

LAMPLIGHTER

4 Sivan
Parshas
Bamidbar
1348
18 May
5778/2018

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

In this week's portion, Bamidbar, we read about how Moses, Aaron and the leaders of the tribes conducted a census of the Jewish people at G-d's command. "Take a census of the congregation of the Children of Israel... you and Aaron... and with you there shall be a man of every tribe."

Counting the number of citizens who reside in a particular country is something that is done all over the world. There are no stringent requirements for becoming a census-taker; anyone may do so.

A census-taker goes to each house writing down the number of residents on a special form. Other pertinent details are also recorded: a person's age, his occupation, etc. After tabulating all the data, the exact number of residents in the country is arrived at.

The census of the Jewish people in the desert, however, was conducted in an entirely different manner. The census-takers were not unemployed or simple folk; rather, they were the most important people in the entire nation - Moses, Aaron, and the heads of each tribe!

Moses was asked by G-d to conduct the census. G-d wanted Moses, the consummate Jewish leader and teacher of Torah, to abandon all his other affairs and go from tent to tent, counting the number of Jews over the age of 20!

But why was Moses chosen for the task? Why did it have to be Moses, Aaron and the tribal leaders - the Jews with the highest status - who conducted the census?

The answer is that appointing only the most prominent individuals expressed the intrinsic value and tremendous significance of the Jewish people. Counting Jews is an act of great consequence; not just anyone is permitted to do so. Each and every Jew is so precious that only people with the stature of a Moses, an Aaron or a leader of a tribe may take their number.

Conducting a census of Jews is not a secular activity, it is a holy one. Every single Jew is holy, a "veritable part of G-d above," and counting the members of a holy nation is a mitzva (commandment). This was reflected in the way the census was taken. The census-takers were required to wear their Shabbat finery as they made their rounds from tent to tent. The census was a serious affair.

Counting, in and of itself, is a mundane task, but when it comes to counting Jews it is a holy matter.

So too is it with all the worldly affairs and daily activities of the Jew. Because of his unique spiritual nature, even his mundane activities take on a higher significance. Eating, drinking, managing a Jewish household and educating one's children - all these are uplifted and transformed into holy pursuits, for each and every Jew is invaluable to G-d.

Every Jew Counts

By Yossy Goldman

Once there was a small town consisting of only a few Jewish families. Between them, they had exactly ten men over the age of bar mitzvah. They were all dedicated people and they made sure that they never missed a minyan. One day, a new Jewish family moved in to town. Great joy and excitement; now they would have eleven men. But a strange thing happened. As soon as they had eleven, they could never manage a minyan!

When we know we are indispensable, we make a point of being there. Otherwise, "count me out."

This week in the Torah reading of Bamidbar, we read of the census taken of the Jewish people. This portion is always read on the Shabbat before Shavuot, the "season of the giving of the Torah." One important and obvious connection is that in the Torah, too, every letter counts. One missing letter invalidates the entire scroll. Likewise, one missing Jew leaves Jewish peoplehood lacking, incomplete.

Nine of the holiest rabbis cannot make a minyan. Enter one little bar-mitzvah boy, and the minyan is complete! When we count Jews, there are no distinctions. We don't look at religious piety or academic achievement. The rabbi and the rebel, the philanthropist and the pauper -- all count for one: no more, no less.

If we count Jews because every Jew counts, then that implies a responsibility on Jewish communal leadership to ensure that no Jew is missing from the kehillah, from the greater community. It implies a responsibility to bring those Jews who are on the periphery of Jewish life inside. To make sure they feel that they belong and are welcome -- even if they haven't paid any membership fees. It also means that the individual Jew has commitments and obligations. If you're important, don't get lost. You are needed.

Today, we are losing a lot of Jews to ignorance. But sometimes we also lose them because we didn't embrace them as we could have. At a time when they were receptive, we didn't make them feel welcome.

Other faiths, ideologies and cults are using "love bombs" to entice Jews to their way of life. Very often they prey on the weak and vulnerable among us. Anyone desperately seeking warmth, love and a sense of belonging will be an easy target for such groups. But there are lots of ordinary, stable people who crave these things too. Don't we all? If the Jewish community doesn't provide that warm welcome, we may very well find them going elsewhere.

