

LAMPLIGHTER

23 Iyar
Parshas Bamidbar
38th day of the Omer

1140

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This Shabbat we begin reading from the Book of Numbers, whose Hebrew name, Bamidbar, means "in the desert." There are many places in the world that, from a Jewish perspective, are "deserts." Lacking even the most basic necessities of a Jewish community, the surrounding atmosphere is not one of Torah and sanctity. From a physical standpoint it might be a luxurious garden spot, but in the spiritual sense it is a "desolate wasteland."

A Jew finding himself in such a location might think that it is impossible to lead an authentic Jewish life under these conditions. He might even begin to compromise his Judaism, at first relinquishing those elements he doesn't consider "essential," yet gradually giving up things that really are. "Here it is different," he may say to himself. "A Jew cannot be expected to behave the same as if he lived in a traditional, Jewish neighbourhood."

However, when we consider this week's Torah portion, the fallacy of such thinking becomes apparent. The Torah relates how the task of carrying the numerous components and vessels of the Sanctuary was divided among the Levite families. It describes how the journeys were conducted and how the Sanctuary was erected in every location the Jewish people encamped. Indeed, it is quite astounding when we remember that all this occurred in a barren wilderness, devoid of human habitation.

How was this possible in a place without life, let alone any trace of holiness or Judaism? And yet, the very first thing the Jews did upon arriving in an encampment was to erect the Sanctuary, immediately transforming it into a holy place where they could serve G-d!

The Torah thus teaches that G-d has not limited the power of holiness to operate only under certain specific conditions. Wherever a Jew goes, be it a "desolate wasteland" in the physical or spiritual sense, he has the ability to establish a "sanctuary" to G-d, to sanctify that place and spread the light of Torah and mitzvot (commandments).

All that is necessary is to allow the inner light of the G-dly soul to illuminate, to light up the correct path to follow. The Jew will then see how all obstacles and difficulties will disappear, until he too will reach the "Holy Land."

This concept, which applies to all Jews, is especially relevant to Jewish women. In the same way that the Jewish women were the first to contribute to the physical Sanctuary, so too do they play a unique role in erecting a spiritual sanctuary to G-d. As the "akeret habayit," the core and mainstay of the home, the Jewish woman has the unique ability to establish a Jewish tone in the home, and the strength to protect her family from negative influences.

Adapted from Volume 2 of Likutei Sichot

Why Didn't G-d Hire a Location Manager?

By Levi Avtzon

This week's Torah reading is called *Bamidbar*, "in the desert." It's always read before the holiday of Shavuot. The connection is obvious-after all, Shavuot commemorates the giving of the Torah, an event that transpired in the Sinai Desert.

Ask any film producer and he or she will tell you that one of the toughest aspects of production is the preparation of the set. Countless hours are spent planning every detail, building facades, choosing props, and finding a suitable location.

Similarly, presidential candidates put much thought into selecting the venue at which they will appear to announce their candidacy and campaign. What message will he or she send by the choice to speak in that particular place? Will that selection garner maximum support?

With that in mind, is it not surprising that G-d chose to present Himself to the Jewish nation and give the Ten Commandments in the desert of all places? Why did our mission start in no man's land? What's up with the desert?

G-d certainly knew of the travel magazines' "100 best locations to vacation"; of the beautiful beaches of Maui and the majestic Alps. Why, then, was the Torah given in a hot desert in middle of the summer? Surely this most dramatic moment in history warranted a more impressive backdrop!

Yet the explanation lies within the question itself. For the same reason why we would never pick Sinai - its simplicity, dullness and emptiness - is the reason why G-d chose it.

A desert is a no-show for human life, cattle and produce; a desolate area where almost nothing can live. A vast expanse of barren land, rendering it a least desirable topographic area.

G-d gave us the Torah there to teach us that our job is to transform a world which is a spiritual desert, lacking morals, ethics and humility, into a world of Torah and peace.

And more personally speaking: At times we find ourselves in a moral Sinai, when our life seems empty and dull, uninspiring, depressing and barren. There, specifically there, the Torah must enter and push us back out of the rut.

