

DIVREI TORAH FROM INTERNET
ON PARSHAS BAMIDBAR - 5756

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OU Torah Insights Project

Parashat BaMidbar 5756

by Rabbi Eliyahu Safran

Parashat Bamidbar May 18, 1996 In the beginning of Bamidbar, the Torah paints a contrasting picture to that which took place in the parshah of Korach. There, KorachEs common sense rebellion, as Rav Yosef B. Soloveitchik labeled it, wrought havoc on the organized Jewish community. But in Bamidbar, all was peaceful: The children of Israel did all that G-d had commanded Moshe, that is how they camped according to their standards and that is how they traveled. The Midrash comments that the Israelites distanced themselves from the Mishkan in order to allow the Levites to take their rightful place adjacent to the sanctuary. That need not have been the case, the Sefas Emes points out. The Jewish people could have argued as logically and emotionally as Korach did. They, too, could have claimed that there were those who were more worthy than the Levites to stand near the Mishkan. Were all Levites of such superior stature? Was it not possible that among the non-Levites there were those more deserving of these coveted front-row seats? But this did not occur. These arguments were not presented. The Jewish people understood and accepted that if these places were assigned by G-d, no switching could be done. Everyone assumed their designated positions and Divinely assigned roles. It takes a combination of greatness and humility to discover and accept one's assigned role and responsibilities in life, and it takes a lifetime of effort to fulfill them. It is easier to usurp someone else's role or to ask, as the more democratic among us might, Why have roles altogether? But G-d not only assigned the Levites their role in the wilderness, He counted the heads of the entire congregation of the children of Israel in the wilderness as well - in that very wilderness where the Torah was given. G-d wants us to learn that only a humble Jew, who is barren as the wilderness of any vanity, is capable of receiving the Divine word and of accepting his assigned role and position. The story is told of a man who is able to quote the bible by heart but whose reputation in the community was questionable. One day, he confided a secret ambition to his grandfather. More than anything else, he said, I would like to go into the wilderness that our forefathers crossed, and then to Mount

Sinai. I would like to climb the summit of the mountain and from there to read the Ten Commandments aloud. That would be the crowning achievement of my life. His grandfather looked at him intently for a while and then said, Instead of going to the wilderness and Mount Sinai to read the Ten Commandments, why not stay at home and observe them!

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<http://www.jpost.co.il/col> Friday, May 17, 1996 SHABBAT SHALOM:
FORGETTING TO REMEMBER - By RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget her cunning. May my tongue cleave to my palate if I ever think not of you, if I ever set not Jerusalem above my highest joy." (Psalm 137)

IN a recent feature story, writer Amos Oz declared that for him, Jerusalem is hutz la'arezt, outside Israel, more representative of Jewish exile than of the Israeli state! Since the intifada, many North Tel Aviv Israelis have ceased to visit Jerusalem at all.

It is interesting to note that our Grace after Meals contains three blessings considered biblical in origin: thanksgiving to the Almighty for the meal; thanksgiving for the land of Israel; and a request for the restoration of Jerusalem. Apparently, the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem are seen as two distinct concepts. What is the fundamental difference between the two? Last week's portion of Behar, commanding us to work the land for six years and allow it to rest on the seventh, provides an interesting key. What strikes even the most casual reader is the parallel to the six days of physical creativity and the seventh day of rest. The Mishna outlines the 39 forbidden categories of work on the Sabbath, ordering the prohibitions by first cataloging the processes of bread manufacture, then garment and leather manufacture, and finally building construction.

This clearly indicates that although it is necessary to occupy ourselves with the pursuit of food, clothing and shelter six days a week, Shabbat must be dedicated to the life of the soul. And what the Sabbath is to the days of the week, the sabbatical year is to the cycle of years. For six years the land must be tilled to provide necessary sustenance, but the seventh year must be dedicated to God and Torah.

From this perspective, the blessings of the Grace After Meals assume a deeper meaning. We begin by logically expressing thanks to God for nourishing the entire world. But it is the next blessing which is the biblical source for the Grace After Meals: "And you shall eat, be satisfied and praise the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you."

Apparently, the Torah is stating that although God may have provided the entire world with the ability to sustain itself, so long as Jews don't have their own land, the very food we eat will depend upon the mercy of governments under whose sovereignty our presence is suffered.

Hence, the identification of Jerusalem with the Divine Presence. Whenever the Torah speaks about "the place (ha makom) that God will choose," the reference is to Jerusalem. Maimonides rules that the sanctity of Jerusalem is eternal, because its sanctity is based upon the metaphysical presence of the Divine on the Temple Mount. No enemy has the power to destroy or nullify this Divine Presence.

As the seat of the Sanhedrin, Jerusalem is also identified with the Teaching of God. After all, the Torah was interpreted and expanded by the Supreme Court of 71 judges, whose chambers were next to the Holy Temple. This is the source of the universal aspect of Jerusalem as well.

The God of Israel is the God of the world, and the Torah of ethical monotheism must come forth from Jerusalem to the entire world. Hence, the commandment for the Jews to ascend to Jerusalem during the three major Festivals of the year, where they would experience an intensive rendezvous (mo'ed) with God and Torah, and see and be seen by the Divine Presence. A similar connection between the land of Israel and the ideal of Jerusalem is to be found in the thrice-daily Amida prayer.

It's interesting that the ninth Amida blessing, for the land of Israel, is also our prayer for physical sustenance: "Bless this year on our behalf, O Lord, our God, and all kinds of its produce, and grant blessing on the face of the land and satisfy us from the land's goodness."

The next blessing is for the ingathering of the exiles. History has proven again and again that there is only one haven for the Jews, and that's the land of Israel.

But the journey doesn't end with a four-room apartment and a view of the Mediterranean under the protection of the Israeli army. After securing physical well-being, we must continue to seek the spiritual goals the City of Peace represents.

"Return in mercy to your city Jerusalem, and dwell in it as you have promised; speedily establish in it the throne of David, and rebuild it soon, in our days, as an everlasting structure."

Here Jerusalem is defined as God's city. It is also clearly established as the seat of Jewish sovereignty, the house of the throne of David.

And the King of Israel is also meant to symbolize the King of Kings; Jewish sovereignty is seen as the first step in guaranteeing the continuity of our spiritual message to the world - the ultimate purpose for our physical nationhood. And so the next blessing in the Amida is our prayer for the Messiah, herald of universal peace: "Speedily cause the shoot of David to sprout forth... we await your salvation..."

It is probably because we recognize Jerusalem as the seat of the Ruler of the Universe that after the Six Day War we immediately announced the inviolate right of followers of every religion to worship at their respective Jerusalem shrines. Once Jewish rights are secured, the dream of worshipping the Divine Lord of Peace, each religion in its own way, can begin to be realized. Shabbat Shalom

Monday, May 13, 1996

SECURITY COMES BEFORE PEACE - By RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

"If you walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them, then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield its increase ... you will have your fill of food, and you will dwell in the land safely. I will give peace in the land so that you will sleep without fear." (Lev 26:3,6,7)

THUS the Torah describes all the good in store for our people if we but follow God's laws - including dwelling in the land with security (laVetah). Now, generally speaking, peace in the land is synonymous with security - bitahon. Why the repetition?

In order to understand what peace is, we first have to understand what peace is not. Undoubtedly the first idea that comes to mind is that peace is the antithesis of war. But instead of contrasting war and peace, which is expected, I would like to contrast truth and peace, which is less expected. The nature of truth lies in its insistence on a no-nonsense approach to life. Truth is either/or, black or white, right or wrong. Truth is exact, and exacting. Olam ha'emet ("the True World") is a term used to describe the next world, where a true accounting will be given, or taken.

Like justice, truth is blind. In a discussion in the Talmud concerning the rendering of judgment, the text states that "where there is justice, there is no peace, and where there is peace there is no justice." (B.T. Sanhedrin 6b) Why is truth blind? Perhaps because it's independent of people; it is objective Law, emanating from a realm beyond human frailties.

In contrast, peace is down to earth, it implies a relationship of give and take, a compromise that enables both parties to save face while neither is able to land a knockout punch.

But if each side insists that the entire truth belongs to him and him alone, then truth becomes a stumbling block to peace. The pursuit of peace takes two irreconcilable "truths" and suggests that the parties choose: If they want truth and nothing but truth, they should get ready for war, but if the objective is to live in peace, then each side has to give up some of its truth.

Peace is fragile and difficult to attain, whether it's between husband and wife, two neighbors, or bordering nations. Therefore it shouldn't be surprising that Rabbi Yehoshua B. Korha offers the opinion that judges must first suggest to litigants that they compromise (pshara), and that a legal decision in favor of such compromise is a mitzva. (B.T. Sanhedrin 6b)

Why do parties to a compromise emerge at peace? Because they each feel satisfied that at least the other party did not get everything he or she had demanded either.

In the prophecy of Zachariah, God guarantees that eventually our fast days (over the destruction of Jerusalem) "shall become days of joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts to the house of Judah, therefore love the truth and peace."

Apparently, says the prophet, truth alone is not sufficient to bring about the final Redemption.

Any discussion of truth and peace inevitably leads us to the major issue facing Jewish life today - the Arab-Israeli conflict. Whether one feels elated, threatened or frightened by the prospect of peace in our region, the verses in our portion make it clear where reality lies. If we join the end of the fifth verse with the beginning of the sixth, we come up with the following common-sense formula: "When you live securely in your land, I will give peace to the land."

The simplicity of this equation should stop us in our tracks. If we understand peace as requiring each side to surrender a little, to compromise, then the verse is telling us that no peace or compromise can be legitimately expected until we have security. Otherwise we're only tempting the other side to take advantage of our readiness to yield as a chance to seek our destruction. There are undoubtedly many sources which mandate a land-for-peace option. After all, doesn't Maimonides rule that a doctor must sometimes amputate a limb in order to save a patient? But the analogy between land and limb overlooks one factor. We amputate a limb only if the surgeon's goal is to preserve the life of the patient.

But what if the surgeon is an enemy? What if his goal in removing the limb is not to strengthen but rather to weaken us - and eventually destroy us? Thus it can be said that this week's portion, Behukotai, dealing with the consequences of keeping or breaking God's commandments, and which begins and ends in terms of the land, alludes to a formula for peace, which we've defined as compromise.

Only when we feel secure in our land can we be expected to make the compromises necessary for peace.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention one more definition of peace. "I will give peace in the land," (Lev. 26:6) is followed by the declaration: "and they [your enemies] shall fall before you by the sword."

The question begs to be asked: about what kind of peace are we speaking when the text still mentions the slaying of enemies? Perhaps the Bible is emphasizing a second definition of peace: peace between Jew and Jew.

The prerequisite to achieving security and peace with other nations is our ability to achieve security and peace among ourselves. When we Jews truly become united, no human force will be able to destroy us. Shabbat Shalom Rabbi Riskin, dean of the Ohr Tora institutions, is chief rabbi of Efrat.

Torah Weekly - Bamidbar - OHR SOMAYACH

Summary

The book of Bamidbar ('In the desert') begins with Hashem commanding Moshe to take a census of all the men over the age of twenty -- old enough for service. The count reveals just over 600,000. The Levi'im are counted separately later, because their service will be unique. They will be responsible for transporting the Mishkan and its furnishings and putting them together when the nation encamps. The Tribes of Israel, each with its banner, are arranged around the Mishkan in four sections: to the East, South, West and North. Since Levi is singled out, Yosef is split into 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 exchange is made between the firstborn and the Levi'im, whereby the Levi'im take over the role the firstborn would have had serving in the Mishkan before the sin of the golden calf. The exchange is made using all the 22,000 surveyed Levi'im from one month old and up, even though only Levi'im between 30 and 50 will work in the Mishkan. The remaining firstborn sons are redeemed with silver, similar to the way we redeem our firstborn today. The sons of Levi are divided in three main families, Gershon, Kehas and Merari (besides the Kohanim -- the special division from Kehas' family). The sons of Kehas had to carry the Menorah, the Table, the Altar and the Holy Ark. Because of their utmost sanctity, the Ark and the Altar are covered only by Aaron and his sons, before the Levi'im prepared them for travel.

Commentaries

"In The Desert..." (1:1) DESERT SONG - 1 Just as a lover is obsessed with his beloved, so must the true student of the Torah be obsessed with his

`beloved' - the Torah. It must occupy his thoughts all the time, and nothing else can be as important to him. He must feel that only the Torah gives meaning to his life, that for the Torah he is prepared to forgo all the material comforts of this world, to make himself like a desert - void and ownerless. He must make himself like a virgin canvas for the Torah to paint its landscape on his soul. The Torah was given to us in the desert. To imbibe the Torah deeply, for it to `water' our soul, we must thirst for its living waters like a man thirsting for water in a desert. We must be as humble as the desert, lowly and abandoned, forsaking our preconceived ideas, prepared to relinquish our material desires and the distorting effects of passion. For only when we let the Torah mold our thought processes will Hashem open our eyes to the real world.

DESERT SONG - 2 The desolation of the desert stands eternally as the antithesis of life and activity. The symbol of civilization, of the flow and vitality of life is the city. A city is comprised of houses, and the houses, of stones. The words of a sentence are like stones. Just as each stone by itself is devoid of life, but when combined together into a house, they form the setting of life and vitality, so too are the letters of a word. When left by themselves they radiate no light or life. They are merely lifeless stones. But when they are built into words and sentences, sayings and utterances, they radiate the light of intellect that infuses life into man, that leads him and guides him.

"With the word of Hashem, the heavens were made." The entire world was created with the combination of the letters of the Hebrew aleph-beis. The letters and the words are spread out and dispersed over the whole face of the earth. If, through them, we recognize and see the thread of Godliness pervading the world, if they are like beads of a necklace, revealing the Godly thread that weaves the world into one, then the world is no longer a desert of desolation, but a populous city vibrant with life and purpose. However, if we fail to comprehend the writing of the Divine Hand, if we make no effort to assemble the letters of existence into words and sentences, then the world remains a desolate wilderness. It's like two people reading the same book.