Some years ago, we had a visiting Rabbi from Canada speaking in our shul. His talk was about the very real threat of "Jews for J." and so-called "Hebrew-Christians" who preyed on unsuspecting Jews by using Jewish symbols and even so-called "shuls," or Messianic Synagogues, which are really nothing more than churches in disguise. He described how these individuals make every deceitful effort to confuse ignorant Jews into believing they are going to a Jewish house of worship.

A woman in the audience then asked, "Rabbi, if I am traveling out of town and want to go to shul, how will I know if I am going to a real shul or one of these impostor synagogues?"

The Rabbi laughed and said, "When you go into these places, they bombard you. As soon as they see a new face, a dozen people will come over to welcome you and give you a seat and a book and make you feel at home. But what happens when you go into a real shul? Nobody greets you. Nobody looks at you. And the first person to say a word to you growls at you because you're sitting in his seat!"

Asad, sad joke indeed.

We need to embrace everyone who walks in through our doors. And we need to do more than just wait for people to come to shul and make them feel welcome. We need to go out and find our people wherever they may be. Most certainly, when someone shows a spark of interest -- a soul seeking its source -- we need to be there; as an organized community, and as individuals.

So next time you notice someone sitting at the back of the shul looking lost, or even just a new face in the crowd, try and spare a smile. You may save a soul. Every Jew really does count. Let's count them in.

Slice of LIFE

Learning Ahavas Yisroel from the Rebbe

By Dovid Zaklikowski

In 1952, at the suggestion of his uncle Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Isaac Hodakov, chief aide of the Rebbe, 17-year-old Immanuel Schochet traveled from Toronto to the Lubavitch school in Brooklyn, New York. Initially, while attending the school, located in Crown Heights, close to Lubavitch World Headquarters, known as "770", he found Chassidic life foreign. Although he enjoyed the gatherings presided by the Rebbe, he had little understanding of a Rebbe's role and felt out of place whenever the crowd sang melodies for lengthy periods. In addition, he found the study of Chassidic texts bewildering.

His views changed one day after waiting outside 770 to wish the Rebbe a good Shabbos. "I followed the Rebbe into 770," he recalled. "When I came to the stairs, I saw that the door was open, and it was the Rebbe himself holding the door open for me." He said that the encounter made him feel closer to the Rebbe, who he discovered was not only brilliant but also uniquely sensitive to others.

According to those who knew him, Rabbi Schochet's deep consideration for others, regardless of differing views, was

a trait the rabbi gleaned from the Rebbe. One illustration of this took place while Rabbi Schochet was still a young student in Crown Heights. In 1954, he had remained in the neighborhood for Passover, so as to experience the Rebbe's court. During one of the Rebbe's gatherings, an elderly Jewish scholar entered the room. Unknown to most there, he was waging a personal battle against the Rebbe.

The room was already packed, with no place for this man to sit among the elders at the head table. He tried to inch his way over the benches and tables when someone suddenly pulled him back forcefully.

The Rebbe, watching the scene, turned white as a tablecloth, as Rabbi Schochet described. The hall grew silent and the Rebbe spoke sharply about G-d's command to the Jewish nation not to show anger towards the Egyptians, "for you were once strangers in their land."

"A person should never be embarrassed in this way," the Rebbe continued, "and certainly not one who has many merits from the good deeds he has done."

Another incident took place following the passing of Uriel Zimmer, professional translator for the Rebbe. Letters in foreign languages continued to pour in, and so Rabbi Schochet was asked to translate letters in languages in which he was fluent. Considering many of the letters too laden with detail, he suggested to the Rebbe that only

relevant sentences be translated.

The Rebbe responded: "You never know what the writer expresses about himself and his pain in the seemingly non-essential parts of his or her letter. Therefore, you should translate the entire letter."

This was a lesson Rabbi Schochet took to heart: other people's "nonsense" should never be trivialized. One must always listen. He was never a man for small talk, but questions or opinions broached by others were considered with thoughtfulness and sincerity.

One acquaintance told Rabbi Schochet's children, "Your father could highbrow with top professors and great rabbis, yet he talks to us at our level and as our best friend."

One Shabbat morning, a man in crisis was waiting near Rabbi Schochet's home as he was about to make the 25 minute trek to the synagogue. For Rabbi Schochet, this walk was a sacrosanct time for quiet thought. Nevertheless, he allowed the man to accompany him. Together, they walked to the synagogue, while discussing the man's issues at length. As they neared the synagogue, Rabbi Schochet embraced the man warmly.

