

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR
TAL



UNITY IN NUMBERS!

What does a number mean to you? Technically a number is a mathematical object used to count and measure. Yet we use numbers to represent important times in our lives, to role dice in a game or even play a lucky lottery. This week we enter the fourth book of the Torah Bamidbar. Our Sages know this book as Sefer Hapikudim – the book of Numbers.

On first thought we understand the book is so called after the beginning of our Parsha which deals with a population census that is taken of the Jewish people at the time.

Yet when we think of it, why is a whole book named after such a one off event? Wouldn't it have been better for our sages to keep the name as the book of Bamidbar, especially seeing as most of the book deals with occurrences in the wilderness?

Furthermore on inspection the Torah states: "Take a census.....according to their fathers' house, BY NUMBER OF THE NAMES, every male according to their head count." (Bamidbar 1:2).

The expression "Bmispar Sheimot" [by number of the names] seems contradictory. What does it really mean? The term "number" and "names" are almost mutually exclusive. When we talk about numbers we imply anonymity. The word "names" has the exact opposite connotation. A name gives a person singularity and a quality of being special – more than just a number!

Which is it - was the census concerned with the overall numbers (the "Klal") or was the census interested in the individual names (the "P'rat")?

Have you ever been in a synagogue searching for a Minyan? When people arrive in the synagogue the Shliach Tsibur has to wait till there are ten men. The Halacha is that he may not count these people directly.

Rav Mordechai Gifter zt'l, explains that numbers by their very definition are finite. Stating a number, one quantifies an item such that the quantity is no more and no less than the number stated. A human being, by his very definition, is not finite in this sense. He has a soul and strengths, and characteristics. He has unlimited potential to grow and expand his capabilities. Trying to put a number on an individual limits him and restricts his ability to reach untold heights. Therefore, when we speak of a "Minyan" we are not speaking of a "mispar" [a number]. We cannot just "count" Jews. When we enumerate people and treat them as numbers we in effect say they are defined and limited. This is certainly not the way Hashem wants us to view the Jewish people.

Thus when there is a census of the people, the aim is to work out the number, but they are not counted by numbers, rather they are counted through names. Each name represents an individuality, an unlocked potential – each person has a separate task in life. The end number is the sum of all the physical bodies, but it in no way measures the awesome infinite power of all their souls.

Getting the Jewish people to unite nowadays isn't easy.

But lets think about it 3323 years ago, when the Jews left Egypt. How easy was it for them to unite?

The Midrash states that when the time was right to leave Egypt Hashem gathered the Jews from all over Egypt. They all set out and followed Moshe into the wilderness. ►

> SHAVUOT TIMES

SHABBAT BEGINS 20:36
FIRST DAY YOM TOV 21:57
SECOND DAY YOM TOV 21:59
YOM TOV ENDS 22:01

” THE WEEKLY QUOTE
“Once you let go of negative people, positive ones appear.”

> UPCOMING EVENTS

• SHAVUOT PROGRAM

19th May (More info check online)

• FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

10th June 2018 (More info check online)

• FRIDAY NIGHT DINNER ST JONHS WOOD

15th June 2018 (More info check online)



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Unity in Numbers!
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

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Imagine, a people that had been scattered across a vast land, there were no technological communications, and yet they all went following one leader into the wilderness.

Forty nine days later they stood at Har Sinai – and they encamped united – Kelsh Echad Belev Echad. Millions of people, a whole nation, and within 49 days they had achieved unity!

What is the secret to this unity?

Chazal explain that Moshe had already told them that the whole purpose of Yetsiat Mitsrayim was Taavdun...Al Hahar Haze – receiving the Torah. The people had a goal, they were excited and had a goal to work towards. They united behind this goal, and worked on themselves for 49 days each day improving their characters and unity, until they were able to completely unite to receive the Torah.

The Torah could only be received by a united people!

Similarly we find in this weeks Parsha. Moshe was worried. Each tribe had a different flag, each tribe had a different Avoda (work) set out for them. How would they all be able to integrate? Perhaps some of the tribes would complain about their flag and tasks?

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky explained that Hashem reassured Moshe, and told him so long as they are encamped around the Mishkan all will work well. So long as we are unified in our ideology, we understand the important things in life and set these as the centre of our attention – the Holy Presence of Hashem – then we will be successful.