One reads with insight and understanding, and the other spews forth a jumble of letters and words without grasp or comprehension. The first reader kindles the light of wisdom that is in the words, he brings them to life. The second is left with a collection of dead stones. The world is a large book. Fortunate is he who knows how to read and understand it. (Adapted from Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin - Torah U'Moadim)

DESERT SONG - 3 Every year on the festival of Shavuot, the Jewish people again receive the Torah. On the Shabbos before Shavuot we prepare for this event. Historically, Shabbos was given to the Jewish People before the giving of the Torah, and it was the power of Shabbos that brought us to Sinai: For Shabbos creates unity in the Jewish People. And unity among the Jewish People is a pre-requisite for receiving the Torah. When we sit together as brothers, like one family at the Shabbos table, we re-create that same unity which was necessary for receiving the Torah at Sinai. If the unity that Shabbos creates is one way we prepare for receiving the Torah, another way is the self-abnegation of Shabbos: Instead of being `full with ourselves,' we make ourselves like the desert, void of all concerns except the desire to do Hashem's will. Every Jew has this capability of self-abnegation which expresses itself each Shabbos when we refrain from doing melacha (creative work). Thus Shabbos is a necessary prelude for the receiving the Torah. As it says in the Haggada of Pesach: "And He gave us the Shabbos and He brought us close to Mount Sinai." (Sfas Emes)

Haftorah: Hoshea 2:1-22 "And it shall be in the place where it will said of them `You are not my people,' it will be said to them `The children of the living G-d.'" (2:1) The history of the Jewish People shows that specifically in those lands in which we have been oppressed and separated into ghettos, Jewish Life has flourished. However, where we have experienced acceptance and dwelled in comfort with equal rights, the scourge of assimilation and the disappearing Jew has taken root. This spiritual holocaust has caused a hemorrhage which has ravaged whole limbs of the body of the Jewish People.

The prophet Hoshea teaches us here that "It shall be in the place that it will be said to them you are not my people" - specifically in those places where the Jews will be rejected and scorned as being inferior, "it will be said to you -- children of the living G-d." There it will also be that you will guard well your source, the Torah, until it will become apparent and clear that you are

the "children of the living G-d." (Bikurei Aviv)

Sing, My Soul! Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations. Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations. Yom Zeh Mechubad - "This day is honoured..."

"This day is honored above all other days for on it rested The Rock (or Molder) of the Universe." Yom zeh mechubad mikol yomim, ki vo shavas tzur olamim

The term "Tzur" used in the refrain of this song is generally translated as "Rock," referring to Hashem's power and stability.

But when Chana, the mother of Shmuel Hanavi, offered thanks to Hashem for blessing her with a child (Shmuel I 2:2) she said "there is no Tzur like our G-d," which our Sages interpret as meaning that there is no "tzayar" - molder - like Hashem. A human artist, they point out, can only mold a figure on a wall but cannot instill it with life and a soul, but the Divine Molder molds a form within a form and instills it with life and soul.

It is in this sense, that Hashem is the all-powerful Creator of the universe and the Supreme Molder of everything in it, that we sing this song of praise on the day when He rested from this effort.

Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair General Editor:
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"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frاند on Parshas Bamidbar -
Legacy from Yaakov Avinu: Maintaining Civility In Times of Duress

There is an interesting Medrash on this week's Parsha: When G-d said to Moshe Rabbeinu, "Make them 'Flags' as they desire", Moshe began to complain. Moshe said, "Now there will be divisions and disputes between the tribes".

In other words, Moshe reasoned, "Once I start dividing and specifying who travels in the East and who travels in the West, who is in front and who is in back, I know what's going to happen -- people are going to start arguing. If I tell the tribe of Yehudah, they should travel in the East, they will come back and say they want to travel in the South; and so too with the tribe of Reuvain, and the tribe of Ephraim, and so forth with each of the tribes. What am I going to do? I know there's going to be machlokes."

G-d responded to Moshe, "Moshe, what are you worried about? -- They know their proper places by themselves. This has all been previously worked out; there is a system that they received from Yaakov Avinu regarding how to camp by 'flags'."

How did they get this system from Yaakov Avinu -- after all, Yaakov died long before their current travels in the Wilderness?

The answer is that the Tribes were to circle the Mishkan now, in the exact formation in which they circled the coffin of Yaakov when they returned his body from Egypt to the Land of Israel for burial. Yaakov gave this formation to his sons as part of his death-bed instructions: Yehudah, Yissachar, and Zevulun will carry my coffin from the East; Reuvain, Shimeon, and Gad will carry it from the South; Ephraim, Menashe, and Binyamin will carry it from the West; and Dan, Asher, and Naftali will carry the coffin from the North.

Therefore, G-d told Moshe Rabbeinu that the travel formations around the Mishkan are already all worked out. There is no need to worry about fights or about Machlokes.

Rav Mordechai Rogov, zt"l, a Rosh Yeshiva in Skokie, interpreted this Medrash as follows:

It is the nature of people to act with civility and treat each other with respect when things are all right and secure. However, when people are thrown into conditions of danger and insecurity, into conditions of duress and of pressure, then, those niceties of humanity and civility begin to decline. Moshe Rabbeinu was worried that he was facing a situation of traveling with Klal Yisroel in the Wilderness; a dessert lurking with danger, with the possibility of attacks from animals and enemies. Even though they were being protected, they still felt themselves to be constantly in a place of

danger. Moshe feared that Klal Yisroel would deteriorate in terms of their menschlichkeit and in terms of how they would treat one another.

When people are forced into such a situation they begin to lose the manner of humanity (tsuras haAdam). It is one thing to walk around with a veneer of humanity now, but what of times of war, of famine, of danger? This was Moshe's worry.

G-d's response was they have a heritage from the Patriarch Yaakov, that people under duress and under tough times and in times of danger -- can still act with humanity. Because, at the time when their father was about to die, during the time of the personal tragedy of losing a Yaakov Avinu, he taught them and gave over to them a lesson. Yaakov Avinu taught them a lesson that they would take with them not only on that occasion but for thousands and thousands of years. The lesson that Yaakov taught them is how a Jew should act in times of Tsore; how a Jew should act in times of pressure. This is what the Medrash is teaching. Not just that Yaakov taught them how to position themselves geographically around his coffin. Yaakov Avinu, knowing that there would be pogroms and inquisitions and concentration camps, knew that he had to teach his sons that Klal Yisroel must know how to act with humanity (tsu zein a mensch) even under the worst of circumstances. This is what G-d reassured Moshe Rabbeinu -- that Klal Yisroel learned from no less a personage than Yaakov Avinu how a Jew has to act in times of tsore.

I am sure we have all heard the stories -- and there are not only hundreds, there are thousands of stories -- about the Holocaust. There are many stories about people who were treated like animals, who were treated worse than animals, yet they did not lose their humanity; they did not lose their civility. When they were treated like animals, they nevertheless acted like Angels. There are many stories about what Jews did on Yom Kippur and on Chanukah and how they exhibited self-sacrifice. However, one simple story about one simple Jew, seems to me, to tell it all. The story did not take place at Neilah or on Yom Kippur; it was not on Rosh Hashannah, but on an ordinary, regular day.

It is a story about a Jew who writes that bread in the concentration camp was not only a scarce commodity, it was a commodity that consumed all their thinking hours: Should one eat the bread right away or should one save it and eat it in nibbles? Should one eat it right away or should one eat it at the end of the day when they would be tired and hungry so they could fall asleep. Should the bread be eaten all at once or should it be rationed so it could be eaten all throughout the day? Chakiras and Derishas about a piece of bread! This is what a piece of bread meant -- literally life!

A Jew who survived writes that he was in a camp and was given an order to see the Commandant of the camp, which meant only one thing -- his time was up.

What did a Jew do when he knew his time was up? First of all he recited Vidui and he made peace with his Maker. Then he would exchange his clothes with another person. He would give his shoes to someone else who had tattered shoes, knowing that he would not need his own much longer. He took off his better winter coat and gave it to someone else, because he knew that he would have no need for it. And that precious piece of bread that he had saved the entire day, he gave to another Jew who was weak and half-starved and could so dearly use another piece of bread.

He went to the Commandant and as Providence would have it, he wasn't killed. He came back to his camp. They were all elated to see him and the person who took the piece of bread said, "Here, take back your piece of bread -- you have to eat it; I can't take it anymore -- you are still among the living, not among the dead".

Where does a Jew get the strength, that under such situations, when he is treated worse than an animal, he still acts like an Angel?

This is the tradition that we have from the Patriarch Yaakov. When Yaakov told them how to carry the coffin -- he was giving them guidance how to always conduct themselves even in moments of extreme pain and distress -- not only then, but for all the bitter days of Exile. This is what G-d reassured Moshe Rabbeinu: You don't have to worry about Klal Yisroel -- about how they are going to act in the Wilderness -- because they have a legacy they received from the Patriarch Yaakov.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington twerskyd@scn.org

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DRASHA PARSHAS BAMIDBAR -- LOVE CHILD

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetsky

This week, Moshe is commanded to count each tribe and tally the numbers -- thus the name of the Sefer BaMidbar is appropriately translated as The Book of Numbers. In a separate counting, the tribe of Levi is also enumerated. However, before the Torah counts the members of the tribe of Levi it reckons a subdivision of that tribe, the four children of Ahron who were designated as Kohanim (priests).

The Torah mentions those children by name, Numbers 3: 1-3: "These are the offspring of Ahron and Moshe on the day that Hashem spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai. These are the names of Ahron's children: Nadav, Avihu, Elozor and Isamar. These are the names of the children of Ahron who were Kohanim (priests), who were anointed to serve and minister."

An obvious question arises: the four children are also identified as sons of Moshe. They were not. In fact, Moshe's offspring are not mentioned in this section at all.

Moshe's mention as a forebearer of Ahron's children is in the context of a phrase which is seemingly out of place. "These are the offspring of Ahron and Moshe on the day that Hashem spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai." What does speaking to Moshe at Sinai have to do with Moshe's relationship to his nephews?

The Talmud in Sanhedrin 19b derives from this verse that if one teaches someone else's children Torah it is as if he bore them. Thus it is understandable that the Torah considers the children of Ahron Moshe's offspring, "on the day that Hashem spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai."

Yet it is troubling. Why is Moshe considered a parent because he taught Torah to his nephews? Is that the greatest reason for the adulation that is due Moshe? He led the Jews, his nephews included from, Egypt. He orchestrated the splitting of the sea, and he saved them from heavenly retribution time and time again. Why is he considered as a parent only in the role of an educator? Why can't Moshe be considered as a savior or a patron, "as if he bore them?" Rav Lazer Gordon, the Telshe Rosh Yeshiva, had a man visit his Yeshiva to find a suitable match for his daughter. The man pointed to a boy who seemed very steeped in his studies and inquired about him. "Oh," said Reb Laizer. "He is my Yankele. He is one of the most brilliant students in Telshe."

The man assumed it was the Rav's son and gestured toward another student. "That is my Dovid'l. He has extremely fine character." The man was puzzled until he kept hearing from the Rav a description of each boy was preceded with the words, "my." "My Avrohom. My Meir. And My Chaim'l."

"Are all these students your family?" he asked.

Rav Lazer smiled, "everyone who is in my Yeshiva is a dear child. That is the only way I will have it."

The Torah is not telling those who are being taught Torah, "consider your teacher as if he were your father." There are many sorts of role models who may be considered as dear as a parent.

The Torah is telling a message to the teacher of Torah. It is impossible to mold a student and teach him the greatness of Torah unless you love him and treat him as if he were your child.

A teacher in our Yeshiva was asked, "Rabbi, how are your children?" In all sincerity he replied, "do you mean the ones I see at night or the ones who I see by day?"

Moshe is identified as a forebearer of Ahron's children in a very specific context: when he had to show supernatural love for them. When teaching them Torah. If you don't love your student as your own child, you may have read to him. You may have lectured him. But you certainly did not teach him.

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Yom Yerushalayim: Seeking the Welfare of Zion and Jerusalem
SICHA OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT" A
Adapted from a sicha delivered on Yom Yerushalayim 5748
Summarized by Yair Yaniv; Translated by Kaeren Fish

Seeking the Welfare of Zion and Jerusalem

"For I will restore health to you and I will heal you of your wounds, says the Lord, because they called you 'deserted,' saying: 'This is Zion, whose welfare is sought by none.'" (Yirmiyahu 30:17)

There are two parts to the above verse: First the good tidings - God's promise that He will heal the suffering of his nation and bring health to Zion after all the blows that she has been dealt, after the period of "hester panim" (hiding of God's face) for Knesset Yisrael. God promises that salvation is near.

Together with this promise comes the second part of the verse - a summary of the view of the nations of the world with regard to Zion during the period of the destruction and exile; the way in which they explained the historic fate of Zion and of Knesset Yisrael. Their historiography includes two central aspects: the first is their recognition of God's connection to Zion - "they called you 'deserted'" - God has abandoned His land, left His holy place, and Zion has been deserted and is cut off from God. And since we are speaking of nations with a religious consciousness, their explanation for the severing of this connection is the same one predicted in Parashat Nitzavim:

"And all the nations will say, 'Why has God done thus to this land? What is the meaning of this great anger?' And they will say, 'Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt, and they went and served other gods and worshipped them, gods which they did not know and which He did not give them. And God's anger burned against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book. And God rooted them out of their land in anger and in wrath and in great fury, and He sent them to another land unto this day.'"

God exiled Knesset Yisrael from Zion, and Zion itself from His holy place. However, we have here not only a theological-philosophical view, but also a reflection of the relationship between Knesset Yisrael and Zion. Zion has been abandoned not only by God, but even by the nation - "whose welfare is sought by none." Knesset Yisrael has come to terms with galut (exile), at least on the practical level. There is no real expectation of return, no practical plan, no activism. At most there is some sort of prayer. But beyond a glance upward, beyond the 'Zion component' of Israel's eschatological vision, Zion has been abandoned even by the nation. And this feeling of Zion's abandonment and desertion by her inhabitants is what tempts the nations of the world to dare to take Jerusalem for themselves - "they cast lots upon Jerusalem" (Ovadia 1:11). They assume that Israel has given up hope of Jerusalem and has forgotten her, and hence they are free to cast lots, according to the Talmud Yerushalmi (Kilayim) which says that although land cannot be stolen, in the event of the owners despairing of their property, their legal ownership is cancelled. So it was during the short Babylonian exile, and so it is during the longer exile. The nations of the world see Knesset Yisrael despairing of Zion, and develop philosophies and theologies to explain the severance and their right to claim the land in Israel's place.