Yet the man remained outside the synagogue until Rabbi Schochet completed his prayers. When the rabbi re-emerged, he happily let the man escort him home, while they continued their conversation. This act repeated itself for the next several months, until the man was able to regain his former life.

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WEEKLY VIDEO



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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Educator's Wish to Leave Community

By the Grace of G-d
16th of Adar 5739 [March 15, 1979]
Brooklyn, N. Y.
Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your (undated) letter, in which you write about the situation of Torah Chinuch [education] in your community, and your personal involvement in it. I am gratified to note your dedication to the cause of Chinuch. I trust you will be able to report good news about your efforts to preserve and strengthen true Torah Chinuch, as well as all matters of Yiddishkeit [Judaism] in general, in your area.

I hope you had a joyous and inspiring Purim, which brought "Light, Joy, Gladness and Honor" to our people in those days, and we pray "So be it for us," both in the ordinary sense of the words, as well as in their deeper meaning, namely, "Light – this is Torah," etc. We have the assurance that when a Jew is determined to strengthen Yiddishkeit both at home and in one's surroundings, G-d blesses such efforts with Hatzlacha [success].

With regard to your question whether it would be advisable for you to move to another place, it would not be good for the children to have such a change in the middle of the school year. Besides, as already indicated, one has definite obligations towards the community in which one lives, and seeking to improve one's own situation would not help those who must remain behind. Indeed, when an active member of the community leaves, it makes their situation even worse. I therefore think that, for the present, at any rate, you ought to redouble your efforts to strengthen the situation of Torah Chinuch and Yiddishkeit in your community, and postpone the question of moving until the end of the school year at least.

May G-d grant that you should have good news to report in all above.
With blessing,
M. Schneerson

QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

With Rabbi Aron Moss

Is It Normal to Have Pre-Wedding Doubts?

Question: *Is it normal to have doubts during an engagement? My friends tell me I should be 100% certain that I have made the right decision, but I would be lying if I said I had no doubts. Is it a bad sign if I am just not sure?*

Answer: There are two types of doubting. One is an alarm bell that should not be ignored. The other is a sign that you have made the right choice.

In a letter to his recently engaged son, the great Kabbalist Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson wrote that engagement and doubt go hand in hand. The union of soulmates is such a lofty and super-rational event that the mind cannot possibly grasp it. Something is at work that is beyond our understanding, and therefore there is always an element of doubt.

This doubt is not an indication that you have done something stupid. On the contrary, it means that you have touched a level that lies beyond the confines of the human mind. Finding your soulmate is such a miracle, our logic cannot process that it is really possible, that it is really true, that you have found the one for you. This wonder is a kind of positive uncertainty: Is this for real? I don't believe this is happening to me!

So the fact that you feel unsure may be a good sign, indicating that you have been touched by the hand of G-d, and are left in wonder that it could really be so good.

However, this only applies when the doubts are vague and general, doubts that anyone could have: Will I be happy 20 years from now? How can I know for sure? Maybe there's someone else better suited to me? What if we change? These questions are normal. They would be there no matter who you were engaged to, and so there's no reason to be alarmed. In time these doubts will disappear like a puff of smoke.

But if your doubts have strong basis to them, like you are questioning your partner's good character, or you suspect that your feelings have not developed to the extent that they should have, then you need to seek advice.

Here's a good way of testing whether the doubts are a cause for concern or not. Are the doubts stronger when you are with your fiancé or when you are apart? Normal doubts come when you are lying awake late at night or when you are alone and your mind is churning. Ignore them. But doubts that arise from actual interactions and real conversations need to be closely examined.

Engagement can be an emotional roller coaster. And when we are emotional, we are rarely able to see clearly. Seek the advice of a wise and experienced outsider who will be able to tell you whether your doubts have a foundation, or you are simply experiencing the humbling disbelief of finding your true soulmate.

A WORD

from the Director

Shavuot begins this Motzei Shabbat/Saturday evening. At this time, we are reminded of the beautiful Midrash which teaches that the Jewish children of every generation are the reason why G-d gave us the gift of the Torah:

When G-d asked what assurance the Jewish people were offering that the Torah would be studied, loved and cherished, the Jewish people offered our Patriarchs as security. But this was not accepted. We then offered the Torah scholars as the guarantors. This, too, was not acceptable. It was only when we offered our children as guarantors that G-d approved our proposal and gave us the Torah.

