

LAMPLIGHTER

4 Sivan
Parshas
Bamidbar
1247
10 June
5776/2016

PUBLISHED BY THE CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD

LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The Torah portion Bamidbar begins the book of Bamidbar, which is also known as "Sefer HaPikudim - The Book of Numbers." Both at the beginning and the end of the book of the book of Bamidbar the Torah details the counting of the Jews: First, after receiving the Torah in the Sinai Desert at the beginning of their wanderings through the vast and terrible desert; and the second time at the end of the forty years' wanderings, on the eve of their entry into the Land of Israel.

There is an eternal lesson which can be derived from these countings, both of which took place in the desert: the mission of every Jew, man or woman, is to make an "abode" for G-d in this material and earthly world.

When a Jew looks around and sees that the world is a spiritual "desert," full of materialism and mundane desires, the thought may occur: How is it possible to carry out one's mission of bringing G-dliness into the world? The Torah informs us that there is no cause for apprehension, as this was the way the Jews began their mission when they became a nation and received the Torah at Mt. Sinai. With the strength derived from the Torah, they made it through the vast and terrible desert - a bleak wilderness in every respect, where in the natural order of things there is no bread and no water, but only difficulties and trials.

Moreover, wherever they made their way through the desert, they transformed the desert into a blooming garden: Miriam's well caused the desert to bring forth all sorts of vegetation and fruit; Manna, "Bread from Heaven" was brought down for their sustenance; the Pillar of Fire illuminated their way, while the Clouds of Glory protected them against all dangers. With our ancestors as role models, we see that our surroundings, whatever they may be, need not cause us any worry.

An additional lesson we learn from the counting in the desert is derived from the counting itself. Each person was counted individually, regardless of his station and standing in life, and each one was counted as no more than one and no less than one. This underscores the fact that each of us has his own personal mission in life.

In fact every Jew can be likened to a soldier - for truly, we are all soldiers in the service of G-d. In an army there are various ranks, from an ordinary soldier to the highest in command, yet, each one individually and all together carry out the Divine mission to make a holy place for G-d in this world, even in a desert.

Excerpted and freely adapted from a letter from the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Wisdom from the Wilderness

By Yossy Goldman

"Numbers" may be the name by which the fourth of the Five Books of Moses is commonly called, but in the Hebrew original it is known as Bamidbar, or "In the Wilderness." It is interesting to note that this Parshah is always read immediately before the festival of Shavuot, "the season of the giving of the Torah." What is the connection?

The Sages teach that it is not enough for G-d to give us the Torah; we have to be ready to receive the Torah. What makes us worthy recipients of this most precious and infinite gift from G-d? This is where the "wilderness" idea comes in. A wilderness is a no-man's land. It is ownerless and barren. Just as a desert is empty and desolate, so does a student of Torah need to know that he is but an "empty vessel." Humility is a vital prerequisite if we are to successfully absorb divine wisdom.

As long as we are full of ourselves and our preconceived notions, we will not be able to assimilate and integrate Torah into our being. Even if are already somewhat accomplished in our Torah studies, we still need to remember - as the Kotzker Rebbe put it - that "as much as you know, you are still an undeveloped wilderness."

Then there is the idea that an ownerless wilderness is there for anyone to stake his claim. No person or group of people has a monopoly on Torah. It belongs to each and every single Jew, not just the rabbis or the yeshivah students, or the religiously observant. "The Torah that Moses commanded us is the heritage of the entire Congregation of Jacob" (Deuteronomy 33:4). While we acknowledge that there is much hard work ahead of us if we are to acquire the Torah and make it ours, we also know that with diligence and effort we can succeed. Indeed, some of our finest Torah scholars throughout the generations have hailed from the simple, ordinary folk-tailors cobblers and the like.

Maimonides, in his Mishneh Torah (Laws of Torah Study 3:1), states: "With three crowns was Israel adorned-the crown of Torah, the crown of the priesthood and the crown of royalty. The priesthood was the privilege of Aaron . . . royalty was the privilege of King David . . . the crown of Torah is there ready and waiting for all of Israel . . . and it is the greatest crown of all."

However, while Torah may be "free for all" as a desert wilderness, we must surrender ourselves to it, emptying ourselves of our ego and our preconceptions, rather than attempting to adjust it to our own circumstances and lifestyles.