However, Israel has a different view - not only with regard to the legalities, but even with regard to the facts of the situation. We see a third component of this verse - the halakhic view. The mishna in Rosh Hashana (30a) says, "Originally the lulav was taken up in the Beit Ha-mikdash (Temple) all seven days, and only one day in the rest of the country. When the Beit Ha-mikdash was destroyed, R. Yochanan ben Zakkai ruled that the lulav should be shaken for seven days throughout the country in memory of the Beit Ha-mikdash, and that the entire day of the waving [of the Omer] it should be forbidden to eat [of the new grain]." The gemara on this asks, "From where do we learn that we must have a 'zekher le-mikdash' (remembrance of the

Temple)? For it is written: 'For I will restore health to you and I will heal you of your wounds, says the Lord, because they called you "deserted," saying: "This is Zion, whose welfare is sought by none." - >From here we learn the obligation of 'derisha' (seeking her welfare)." The situation of "whose welfare is sought by none" is an anomaly, a situation which does not tally with Israel's destiny. If Zion exists, and God has tied up her destiny with that of Israel, then her very presence and existence demand that her welfare be sought. Zion and forgetfulness are mutually contradictory. What is the nature of this "seeking of her welfare" (derisha) that Zion requires, and to which we are obligated? The concept of 'derisha' is used in several different ways in Tanakh. The first refers to seeking and searching: "She seeks (darsha) wool and flax" (Mishlei 31:13); "And Moshe sought out (darosh darash) the goat of the sin offering" (Vayikra 10:16). A second meaning is that of clarification: "And you shall inquire (ve-darashta) and search out and ask diligently" (Devarim 13:15). Yet another use of this concept is that of demanding or claiming property: "So says the Lord God, Behold I am against the shepherds, and I shall demand (ve-darashti) My flock from their hand, and I will end their feeding of the sheep and the shepherds will no longer feed on them, and I shall deliver my flock from their mouth, and they shall no longer be food for them." (Yechezkel 34:10). This is the demand of a surety - the reclaiming of the sheep from the shepherds, or sometimes the demand for the realization of an obligation - "For God will surely demand it (darosh yidreshenu) from you" (Devarim 23:22). It can also mean the imposition of a moral-spiritual obligation, of fear-of-Heaven - Mikha prefaces the presentation of his three basic principles with the words, "He has told you, O man, what is good, and what God demands (doresh) of you" (Mikha 6:8).

Sometimes several facets of this concept are combined and intertwined - demanding together with seeking: "Until your brother will require (derosh) it" (Devarim 22:2) - the seeking of a lost article, and then claiming it.

However, there is yet another important meaning of the word 'derisha.' Beyond all the practical aspects of seeking, clarification and demanding, there is the aspect of hoping. This hoping can sometimes be negative in nature - "Those who seek after my life... and they who hope (dorshei) for my harm" (Tehillim 38:13) - but is usually positive, referring to great and lofty aspirations, matters of holiness and of strong spiritual longing. Of course, this type of 'derisha' can refer to God Himself - "A land which the Lord your God cares for (doresh otah); the eyes of the Lord your God are upon it always, from the beginning of the year until the end of the year." (Devarim 11:12). However, more often it refers to a feeling on the part of Knesset Yisrael: "Seek (dirshu) God when He is present, call on Him when He is near" (Yeshayahu 55:6); "And you shall seek the Lord your God from there; when you long for Him (tidreshenu) with all your heart and with all your soul"; "For so says God to the house of Israel: Seek Me (dirshuni) and live!" (Amos 5:4); "Seek (dirshu) God and His strength, seek His face continually" (Tehillim 105:4); "Is there anyone with understanding, who seeks (doresh) God?" (Tehillim 14:2).

The Ramban (commenting on Bereishit 25:23) says, "I have found no instances of the word 'derisha' in connection with God which did not refer to prayer, for example 'I sought out (darashti) God and He answered me' (Tehillim 34:5), 'Seek Me (dirshuni) and live' (Amos 5:4), 'Upon My life, I shall not be sought out by you' (Yechezkel 20:3)...." But prayer is merely the practical expression of seeking and longing. And attached to this seeking there is always hope: "God is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him (tidreshenu)" (Eikha 3:25). For this reason we say in our prayers, "All those who wait for You shall not be disappointed, all those who trust in you shall not be ashamed forever."

This longing is admittedly a seeking of and longing for God Himself, but it also involves a longing for all that is connected with Him - for that which represents His presence and dwelling place on earth, the mikdash and Jerusalem: "You shall seek (tidreshu) His dwelling, and you shall come there" (Devarim 12:5). There are several aspects to this 'derisha' of Zion and Jerusalem, and it can be divided into three time periods. The first is that of the pre-Zion era - before its establishment and definition as the dwelling place of the Shekhina. Throughout Parashat Re'eh we read of the pilgrimage towards a mysterious "place which will be chosen." This place must be sought and pursued. Its identity and character are unclear. Much effort must

be invested in the careful search, with discerning eye and longing soul, to reveal this anonymous place. This seeking and pursuit involves two levels: the topographical search of the land for that place - and here practical considerations come into play - as well as the more lofty aspiration, because that rock and those boulders will be the foundation of God's eternal dwelling place. These two aspects are intertwined. On the verse "Except to the place which the Lord your God will choose from among all your tribes to put His name there, you shall seek His dwelling place and you shall come there" (Devarim 12:5) - the Sifri comments: "Seek (derosh) - by means of the prophet. Perhaps from this one would think that we should wait until we are prompted by the prophet; therefore we are told 'you shall seek His dwelling place and you shall come there' - seek it and find it, and afterwards the prophet will confirm it." Only if we exert ourselves in the search will we be rewarded with Divine guidance. The search itself increases our longing, as well as removing the 'magical' associations of the place. It is not inherently different in any way - it is simply the place which God has chosen. And the search involves both the active searching for this "place that will be chosen" and, at the same time, the longing for it.

The next period is that of the churban. Jerusalem is destroyed, and there is no possibility of fulfilling the command of "you shall seek His dwelling place." Whether or not we accept the opinion of the Rambam, who holds that Jerusalem is holy for all generations, from a practical point of view there is no possibility of "seeking His dwelling place." The seeking and pursuit are no longer operative, and hence the 'derisha' must be in two directions: firstly, in the direction of 'zekher le-mikdash' - to constantly remember and never allow our thoughts to leave Zion, to maintain a profound spiritual connection, and following this, the demand to seek her welfare. This is a situation with which we dare not come to terms, and to the extent that there is a possibility of 'derisha,' of making a demand for Zion - we are obligated to do so.

The demand is on two levels. Firstly, we demand it on a political level, i.e. reminding the nations of the world that Jerusalem is the eternal capital of Knesset Yisrael, and has never left our thoughts, remaining forever at the forefront of our longing. Jerusalem, as the symbolic nucleus of all of Eretz Yisrael, is an inheritance to us from our forefathers. It may not be 'in our possession,' but it is forever 'ours.' However, by law, Jerusalem is not only ours but also in our possession. The gemara in Bava Metzia says that if something is stolen and the owner has not yet despaired of it, then, if there is any possibility of him getting it back by law, it is still defined as being in his possession. We can demand it back by law. We have a claim to present to the Great Judge, God Himself, a claim and demand of "until your brother will seek it out" - the demand that the surety is paid back. The Rishonim were divided as to the wording of the blessing of "Boneh Yerushalayim" (He Who builds Jerusalem) in Birkat Ha-mazon. Some said "boneh Yerushalayim," others held that it should be "boneh be-rachamav (in His mercy) Yerushalayim." The Vilna Gaon ruled that we should say "boneh Yerushalayim" because we are entitled to demand Jerusalem not only by virtue of God's mercy, but by pure 'din' (justice). "Zion will be redeemed in judgment" (Yishayah 1:27). This is a legal claim, the presentation of a title deed and the demand for repayment.

Both demands existed during the period of the churban. Firstly, the demand from the nations of the world: "You have developed all kinds of theories to explain why 'her welfare is sought by none' - see, here we are to be 'doresh' Jerusalem; practically, politically." Secondly, a demand that God fulfill His promise, that He repay the title deed.

The third period of 'derishat Zion' is that of the rebuilding of Jerusalem. This 'derisha' involves two aspects: Firstly, attention. Special attention should be paid even to those things which are in our possession. The existence of Zion should not be regarded as natural and taken for granted. We should always regard it as something to which we are spiritually and existentially connected. 'Derisha' is not only for what is missing, but also for what already exists. "The eyes of the Lord your God are upon it ALWAYS" - even during her flourishing, God seeks the welfare of Zion. This is symbolized by the presence of the Shekhina. And the Shekhina always remains in Jerusalem - "since the holiness of the mikdash and Jerusalem are because of the Shekhina, and the Shekhina is never removed" (Rambam, Hilkhot Beit Ha-Bechira 6:16). Can we be satisfied with any less?! Even

while Zion is in our possession and under our control, we have to appreciate it and guard it as our most precious jewel.

The other aspect of 'derishat Yerushalayim' in our days is that of "seeking (dirshu) God when He is present". Seeking God not only as an address for our prayers and for the fulfillment of our aspirations, but also out of longing, out of love and awe, out of recognition that He is the all-good, the most elevated, the source of all existence, out of our longing for truth and for loving-kindness. Anyone who possesses a spark of holiness, a spark of God's flame, is among those who are "doresh Hashem," those who seek and search for Him. This 'derisha' involves a dialectic of searching on one hand - seeking God's revelation, seeking His presence, seeking to encounter Him with those tools that are at our disposal, and longing on the other hand - as expressed throughout Shir Ha-Shirim - longing for a beloved who reveals but a tiny portion of Himself, a beloved who peeps through the cracks, appears and disappears. The longing for God as our companion, as it were, is the longing for something which we know we shall never attain, something which is beyond our reach, behind the wall, between the cracks, in the faraway 'hills of Batei'. And so it is with His accessories, as it were - Zion and Jerusalem first and foremost among them; the focal point of the Shekhina on earth. We see Zion in front of our eyes, count her towers, admire her strength, take pride in her physical and spiritual growth; yet at the same time "one tefach is revealed and two tefachim remain hidden."

A Jew is obligated to be 'doresh Yerushalayim' even while he stands in the rebuilt city, to be 'doresh' those existential-metaphysical layers of holiness which remain hidden, which peep out from the cracks in the wall. We must guard that which we already have, but also long for what is still missing; appreciate what is built, but keep in mind that "even the sky and the heavens cannot contain You."

We are in the position of bridging between two periods. On one hand Jerusalem and Zion - with all their connotations for the Jewish soul and halakha - are still not in our hands. Metaphorically, foxes still prowl among the ruins of our Beit Ha-mikdash. Despite our seeming sovereignty, we still lack real control over the place of the mikdash; it remains in the hands of others. The mikdash remains within the realm of dream and vision. But, on the other hand, fortunate are we who have merited to see Jerusalem - not yet rebuilt but nevertheless in the process of rebuilding, with towers that house Knesset Yisrael. We have merited to see Jerusalem as a flag, as the heart of Israeli sovereignty.

And in this intermingled situation, our 'derishot,' too, are intermingled. On one hand, there is a need for attention: we dare not allow our thoughts to leave Zion, we dare not give up hope - neither in our consciousness nor in our actions - for Jerusalem in her full scope, her full strength and her full sanctity. We dare not reach a situation of "her welfare is sought by none." On the other hand, there is a practical demand from the nations of the world. We have not given up, nor shall we in the future. We will not come to terms with the situation. We do not accept that the nations take it for granted that there is a mosque there, and not a Beit Mikdash. And a further demand from God: "Zion will be redeemed in judgment." You promised, and now we ask, "Matai timlokh be-Zion, be-karov be-yamenu le'olam va'ed tishkon" - "When will You reign in Zion, speedily in our days You will dwell there forever."

It is important that we know how to appreciate the privilege of walking in the streets of Jerusalem. The dream held dear by many generations has come true; the dream of hundreds and thousands of years, a dream which many Gedolei Yisrael did not merit to realize. But at the same time we must appreciate Jerusalem not just as a capital which is flourishing economically, esthetically, socially and politically, but also as appearing and disappearing over the "mountains of Batei." We should see not only the glory that exists, but also the glory that was prophesied.

A formidable challenge awaits us. We have to realize that 'derisha,' to set matters right: This city is no longer abandoned. "For I will restore health to you and I will heal you of your wounds, says the Lord." We have to announce to the world - and above all to ourselves - that this is Zion, and we are here to be 'doresh' her. And in the merit of this may God grant us the privilege of the realization of the rest of Yirmiyahu's prophecy: "So says God, 'Behold, I will return the captivity of Yaakov's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places. And the city shall be built upon her foundation, and the palace will stand on its proper place. And thanksgiving and the sound of

joy shall proceed from them, and I will multiply them, and they shall not be diminished; and I will glorify them, and they shall not suffer... And you shall be My people, and I will be your God." (Yirmiyahu 30:18- 22).

PARSHAT HASHAVUA

PARSHAT BAMIDBAR

by Menachem Leibtag

Mazel tov to david schorr ('89) upon his engagement to tunie dweck

As Bnei Yisrael prepare for their journey from Har Sinai to Eretz Canaan, the Torah describes in minute detail the census and the organization the "shvatim" (tribes) surrounding the Mishkan. What is the significance of these 'technical' details?

This week's shiur analyzes this detail and offers an explanation.

PART I - THE ORDER OF THE SHVATIM

In Parshat Bamidbar, the "shvatim" are listed in three different instances; while discussing:

(A) the LEADERS (1:5-15);

(B) the actual CENSUS (1:20-43);

(C) their ARRANGEMENT surrounding the Mishkan (2:1-31).

The following table compares the order of the shvatim in each respective list. A star *- notes a significant change from one list to the next:

#	(A)	(B)	(C)
1)	Reuven	Reuven	*Yehuda
2)	Shimon	Shimon	*Yisachar
3)	Yehuda	*Gad	*Zvulun
4)	Yisachar	Yehuda	Reuven
5)	Zvulun	Yisachar	Shimon
6)	Ephraim	Zvulun	Gad
7)	Menashe	Ephraim	Ephraim
8)	Binyamin	Menashe	Menashe
9)	Dan	Binyamin	Binyamin
10)	Asher	Dan	Dan
11)	Gad	Asher	Asher
12)	Naftali	Naftali	Naftali

To understand the progression from one list to the next, we must analyze the logic of the order of the shvatim in each list.

The order of the leaders (A) appears to be the most logical. This list begins with the children of Leah (in the order of age), followed by the children of Rachel, followed by the children of the 'shfachot' (the maidservants - Bilha & Zilpa).

The order of the actual census (B) is almost identical, with one very peculiar exception: GAD has 'moved up' from position #11 to position #3; in other words, he has been included with "bnei Leah" (the children of Leah).

This special placement of Gad with 'bnei Leah' is found once again in the organization of the shvatim around the Mishkan (C). However, this list includes an additional change: Yehuda, Yisachar, and Zvulun - the youngest children of Leah - have 'jumped ahead' of their older brothers Reuven and Shimon.

This final list, the organization of the shvatim surrounding the Mishkan (C), reflects the actual formation in which Bnei Yisrael travel through the desert (see 10:13-28). What is the logic behind this 're-organization' of the shvatim?

After the construction of the Mishkan, and its placement at the center of the camp, it becomes necessary to organize the twelve shvatim into FOUR DIVISIONS so that the Mishkan to be surrounded equally in all four directions (East, South, West, and North). Therefore, each division must contain a group of THREE shvatim.