On the anniversary of an event, the "spiritual energy" that was infused by G-d into that event is at its strongest. This is the reason why, for example, we should do our utmost to celebrate our birthdays properly each year. This is true, too, concerning every Jewish holiday. Which means that on Shavuot - the celebration of the Giving of the Torah - the spiritual energy that was invested into that day over 3,000 years ago is at its strongest.

What is the special spiritual energy of Shavuot and how can we benefit from it? It was on Shavuot that our ancestors proclaimed, "We will do and then we will listen/study." This is the time when we recommit ourselves to the actual performance of mitzvot - even if we don't yet understand their reasons.

Shavuot is also the time when the spiritual energy of our children, being the guarantors for the Torah, is at its strongest. This is the time when we must renew our commitment to providing our children with a proper Jewish upbringing and education as well as facilitating the proper Jewish education of all Jewish children, wherever they may be.

We can begin doing both of the above by going to the synagogue this Shavuot to hear the reading of the Ten Commandments and by bringing along with us Jewish children of all ages - children in age, children at heart, or children in Jewish knowledge. Be there, and be a part of a more than 3,000-year-old unbroken chain of Jewish commitment and pride.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED



The Best Merchandise

Onkelos was the son of Emperor Hadrian's sister. Being a clever, handsome, well mannered young man, he had grown up to be one of the most promising future leaders of the mighty Roman Empire. His uncle looked forward to the time when Onkelos would be ready to make his formal debut on the stage of public Roman life.

By chance, Onkelos had become acquainted with some of the noble Jewish families who had settled in Rome. Through them, he was introduced to the Jewish religion, and was very much attracted to it.

Onkelos had to remember, however, that he was the noble son of the most eminent family of the Roman Empire. It was unwise for him to be observed associating with Jews. Still more dangerous would it have been, had he openly stated his intention of changing to the Jewish religion. It would have been sheer suicide. On the other hand, Onkelos felt increasingly drawn to the Jewish faith.

After long deliberation, he worked out a solution to his problem. He visited his uncle, Emperor Hadrian. During their conversation he casually mentioned that he had become interested in the world of commerce, and that he would like to dedicate some time and effort to becoming fully acquainted with the principles and workings of this most important field of public endeavor.

Hadrian, who was very fond of his nephew, was highly pleased at this show of interest in such complicated matters as the theory and practice of economics. He gave Onkelos this advice: "The basic approach to commerce is the discovery of merchandise of a highly marketable product which has yet to come before the public. This type of merchandise is the most profitable kind of business."

This is exactly what Onkelos wanted to hear. Now he was given a free hand to travel about and to associate with merchants, many of whom were Jews, without attracting unwanted attention and giving cause for suspicion. In the course of extensive trips he visited the Holy Land, and remained there to study Torah.

Gifted with an extraordinary and keen mind, he easily overcame the difficulties of the Hebrew language, law and lore. After a while he was ready to adopt the Jewish religion and to abide by the commands of the Torah. Secretly, he became a ger, a convert to Judaism.

Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua were the spiritual leaders of the Jewish people in those days. Onkelos visited them and begged them to accept him as their disciple.

The Sages saw the deep change that had taken place in the attitude of the young, noble Roman. Instead of haughtiness, he now showed humility and a readiness to study, like all other students of Torah.

They finally agreed to the urgent request of the young ger, and spent much time and effort on his Jewish education.

The time came when Onkelos could no longer delay his return to Rome. Confident in G-d's help, he parted from the Sages who had become his revered teachers, and embarked on his trip home.

After his arrival in Rome, he paid his due visit to the Emperor Hadrian, who quickly noticed the deep change that had come over his nephew during his long absence. It was a more humble, yet wiser Onkelos, who now stood before him, than the one who had left to study commerce.

"What has happened to you, my dear nephew? Did you meet failure in your business ventures, or did any one dare to harm you?" the emperor asked him.

"Who would harm the nephew of the mightiest man in the world?" replied Onkelos with a smile.

"Why then do I see such humility in your countenance, my nephew?

Onkelos decided to be straightforward. "I cannot but tell you the full truth, my dear uncle. The reason for the change in me is the fact that I spent much time and effort in the study of Torah, the Law of the Jewish people. What is more, I even went so far as to adopt the Jewish religion as my own."