The Netsiv explains that book of Numbers, is so called, because it begins with a census and ends with a census. The census at the beginning refers to a census shortly after leaving Egypt. A nation that had received the Torah, built the Mishkan and was ready to start their voyage. It was a show of how we value each Jew individually, yet at the

same time, how we value the whole nation as a united entity. It is only through unity that we can have the Mishkan and Hashem's presence within us. The census at the end refers, a generation later, to a newborn nation, about to enter Israel. The message being sent to them is clear. To inherit the land of Israel, there must be unity. A count of the people is taken, each exists on their individual level, yet each must know the centre piece must be Holiness.

Am Yisrael are a successful nation when we are united.

Let us focus on our heritage, focus on our individual goals and unite in His service to merit the coming of Mashiach Bimhera Byamenu Amen.

■ **Shabbat Shalom**

RABBI YEHOANATAN SALEM - SHALOM LAAM DIASPORA

**DVAR
TORAH**



OUR INDIVIDUAL MISSION

This week, as we start the book of Bamidbar, the Torah begins by enumerating the Jewish People who were in the Sinai desert. This is to symbolize that every Jew, without exception, has a unique and intrinsic value, and is not just a number or a stereotype. His importance is such that for him alone the entire Creation is justified. At the time of Creation, G-d made many of each species, but of man He only created one, from whom the whole world was to be populated. This demonstrated the uniqueness of each person, and for this reason our Sages taught us the importance of sustaining and saving any individual person.

What is it that makes each and every one of us so important that our individual existence justifies the Creation?

Before the world was created, G-d had created myriads of souls in His “store house”, which

were basking in His divine presence. Yet, for these souls to derive such enjoyment without having first earned it, causes them much embarrassment. Hence, G-d created this physical world and enabled souls to descend into it, encased in a body of flesh, to be given the chance to earn their reward by choosing to do His will, i.e. the mitzvot of the Torah. By exerting effort in their adherence to the mitzvot, they earn eternal reward which they will receive when their souls become detached from their earthly bodies and return to their maker.

However, since each soul is unique in its spiritual characteristics, each one has a specific goal and mission, which it must fulfil in order to attain its perfection. Accordingly, each person is created with a different combination of physical characteristics, strengths and attributes, to enable him to fulfil his given spiritual mission for which he has descended to this world. Additionally, every person has a different, tailor-made route through which he must pass during his earthly stay, in order for him to reach his own perfection. For this reason, everyone has different trials and tribulations, “ups and downs” that he must overcome. We all have moments in our lives when we feel content,

happy, relaxed or calm. On the other hand, there are moments when we feel overwhelmed, challenged, sad or empty.

We should try to understand our individual duty in this world, to define our goal clearly and not to lose sight of it. By doing so, we will be able to channel even our most challenging moments into being part of a purposeful and fulfilling existence, as we steer away from wrongdoing and remain on our defined paths.

The underlying message of the book of Bamidbar is that life has its challenges and its “ups and downs”, as we journey through our phase of life in this world. Recently, my grandmother described the events of her childhood to me. She was orphaned at a very young age from both her parents, witnessed “Kristallnacht”, and escaped with her life from the hands of the Nazis. Today she derives much pride from all her offspring.

Let us keep our heads “above water” and remember that all that we are going through is for our ultimate good, to gain our earned reward in the world to come. ■

Shabbat shalom and Chag Sameach

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RABBI ABBA

OUR CHACHAMIM

Rabbi Abba was among the great Amoraim. He was the student of Shemuel, and though he learned from the great Babylonian Rabbanim, he often traveled to Eretz Israel to learn Torah from its Rabbanim.

The Gemara recounts that Rabbi Abba traveled to Eretz Israel by sea, and when his boat arrived by the shores of Akko, he embraced the earth. He had the merit of seeing Rabbi Yochanan, who headed the great yeshiva of Tiberias and was extremely old at the time. He also saw Resh Lakish (who died before Rabbi Yochanan). We also see just how much he loved Eretz Israel from a story found in the Gemara. Rabbi Abba purchased a plot of land in Eretz Israel, then returned to Babylon. However, what he didn't know was that another Amora, by the name of Rav Gidel, had previously begun negotiations to purchase that same plot of land. Rav Gidel went and complained about Rabbi Abba to Rav Zeira, who in turn told Rabbi Yitzchak bar Napacha of the incident (the latter were old friends of Rabbi Abba, and all three of them were among those who had come to Eretz Israel from Babylon). Rabbi Yitzchak bar Napacha said, "Wait until he returns for the holidays," meaning that they should wait until he comes back from Babylon to verify the story with him.