In each division, one of the three shvatim serves as the leader. Therefore, four leadership tribes must be chosen. As family leadership is usually the responsibility of the first born son - the "bchor" - the four leadership shvatim are the four sons of Yaakov who possess a certain aspect of "bchorah": Reuven, Yehuda, Ephraim and Dan.

The following table summarizes the reason for the choice of each bchor:

- 1) REUVEN: He is the biological first born of Leah.
- 2) YEHUDA: Due to Reuven's sin (see Breishit 35:22), Yaakov appoints Yehuda as the family "bchor" instead. Yehuda is

chosen over Shimon and Levi, even though they are older, due to their reckless behavior during the incident at Shchem (see Breishit 34:30 / See also the brachot of Yaakov to his children in 49:3-12, as well as Divrei Hayamim I 5:1-2!]

3) EPHRAIM: Yosef is the first born of Rachel. In Yaakov's blessing to Yosef, his two sons, Menashe and Ephraim, are each awarded the status of a shevet (Breishit 48:5). Although Menashe is the eldest son of Yosef, Yaakov awards the "bchora" of the children of Rachel to Ephraim instead (48:17-19).

4) DAN: The children of the Yaakov's "shfachot" (maidservants), Bilha and Zilpa comprise a separate unit, and thus, also require a leader. Dan is chosen for he is the first born of Bilha, the "shifcha" of Rachel, the first maidservant to give Yaakov a child.

[Note that four leadership positions are divided equally between Rachel and Leah.]

Each of these four leadership tribes must be joined by two additional shvatim in order to form the necessary four groups of three. As the leadership tribes were chosen based on the first born children Yaakov's wives, it is only logical that each leader is joined by his brothers. Therefore:

- 1) Reuven should be joined by Shimon and Levi, his two younger brothers. However, Levi has a 'new job' and must encamp in closer proximity to the Mishkan (see Bamidbar chapter 3). Thus, Reuven is joined only by Shimon and remains one shevet 'short'.
- 2) Yehuda is joined by his two younger brothers, Yisachar and Zvulun. His group is complete.
- 3) Ephraim, the bchor of the house of Rachel, is joined by his brother Menashe, and his uncle Binyamin, Rachel's youngest son. This group of three is also complete.
- 4) Dan is joined by the other children of the shfachot, his brother Naftali, and the two children of Zilpa, Gad and Asher. However, this group is too big for it totals four, and we are limited to three shvatim in each group. Thus, Dan has one shevet too many!

Considering that Reuven is 'short' one shevet and Dan has one too many, it is only logical that one of Dan's extras moves to Reuven's camp. Who is chosen?

Naftali remains with Dan, for he is his full brother. Therefore, Gad, the eldest of Zilpa, is given the privilege to join the camp of Reuven, while his younger brother Asher remains with the camp of Dan.

This explains the order of the tribes in their encampment surrounding the Mishkan (C) and during their travel through the desert:

EAST - Yehuda, Yisachar, and Zvulun [Bnei Leah]

SOUTH - Reuven, Shimon, and Gad [Bnei Leah +Gad]

WEST - Ephraim, Menashe, and Binyamin [Bnei Rachel]

NORTH - Dan, Naftali, and Asher [Bnei HaShfachot]

While travelling through the desert from Egypt towards Eretz Canaan, the basic direction of travel is eastward, therefore the camp in the East travels first. Yehuda is chosen for this direction, as he is the chosen "bchor" of "bnei Leah".

Based on this analysis, the following reasoning can be suggested the three conflicting orders of the shvatim:

(A) The presentation of tribal leaders (A) follows the most logical order: by mother/ by birth, i.e. the children of Leah - followed by the children of Rachel - followed by the children of the shfachot.

[For some reason, the children of the shfachot are not listed by the order of their birth. It seems that Naftali must always be last, and Asher precedes Gad for he will remain within the camp of "bnei ha'shfachot.]

(B) The census (B) is basically the same, but includes the 'transfer' of shevet Gad into the camp of Reuven, placing him in the position of Levi (#3).

(C) The organization of the shvatim around the Mishkan (C) reflects not only Gad's new position within the camp of

Reuven, but also Yehuda's leadership position in travel formation, for he is destined to be the leader of all the shvatim. [See Breishit 49:10 - "lo yasur shevet m'yudah..."]

PART II - WHEN, AND WHY?

The opening pasuk of Parshat Bamidbar informs us that this organization of the shvatim and the census took place on the first day of Iyar (in the second year, see 1:1). However, in the details of the Mishkan's dedication ceremony, as recorded Parshat Naso, we find an apparent contradiction.

The Mishkan was dedicated on the first of Nisan, i.e. one month BEFORE the census. Parshat Naso (7:12-83) informs us that on each of the first twelve days of Nisan, a different "nasi" (prince) of the twelve tribes offered his special korban. To our surprise, we find that the daily order of the princes follows precisely the same order in which the shvatim were organized surrounding the Mishkan! However, the census only took place ONE MONTH LATER!

Could it be that this identical order is simply coincidental? If not, why did this order exist even before the census took place?

To answer this question, we must recognize that the re-organization of the shvatim served a double purpose:

- 1) To prepare the camp for travel in military order, in anticipation of their conquest of Eretz Canaan.
- 2) To emphasize to the entire nation that the Mishkan be located at the CENTER of the camp.

Let's explain: (1) The census in Parshat Bamidbar of all the males above the age of twenty - "kol yotze tzava b'Yisrael [all who go out to war in Israel]" (1:3) - as well as the subsequent organization of the twelve tribes into four divisions, appears to be of a military nature. This assumption is supported by the fact that Moshe is commanded to take this census on the first of Iyar, only 20 days before Bnei Yisrael actually leave Har Sinai on the 20th of Iyar (see 10:11) and begin their journey to conquer Eretz Canaan.

(2) One month earlier, when the Mishkan is dedicated, we find that this same order of the shvatim already existed. Most probably, once Bnei Yisrael began constructing the Mishkan, they re-organized the camp in such a way that the Mishkan would be located at its center. In order to do so, it was necessary to divide the twelve tribes into four groups of three, with each group flanking the Mishkan in a different direction.

THE SHCHINA RETURNS

To understand the importance of the location of the Mishkan at the center of the camp, we must return to the events which took place after chet ha'Egel.

In response to chet ha'Egel, God instructed Bnei Yisrael to remove their 'crowns' which they had received at Har Sinai (see Shmot 33:5-6), a sign that He is removing His shchina from them. For the very same reason, God then instructs Moshe to move his tent (the site where God speaks to Moshe)

OUTSIDE the camp:

"And Moshe took the Tent, and pitched it OUTSIDE the camp, at a FAR DISTANCE from the camp, and called it 'OHEL MOED', then whoever sought God would have to go to the 'Ohel Moed' located OUTSIDE THE CAMP." (Shmot 33:7)

The very location of this 'Ohel Moed' (tent of meeting) OUTSIDE the camp served as a constant reminder to Bnei Yisrael that God had removed His shchina from the camp. In order for His shchina to return, it was necessary for Bnei Yisrael to build the Mishkan:

"And they shall build for Me a Mishkan, and I will DWELL IN THEIR MIDST [v'shachanti b'TOCHAM]" (Shmot 25:8)

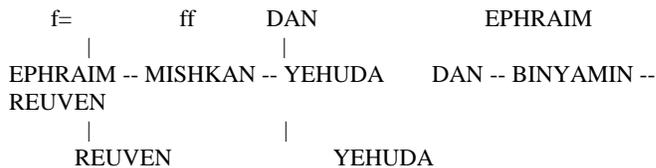
Therefore, the re-organization of the camp of Bnei Yisrael in such a manner that the Mishkan is located at its center serves as a sign to the people that God has indeed returned His shchina to the camp.

Because of this significance, the arrangement of the shvatim around the Mishkan continued even after the forty years in the desert. In Sefer Yehoshua, when the shvatim receive their "nachalot" (chapters 13->19), we find a very similar configuration!

Recall that according to the blessing of Moshe in Parshat v'Zot ha'Bracha, the tribe of Binyamin is destined to house the Bet Ha'Mikdash (see Dvarim 33:12 /"ydid Hashem, yishkon l'vetach alav..."). If we consider the nachala of Binyamin "nachlat shchina" (as Chazal do), then the following parallel emerges.

IN THE DESERT

IN ERETZ YISRAEL



In both cases, the site of the shchina, the Mishkan or nachlat Binyamin, is surrounded by the same four 'leadership' shvatim! [The directions have simply rotated by 90 degrees.]

Why must the Torah go into such minute detail to tell us precisely how Bnei Yisrael encamped and travelled?

The Mishkan serves both as a symbol of God's presence within the camp of Israel and as a constant reminder to Bnei Yisrael of their Divine purpose. As Bnei Yisrael prepare their departure from Har Sinai towards the conquest of the Land of Israel, they face a new challenge. Can they translate what they have learned at Har Sinai into the norms of the daily life of a nation. Are they capable of fulfilling the mundane tasks of fighting battles, establishing a nation, and cultivating the land etc., while at the same time remaining on the spiritual level of Har Sinai?

The complexity of this goal is symbolized by their travel with the Mishkan in their midst, and the ability to re-construct it at each location along their difficult journey.

Today, the 28th of Iyar, as we celebrate the liberation of Yerushalayim, the site of the Bet-Mikdash, this challenge takes on special significance. Can we continue the battle for Yerushalayim and the mundane chore of maintaining a secure and prosperous state, without compromising on the spiritual ideals of Har Sinai? Can we maintain Yerushalayim not only as a unified capital city, but also as a city characterized by "tzedek u'mishpat" (justice and righteousness)? Although the Bet-Mikdash on Har HaBayit, the symbol of this challenge, was destroyed some two thousand years ago, Parshat Bamidbar remains as an eternal reminder.

shabbat shalom menachem

NOTES: 1. Certain aspects of this shiur will be continued in next week's shiur on Parshat Naso, in relation to the "chanukat ha'mizbayach" by the "nssiim".

2. Iy"n, next week we will also send out an introductory shiur on Sefer Bamidbar. 3. Unfortunately, the ftp site has been down for several months and I can't seem to get it working. Iy"n, within a few weeks there will be a Web site set up that will contain all the back-shiurim. If you need any back shiurim before that time, feel free to e-mail me.

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Parashat Bemidbar 5756 - "Banners in the desert"

The Weekly Internet

P * A * R * A * S * H * A - P * A * G * E

by Mordecai Kornfeld

kornfeld@jer1.co.il

This week's mailing has been dedicated in memory of Rabbi Bennett Gold (Rav DovbenDovidMeir) whose Yahrzeit is 3Sivan, by Shari & Jay Gold and family

In this week's Parasha the Torah begins to describe in detail the journey of the Bnai Yisrael through the desert, on their way from Mount Sinai to the Promised Land. During their journey, the twelve tribes encamped in formation. They formed a huge square around the Mishkan (= Tabernacle, or portable Sanctuary), with three tribes on each side of the square. One of the tribes in each group was designated as the flag-bearer of the group. It was assigned a banner, or flag, under which the three tribes encamped. The four flag-bearing tribes were: Yehudah to the east, Reuven to the south, Ephraim to the west and Dan to the north. (According to the Midrash, the other tribes were assigned flags as well. Nevertheless, these four were the primary flag-bearers.)

The Torah gives us no indication as to the significance of this formation, nor as to what appeared on these flags. However, Ibn Ezra provides us with

some fascinating information in this regard.

There were figures depicted on each of the flags. Our ancients tell us (see Bemidbar Rabba 2:10 -MK) that on the flag of Reuven was the figure of a person. This is to recall the incident where Reuven found Dudaim -- a type of flower whose blossoms resemble the figure of a person -- in the field and brought them to his mother (Bereshit 30:14). (It is interesting to note that the word "Dudaim" is spelled with the same Hebrew letters as "Adam," or "person." Furthermore, the precious stone which represented Reuven on the Kohen Gadol's breastplate was "Odem," which is spelled exactly like "Adam" in Hebrew -MK.)

The flag of Yehudah had the figure of a lion on it, for it was to this animal that Yehudah was compared in the blessings that his father gave him (ibid. 49:9). (This, as well as what follows, appears to be the Ibn Ezra's own addendum to the Midrash. -MK)

The flag of Ephraim had the image of an ox on it, based on the verse that compares Yosef, Ephraim's father, to an ox (Devarim 33:17 -- see also Bereishit 49:6).

Dan's flag pictured an eagle. (The Ibn Ezra offers no explanation for the connection between Dan and an eagle. See, however Rashi, Shemot 19:4 s.v. Al, and Rashi, Bamidbar 10:25, s.v. Me'asef. -MK)

Thus, the four flags resembled the Divine Chariot of Hashem that was seen by the prophet Yechezkel in his vision (Yechezkel, Chap. 1; see esp. 1:10), which featured the images of a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle.

(Ibn Ezra, Bemidbar 2:2)

The four flags of the Israelite camp bore the same four symbols as the celestial Beings who bore the Divine Chariot. What is the significance behind this intriguing resemblance?

II

Ibn Ezra does not reveal to us the source for his interpretation, but the Ramban (ibid.) cites a Midrashic source for Ibn Ezra's words:

"Just as Hashem created the four points of the compass, so did He surround His Throne with the likenesses of four celestial Beings, and so did He command Moshe to organize the camp of the Bnai Yisrael into four flag formations"

(Bemidbar Rabba 2:10).

We may call attention to another interesting Midrashic source for Ibn Ezra's words:

When Hashem appeared on Mount Sinai, He descended with 22,000 angels, as it says (Tehillim 68:18), "The chariot of God was tens of thousands and thousands of angels... at Sinai." These angels were divided into camps, each bearing flags, as it says (Shir HaShirim 5:10), "He is ... beflagged with the ten thousands." When the Bnai Yisrael saw this formation, they desired to have such flags for themselves. They said, "How we wish we could be divided into flag-bearing camps also!" ... Thereupon Hashem said to Moshe, "Go divide them into flag-bearing formations, as they desire."

(Bemidbar Rabba 2:3)

The "chariot" of 22,000 angels that the Bnai Yisrael saw at Sinai can undoubtedly be identified with the Divine Chariot seen by Yechezkel. The formation of the angels into "camps" is apparently a reference to the four "faces" of the Chariot. When Hashem saw that the Jewish People desired to have a similar formation for their own camp, He instituted a system which corresponded exactly with the Chariot's arrangement -- using the same images of man, lion, ox and eagle.

III

The Midrash quoted above requires some explanation, however. Why should the Bnai Yisrael have *envied* the flag-bearing camps of the angels -- what is so special about having flags? And why do the angels themselves make use of flags?