Torah is not only for the synagogue. It is for the desert as well.

Or, better yet: specifically for the desert.

Slice of LIFE

A Mezuzah for Mama

By Aviva Ravel

When Elsie moved into her new flat, she removed the *mezuzah* on the doorpost of the front door. The ancient case had broken into shards as she dislodged the nails and pried loose the metal container. A piece of parchment containing Hebrew script fell out of the case; brittle and yellow with age, it crumpled in her hand. She gathered the fragments of metal and parchment, stored them in a paper bag, and placed them in her sewing basket, which contained a myriad of odds and ends such as balls of wool, knitting needles, and threads of many colours. Then she set about cleaning her new kitchen.

Shel nodded in approval at the empty space that had been occupied by the *mezuzah*. He had had a hard day at the knitting mill, and looked forward to his hot cup of tea. "So you did it," her husband said as he stirred sugar into his cup and turned to the editorial pages of the evening newspaper.

"I said I would," came the reply.

"What will your mother say?"

"It's my home. She won't say anything."

Elsie was right. When Mrs. Klein visited her daughter's new home holding toys for her four-year-old granddaughter, a new tablecloth and dish towels, she immediately noticed the blank oblong space once occupied by the *mezuzah*. To prevent herself from commenting, she bit hard on her lip, and then summoned Miriam to receive her Chanukah presents: a red-haired doll that came with a pretty dress, and miniature dishes. "Thank you, Bubby, thank you," the little girl squealed.

Two years before, Mrs. Klein's daughter and son-in-law had joined the Party. She bit on her lip then too. She knew what this entailed: her daughter would refrain from lighting Shabbos candles; neither would she light candles on the Chanukah menorah; and attending *shul* was out of the question. Although Mrs. Klein had raised her daughter in an observant home, now she feared that the rituals she had so

carefully maintained would be lost to the next generation . . .

Elsie noticed the pained look on her mother's face and declared fervently, "We are against religion. Religion is the opiate of the people. We are atheists. We don't believe in myths and miracles. You have to understand that."

Of course, Mrs. Klein understood. She was up-to-date on current events, since a day didn't go by without her having read *Der Tog*, as well as the daily English *Star*, from cover to cover. "Has everyone in your organization renounced their religion?" she asked in Yiddish.

"Yes, of course. None of my gentile comrades go to church."

"But you're having a Christmas party in a few weeks. I see the notice on the refrigerator."

"Christmas is a national holiday. It's not religious. Everyone has a party."

Although Mama was deeply wounded, she brushed a grey strand of hair away and maintained a stubborn silence. She was generally not a cheerful person; she had experienced hunger, war, and the loss of family and friends, while a bout with typhus in Romania left her frail for the rest of her life. However, she never grumbled, and attended to her household duties with the diligence and care associated with devoted Jewish mothers.

"Look, Mama, I know you don't agree with the principles of the Party. But what we want is equality for all people, no matter their race, colour or nationality. Justice for all. One day we'll have one beautiful world, no separate countries, no borders, no racism. Religion and nationalism separate people."

"The Hindus will also be part of the new world?"

"Sure, why not?"

"So what are they going to do with all their temples?" Mama's attempt at a joke was lost on Elsie.

"Ma, you're missing the point."

"I know, I'm old-fashioned. But, my daughter, I love you, I love our Miriam, and I will never tell you what to do and what not to do. It says in the Torah, the most important thing is *shalom bayit-peace* in the house. And, for your information, we also believe in Justice. *Tzedek, tzedek tirdof* . . . Didn't you learn that in Jewish school?"

Elsie looked at her mother with the

impatience you reserve for a disobedient child, and passed her a plate of homemade strudel.

At least, Mrs. Klein thought, they come to me for Shabbat, and the Seder, and the Rosh Hashanah meal. Moreover, Mrs. Klein never refused to babysit Miriam, as Elsie and Shel attended frequent clandestine meetings held in secret locations. "But please," Elsie pleaded, "don't fill Miriam's head with ridiculous stories."

"Like what?" her mother asked, knowing full well what her daughter had in mind.