When Rabbi Abba came back, his friends asked him what was the law concerning "a poor man who awaits his portion, but then another comes and takes it." In other words, what was the law concerning a person who acts maliciously with the poor, trying to seize what awaits him before he has time to take possession of it? Rabbi Abba responded that such a person was a wicked man. And when he was asked why he himself acted in this way concerning the land of Rav Gidel, he replied that he was not aware that Rav Gidel had wanted to purchase it.

Rav Yitzchak bar Napacha therefore decided that he should give up the plot of land for Rav Gidel's benefit. Rabbi Abba replied that he didn't want to sell the plot of land, for it was his first purchase in Eretz Israel, hence it didn't bode well to sell it. Rather, he said that he was ready to give it to Rav Gidel as a gift.

For his part, Rav Gidel didn't want the land as a gift because of the principle that "one who hates gifts will live" (Proverbs 15:27). The Gemara concludes the story by saying that neither of them wanted to use the land in question, and so it was abandoned. This plot of land came to be known as "the land of the Rabbis" (see Kiddushin 59a for details).

Rabbi Abba lived temperately and was accustomed

to praying that his Torah views be accepted by his colleagues. Among the Sages who had particularly great respect for Shabbat, Rabbi Abba is mentioned favorably. He had the habit of purchasing 13 selaim of meat in honor of Shabbat, and pressed his servant to prepare everything in the best possible way. Rabbi Abba apparently had many guests on Shabbat, and he wanted to honor them with the finest tasting meals. He lived an exceedingly long time, and in his latter years he was considered as a leading Halachic authority in Eretz Israel. He shared this distinction with Rav Ami, who was Rosh Yeshiva, while Rabbi Abba himself was the Av Beit Din.

Rav Ami was named Rosh Yeshiva after the death of Rabbi Eliezer ben Pedat, who continued the academy of Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Shimon ben Eliakim. When Rav Ami moved the yeshiva to Cesarea, Rabbi Abba also joined him there. Rav Papa and Rav Ami called Rabbi Abba, "Our father of Eretz Israel."

The teachings of Rabbi Abba in Halachah and Aggadah are found throughout the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds, as well as in the Midrashim. One of his famous parables, by which he explained what occurred between Ahasuerus and Haman, is cited in Megillah 14: "To what can the story of Ahasuerus and Haman be compared? To two men, one who had a mound in his field, and the other who had a pit in his. The latter thought, 'Who could sell me a mound?' while the other thought, 'Who could sell me a pit?' After a certain time, they encountered each other. The one who had a pit said to the one who had a mound, 'Sell me your mound,' to which the other replied, 'Take it for free! You're doing me a favor.' This is what happened when Ahasuerus said to Haman, 'The silver is given to you, the people also, to do with as you see fit' [Esther 3:11]."

To show just how catastrophic honor-seeking is, Gemara Sanhedrin cites the explanation of Rabbi Abba on the verse that states, "After this, Jeroboam did not repent from his evil way" (I Kings 13:33). The Gemara asks about the meaning of "After this," to which Rabbi Abba explains: "After the Holy One, blessed be He, grabbed hold of Jeroboam by his cloak and said to him, 'Repent, and I, you, and the son of Jesse will walk in Gan Eden,' Jeroboam replied, 'Who will be in charge?' to which the answer was 'the son of Jesse will be.' Jeroboam then responded by saying, 'In that case, I want nothing of it!'"

Rabbi Abba died at a great old age, apparently in Eretz Israel. ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

TOUCHING FOOD BEFORE WASHING ONE'S HANDS IN THE MORNING

Maran writes in Shulhan Aruch (Orach Haim 4) that one must ensure not to touch a vat of beer in the morning before washing Netilat Yadayim, as doing so could cause one to lose the beer. The Mishna Berura (Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan, 1839-1933) explains that since there is Tum'a (impurity) on one's hands when he wakes up in the morning, touching food can cause it to become Tameh, which can have detrimental effects. One must therefore avoid touching food before washing his hands in the morning.

The Halachic authorities write that if one did touch food before washing his hands in the morning, he should put it under water three times, and then it may be eaten. This applies even to vegetables that one normally peels, like cucumbers. Despite the fact that one touched only the peel, which in any event will be removed, the vegetable must be rinsed three times before it is eaten.