The answer is that when a person or a contingent carries a flag or a banner, it is a proclamation of the fact that they are the faithful legions of the king. (Actually, the Midrash [Bemidbar Rabba 2:7] tells us that the kings of

the world took the idea of having their legions bear flags from the flags of the Bnai Yisrael in the wilderness!) The flags borne by the angels thus demonstrated that they were the faithful legions of Hashem.

The Bnai Yisrael envied the unique status of the angels. They expressed the desire to be themselves designated as the faithful legions of Hashem, who would further His objectives on this world. The Midrash (Bemidbar Rabba 2:3) in fact says that the flags were given to the Bnai Yisrael "so that they would be "known." The flags were meant to demonstrate to all that their bearers were the chosen people of Hashem. This, too, is what is meant in the Midrash's statement (ibid. 2:4) that the flags were a mark of "prestige and greatness" for Israel.

IV

On a deeper level, just as the bearers of the king's flag are distinguished by the august standard that they display, so is the king's honor enhanced by his legions' display of the royal banner.

A king's throne demonstrates his glory and splendor. But this permanent display of royalty is limited to a single location -- the king's palace. The king's beautiful chariot likewise displays his grandeur. This display, however, is mobile. As the royal chariot transports him from place to place throughout his kingdom, it displays the king's eminence to all who behold it, wherever they may be. Perhaps the "Divine Chariot of Hashem," then, is a metaphor for that vehicle which expresses Hashem's glory and power to humankind.

But what is this vehicle which proclaims the glory of Hashem on earth? The Rambam addresses this issue:

What can bring a person to experience the love and fear of Hashem? When a person contemplates the wondrous works and creations of Hashem and sees the infinite wisdom that is involved in these creations, he is immediately overcome with a sense of love for Hashem. He intensely desires to become more familiar with His greatness.... And when he considers these things he immediately recoils with the recognition of the fact that he is but an insignificant creation, with inferior intelligence, standing before the One of Perfect Knowledge.

(Rambam, Yesodei HaTorah 2:2)

We can appreciate Hashem's glory, the Rambam tells us, by studying the amazing intricacies of nature that surround us.

The highest, most intricate form of nature is life -- or animal life, to be more specific. The four categories of living beings to which man has an ongoing, daily exposure (to the exclusion of the fish kingdom, with which we do not have extensive contact) are represented by the four images of the Divine Chariot. The lion is the "king" of the wild animals, the ox is the chief among the domestic animals, the eagle is the master of the avian world, and man, the pinnacle of all forms of life, is of course in a class of his own. By contemplating these four sections of the animal kingdom, which represent the highest and most complex forms of nature, a person can develop an appreciation of Hashem's glory. In this sense, these beings are the banner-bearers of Hashem. They foster an awareness of His presence and His glory in the world.

This is the mission of the four beings of the Chariot which aroused the Jewish people's envy at Mount Sinai. The Jews expressed their desire to personally participate in the mission of proclaiming Hashem's glory and presence to the world. Hashem acceded to their request -- He gave them the Torah and rested His Divine Presence upon them in the Mishkan. From now on, it was through the Bnai Yisrael that Hashem would show His glory to the world. As the Rambam tells us elsewhere (Sefer HaMitzvot, Aseh #3), the manner in which a person may be brought to love Hashem with all his heart is through studying His Torah and its Mitzvot

Perhaps this, too, is what is meant by the statement that "the patriarchs (Avraham, Yitzchak and Yakov) were Hashem's Divine Chariot" (Rashi, Bereshit 17:22). The patriarchs were the vehicles through which Hashem's name became known throughout the world, as long as they lived. Wherever they went, they "called out in the name of Hashem" -- that is, they proclaimed the message of Hashem's dominion, and taught the world to follow in the ways of Hashem (Bereshit 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25; 33:20, Rashi ibid. 12:5). Thus, the patriarchs could truly be called the "Chariot of Hashem."

As long as the Temple stood and the Jewish People were in their own land, the Jews remained the bearers of the standard of Hashem. After the destruction of the Holy Temple and the exile of the Jewish People from their land, the presence of Hashem that dwelled among us was no longer readily apparent to the nations of the world. The four faces of the Divine Chariot reverted to being the symbol of Hashem's glory once again. This is the reason that the prophet Yechezkel, who saw his vision of the Divine Chariot *after* the destruction of the Temple, perceived the four animals as being the Chariot of Hashem.

May we soon merit to see the return of Hashem's glory to His nation, that the entire world may realize His sovereignty.

"owner-torah-forum@ns.destek.net"torah-forum-digest@ns.destek.netTorah-Forum V2 #39-46

From: gershon.dubin@consultant.com (GERSHON DUBIN)
Subject: Re: Pants For Ladies

In reply to: "What is the prohibition against ladies wearing pants besides for the fact that ladies are not allowed to wear men's clothing (begeid ish)?" That prohibition by itself would allow for the wearing of pants which are specially designed for women. The other prohibition originates from a Gemara in the beginning of Pesachim which points out that unless there is a specific reason to do so, the Torah does not use the verb to ride for women on donkeys (horses, camels, etc.) but rather the verb to sit. Rashi explains that even this is for the sake of modesty. This is extended to wearing pants which obviously have that problem.

From: nwyckoff@ucla.edu (Nathaniel Wyckoff)
Part of Nechama Cox's reply to the question of women wearing pants said: "The idea is to be modest, and many people feel that wearing pants shows too much of a woman's figure. Of course, wearing a skirt is not guarantee of modesty. (And many women will not wear shorter skirts or tight skirts.)" So, then, why is it acceptable for women to see a man's figure by his wearing pants? ... Nathaniel Wyckoff

From: WOLMAM@pfizer.com May I reply as follows:
From a Torah standpoint, there most definitely IS a double standard between the sexes as far as dress code. But the reason for this is not because of any sexism, submissiveness or inferiority of women. On the contrary, it is to protect from a different standard that nature has imposed on men. G-d in his infinite wisdom chose to implant such a trait in males for what ever the reason may be, but has provided guidelines that help keep this trait in check. By nature, men too often become aroused by things that do not constantly arouse women. ... Nature's double standard number two is that as a result of immodest gazing, there is a far greater chance of a man committing certain serious sins than there is for a woman. Additionally, the most common serious sin is not halachically applicable to women. In light of the above, there are many every day applications in Halacha, where we are more stringent in what a man is permitted to see as opposed to a woman. Here are a few examples: 1) A mechitza (partition between the sexes) in a synagogue can technically be one-way, with the women being able to see the men. Here there is a problem with men seeing even modestly dressed women during prayers not vice-versa. 2) There is a greater range of areas in a woman that must be covered up in front of men, e.g. knees, upper arms, voice, hair (in married women) etc. ... To sum up, when we measure what is proper dress for a man or for a woman, we don't use the same yardstick. And that's because... "men are from Mars and women are from Venus". Moshe Wolman

From: michael_Krull@ccmail.prusec.com
... In all seriousness, however, women do have a special obligation as it pertains to modesty (singing in public, uncovered hair for married women, etc.), which you choose to call a double standard, but in reality is merely a reflection of the differences between the sexes and is not derogatory.

From: Yaakov Menken <menken@torah.org>
In answer to Nathaniel Wyckoff, different standards for men and women aren't "double," because these standards take into account the different ways in which men and women react to each other.

... I know this is a sensitive issue for many women, but they have fallen into the trap of their own rhetoric: while stating loudly that men don't understand women, they forget the corollary that women don't understand men. Instead of demeaning women, the laws of tznius do the exact opposite: they preserve the intimacy of a woman's beauty, while helping the men around her to react to her as a human being, rather than an object. Yaakov Menken

From: "Louis A. Gamerman" <lgamerma@goucher.edu>

... Certain activities, like horseback riding or fencing, require a woman athlete to wear pants, and tight ones at that. Is it permissible for a woman to wear pants, if that is the clothing necessary for that activity, assuming she is alone or only women are present? For example, could women go horseback riding, in normal equestrian gear, if there are no men present? Obviously, I realize the easy stock answer would be for the women not to engage in those sorts of activities, but I'd like to know what the answer might be, presuming she did (I know a lot of women athletes who would have to give up their sports based on this issue).

From: RabbiMarkS@aol.com
It is commonly accepted that if girls are doing activities which pants would be helpful to them they may wear both a loose skirt and pants (horseback riding, mountain climbing etc.) If the sport is indoors, and NO MEN ARE AROUND, (like a ladies gym) then perhaps it could be acceptable to wear pants or a leotard or leggings. Many girls complain it's not fair to have to give up things they enjoy, but if *tznius* (modesty, privacy) is important to them, they must uphold it, not conveniently circumvent it for pleasure's sake. Rabbi Mark Schaffel, Milwaukee, WI

Subject: Dates of the Second Temple
On Thu, 28 Mar 1996 Moshe Martin wrote:
I was wondering if someone could explain why so many "reliable" sources say that the churban (destruction) of the first Bais Hamikdash (Temple) was in 586 BCE. It seems from our sources that this is about 160 years too early. Calculation: the second destroyed about 70 CE. It stood for 420 years; hence it was built 350 BCE. This was after a 70 year exile following the destruction of the first Bais Hamikdash. This would mean that the first was destroyed around 420 BCE, not 586 BCE. Any information would be helpful. I might add that this 160 year discrepancy is also found in regards to the Yerushalayim 3000. That is I think we are about 160 years too early.

From: Mordechai Perlman <aw004@freenet.toronto.on.ca>
I think that the real dates are that the 2nd B.H. was destroyed in 68 C.E., it's building was in 352 B.C.E, and the destruction of the 1st B.H. was in 422 B.C.E. Also the first B.H. was built in 832 B.C.E and Dovid Hamelech conquered Y'rusholayim in 866 B.C.E, which is 2862 years ago. This makes the "3000 year thing" 138 years too early. My dates are based on info from the Seder Hadoros. Mordechai Perlman Toronto

From: elliot gordon <gordone@Phibro.COM>
Hillel Markowitz responded to this by quoting Rav Shimon Schwab Z"tzl (of Washington Heights) and others, from memory. Last month, in Rav Yisroel Reisman's weekly shiur on the Prophets, he discussed this matter in detail. According to Rav Reisman, the source of the 160 year discrepancy is the length of the Persian Empire. The Talmud states the Babylonian Exile lasted 70 years. This means that the length of the Persian Empire until defeated by the Greek Empire was a measly 34 years. This is problematic because the Persian history lists over 15 kings reigning in that time. Secular historians discount the Talmudic history in favor of the Persian one. Rav Schwab Z"tzl proposed in his scholarly article written abt 35 years ago, that Chazal deliberately hid 160 years from the calendar for whatever reason.

Most interestingly, Rav Reisman says that the article was reprinted in the recently published, "Selected Speeches by Rabbi Shimon Schwab", where at the end of the article Rav Schwab retracted his thesis for 3 reasons: 1) He found that Rav Saadia Gaon in his book "Emunah Vedeos" Chap.9 states that a well known nation falsified its history by adding over 100 years and numerous kings that never existed. Rav Schwab indicates that this refers to the Persians.2) We have our lunar calendar which calculates the new moon each month to within an astronomical fraction of a second. The scientific accuracy of this calculation is well documented, and since the new moon is never "born" at the same time twice, there is no way to explain that our calendar is 160 odd years off. 3) Josephus the early Jewish historian, who was more secular than Talmudic in outlook, also does not have these "missing" 160 years. In summation Rav Reisman stated that we should be more comfortable and loyal to our own historical calculations, rather than abandon it for the notoriously self-serving histories of ancient non-Jewish kingdoms. The above is a greatly condensed version of the lecture. One may purchase a tape copy of the lecture by contacting Rabbi Reisman or the Agudath Israel of Madison, 1812 Ave. R, Bklyn NY 11229. The live lectures are free, attended by up to 1000 people each on Motzoei Shabbos (Sat night) except in summer. If you are ever in Bklyn for Shabbos, it is a phenomenal must see. Eliezer Gordon

From: eli turkel <turkel@math.tau.ac.il>

Moshe is correct in his assertion that there is a contradiction between the Talmudic sources and other sources about the date of the rebuilding of the second Temple (and thus all events before that). The Artscroll books and Rabbi Wein use the traditional dates, while the Mosad Harav Kook Tanach and all secular sources use the date of 586 BCE. The reason is that according to the traditional sources the Persian empire lasted only about 35 years from some 15 years before the building of the second Temple, with Cyrus until the end of the Persian empire by Alexander the Great about 330 BCE. Since the years of Alexander are well known and agreed upon (at least within a year or two) the discrepancy between the two is on the length of the Persian empire.

Unfortunately there is overwhelming evidence that the Persian empire lasted for about 200 years. Even within Tanach the book of Ezra and Nehemiah indicate a story of many years. The first return from Babylonia was led by Zerubavel and Joshua the high priest. The second one by Ezra and Nehemiah. These sets never met although according to the Talmudic tradition they occurred within a few years of each other. The later Tanach books speak of the kings Cyrus, Darius, Ahasverosh and Artachasta. This already adds up to too many years and so the commentaries are forced to say that many of the different names refer to the same king. We know that both Ezra and Nehemiah made several trips between Persia and Israel which is gain difficult to reconcile with a short period. Finally the book of Ezra lists several generations of high priests. In fact Chazal state that Shimon haGadol was the seventh descendant of Joshua and met Alexander the Great and so there were 7 generations of high priests within 35 years !!! According to most secular datings (see for example the Mossad Harav Kook Megillat Esther) the story of Purim took place during the reign of Xerxes I (485-465 Khsayarsan in old Persian) the son of Darius and so during the time of the Second temple, not before. Indeed much of the description of Xerxes from Herodotus conforms to the description of Ahasverosh. Josephus, however, identifies Ahasverosh with Artaxerxes the son of Xerxes. Ezra appeared on the scene about 70 years after the rebuilding of the second Temple in the seventh year of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:7 in 458 BCE). Nehemiah arrived in the 20th year of Artaxerxes (445 BCE). The more serious problems are with external sources. During much of the Persian Empire there were wars with the Greeks which were recorded by contemporary Greek historians. The most complete is Herodotus who gives a relatively complete history of the era and the various Persian kings and their deeds over the 200 year period and he himself visited Babylonia during the time of the Persians. The Peloponnesian wars (431-404) between the Greeks and Persians was described by the Athenian general, Thucydides. Beyond Greek historical writings there are also some Egyptian descriptions of the wars between the countries. There are also major inscriptions written by the Persian emperors in Behistun and Persepolis. In Behistun Darius gives many details of his conquests. In Persepolis there are archways with inscriptions like I am the king Xerxes the son of Darius etc. (in Persian of course).

