he received from the author of Kinyan Torah (Rav Avrohom Dovid Horvitz) that although sometimes there may be leniency in saying a falsehood to ensure that a correct halacha be followed, here, regarding a journalist writing in a newspaper, there is absolutely no leniency whatsoever. Rav Horvitz recommends not signing any name at all or alternatively, one may write, "Name Withheld Upon Request."

Mussar – Introspection

Please see below for a translation of Rav Chaim Kanievsky zt"l's selection on Emes from his Mussar Sefer Orchos Yosher (courtesy of Orchotyosher.org)

Our sages describe the severity of the punishment of one who lies and said (Sanhedrin 92a), "Whoever changes things in his wording it is as if he has worshipped idols." See Rabbeinu Yonah in his Shaarei Teshuvah (Shaar 3) who explains that even if he does not cause any damage to another [with his lie] it is still forbidden to lie. The sages further said (Sotah 42a), "The group of liars do not receive the Shechina." The Gemorah in Sanhedrin (89b) states that [one of] the punishments of a liar is that even when he tells the truth he is not believed. The Gemorah in Brachos (4a) advises, "Teach your tongue to say that you do not know, for perhaps one day you may fall victim to lying and you will be caught."

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