Some writers raised the question of why this method of eliminating Tum'a does not work in the case of garlic that was left without its peel overnight. The garlic in this case should not be eaten, as it contracts Tum'a overnight, and the Poskim do not offer the solution of rinsing the garlic the three times. The work Arsit Haim explains that one cannot compare different forms of Tum'a and evil spirits. A method that is effective for eliminating one kind of Tum'a is not necessarily effective with regard to a different kind, and thus although a food that has been touched before Netilat Yadayim may be rinsed and eaten, this solution cannot be used in the case of garlic that had been left overnight without its peel.

The Mishna Berura writes that one should also refrain from smelling tobacco snuff before washing Netilat Yadayim in the morning, for two reasons: 1) he causes the snuff to become Tameh by touching it; 2) smelling snuff involves touching the nostril, and it is forbidden to touch the openings of one's body before washing Netilat Yadayim.

Summary: One should ensure not to touch any food or drink before washing his hands in the morning. If he did touch food before washing his hands, he should wash it three times and it may then be eaten. ■

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STORY

THE CENTER

That model looks really neat, Chaim. What is it? It is a model of the camp of the Jewish people during the years in the desert, Avi. The twelve tribes are camped around the outside. Inside is the camp of the Kohanim and Leviim.

What is that in the center?

That is the Mishkan (Tabernacle).

What is inside of the Mishkan?

Many things. The holiest part is the Kodesh Kodoshim (Holy of Holies).

What is inside of the Kodesh Kodoshim?

The Aron Kodesh (Holy Ark).

Do you mind if I ask you one more question Chaim?

Not at all, Avi.

What is inside of the Aron Kodesh?

That's a good question, Avi. Inside of the Aron Kodesh is the Sefer Torah.

Why is that such a good question Chaim?

Because, now you have come to the center. The Sefer Torah is in the innermost part of the camp. It is inside the Aron Kodesh, which is inside the Kodesh Kodoshim, which is inside the Mishkan, which is inside the camp of the Kohanim and Leviim, which is inside the camp of the twelve tribes.

I see why my question was good. G-d does not do anything haphazardly. He instructed the Jewish people to set up the camp in this specific way. The center of the camp is the focal point and usually contains something or someone very important.

Exactly, Avi. Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, who is known to us as the Chofetz Chaim, explains why the Sefer Torah was in the center. In our shuls nowadays, the Sefer Torah is read on the "bimah" a table in the center of the shul. Similarly, the Eitz HaChaim (Tree of Life) was planted in the center

of the Garden of Eden. This is all a beautiful parable to the Torah, which is our "Tree of Life". The human body is also part of the parable. The life force flows from the heart. Therefore, it is in the center of the body. It pumps the blood, which carries this life force to all parts of the body, and they all receive their energy from it. So you see, when G-d designs something, He puts its energy source in the center.

The Torah must be the energy source for the Jewish people.

Right again, Avi. The Torah is the generator of the spiritual energy that keeps us alive. In the last blessing of the Amidah prayer, the Torah is referred to as "Toras Chaim", the Torah of life.

We had better get busy, Chaim.

Doing what?

If G-d Himself put the Torah in the center of the camp, then we must surely put it in the center of our lives.

In what way, Avi?

The Torah is called our Torah of life because it guides us how to live our lives. Everything that we do should revolve around it. The halacha (Torah Law) guides us in all areas. It tells us how to eat, how to speak, how to conduct our business matters, and how to treat our family, friends, and neighbors. Whenever we think about doing something, our first question must be, "How should this be done according to Torah?" There is a right and a wrong way to do everything. The Torah tells us the right way.

I have another parable, Avi. When you put the Torah at the center, then everything spins around nice, smooth and balanced like a dreidel on Chanukah. We should all put our "Torah dreidel" down and "spin to win".

TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- 1 Why were the Jewish People counted so frequently?
- 2 What documents did the people bring when they were counted?
- 3 What determined the color of the tribal flags?
- 4 What is the difference between an "ot" and a "degel"?
- 5 How do we see that the Jews in the time of Moshe observed "techum Shabbat" -- the prohibition against traveling more than 2000 amot on Shabbat?

Answer

1:1 - They are very dear to Hashem. 2:18 - They brought birth records proving their tribal lineage. 3:2 - Each tribe's flag was the color of that tribe's stone in the breastplate of the kohen gadol. 4:22 - An "ot" is a flag, i.e., a colored cloth that hangs from a flagpole. A degel is a flagpole. 5:22 - Hashem commanded them to camp no more than 2000 amot from the Ohel Mo'ed. Had they camped farther, it would have been forbidden for them to go to the Ohel Mo'ed on Shabbat.

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