There have been discovered thousands of documents throughout the near east describing various events that occurred. We even have various lists of high priests and governors in Samaria, including descendants of Sanballat and Tobiah (the Samaritan enemies of the Jewish people) during this era. Again many people are listed over an extended period of time. Some of the most fascinating documents of the time are from the Jewish colony in Elephantine. See for example Persia and the Bible by Yamatuchi for the history of the early Persian empire. Thus, the secular dating is supported by much archaeological evidence, writings of contemporaries and even internal evidence in the Tanach. Since the evidence comes from hundreds of different sources it is not possible to accuse any person of making up all this history. The uncharitable viewpoint is that the rabbis simply confused Darius the great with the final Persian king Darius who lived many years later. This led Rav Schwab Zt'l to consider reasons that Chazal deliberately changed the facts they knew to eliminate some 150 years of history. My personal theory is that they did this to throw off all attempts at calculating the time of the Messiah as all such dating is based on false information.

From: eli turkel <turkel@math.tau.ac.il>

Eliezer Gordon says that Rabbi Schwab retracted his explanation about the discrepancy between the secular and traditional length of the Persian empire. I understand that Rabbi Schwab Zt'l had an article in the Jewish Observer several years ago reaffirming his suggestion that Chazal deliberately hid the 160 years. As to the points that are brought

1. Josephus clearly refers to more than 34 years of the Persian empire.

He refers to: 6 years of Cambyses the son of Cyrus
the Temple was built in the 9th year of Darius

Ezra and Nechemia were active in the days of his son Xerxes and the wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt in the 28th year of Xerxes

The story of Purim happened in the days of Artaxerxes his son.

Alexander conquered the Persian empire under a later king Darius (III).

He also describes many High priests and their fights which could not have happened within 34 years.

2. As I described in a previous lengthy submission there is numerous archaeological evidence of the length of the Persian empire including inscriptions by the various kings.

There exists extensive correspondence between the Jewish garrison in Elephantine (Yeb) and the Judea. They mentioned the king Darius and the governor Bagoses (also mentioned in Josephus as a late Persian general) and various high priests and Sanballat. Hence, this could not be Darius I but must be Darius II. Thus, not only contemporary non-Jews refer to the many Persian kings.

3. The kings mentioned in Tanach correspond to the kings in the secular history.

>> In summation Rav Reisman stated that we should be more comfortable and

>> loyal to our own historical calculations, rather than abandon it for the

>> notoriously self-serving histories of ancient non-Jewish kingdoms.

Given the history of many contemporary Greeks, thousands of papyri around the entire middle east and inscriptions in stone it is hard to call this merely self-serving histories especially since these do not reference Judea and were written hundreds of years before any rabbinic account.

Eli Turkel

From: Ydfrankel@aol.com

In recent postings in Torah Forum (2:36; 2:38; 2:41; 2:42 2:44) there has been a discussion about the true date for the destruction of the first temple. I make no claim at being either a historian or scholar. It would be therefore be ludicrous for me to involve myself in an area to which I must admit only cursory knowledge. I have no way of explaining the inconsistencies between the secular dating of the first temple and the dates based on our masorah. (Transmitted information from our sages.) I would like

to make one point though. With the information that we do have through Torah, even a child in elementary school can be the storehouse of the most sophisticated historical information. Let me give just one small example.

One can calculate the dates from creation and onward using the ages of the names supplied to us in the beginning of Genesis. For example If Adam was 130 when Eve gave birth to Seth then Seth was born in the year 130. If Seth was 105 when Enosh was born then Enosh was born in year 245 after creation, etc. Using this simple method one finds that Abraham was born in the year (step #1) 1948 AC (after creation).

Yitzchok (Isaac) was born when Abraham was 100; (step #2) 2048 AC. The Jews left Egypt 400 years after the birth of Yitzchok; (step #3) 2448 AC.

The wandering in the desert was 40 years (step #4). The Jews entered Israel in 2488 AC.

The first temple was destroyed 850 years after entering into the land. (See Rashi [Rabbi Shlomo Itzhaki -- Bible commentator] Deuteronomy 4:25); (step #5) 3338 AC.

The Babylonian exile was 70 years; (step #6) 3408 AC.

The second temple lasted 420 years (Yoma 9B); (step #7) 3828 AC.

In seven steps, any elementary school yeshiva student can figure out the date 3828 AC. Now let us convert this date into a secular date.

This year on the Jewish calendar is 5756. That means that 3828 was 1928 years ago. This year on the secular calendar is 1996. This means that the second temple was destroyed (approximately) in the year 68 CE. Voil"

With an allowance for rounded off years even a skeptic must be impressed with the unbelievable accuracy of these calculations.

Sincerely, Yitzchok D. Frankel Long Beach, NY

From: David Mata (HP OSSD/COSL)<dmata@hposl41.cup.hp.com>

The following is an excerpt of Rabbi Schwab's lecture.

Start of Lecture insert by Rabbi Schwab

V. The Building of the Second Temple

Rabbi Schwab pointed out that the historical evidence dates the destruction of the first Temple at 586 BCE and the destruction of the Second Temple at 70 CE. This seems to cause a conflict with the Talmud which lists the Second Temple as having lasted 420 years and the exile as 70 years. This 490 year span would put the destruction of the First temple at 420 BCE. The dating scheme used below is AM (Anno Mundi) for the dates from the creation as in the tables above, TCE for the Temple Construction Era, BCE for Before the Common (or Xian) Era, and CE for the Common (or Xian Era).

Rabbi Schwab deals with this by postulating that the period of the building of the Second Temple lasted 168 years and was not counted in the calendar we

use today. That is, the era he refers to as the "Temple Construction Era" was numbered separately and was identical with the era of "Anshei Knesses Hagdola" (Men of the Great Assembly). One reason for this is to prevent the attempt to calculate the exact date that the moshiach will come. An appendix giving Rabbi Schwab's dates for the events of the end of the First Temple Era will be added later. Rabbi Schwab dated the Destruction of the First Temple in 3340 as 590/89 BCE. The end of the Babylonian exile in 3409

is dated 521/20 BCE with the reign of Darius I. The era of the Anshei Knesses Hagdola is shown in the following table. Note that this would date the creation of the world (Year 1 AM) as 3929/28 BCE.

Date TCE | Date BCE | Event

Date TCE	Date BCE	Event
1	520/19	Temple building is resumed. Hagai, Zechariah
5	516/15	Dedication of (incomplete) Temple celebrated. Rebuilding of Jerusalem wall is begun

6	515/14	Ezra arrives. First (prophetic) period of "Knesses Hagdola" begins. After death of Joshua Ezra become High Priest.
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34	487/86	Darius I dies.
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35	486/85	Xerxes (Artachshasstra of Ezra). Messianic redemption expected no later than 3450 from the creation (1,000 years after the Exodus). Ezra travels to Bavel to organize the Ingathering of the Exiles. He appoints Yoyakim as High Priest.
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40	481/80	Xerxes appoints Ezra as Pasha of Yehuda, encourages total immigration.
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41	480/79	Second coming of Ezra with only 1500 immigrants. Refusal of majority to leave exile causes indefinite postponement of messianic redemption.
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42	479/78	Mixed Marriages Dissolved.
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54	466/65	Xerxes dies. Artaxerxes I (Longimanus = Artachshassta of Nechemiah). Through change of government, Ezra loses his political power. Deterioration sets in. Ezra (= Malachi) admonishes his contemporaries. Persecution under new governors. Sanballat in Samaria, Tobias the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arab are main antagonists. Enemies burn walls of Jerusalem, many Jews flee country, poverty and corruption reign. Eliashev is the High Priest.
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75	446/45	Nechemiah becomes governor. Walls of Jerusalem are repaired.
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76	445/44	Spiritual restoration of Jewish community. "Covenant of the Faith". Second period of "Knesses Hagdola" (Soferim) begins. Yoyada is High Priest.
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86	435/34	Nehemiah leaves for Shushan. Partial deterioration sets in again.
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88	433/32	Nehemiah returns. festive dedication of Jerusalem (ca) wall. Ezra dies. Yochanan (= Jonathan) becomes High Priest. Biblical canon closed.
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97	424/23	Darius II (Nothus)
410		Yeb temple in Egypt destroyed.
406		Bagoas governor of Yehuda. Delaiah, son of Sanballat in Samaria.
116	405/04	Artaxerxes II (Mnemon)
161	360/59	Artaxerxes III (Ochus)
168	353/52	Final temple restoration completed by Shimon Hatzadik (Simon "The Just"). End of the Temple Construction Era. Resumption of Anno Mundi numbering.

End of Lecture insert

I don't remember who typed this copy of

"The development of the time-line based on a lecture by Rav Schwab of Kahal

Adath Yeshurun (Rav Breuer's schul) given in the year 5729 (1968/69 C.E.) according to the count we currently use from the creation of the world. The lecture dealt with the problem of dating the destruction of the two Temples and reconciling the dates with the Xian dating system currently in use."

From: Yaakov Menken <menken@torah.org>

I happened to notice this weekend that accepting the archaeological dating for the First Temple also brings the Biblical conquest of Canaan by Joshua into accordance with archaeological evidence, which seems to show destruction of Jericho in 1400 BCE. Using Rabbi Frankel's time-line, the entry into Israel occurred in 2488 AC, which would be 5756-2488-1996 = 1272

BCE. Add 168 years, and you have 1440 BCE, which fits the margin of error. Studies in the late 1980's discovered "remarkable agreement" between existing evidence at Jericho and the Biblical account, if one uses the 1400 BCE date. The article in the New York Times, Feb. 22, 1990, is almost as interesting as the follow-up letter from Zecharia Sitchin, who is described merely as the author of "The Lost Realms," a book on ancient civilizations and prehistoric events:

"The correlation between archeological evidence and biblical tale for the walled city of Jericho has been made possible by dating the Israelite conquest... to circa 1400 B.C.[E.]... Soon thereafter, we read in the Bible, the Israelites attained another major victory when the sun stood still at Gibeon -- rising but not setting for a whole day. Because scholars have been unable to explain the phenomenon, it has been disbelieved.

"However, at about the same time, circa 1400 B.C.[E.], according to Aztec lore in Mexico, the sun failed to rise for a whole day in the City of the Gods, Teotihuacan (north of Mexico City). Likewise, it failed to rise for 20 hours in the Andes, according to Inca legends.

"Since a day that does not end and a night that does not end are the same phenomenon in opposite parts of the world, the dating... would also confirm the tale of the sun's standing still at Gibeon."

Incredible. Yaakov Menken

Re: Jewish Star Magen David

From: JCMKC@aol.com

There is a long history about the Star of David in Encyclopedia Judaica. Basically it has been around as an ornamental symbol in many cultures since the bronze age. First called the "seal of Solomon" by the Arabs. The Magen David (shield of David) was originally Psalm 30 written out in shape of Menora. By Middle Ages the two terms were used interchangeably and the star is found as design in churches and Muslim countries. Over years increasingly used in Jewish communities, but only became popularized in 19th Century as a symbol for Judaism in an imitation of Christianity's cross.

From: "Richard S. Sevrinsky" <sevrins@columbia.edu>

I once heard that the six-pointed Magen David (lit. Star of David) was originally the crest of King David himself. The figure was created by interposing two Delta (triangular) figures, which would have been chosen as his first initial. I'm guessing that the letter for daled in k'tav ivri [ancient Hebrew letters] would have been the same, as opposed to k'tav Ashuri. However, I have never confirmed this, and could be mentioning it simply because it makes a lot of sense. Richie

From: 00srweintrob@bsuvc.bsu.edu

I had read that the two dalets of King David's name were intertwined on his shield. Eventually, this symbol was stylized into what we use today. I do not remember the source, unfortunately, but thought it was a possibility. Susan Weintrob

From: SUBAR@ohr.israel.net

Bernard Schubach mentioned that there was "an Ohr Somayach Ask-the-Rabbi about this." It was Ask the Rabbi Issue #60 and #61. [Rabbi Subar included the full text, but I am quoting only the answer. --YM] The six-pointed star has long been associated with the Jewish people. In Southern Italy, a tombstone dating back to 300 C.E. was found with a six-pointed star on it. In the year 1354, King Carl IV insisted that the Jews of Prague make a flag for themselves that would feature the six-pointed star as well as the five-pointed star of King Solomon. The words "Magen David" literally mean "Shield of [King] David." Some say that the soldiers of King David's army wielded shields in the shape of a six-pointed star. King David's personal seal was not a star, but rather a shepherd's staff and bag. His son, King Solomon, used a five-pointed star for his personal seal. In Kabbalistic teachings, one finds that the number six represents the Heavens and the Earth and the four directions (North, South, East, West). There are those who suggest that the Magen David with its six points correspond to this Kabbalistic idea, which in turn can represent G-d's Omnipresence. Interestingly, the words "Magen David," in Hebrew, are made up of six letters. Some people have the tradition of hanging a Magen David in their Sukka. Perhaps the six sides allude to the six "Ushpizen" guests who visit during the first six days of Sukkot: Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya'akov, Moshe, Aharon, and Yosef. The star as a unified whole symbolizes the seventh "Ushpizen" - - - David -- the "king" who unifies the whole. Furthermore, the Magen David has 12 sides: David as king unified the 12 tribes. [1 week later:] In response to last week's column about the origin and meaning of the Magen David, Gershon Seif <76132.3170@compuserve.com> wrote: I recall learning that the two triangles represent the reciprocal relationship that the Jewish people have with Hashem in bringing blessing to the world. The triangle pointing up stands for our Mitzvot. They go up to Heaven, then they activate a flow of good to the world from Heaven back down to the world, which the triangle pointing down stands for. Ohr Somayach is on the web at <http://www.jer1.co.il/orgs/ohr>.

From: geoffrey <geoffrey@therev.demon.co.uk>

Sally Fleischman asks about the origin of the 'Jewish Star,' by which I assume she means the Magen David - Star of David. Although it's certainly an ancient symbol, it's highly unlikely that King David knew it as Jewish.

The Jewish Encyclopaedia says that the first time it appears on a Jewish tombstone is at Tarentum in Southern Italy, dating from the third century, and the earliest Jewish source to mention it is in the 12th century (Eshkol Hakofer). A most fanciful suggestion as to its origin is to be found in a book published in England in 1941 by Joseph Porton, called 'Bible Studies and Jewish Ideals'. Mr Porton suggests that when an archer pulls a bow, it forms the shape of a triangle. Since the bow was the most popular weapon in those days, it served as a 'Shield' to David, and that is simply what the symbol represents. The idea of having two bows intertwined is to signify, emblematically, the king's continual victories - the arrows of his bow are directed and ready to defend him on every side. A rather more down-to-earth suggestion is that there cannot be a more appropriate symbol for the Jewish nation, than two triangles pointing in opposite directions!

Geoffrey Shisler

Subject: Mad Cow Disease

From: nechama@borealis.com (Nechama Cox)

Harry: "Does anyone know whether there is truth in the statement that kosher beef (from England) is unlikely to have a problem of Mad Cow Disease? Although the disease is mainly found in the spine, can it be found in "kosher cuts"?"

