

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT BAMIDBAR

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

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 "Prat")?

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 let's think about it 3335 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. 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!

29TH IYAR 5783

SHABBAT BEGINS:

20:37pm

SHABBAT ENDS:

21:53pm



Join our weekly TAL Shabbat Minyan.

• 8.45am

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DVAR TORAH
Unity in Numbers!
By Rabbi Jonathan Tawil



DVAR TORAH
Sefirat Haomer
By Rabbi David Baadani



DVAR TORAH
Our Individual Mission
By Rabbi Yehonatan Salem



OUR CHAHAMIM
Rabbi Nathan Tzvi Finkel



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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 Hazeh – 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 DAVID BAADANI

Director - TAL Chazanut Program

ספירת העומר - עומר לגולגולת

Regarding one's thoughts, it is known that it is not possible for a person to remove a thought from their mind by desiring not to think about that particular thought. Meaning. If a person tells you 'Don't think about elephants', it will be impossible for you not to think of them. The way to eliminate any undesirable thought, due to it not being pure or a trigger for anger, sadness and other negative emotions, will be the way of עומר עמר 'an omer to a person head'. The

hint at these words is that 'עמר' is one measurement, and 'לגלגלת' is the brain. It comes to tell us that our brain can only contain one omer, one measure, one thought.

Therefore, when a person wants to clear their mind of negative thoughts, they should remember that the only way to do so is by bringing a positive thought to eliminate the negative thought.

It is known that the world works in the way of thought, speech and action. That is, everything that is done in the world is preceded by a thought first, then a speech and only after the speech comes the action.

Therefore, a person should be very careful not to say any bad thoughts so that he does not bring that thought into action. And this is what King David said : אֲנִי שָׁמַרְתִּי אֲפָרוֹחַת פִּי : I kept myself from acting in ways that are not good by זָמַמְתִּי בְּלִי-יַעֲבֹר־פִּי putting a barrier to my mouth to which I would not utter that bad thought which would mean it won't get closer to becoming an action.

It is very worthwhile to speak as many good thoughts, words of truth and peace as possible and thus do good deeds that will please our Father in heaven.



RABBI YEHONATAN SALEM

OUR INDIVIDUAL MISSION

This week, as we start the book of Bamibar, 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 is 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 perfec-

tion. 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



OUR CHAHAMIM

Rabbi Nathan Tzvi Finkel – The Alter of Slabodka

The gaon Rabbi Nathan Tzvi Finkel Zatzal was born in the tiny Lithuanian town of Rasei in the year 5609. From his youth he was known as an illui (genius), a child prodigy. As he grew older, he was among those close to the gaon Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv of Kelm, the disciple of Rabbi Israel Salanter (the founder of the Mussar movement). Although Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv appointed Rabbi Nathan Tzvi as the director of the Kelm Talmud Torah, he did not rest upon his laurels. In fact he began establishing numerous yeshivot throughout Poland and Lithuania. In

5637 Rabbi Nathan Tzvi helped establish the famous Telshe yeshiva, while at the same time he set up the Kovno kollel. It was there that remarkable avrechim perfected themselves, and where the Mussar movement produced tzaddikim.

Rabbi Nathan Tzvi went on to establish the Slabodka yeshiva, the crown jewel of yeshivot. It was to the Slabodka yeshiva, which Rabbi Nathan Tzvi saw as his great goal in life, that he sent famous gaonim to teach. Nevertheless, he did not neglect other yeshivot, for he cared for his students as a father for his children.

When the First World War began, Rabbi

Nathan Tzvi was forced to leave Slabodka, traveling with his students to Minsk, and from there to Kremenchug. In 5684 a portion of his yeshiva students left for Hebron, where the yeshiva continued under the direction of his son-in-law, Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Epstein. It remained there until 5689, when Arabs committed the infamous Hebron massacre. Because Rabbi Nathan Tzvi was so concerned for his students, he became known as the Alter ("elder," i.e., father) of Slabodka. He passed away on Shevat 29, 5687. May the memory of the tzaddik be blessed.



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

THE MISVA TO LEND MONEY

The Torah writes in the Book of Shemot (22:24), "If you lend money to my nation – to the poor among you..." The Sages derive from this verse that lending to a person in need of money constitutes a Misva. Although the verse states, "If you lend," suggesting that lending is optional, elsewhere the Torah speaks about lending in obligatory terms: "Should there be a destitute man among you... you shall surely open your hand to him and lend him that which he lacks..." (Devarim 7-8). In fact, lending money is looked upon as

an even greater Misva than giving charity to the poor, as through lending one assists a man in need before he reaches the point where he must accept charity. By lending money, a person helps his fellow Jew in need without subjecting him to the shame and embarrassment associated with accepting charitable donations.

The Misva to lend money applies even to loans given to wealthy people in temporary need of cash. One who offers sound advice concerning investments and business dealings also fulfills this Misva. If a man is approached by both a poor man and a wealthy man who request a loan, and he can afford to lend to only

one of them, the poor man takes precedence. As we cited earlier, the Torah introduces the Misva of lending specifically in the context of lending to the poor, and thus although the Misva includes lending to wealthy people, the poor should nevertheless be granted precedence.

Summary: It is a Torah obligation to lend money to a person in need, even if he is generally wealthy but requires a temporary loan. If both a poor person and a wealthy person are in need of loan, one should afford preference to the poor man.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Bamidbar

The Book of Bamidbar — "In the desert" — begins with Hashem commanding Moshe to take a census of all men over age twenty — old enough for service. The count reveals just over 600,000. The levi'im are counted separately later on because their service will be unique. They will be responsible for transporting the Mishkan and its furnishings, and assembling them when the nation encamps. The 12 Tribes of Israel, each with its banner, are arranged around the Mishkan in four sections: east, south, west and north. Since Levi is singled out, the tribe of Yosef is

split into two tribes, Ephraim and Menashe, so there will be four groups of three. When the nation travels, they march in a formation similar to the way they camp.

A formal transfer is made between the first-born and the levi'im, whereby the levi'im take over the role the first-born would have had serving in the Mishkan if not for the sin of the golden calf. The transfer is made using all the 22,000 surveyed levi'im from one month old and up. Only levi'im between 30 and 50 will work in the Mishkan. The remaining first-born sons are redeemed with silver, similar to the way we redeem our

first-born today. The sons of Levi are divided into the three main families of Gershon, Kehat and Merari (besides the kohanim — the special division from Kehat's family). The family of Kehat carried the Menorah, the Table, the Altar and the Holy Ark. Because of their utmost sanctity, the Ark and the Altar are covered only by Aharon and his sons, before the levi'im prepare them for travel.

Rabbi Sinclair,
Seasonsofthemoon.com



1 Why were the Jewish People counted so frequently?

1:1 - They are very dear to Hashem.

2 What documents did the people bring when they were counted?

1:18 - They brought birth records proving their tribal lineage.

3 What determined the color of the tribal flags?

2:2 - Each tribe's flag was the color of that tribe's stone in the breastplate of the kohen gadol.

4 What is the difference between an "ot" and a "degel"?

2:2 - An "ot" is a flag, i.e., a colored cloth that hangs from a flagpole. A degel is a flagpole.

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?

2:2 - Hashem commanded them to camp no more than 2000 amot from the Ohel Mo'ed on Shabbat. Mo'ed. Had they camped farther, it would have been forbidden for them to go to the Ohel Mo'ed on Shabbat.