And then, like the empty and uninhabited wilderness, the Torah personality may well find himself alone and isolated. We might express our strongly held values and beliefs, only to discover that we stand alone. We might display the courage of our convictions and find ourselves, like Abraham, "on the other side" of the whole world. Our principles may well prove unpopular, especially should they step on toes or upset apple carts. No matter. Being true to G-d and His Torah means standing by it, under any and every circumstance.

May the literal title of our Parshah of Bamidbar, and the many lessons it conveys, serve as a fitting prelude for the beautiful festival of Shavuot. May we receive the Torah with joy and earnestness, so that this important festival will be both memorable and meaningful.

Slice of LIFE

Mr. Smith, although he is a lawyer and well above the maximum age of our pupils; because learning Torah makes one younger and smarter, is one of the pupils in our Yeshiva.

He relates that in the year 2000 he experienced a big miracle. Three of his children, two boys and one girl were engaged to be married and not only did he have no money for the weddings, he didn't even have sufficient funds to fly to the weddings!

Things looked really bad and he was worried. His restaurant was having a bad year; he already owed money and had mortgaged his home so getting a loan was almost out of the question. Where would the money come from? "What am I going to do? How can I pay for those weddings?" He asked himself out loud.

But his wife wasn't worried. "Hershel", she kept telling him. "Don't just stand there and complain and do nothing... pray!"

So he prayed, and prayed and even said psalms at every free moment but the deadline approached and his debts, and worries just increased.

Finally, in desperation, his wife suggested that instead of wandering around the house worrying in his free time that he should DO something positive... like... clean up his home office.

This was no simple job. The room had not been really put into order for many years and had absolutely nothing to do with solving his debts. He wanted to concentrate on his problem! But to make his wife happy he did it. It was tedious work; there was a lot of dust and tons of useless papers that had to be trashed and after working for a few hours with no apparent progress he was just about to give up when he noticed a neat bundle of official looking papers.

He took a closer look and realized they were one hundred shares of Northern Natural Gas stocks at seven dollars per share that he had purchased 24 years earlier in 1976!

He tried to remember when and why he bought them but couldn't. The main thing was.... Were they worth anything? He sat before his computer, typed in the name and found that they were worth..... Nothing! There was no such company! He tried all sorts of combinations of names and spellings but... after all, 24 years is a long time!

But he didn't throw them away. He had nothing to lose so he took them the next day to his restaurant and, at lunch break, brought them to a stock brokerage down the street and asked them if it was possible to check if they were worth anything.

"Just one minute" the broker said, "I'll have a look here" and he began searching the web as only a stock broker can. But he too came up with nothing.

So Mr. Smith left the stocks at the brokerage at the request of the broker who promised he would make a more thorough search when he had free time.

Two days later, after Smith had already forgotten the entire affair and was back to worrying full time about the upcoming weddings, he got a telephone call. It was the broker.

"Mr. Smith? I have some news for you. Twenty years ago Northern Natural Gas was bought out by another company who, two years after that, merged with yet another company. Then that third company merged with someone else and a few years later it was bought out by a company called with Enron gas which is a multibillion dollar concern. So, to get to the point, today you own 600 shares of Enron at 80 dollars a share."

Mr. Smith managed to say four words... "It's a miracle. Sell!"

The next day he had \$48,000 more dollars in his bank account: certainly enough to fly his family to, and even

pay a large portion of, all three weddings.

His wife, although very happy and grateful to the Almighty, was not really surprised at all. "I told you to just pray and clean up your room! See, the same G-d who made us the weddings gave us the money to pay for them!"

But the story isn't over.

A month later Mr. Smith casually opened to the financial page of his daily morning paper and read the headlines: "Enron management indicted for FRAUD! Stocks fall to THREE CENTS A SHARE!!!"

He read and re-read the article to see if it was really the same company and if the stocks really dropped so drastically it was and they did. No doubt about it.... It was a double miracle; G-d blessed AND protected him!

But it REALLY hit home when, three months later he got a call from the Federal Securities and Exchange Commission! It seems that it is a crime to have inside information on the stock exchange and to use that information to manipulate the market. And that is exactly what it seemed clear to them that Mr. Smith had done!

If he didn't have some sort of inside 'tip' how could he possibly have known to sell those shares at their highest price, just days before they plummeted to almost nothing?!

They informed him that if he didn't give a satisfactory explanation they would have to subpoena him to court.

So he explained the entire thing; about the upcoming weddings and the stocks he found. He sent them copies of the transaction and of the original stocks along with invitations to the three weddings and hoped for the best.