BSE has never been found in a cow under 2 years old, and since kosher beef is from cows slaughtered at or before 2, there has never been a case of BSE in kosher meat. The disease can be found in the brain, and brain is a kosher part of the animal. In fact there was a group of Libyan Jews who had a very high rate of CJD because they ate lightly boiled lambs brains which gave them the disease. So it is not the cut of the meat which avoids the problem, but rather the age of the cows. Nechama Cox nechama@borealis.com

From: "Thomas G. Shafer" <tgshafer@fly.hiwaay.net>

There was a panic in Britain about "mad Cow" cases appearing at the same time as an increase in a somewhat similar illness in humans, Jacob Kreutzfeld Disease. We have now located a French case of JK with good documentation that there was never any contact with British or any other infected beef. There really is no proof that JK has animal to human transmission at all. There is a similar disease called Kuru found among New Guinean cannibals who eat human brains and is transmitted by a small protein particle called a prion. Connecting Kuru and JK is interesting speculation at best. In any event, it would appear to me that kosher slaughtering practices would minimize risk since we do not consume any significant amounts of nervous system tissue, even to the point of dissecting out the sciatic nerve. Shalom, Thomas G. Shafer, MD

Disclaimer: The sages teach us that free medical advice is worth just what you paid for it. When in doubt, check with your own physician.

daf-hashavua@shamash.nysernet.org Rafael Salasnik <rafi@brijnet.org>
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Bamidbar The Time for Question

by Rabbi Gavin Broder, Newbury Park Synagogue

The book of Bemidbar begins with G-d asking Moses to take a census of the Jewish people. This was to be done by counting every individual of each tribe who was over the age of twenty. A leader of each tribe was chosen to stand together with Moses during the process of counting. The Torah delineates the names of those heads of household who were to stand with Moses. The tribe of Levi is conspicuously absent. Only after Moses has finishing counting the rest of the tribes does the Torah tell us: "The Levites according to their fathers' tribe were not counted among them...you shall not count the tribe of Levi, and you shall not take a census of them among the Children of Israel" (1:47,49)

The major commentators offer different reasons as to why G-d did not want to number the Levites together with the rest of the tribes. However, the purpose

of this essay is to elaborate on a more fundamental question. When Moses was first asked to number the tribes he must have realized immediately that one of them had been left out. This must have been most apparent when G-d informed him of the names of the heads of the tribes who were to stand with him and yet no leader was mentioned for the tribe of Levi. Why did Moses not say to G-d "excuse me, haven't you forgotten someone?"

Midrash Rabbah (1:11) elaborates. At the outset when G-d asked Moses to number the tribes, He did not ask him to number the tribe of Levi and consequently Moses refrained from doing so. Moses reasoned that if it had been G-d's will that he should number the Levites He would have told him to do so. After Moses had finished counting the rest of the children of Israel, however, he wondered why G-d had not yet commanded him to count his tribe. He must further have wondered if G-d would ever call upon him to number them. When G-d saw that Moses was in a dilemma He explained to him why he had not asked him to number them. Thus after counting the rest of the tribes the Torah says "And the Lord spoke to Moses saying but you shall not count the tribe of Levi etc."

It is therefore apparent from the Midrash that after Moses had finished the counting he asked a pertinent question as to why his tribe was not counted and G-d responded. The question, however, remains as to why Moses did not ask this question in the beginning. The process of counting must have taken a considerable amount of time, surely Moses could and should have asked this question earlier?

Rabbi Soloveitchik offers a most humbling answer. He suggests that at the time when G-d gave His command to count the people, Moses immediately began what was requested of him. In the same way that a servant does the will of the master without questioning what he is doing, even if he does not comprehend so too did Moses. However, once Moses had fulfilled that which he was expected to do, then, and only then, did he begin to ask questions.

A comparable incident is found in the tenth trial of Abraham by G-d., that of the Binding of Isaac on the altar. The Torah tells us: "and He (G-d) said (to Abraham), Please take your son, your only one, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah. Bring him up there as an offering upon one of the mountains that I will show you". So Abraham woke early in the morning and he saddled his donkey. He took his two young men with him and Isaac, his son. He split the wood and stood up and went to the place of which G-d had spoken to him" (Bereshit 22:2,3).

Abraham, no doubt, had many questions to ask yet he did not. As difficult as it must have been for him, he did not delay in fulfilling his task. He saddled his donkey himself in haste to perform the Mitzvah that he had been commanded to do. It was only later when the angel stopped the sacrifice that Abraham permitted himself to ask the burning question which had troubled him. This is shown by Rashi, who commenting on the verse, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad nor do anything to him for now I know that you are G-d fearing", (Bereshit 22:12). quotes the Midrash: Abraham said to G-d, "yesterday you said to me 'through Isaac will offspring be considered yours' and then You said 'please take your son and offer him as a sacrifice', now You say to me 'do not stretch forth your hand at the lad'." It is apparent, therefore, from the Midrash that now the trial had been completed, Moses understood that he could confront G-d with his questions.

As a nation we have never promulgated blind faith. We do however, need to know when to ask our questions and when to trust in G-d.

PARASHAT BAMIDBAR
SICHA OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT" A
WITH LOVE AND WITH AWE

Summarized by Danny Orenbuch

"And God spoke to Moshe saying, Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aharon the Kohen that they may serve him." (Bamidbar 3:5-6)

Rambam (Hilkhos Kelei Ha-Mikdash 3:1) elaborates on this: "All the descendants of Levi are set aside for service in the Beit HaMikdash, as it is written, 'At that time God separated the tribe of Levi.' It is a positive commandment for the Levites to be available and ready for service in the Beit HaMikdash, whether they are willing or not, as it is written, 'And the Levi will perform the service of the Tent of Meeting.' And a Levi who

accepts upon himself all the commandments pertaining to the Levi'im except for one thing - he is not accepted until he accepts all."

The Rambam rules that the Levite service is not up to the Levi's choice. Whether he wishes to serve or not, he is obligated to do so and he is forced to perform it. This coercion has a function and purpose: the inculcation of the concept of discipline and coercion in Divine service. Through this command to the Levites, who symbolize the entire nation, the rest of the nation observes and learns the importance of this concept.

We have already come across the motif of coercion at Har Sinai, where God 'held the mountain over the nation like a cask' (thereby forcing them to accept the Torah). But in that instance we see evidence of another dimension to the experience: discipline out of love, "Na'aseh ve-nishma."

These two paths - obedience out of coercion and out of love - were the guiding principles of two radical phenomena which we witnessed during this century. On one hand - the Communist regime, which ruled by pure coercion, authoritarianism and suppression of the people and which eventually collapsed, and on the other hand - the Western concept of total freedom, which is also on its way to bankruptcy.

Am Yisrael and Jewish philosophy create a balance between these two paths.

"Do not be like slaves who serve their master in order to receive reward; rather be like slaves who serve their master without regard for reward. And let the fear of heaven be upon you." (Pirkei Avot 1:3)

At first glance this appears contradictory: On one hand we are being told to serve out of love ("without regard for reward"); on the other hand we are commanded to have the "fear of heaven" upon us - i.e. service out of coercion. In fact, this mishna comes to point out the proper balance. Divine service must be performed willingly and with a sense of gratitude, but on the other hand there must be discipline based on coercion in order to hold us in check.

The Rambam, in Moreh Nevukhim, teaches that the mitzvot can be explained only in a general sense, and that a person who seeks to understand the reason for every detail of the mitzvot is foolish. What we have said above helps us to understand why this is true: If every detail of every mitzva had a reason which we knew and understood, then the aspect of Divine command in the mitzva would be lost; an action which is performed for a reason and purpose which we can understand does not need to be commanded. Hence the correct balance involves fulfilment of the mitzvot with a general understanding of their purpose - willingly, as well as performance of all their details - symbolizing the aspect of command and coercion.

In Rav Kook's Mussar Hakodesh (found in Orot Hakodesh, Book 3), service of God is divided into three levels. The lowest is the service of the Levi'im, who are coerced to serve even if they have no wish to do so. Above this is service of God out of love and awe, and the highest level is that of connecting oneself with God in the highest spheres of heaven.

The task of the tribe of Levi, therefore, is to teach the nation the path of Divine service based on command and discipline, through the example of their own obligation to serve in the Beit HaMikdash.

(Originally delivered at Seuda Shelishit, Shabbat Parashat Bamidbar 5752. Translated by Kaeren Fish.)

Parshas Bamidbar

The following comes to you from the weekly perasha bulletin of the Jersey-Shore. You can subscribe directly to this bulletin by sending a message to majordomo@sitt.com, with the subject containing anything, and the body of the message containing only the words "subscribe jersey-shore" (without the quotes).

THE WHOLE IS GREATER THAN THE PARTS

by Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

"Count the heads of all the Children of Israel." (Bemidbar 1:2)

Whenever the Jewish people were counted, they had to give a certain coin which, by counting that coin, we could know the number of people. Once, in the time of King David, the people themselves were counted and a great plague ensued. Even today, when we count individuals for a minyan or the like, we don't say, "one, two, three..." but rather we say words of a verse

containing a known number of words, through which we all know the number of people. Why is there such an emphasis on not counting people by number?

Rabenu Bahya explains that when people are included in a group, they have the merit of the entire group and thereby are protected. When an individual becomes separated by being counted, then he is on his own, and he must have his own protection. Even when we pray for sick people, we always include the individual with the entire nation by saying, "Among all of the sick in Israel," so that they should have the merit of the whole nation.

This should teach us that although we are all individuals, unique and separate, our strength lies in our being part of a greater whole, the Jewish people. We should try not to stand out and not separate ourselves from community involvement. By joining together in the synagogue's programs, such as minyan, classes and activities, we will have the blessing of the multitudes in addition to our own merit. Shabbat Shalom.

TOGETHERNESS

by Rabbi Reuven Semah

"And Hashem spoke to Moshe...in the second year after leaving Egypt...Count the entire community of Israel." (Bemidbar 1:1,2)

This week's perashah emphasizes the counting of Israel. As the Torah tells us the numbers of each tribe, we find an unusual order. It starts with Reuven and Shimon, which are the two oldest sons of Yaakov. The next one is Gad, who is much younger. However, further study of the perashah shows that these three tribes camped in proximity of each other on the southern side of the sanctuary, each tribe with its own flag. It seems that from the start of the counting, the flags and the location of the tribes was a central idea in the counting.

Rabbi Ya'akov Kaminetzky asks: The Jewish nation left Egypt a year earlier as one free and united nation. Why did G-d wait one year before giving each tribe its flag and location? His answer is absolutely crucial for us today to understand the nature of our people. He says that each tribe had its own flag with an emblem which described the nature and individual aspirations of that tribe. In essence, the flags tended to bring out the individual qualities of each tribe. However, they were also divisive in nature.

They could have caused disagreements and fighting amongst the tribes. Nevertheless, the glue that held them together was the Sanctuary, the Temple which contained the Tablets of Moshe from Mount Sinai. All Israelites were completely dedicated to the Torah.

G-d wanted each tribe to fulfill its own potential, each one having different qualities. When the Jews left Egypt, they didn't have the Sanctuary to unite them, therefore, G-d waited one year until the Sanctuary was built. Only then did Hashem allow us to follow our different characters, customs and dialects.

Our nation today is as diverse as the twelve tribes. Sephardic and Ashkenaz, Hassidic and Lithuanian are only some of the subdivisions of our people here and in Israel. Hashem wants this variety. It brings out the best in us. However, the key factor that unifies us is the Torah. We must learn to tolerate and understand each other. If we view each other as partners in observing and learning the Torah, we will succeed in this great mission. Shabbat Shalom.

DESERT FAITH

"G-d spoke ...in the Sinai desert." (Bemidbar 1:1)

Why was it necessary for the Torah to be given in the desert?

When a horse goes to drink by the river, he first stamps his feet in the water. Why does he do this? When he is about to drink, he sees his reflection in the water and thinks that it is another horse coming to take away his water. He stamps his feet to chase the horse away. As a result, he ends up drinking muddy water.

Man often has the same attitude. He fears that other people can cause him loss or damage, and he takes many undue precautions to protect himself, often at great expense. The Torah therefore teaches us that we must behave as though we are in the desert. In the desert, when one is isolated, he is not afraid that someone else will come along and take what is his. Even among

other people, we must have faith in G-d and truly believe that nobody can take away what is ours unless He wills it to be so. (Lekah Tob)

THE SMALLEST TRIBE

"All that were numbered of the Leviim...all males from a month old and upward, were twenty two thousand." (Bemidbar 3:39)

The members of the tribe of Levi were fewer than the other tribes. Although they had been counted from the age of a month old and above, unlike the other tribes who were counted from the age of twenty years and over, they still numbered only twenty two thousand. It is astonishing that G-d's servants and pious devotees should not be blessed to the extreme that the rest of the people were.

The tribe of Levi was not subject to the Egyptian bondage, which was imposed on the rest of the tribes. Because the Jewish People's lives were made bitter by the Egyptians through hard labor in order to diminish them, G-d miraculously increased them to compensate for the Egyptians' decree. The tribe of Levi, however, which was not subject to this affliction, increased in a normal way; consequently, the tribe of Levi did not grow in numbers as significantly as the other tribes. (Peninim on the Torah)
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Moderator, Dvar Torah Project Genesis

Haftorah Bamidbar
MESSAGE FROM THE HAFTORAH PARSHAS BAMIDBAR Hosheia 2:1

This week's haftorah reveals to us the indescribable love that Hashem possesses for the Jewish people. The prophet Hosheia opens with warm words of blessing to the Jews and states, "The numbers of the Jewish people will be likened to the sand of the sea which cannot be measured or counted." But Hosheia continues and says, "And instead of being denied the status of My nation, they will be regarded as 'sons of Hashem.'" These words indicate a change in status, and suggest that the Jewish people will undergo a serious transformation. In truth, we discover after reading preceding passages that the Jewish nation actually forfeited their prominent status of the people of Hashem. "Hashem said, (Hosheia 1:9) call its name 'not My nation' because you are not My nation and I will not be to you..." But now, one passage later, we find that Hashem is blessing the Jewish people in unbelievable proportions. Instead of their earlier status as "the nation of Hashem", the prophet even conveys upon them a newly earned title of "sons of Hashem." One must question this sudden change of status and in particular its extreme proportions, going from total disassociation to the cherished sons of Hashem.