"Like the waters of a sea opening up and people walking across on dry land. Yesterday she asked me if G-d would open the lake in the country so she could walk across to the other side to play with the children there."

But Mrs. Klein continued to tell her stories, and Miriam listened, her dark eyes wide open in awe and concentration.

Years passed, and Mrs. Klein succumbed to old-age ailments. Elsie sat at her mother's bedside in the hospital until the old woman took her last breath. For the sake of propriety, and out of respect for the observant members of the family, Elsie sat *shiva* with her brothers, sister and aunts.

The day after the *shiva*, when all the visitors and mourners had gone, Elsie drove to the local Judaica shop and purchased a *mezuzah* and a finely decorated case made in Israel. She hammered nails into both ends of the *mezuzah* case and affixed it to the doorpost, meticulously following the instructions - the upper end pointing inward, the lower one outward. A prominent *shin* in gold lettering graced the upper end of the case. Elsie looked at her handiwork and was pleased.

"What on earth are you doing?" Shel asked, perplexed.

"I put a *mezuzah* on the door. Inside, a Hebrew inscription is written on special parchment. Two passages from the Book of Deuteronomy. One is the Shema."

"But why?"

"Simple." Elsie faced him and spoke without a hint of uncertainty in her voice. "When Mama's soul visits us from heaven to say a blessing, there has to be a *mezuzah* on the door, so she will feel at home."

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ISSUE 1140

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Regarding the laws of Jewish settlement, we find a commandment to establish both judges and officers in all of our communities. Interestingly, in reference to the times of the redemption the verse refers only to the return of the Judges to their position but makes no mention of the officers. The commentaries explain that since in the times of the redemption all evil will be eradicated from this world, there will be no need for the officers to carry out the laws of the judges, as the people will follow the Judges on their own free will.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

By the grace of G-d
2nd Tammuz, 5716 [June 11, 1956]
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Miss ----
New Haven, Conn.

Blessing and Greeting:

I was pleased to note your studies and I received your letter in which you ask the question "if a soul has come back to earth several times to complete its duty here, when Messiah comes in which form will the soul come back?"

I was pleased to note from your letter that you are taking an interest follow the instructions of our Holy Torah as you are taught in the Yeshivah in New Haven.

As for your question, it was already asked a very long time ago by one of our great teachers of the Talmud, Rabbi Hizkiah, as mentioned in the holy book "Zohar" (Part 1, page 131a). The answer given there by another great teacher of the Mishnah, Rabbi Jose, is that the soul will come back to life in the body in which it has accomplished Torah and Mitzvoth during her lifetime on this earth, and that a body which did not practice Torah and Mitzvoth on earth will not come back to life. This answer must be considered in the light of a further explanation by the great Rabbi Isaac Luria, who lived about 400 years ago, and is known as Ari (the "Lion") (About his life and work you may have read in the "Talks and Tales.") The saintly Ari explained that it is almost impossible for a Jew not to fulfil at least some Mitzvoth. Therefore, in accordance with the answer in Zohar, almost all bodies will come back to life. The question then is, in which body will the soul return if it had been in more than one body. The answer, strange as it may seem at first glance, is that it will return in all bodies it had inhabited. To understand how this is possible, let us remember that the souls of mankind started from two people, Adam and Eve. Their souls included all the souls of the future generations, in a way a single seed includes in it future generations of trees, fruits, and seeds. In the same way the souls of parents are not just two souls but they can split up into soul sparks, each of which is in turn a complete soul. Therefore, when a Jew performs a Mitzvah, the body takes part in it and it is no longer "dry wood" that rots away, but it will come back to life with a soul which is a Divine spark, and which was included in the original soul. Thus at the Time of Resurrection (after Messiah will come) all "parts" of a "general" soul will each have a separate body, just as parents will come back to life with all their children.

If you find the above a little difficult to understand you can ask your teacher to explain to you more fully, or leave the question until you grow older. But you may be sure that no good deed, no Mitzvah, not even a single minute spent in the study of the Torah, is ever lost.

With blessing,

CUSTOMS CORNER

Laws of Counting Jews

To actually count Jews directly is forbidden, as the prophet says: "And the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which shall neither be measured nor counted."