A week later the investigator called Mr. Smith said he received all the evidence and admitted that if he hadn't seen it with his own eyes he would never believe it. "The Good L-rd really kept an eye out for you didn't He?" were his concluding words.

Published by **The Chabad House of Caulfield** in conjunction with the **Rabbinical College of Australia and N.Z.**

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ISSUE 1247

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The exile has caused us travail in regard to our material welfare, and similarly, has prevented us from reaching our true potential in the service of Gd. Indeed, it is impossible for us to appreciate how much the exile has hindered us, for we are all children of the exile. We have grown up in exile and it dominates our thought processes. This, however, will be brought to an end in the near future. Through teshuva (returning to our source), each person will establish a connection with the essence of his soul. And this will lift us and the entire world above the limitations of the exile, into "the era which is all rest and Shabbat for eternity." (*The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Shabbat Bamidbar, 1991*)



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Freely Translated Letter

Rosh Chodesh Sivan, 5735 [1975]

To All Active Friends of the Beth Rivkah Schools, and to the Participants in the Annual Dinner, In particular, Greeting and Blessing:

I was pleased to be informed about the forthcoming Annual Dinner, on the 25th of Sivan - the month of Mattan Torah, when the Torah was given to us at Sinai.

Mattan Torah has a special relevance to Jewish women and daughters, as has often been emphasized. According to our Sages of blessed memory, when G-d was about to give the Torah to the Jewish people, He told Moshe Rabbeinu [Moses] to speak about it first to the women, and then to the men, as it is written, "Thus shall you say to the House of Jacob (= the women) and speak to the sons of Israel (= the men)." In this way, the Torah (meaning "instruction"), which is eternal, has given us an everlasting instruction, for all times and places, that Jewish women, mothers and daughters, have a special mission and task to help ensure that the Torah and Mitzvoth [commandments] will always be "received" and kept with devotion and joy.

Also in the portion of the week in which the Dinner is taking place, there is a distinct relevance to Jewish women in the Mitzvah of Challah [1] - which is one of the special Mitzvoth that have been given to Jewish mothers and daughters; a Mitzvah which is connected with generous Divine blessings for themselves and the entire household.

Another Mitzvah which has likewise been given specially to Jewish mothers and daughters (including the very young who have reached the age of training in Jewish living) is the Mitzvah of lighting the candles to usher in the holy Shabbos and Yom Tov [holidays]. We have had occasion to point out how particularly significant this splendid Mitzvah of candle-lighting is, not only for the mother and daughter lighting them, but for the whole family. This is clearly reflected also in the direct beneficial effect of the shining candles in the home and for all seated at the table.

The said Mitzvoth, together with the other Mitzvoth given specially to Jewish women - in addition to all the Mitzvoth which are incumbent upon Jewish women equally with men - underscore the importance of Torah-education for girls, especially in preparation for the time when each of them becomes Akeres Habayis, the "Foundation of the Home," the ba'leiboste who largely sets the tone and pace for the conduct of the Jewish home.

This is what the Annual Dinner is all about.

The Beth Rivkah Schools provide true Torah-education to many hundreds of girls (may their numbers grow), to enable them to carry out their G-d-given mission in life, in the best and fullest measure. It is therefore an extraordinary Zechus [privilege] for the friends of Beth Rivkah to be partners in such a vital cause. I hope and trust that all friends of Beth Rivkah will know how to express their privilege and responsibility, by generously helping Beth Rivkah not merely maintain its facilities but also to expand them in order to meet the urgent challenges of the present times.

May G-d bless each and all of you, with your families, and prosper you in all your needs, materially and spiritually.

With the traditional blessing to receive the Torah with joy and inwardness on the Festival of Mattan Torah and throughout the year,

Notes:

1. (Back to text) to separate a portion of dough when making bread in remembrance of the portion set aside for the priests in Temple times

CUSTOMS CORNER

LEARNING ALL NIGHT ON SHAVUOT

On the first night of Shavuot (this year, Saturday night, June 11, 2015), Jews throughout the world observe the centuries-old custom of conducting an all-night vigil dedicated to Torah learning and preparation for receiving the Torah anew the next morning. One explanation for this tradition is that the Jewish people did not rise early on the day G-d gave the Torah, and it was necessary for G-d Himself to awaken them. To compensate for their behaviour, Jews have accepted upon themselves the custom of remaining awake all night.