Emperor Hadrian's face grew red with fury over his nephew's confession. This spelled the end of Onkelos's political career and deprived him, his uncle, of the one on whom he had counted heavily in his future political plans.

When his fury abated, Hadrian felt that he should give his nephew a fair chance to explain his behavior before doing anything to punish him. "You have thoroughly disappointed my high hopes and expectations of you. Yet I am curious to know what caused such unbelievable foolishness on the part of such a clever young fellow as you. Perhaps there was some young woman who trapped you against your will?"

"My dear uncle and friend, to be frank, I must state that no such reason was at the root of my change of religion. What prompted me to take such a weighty step was none other than your sound advice before I parted from you."

Angrily, Hadrian retorted: "I would be the last man to advise you so stupidly."

"Yet remember, dear uncle, before I left, you advised me to search for merchandise that had the promise of being a best selling article. On my extensive trips and thorough study of many countries and conditions, I did not discover any merchandise that, at the present time, is considered lowlier or cheaper than the Jewish religion and the Jewish people.

Yet, there is also no doubt in my mind that it will become the most valuable merchandise of all in the future. As the Prophet Isaiah said: 'Thus said G-d, the Redeemer of Israel, the Holy One, to him who is despised by men, to him who is abhorred by nations, to the servants of rulers; kings shall see it and rise up; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves.' I should think no reasonable businessman would miss the chance of such great profit."

Hadrian recognized his nephew's conviction, and despite his regret and sorrow, he let him go. He did nothing to interfere with Onkelos's open conversion to the Jewish faith, and his life as a pious and observant Jew.

PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

In the Sinai Desert, G-d says to conduct a census of the twelve tribes of Israel. Moses counts 603,550 men of draftable age (20 to 60 years); the tribe of Levi, numbering 22,300 males age one month and older, is counted separately. The Levites are to serve in the Sanctuary, replacing the firstborn, whose number they approximated, who were disqualified when they participated in the worshipping of the Golden Calf. The 273 firstborn who lacked a Levite to replace them had to pay a five-shekel "ransom" to redeem themselves.

When the people broke camp, the three Levite clans dismantled and transported the Sanctuary, and reassembled it at the center of the next encampment. They then erected their own tents around it: the Kohathites, who carried the Sanctuary's vessels (the Ark, menorah, etc.) in their specially designed coverings on their shoulders, camped to its south; the Gershonites, in charge of its tapestries and roof coverings, to its west; and the families of Merari, who transported its wall panels and pillars, to its north. Before the Sanctuary's entranceway, to its east, were the tents of Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's sons.

Beyond the Levite circle, the twelve tribes camped in four groups of three tribes each. To the east were Judah (pop. 74,600), Issachar (54,400) and Zebulun (57,400); to the south, Reuben (46,500), Simeon (59,300) and Gad (45,650); to the west, Ephraim (40,500), Manasseh (32,200) and Benjamin (35,400); and to the north, Dan (62,700), Asher (41,500) and Naphtali (53,400). This formation was kept also while traveling. Each tribe had its own nassi (prince or leader), and its own flag with its tribal color and emblem.

CANDLE LIGHTING

	Shabbos 18th	Shavuos 19th-21st		
	Begins	Lighting	Lighting	Ends
Melbourne	4:59	After 5:58	After 5:58	5:57
Adelaide	5:01	After 5:58	After 5:58	5:57
Brisbane	4:48	After 5:42	After 5:42	5:41
Darwin	6:11	After 7:02	After 7:02	7:02
Gold Coast	4:45	After 5:40	After 5:39	5:39
Perth	5:08	After 6:04	After 6:04	6:03
Sydney	4:43	After 5:40	After 5:39	5:39
Canberra	4:48	After 5:46	After 5:45	5:45
Launceston	4:42	After 5:43	After 5:42	5:42
Auckland	5:02	After 6:01	After 6:00	5:59
Wellington	4:52	After 5:53	After 5:52	5:51
Hobart	4:37	After 5:40	After 5:39	5:38
Byron Bay	4:43	After 5:38	After 5:38	5:37



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS BAMIDBAR • 4 SIVAN • 18 MAY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	MINCHA	5.05 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS	5.35 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	9.44 AM
	SHACHARIS	10.00 AM
	MINCHA	4.55 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA	5.00 PM
	MAARIV	5.45 PM