Although the prohibition against counting Jews is not included in the Code of Jewish Law, it is discussed by the later Halachic authorities.

Some of the details of this law are:

- In place of counting individuals, it is permitted to count a particular body part such as noses or fingers. However, the commentaries say that one should not use a limb whose removal would be life threatening.
- When counting for a minyan, it is customary to use a Torah verse that contains ten words instead of using numbers. The verse usually used is: "Hoshiah et amecha u'varech et nachalatecha ur'em venas'em ad ha'olam."
- Another common method is to say: "Not one, not two, etc."
- Once one has counted in a permissible way, it is not forbidden to say the actual total number of people. We see this from the fact that the total numbers of the various tribes are stated in the Torah.
- One should educate children to observe this law.

A WORD

from the Director

In this week's Torah reading, Parshas Bamidbar, we read of yet another census of the Jewish nation. This is the third time the people were counted. The first time was when they left Egypt; the second time was after the sin of the Golden Calf, when God commanded them to build the Tabernacle. The third census, of which we read this week, is when the Jews have already settled after the building of the Tabernacle.

The three censuses serve to manifest our Divine consciousness within us in three stages:

1) When we left Egypt, the Divine soul became manifest, but only in a very general way. Our Divine consciousness encompassed our whole being enough to inspire us to follow God blindly into the desert, but it did not yet change us fundamentally.

2) When God commanded us to build the Tabernacle, whose purpose it was to enable Him to dwell within us, our Divine soul became manifest enough to affect the way we think and feel. But because God "imposed" this revelation on us from above and it was not the result of any self-refinement on our part, its effect was only transient.

3) Finally, after the Tabernacle was built and we began to participate in the sacrificial rites, our Divine souls could become fully manifest; our efforts at self-refinement ensured that our Divine consciousness would become and remain an intrinsic part of ourselves.

This is one of the reasons why this third census was held in Iyar rather than in Nisan. Nisan, the month of the Exodus, expresses how God takes the initiative to extricate us from our material orientation. Iyar, the month spent in spiritual preparation for the giving of the Torah, expresses our initiative in refining ourselves.

J. I. Guterlich

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

THE SECRET RECIPIENT

Rabbi Chayim Halberstam of Sanz, known as the Divrei Chayim, was deeply involved in the *mitzvah* of *tzedaka* (charity), giving with an open hand from his own funds and soliciting from others as well. In keeping with the rabbinical dictum that charity collectors should travel in pairs, he always went on his rounds with a respected member of the community.

One time Rabbi Chayim set about to collect a large amount of *tzedaka* for a certain wealthy man who had gone bankrupt. He and a trusted companion went about from house to house soliciting funds, when they came to the elegant home of one of the richest men in the city. They entered the beautifully appointed anteroom and were shown to a velvet sofa where they were served tea from a silver tea service while they waited for the master of the house to appear. After a few minutes a well-dressed gentleman entered and greeted the illustrious Rabbi warmly.

The Rabbi and his companion requested that the wealthy man donate the large amount of five hundred rubles for an unspecified "worthy cause."

The rich man considered their request for a few moments and then asked, "Tell me, exactly what is the cause you're collecting for? Is it for some public institution or for a private person?"

Rabbi Chayim replied that he was collecting for a wealthy citizen who had lost all his money and gone into bankruptcy. But this answer wasn't sufficient for the man, and he began to inquire further about the identity of the person.

"I'm sorry," replied Rabbi Chayim, "but I cannot divulge the man's name, since that would cause him terrible embarrassment. You'll just have to trust me when I tell you that he's a very deserving individual."

The rich man refused to be dissuaded from his curious pursuit of the man's identity. "Of course, I trust you implicitly, and I would be only too happy to donate even several thousand rubles to help you, but I would first like to know for whom I'm giving the money."

At this point the man who was accompanying the Rabbi interjected his opinion that perhaps it wouldn't be so bad to divulge the man's identity in this case. Certainly the rich donor wouldn't allow the information to leave the room, and it was a wonderful opportunity to amass the large amount of money to help a fellow Jew rebuild his life.