A WORD

from the Director

This Shabbos proceeds the holiday of Shavuot which is commonly known as, and in prayers it is referred to as, "the season of the giving of our Torah." Our Sages connect the giving of the Torah with the number three, "G-d gave a threefold light to a threefold people through the third [of Amram's children]... in the third month."

Why do we obsess with the number three in reference to the giving of the Torah? Three reflects the union between two separate concepts: One, the world; Two, spirituality. Before the Torah was given these two existed on different plains. When the Torah was given the Jewish people were imbued with a strength which was capable of fusing these two. From that point and on we possessed the ability to take the one entity of physicality and combine it with the number two, spirituality, make the three, a beautiful dwelling place for the presents of G-d.

Being that we have now entered the month which contains the auspicious day on which we received this special power, the coming days must be used in preparation for "the season of the giving of our Torah." Each individual should resolve to increase his study of Torah -- both the revealed realm of Torah law and Torah's mystic dimension -- and fulfilment of Mitzvos, stressing the interrelation of thought, speech, and deed.

In particular, based on the concept that our children are the "guarantors of the Torah," efforts should be made to bring all Jewish children, even those of a very young age, to shul on Shavuot to hear the reading of the Ten Commandments. Even though the children may not appreciate what they hear, their presence has an influence on the source of their souls.

On behalf of the Chabad House of Caulfield, I wish the community a Chag Sameach - a joyous and inspiring Shavuot.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

A group of Chasidim of the Shpoler Zeide from a rural area had been suffering for years under the heavy yoke of their cruel landlord, a high-ranking member of Poland's nobility, who owned all the land in that area. He was constantly raising the rents on their homes and the leases for their businesses.

What hurt most, though, were his vicious anti-Semitic twists. He had tried to force them to open their businesses on Shabbat. But his most recent depravity was the worst: he had issued a decree that in all buildings on his extensive properties, a depiction of the Christian god had to be displayed. The Shpoler Zeide's Chasidim travelled to their Rebbe to tell him this latest tale of woe.

"I've waited a long time for that wicked man to change his evil ways," said the Rebbe furiously. "He must be taught a lesson. It is time for him to hear the Ten Commandments. This is what you must do: Gather for the Shavuot holiday at the home of the Chasid with the largest property. But first, invite the landlord and all of his noble friends to come hear the festival morning prayers. As for you, prepare yourselves for the holy occasion of Receiving the Torah. I will come to join you. So, go in peace and don't worry."

The Chasidim were eager to carry out the Rebbe's instructions. The villagers who went to invite the Poritz were received pleasantly, much to their surprise. He promised that he and his associates would attend. He immediately launched preparations for a huge party for all the noblemen in the region, the highlight of which would be the spectacle of the Jewish prayer to which they were all invited.

The Shpoler Zeide arrived in the village on the eve of Shavuot. They quickly realized there would not be enough room on the largest farm for so many people. The Rebbe told them to go to the nearby hill, and raise up a large tent there.

On Shavuot morning, the grassy lands around the hill were crowded with hundreds of Jews, waiting in nervous anticipation. A significant number of non-Jewish landowners and nobility in the region also waited eagerly, looking forward to the wonderful spectacle their host had promised them.

The Rebbe approached the platform to lead the prayers himself. The Jews began to pray with enthusiasm. The gentiles - seeing an old man with a long beard, covered with an oversized white shawl, chanting loudly the words of the prayers - all laughed heartily. But when the Rebbe called out powerfully, "Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad," their laughter ceased. It was as if a lion had roared. They were gripped by terror. How could a puny, absurd Jew make them afraid? But they couldn't shake the mood. It was as if the Rebbe's voice continued to reverberate off the hillside. A few minutes later, the praying Jews stood silently, reciting the Amida prayer, after which followed the joyous singing of Hallel and chanting of the Akdamot. The festival joy was palpable. The Rebbe signalled for the Torah scroll to be brought out. The Shpoler Zeide then summoned a very tall, distinguished man to be the Torah reader.

The reader's voice was both musical and powerful. When they reached the section of the Ten Commandments, the atmosphere altered radically. It had been a beautiful, clear, spring morning. Suddenly, the heavens darkened, and tremendous peals of thunder boomed out. Fright took hold of everyone.

The reader's voice rose in volume and intensity. "I am G-d who brought you out of Egypt." Though he did not know even a word of Hebrew, amazingly, the landlord understood everything that was being read. "You shall not have other gods before me. Do not make any statue or image..." The landlord trembled as he thought of how he had demanded the Jews put up graven images.

When he heard "Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy," his knees buckled. Why had he tried to force the Jews to open their businesses on the Sabbath?

His friends were similarly affected. They too felt they understood the

commandments directly. Each one thought about his sins and was seized with fear. Their faces were deathly white. Many of them fainted. After a few moments which seemed like an eternity, the reading drew to a close and the noblemen recovered somewhat. Deeply embarrassed, they slipped away one by one.

After the prayers were concluded, the Jews sat down to the traditional dairy meal. The Shpoler Zeide related: "I assure you that the Poritz and his friends will remember today for the rest of their lives and they will never afflict you again. To accomplish this I was forced to trouble Moses himself to come and read the Torah. You have a great merit, my friends, to have been here today.

The Rebbe continued, "Know that your landlord has in him a spark of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law and the priest of Midian, who came to the Jews in the desert and acknowledged the existence of G-d...and that Israel is His chosen people."

After the holiday ended, the duke requested that the Rebbe come to see him. The two men spent hours together alone and the next morning the Shpoler Zeide returned home.

From that day on, the landlord's attitude towards his Jewish tenants changed dramatically. They were able to live in peace, without any unfair pressure from the landlord. Not only that, but with his own money he paid for the construction of a synagogue for the Jews on his estates, insisting, though, that it be built on the hill where the holy rabbi had come to pray.

Translated and adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles. www.ascent.org.il

Thoughts THAT COUNT

Take the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' houses... (1:2)

In order to know the number of people in each tribe, first they were counted according to their families and then each member of the family was counted. This shows us the importance of the family. The existence of the Jewish people is based on and dependant on the actions of each family. (*The Lubavitcher Rebbe*)

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

G-d chose a desert in which to give the Torah. He spoke to the Jews in a place where everyone enjoyed free access, to show us that every Jew has an equal obligation and share in the Torah. (*Bamidbar Rabba and Michilta Beshalach*)

A man of every tribe, a man who heads his family division (Num. 1:4)

It is easier for a person to be considered great by strangers than by his own family, who know his faults well. If a person is appreciated by his "family division" - those who know him well - it is a sign that he is worthy of being at the head of his tribe. (*Otzrainu Hayashan*)

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD
PARSHAS BAMIDBAR • EREV SHAVUOS • 4 SIVAN • 10 JUNE

FRIDAY NIGHT	CANDLE LIGHTING:	4.49 PM
	MINCHA:	4.55 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5.25 PM
SHABBOS	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.53 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	MINCHA:	4.45 PM
	CANDLE LIGHTING FOR YOM TOV:	after 5.50 PM
	TIKUN LEIL SHAVUOS:	from 9.45 PM
	ALOS HASHACHAR:	6.04 PM
	LECTURES THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT	

SUNDAY 24 MAY, SHAVUOS DAY 1	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	ASERES HADIBROIS:	approx. 11.00 AM
	SECOND KRIAH:	1.00 PM
	MINCHA:	4.55 PM
	YOM TOV MAARIV:	5.50 PM
	CANDLE LIGHTING:	after 5.50 PM

MONDAY 25 MAY, SHAVUOS DAY 2	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	YIZKOR:	11.30 AM
	MINCHA:	4.40 PM
	YOM TOV ENDS / MAARIV:	5.50 PM

WEEKDAYS	TUES-FRI:	
	SHACHARIS:	8.00 AM / 9.15 AM
	MINCHA:	4.55 PM
	MAARIV:	5.40 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING: 10-13 JUNE 2016

BEGINS			ENDS
10th	11th	12th	13th
4.59	5.50	5.50	MELBOURNE 5.50
4.53	4.52	5.52	ADELAIDE 5.52
4.42	5.39	5.38	BRISBANE 5.38
6.10	7.03	7.03	DARWIN 7.03
4.40	5.36	5.36	GOLD COAST 5.36
5.01	5.59	5.59	PERTH 5.59
4.35	5.34	5.34	SYDNEY 5.34
4.40	5.39	5.39	CANBERRA 5.39
4.30	5.34	5.34	LAUNCESTON 5.34
4.53	5.53	5.53	AUCKLAND 5.53
4.40	5.44	5.43	WELLINGTON 5.43
4.25	5.30	5.30	HOBART 5.30
4.38	5.34	5.34	BYRON BAY 5.34

Light candles on June 11th & 12th after the time given, and only from a pre-existing flame.