But Rabbi Chayim would say only that the man had up until recently been one of the pillars of the community and had himself contributed to many worthy causes before his unfortunate business collapse. Again he protested that he couldn't and wouldn't publicize the man's name.

The rich man, far from being silenced, was even more aroused in his curiosity. "If you tell me his name I will give you half of the entire amount you need."

His fellow collector again tried to convince the Rabbi to tell the man's name, in view of the tremendous sum of money involved, but to no avail.

"You must understand," he replied, "that even though the sum you are offering is more than generous, the honour of this Jew is more important

and valuable to me than any amount of money! If you were to give me the total sum that I require, I would still refuse to reveal the identity of the recipient!"

The rich man's countenance changed suddenly and he became very still. He quietly asked Reb Chayim to step into an adjacent room, for he wished to speak with him privately.

Standing alone with the Rabbi, the rich man broke down into bitter sobbing. "Rebbe," he began, "I, too, have lost my entire fortune and am about to enter into bankruptcy. I was too embarrassed to tell this to anyone, but when I saw how scrupulously you guarded the other man's privacy I knew I could trust you. Please forgive me for testing you in such an outrageous manner, but I am a desperate man. I needed to know for sure that under no circumstances would you tell anyone about my terrible situation. I am in debt for such a huge sum; I have no hope at all of repaying it. I'm afraid that I will have no choice but to leave my family and go begging from door to door!"

The Sanzer Rav left the home of the rich man, and needless to say, not a soul ever heard a word of their conversation. Less than a week later he returned to the same man's house with a large sum of money. He had been able to raise enough money to rescue not only the original intended recipient, but this one as well. They were both able to pay off their debts and resume their businesses successfully.

The role of the saintly Sanzer Rav in this affair became known only many years later, after he left this earthly world.

Source: Adapted/Supplemented from the rendition in //IChayimweekly.org (#872), with permission.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

And G-d spoke to Moses in the desert of Sinai (Numbers 1:1)

The Torah was given to the people of Israel in the ownerless desert. For if it were given in the Land of Israel, the residents of the Land of Israel would say, "It is ours"; and if it were given in some other place, the residents of that place would say, "It is ours." Therefore it was given in the wilderness, so that anyone who wishes to acquire it may acquire it. (*Mechilta D'Rashbi*)

And these are the generations of Aaron and Moses... Nadav, Avihu, Elazar and Itamar (3:1-2)

He who teaches the son of his fellow the Torah, Scripture ascribes it to him as if he had begotten him, as it says: "And these are the generations of Aaron and Moses"--and only the sons of Aaron are listed. Aaron begot them and Moses taught them, and they are called by Moses' name. (*Talmud, Sanhedrin 19b*)

And these are the generations of Aaron and Moses (3:1-2)

Usually Moses appears before Aaron, but in certain places Aaron is mentioned first. This is to teach us that they were both of equal importance. (*Midrash*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 23 MAY 2014



BEGINS		ENDS
4:56	MELBOURNE	5:56
4:58	ADELAIDE	5:56
4:46	BRISBANE	5:41
6:10	DARWIN	7:01
4:43	GOLD COAST	5:38
5:06	PERTH	6:02
4:40	SYDNEY	5:38
4:45	CANBERRA	5:43
4:38	LAUNCESTON	5:40
4:59	AUCKLAND	5:58
4:48	WELLINGTON	5:50
4:34	HOBART	5:37
4:41	BYRON BAY	5:36
6:49	SINGAPORE	7:40

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD
PARSHAS BAMIDBAR
23 IYAR • 23 MAY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	4:56 PM
	MINCHA:	5:05 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5:35 PM
	TEHILLIM:	8:00 AM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:48 AM
	THE MOLAD WILL BE THURSDAY: 5:22 and 11 CHALAKIM AM	
	FARBRENGEN FOLLOWING DAVENNING	
	MINCHA:	4:55 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	5:56 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS: SUN-FRI:	9:15 AM
	MON-FRI:	8:00 AM
	MINCHA:	5:00 PM
	MAARIV:	5:50 PM