Our Chazal in the Sifri (D'vei Rav, Balak) raise this concern and explain this puzzling development with the following analogy. A king became enraged at his wife over her inexcusable behavior and immediately summoned a scribe intending to instruct him to prepare a divorce document. Within moments, the king's wrath was quieted, long before the scribe even arrived. The king now faced a serious dilemma unwilling to disclose his peculiar change of heart. He finally resolved the dilemma and when the scribe arrived, the king instructed him to prepare a new marriage document doubling his previous financial responsibilities. Chazal's hidden lesson can be understood in the following manner. Studying the analogy we sense the king's deep love and devotion for his wife. Although he was angered almost to the point of totally rejecting his wife, the anger was not deep-rooted or lasting. Within moments he was appeased and his true affection was shown. In order to compensate for his painful suggestion of rejection, the king not only restored his relationship but even strengthened it. The thought of disassociation was too overpowering and the king sought to rectify matters by doubling his expression of affection.

Chazal reveal through this the depth of Hashem's love and affection for the Jewish people. In the times of Hosheia the Jewish people strayed severely from the proper path and involved themselves in inexcusable practices. Hashem's wrath was kindled and the prophet Hosheia was called to serve the Jewish people with rejection papers. The mere notion of rejection was sufficient to sensitize the Jewish people to the severity of their wrongdoings. Hashem's expression of love for His people returned and He immediately

retracted his suggestion and restored the Jewish nation to their prominent status of "His people." However, Hashem wouldn't stop there and permit this intended rejection to remain a factor in the chronicles of Jewish history. Hashem compensated for this suggested rejection and increased His display of affection for the Jewish people. From this point on, the Jewish people would enjoy a special relationship and would be regarded as Hashem's children, not merely His loyal subjects. We see from this the indescribable love Hashem possesses for His people and we learn that even during moments of rejection Hashem's true affection for the Jews is never effected. This lesson finds its parallel in this week's sedra regarding the special opportunity of the Jewish encampment. The Jewish people had been stationed at the foot of Mount Sinai for close to a year. During this time they developed a close association to Hashem through receiving the Torah and learning the word of Hashem. This intimate bond, however, was interrupted by an inexcusable plunge of the Jewish people into idolatry. Hashem's wrath was kindled and Moshe Rabbeinu was immediately summoned to deliver the rejection papers. After the Jewish people were sensitized to the severity of their wrongdoings Hashem restored the Jews to their prominent status. But Hashem didn't stop there; instead He sought to compensate for this intended rejection. In addition to His open demonstration of affection, resting His Divine Presence in the Mishkan, He would grant the Jews a special opportunity. He therefore permitted the Jewish people to camp around the Ark and encircle His Divine Presence thereby creating amongst them an indescribable sensation of embracing Hashem. Indeed Shlomo Hamelech refers to this encampment as an unbelievable experience of intimacy and sings in the name of the Jewish people, "And His flag was for me an expression of love" (Shir Hashirim 2:4)

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* PG LifeLine - Bamidbar

----- "Take a count of the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their heads of households, with the number of their names, every male by head." [1:2] Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech Hertzberg z"l, my wife's grandfather, looks at two elements of the counting - that it was done by family (specifically, by the heads of households), and by "head," or as Rashi explains, by a coin - one half-shekel given for each head.

Why was a coin needed? Because the act of giving indicated that the giver was a Jew, a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The children of Israel share three traits: they are "bayshanim," modest and sensitive to embarrassment, "rachmanim," merciful, and "gomlei chasadim," doers of acts of kindness and generosity. By giving willingly, lovingly, the giver provides a sign that he is part of this nation.

Rav Hertzberg then goes on to offer a deeper understanding of the counting by family. He says that each Jew must see him or herself within the context of one's family, and always keep the image of one's father and grandfather in his mind. When contemplating any action, one must consider whether it will embarrass his or her ancestors, or increase respect for them.

The Torah tells us that we learn to fear G-d from fear of our parents - and specifically our fathers, who most often seem to take ultimate responsibility for discipline in the home. If a person turns out bad, he embarrasses not only himself, but his parents and ancestors, and those who see him will denigrate the parents who brought up such a child (especially the father who didn't discipline well).

One must see this at every level. The Medrash says that Yosef saw the image of his father before him, and this kept him from sinning with Potiphar's wife. Even in private, we have an obligation to look not only at our immediate family, but at our glorious ancestors and our line back to Sinai - and to behave in a way that brings respect not only upon ourselves, but to the entire extended family of the House of Israel.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY! Parshas Bamidbar, 5755, we made two list announcements: The first was the beginning of "Iyov," Rabbi Yitzchak Schwartz's class on the Book of Job. His thoughtful presentations now reach 930 subscribers. In other news, Rabbi Yissocher Frand became personally involved one year ago with the production of the ravfrand class. From Parshas Breishis (Genesis) through Bamidbar last year, the Internet class was a Thursday-night transcript of the class that had just been delivered that evening, produced by one dedicated attendee (Mr. Hillel Markowitz, who deserves our gratitude for all that has developed). The list rapidly grew so large (over 700) that Rabbi Frand requested the opportunity to edit the presentation made here. One year ago, Rabbi Dovid Twersky's first transcript appeared - from a previously taped class - as edited by Rabbi Frand himself. The class remains one of our most popular, with 2700 readers. Incidentally, at that time Project Genesis had 2844 subscribers overall; today, the figure is well over 6000. In addition, we now appear on most major commercial services (CompuServe, AOL, MSN), and printouts are available in synagogues and Jewish community centers (of all flavors and denominations) throughout the world. Thank you for helping to make Project Genesis one of the world's largest Jewish learning programs!

If you would like to help us to go forward, then please consider a \$36 "subscriber" donation, or even \$10 for students and those just starting out. Every dollar counts - even the "counting" alone is worthwhile. By sending even one dollar, you declare your recognition of the value of Torah learning through this project, and make yourself a part of it; the donation of a single half-shekel coin showed that the giver was part of the Jewish people. If you see the potential of an independent, unaffiliated Internet program for Jewish outreach and education, and would like to see us grow and introduce new programs, then please take a membership in Project Genesis for \$108. Has any synagogue ever asked so little for membership? If even 10% of our subscribers became members, our troubles would be over!

Good Shabbos, Rabbi Yaakov Menken

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Enayim L'Torah Parshat Bamidbar
Publication of Student Organization of Yeshiva University

candle lighting: 7:51 pm
shma (morning) (Magen Avraham): 8:38 am
shma (morning) (GR"A): 9:14 am

Torah in the Midbar by Rabbi Chananel Herbsman

"Vay'daber Hashem El Moshe BeMidbar Sinai." "And Hashem spoke to Moshe in the desert of Sinai." The Midrash Rabba comments that this teaches us that Torah and wisdom can only be acquired by one who makes himself "Hefker" like a desert. What connection exists between the Torah and the desert? And how does this Midrash relate to our learning of Torah?

The Mesilat Yesharim writes in Chapter 9 that one of the greatest factors which inhibit a person from doing mitzvot and learning Torah is his attachment to pleasures and comforts. A person who "loves pleasures to their very limit" will be unable to properly learn Torah, as he will lack the necessary "work habits" which are required in order to acquire Torah. This is precisely the message of the above Midrash. A person must make himself into a desert, a place without all of the comforts and luxuries that the world offers. Once he has removed his attachment to these pleasures, he will be able to focus properly on his learning and develop a Torah personality.

Among the braitot printed at the end of Pirkei Avot we learn This is the course of action somebody should take if he wants to excel in Torah: eat only bread with no condiments but salt; drink water in measured (small) amounts; sleep on the ground; and live a life of

affliction.

Similarly, another braita teaches us that Torah is acquired through 48 steps, including "limited pleasure, limited sleep, limited conversation, limited laughter, etc." When we look at some of the steps mentioned, they do not appear to have a direct connection with a pursuit of knowledge. Chazal are telling us that Torah is not merely an intellectual pursuit of knowledge. As such, the acquisition of Torah requires that we must regulate our bodily habits and personal character traits. This is particularly true when one is just beginning to walk down this path. (Tiferet Yisrael - Avot 6:4)

It is quite a challenge and a difficult task for a person to minimize worldly pleasures and head for a "midbar"; consequently, the rewards are great. Rash"i (Shemot 18:5) writes that the Torah relates Yitro's journey to the desert in order to laud him; Yitro had been living in "K'vodo shel Olam" and left to go hear Torah in the wilderness. Ultimately, Yitro merited to have a parsha added to the Torah.

Despite the effort in learning, and the struggle to find that "midbar" which will allow a person to grow in Torah, there is still another factor. Humans are frail with forgetfulness. We can spend days intensely on one topic only to find a short time later that our recall of it is lacking. The Talmud (Megilla 6b) comments "Aval LeUkmi Girsu - Siyyata Min Shemayya Hi." To remember what one has learned requires the "help of heaven".

The Talmud (Nedarim 55a) comments on the verse, "UMiMidbar Matanah" that if a person makes himself "Hefker" like a desert, not for himself, but for others, then the Torah will be given to him as a "Matanah", a present. The Commentators explain that this "Hefker" means that he is ready to share his learning with anybody. He then may merit to have Torah given to him as a Matanah in a similar fashion in which it was given to Moshe Rabbeinu. The Talmud (Nedarim 38a) comments that Moshe forgot some of his learning until it was given to him as a Matanah. This sharing of learning does not mean that one must be a Rosh Yeshiva. It can be with a friend at any time or place. The key is the willingness to share one's Torah.

As we approach Shavuot and prepare ourselves for Kabalat HaTorah, may we all continue to expand our personal "midbar", both in terms of our personal acquisition of Torah and in our sharing of it with others.

Editor-in-Chief Naftali Bodoff

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bamidbar

Shiur HaRav Soloveichik ZTL on Parshas Bamidbar

The Gemara in Megilla (31b) states that Ezra established the practice of reading from the Torah the Berachos and Klallos from Toras Kohanim (Parshas Bechukosay) before Shavuot and the Berachos and Klallos from Sefer Devarim (Parshas Ki Tavo) prior to Rosh Hashana. Tosfos in Megilla asks that our custom is to read Bamidbar prior to Shavuot and Parshas Nitzavim prior to Rosh Hashana, which contradicts the custom mentioned in the Gemara. Tosfos answers that Chazal wanted to place some distance between the festive atmosphere of Yom Tov and the Tochacha, hence they put a gap of a week between them.

The Rav noted that the Berachos and Kelallos of Ki Tavo really conclude in the following Parsha, Parshas Nitzavim. The Kelallos in both Toras Kohanim and Devarim conclude with words of consolation. In Toras Kohanim, both the Kelallos and the Nechama are contained within Parshas Bechukosay. In Mishne Torah, the enumeration of the Kelallos continues in Parshas Nitzavim and the Tochacha concludes with the promise that Bnay Yisrael will return to Hashem after they have suffered through the exile described in Ki Tavo-Nitzavim.

Since the reading of Parshas Nitzavim precedes Rosh Hashana, the statement in the Gemara regarding the reading of the Berachos and Kelallos in Mishne Torah is readily understood. The Rav clarified the connection between Bamidbar and Shavuos. Apparently there is some aspect in Parshas Bamidbar that is relevant to the holiday of Shavuos, and the receipt of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

The central theme and halacha described in Bamidbar is the setup of the various camps and degrees of separation based on Kedusha. The various camps can be viewed as concentric circles with the Machane Shechina which included the Mishkan and the Holy of Holies at the center and the Machane Leviim surrounding the Mishkan and the Machane Yisrael surrounding the Machane Leviim.

The Rambam (Hilchos Beis Habechira 7:11) describes the 3 camps in the desert as the blueprint to be used when establishing the environment around the Beis Hamikdash, past and future (Uknegdan Ldoros). He mentions the Machane Shechina which includes the Mikdash and the Holy of Holies, Machane Leviya which includes the Temple mount area and the Machane Yisrael which includes the rest of the City of Jerusalem.

The Rav explained the Rambam as emphasizing the concept of Machane as it relates to Ldoros. Yerushalayim is not only a city like other cities, it also has the special status and Kedusha of Machane Yisrael, just like the Machane Yisrael had in the desert. The same is true for the Har Habayis as being a continuation of the Kedushas Machane Leviya and the Mikdash itself as the continuation of the Kedushas Machane Shechina. It is the aspect of Machane that defines and establishes the Kedusha of these 3 places. Without the perpetuity of the concept of Machane there would be no Kedushas Mikdash. The Rav derived this from the language used by the Rambam, for example the Rambam does not say that Yerushalayim has similar sanctification to that of Machane Yisrael in the desert. Instead he says that the Machane concept is perpetual.

The Rav explained the concept of perpetual Machane. The central Machane, Machane Shechina was the source of Kedusha which emanated to the surrounding Machanos. The Machane Leviya was closest to the Machane Shechina, hence its level of Kedusha was greater than Machane Yisrael, which was further removed.

These virtual Machanos extended to the Beis Hamikdash. The Beis Hamikdash itself, including the Holy of Holies and the sanctuary, was the virtual Machane Shechina. The Har Habayis, including the courtyard of the Mikdash was the virtual Machane Leviya. Yerushalayim was the virtual Machane Yisrael. The Kedushas Yerushalayim derived from its role as a Machane in the context of Kedushas Mikdash, not because it was a city in Eretz Yisrael.

In all cases the theme of Kedusha Machanos was that the closer the Machane was to the center, Hashraas Shechina, the greater its level of Kedusha.

This main focus of Parshas Bamidbar is the description of the various levels of Kedusha for the different Machanos. What is the connection of the Parsha to Shavuos? The Rav explained that Mount Sinai at the time of Kabbalas Hatorah had the status of Mikdash. It was the first Mikdash for Bnay Yisrael. There were 3 distinct levels of permission that applied to approaching Mount Sinai: at the center,

on the top of the mountain, was Hashem and Moshe (Machane Shechina). The second Machane included Aharon and the 70 elders (Machane Leviya). The third Machane consisted of the rest of Bnay Yisrael who remained below, surrounding the mountain (Machane Yisrael). Before we can

understand and appreciate Kabbalas Hatorah, we have to understand the concept of Kedushas Mikdash, that it consists of 3 Machanos or Mechitzos, where the members of each group were restricted from entering the next higher level Machane (level of Kedusha). That is why Hashem emphasized that Moshe should clearly demarcate the boundaries of the Mountain, to ensure that the people do not breach their Machane, their level of Kedusha. Parshas Bamidbar explains the various degrees of Kedushas Machanos and is therefore read before Shavuos.

The Rav added an additional connection between the Mikdash and the Kedushas Machanos. The Gemara raises the question if the Mishkan was taken apart in order to travel (i.e. there was no Mikdash extant while they traveled in the desert) how was the Kedusha of the Lechem Hapanim maintained (i.e. without a Mikdash how could there be Lechem Hapanim)? The Gemara answers that the Kedushas Mikdash remained in effect even though it was taken apart while they traveled. The entire entourage that included the 4 groups of Bnay Yisrael surrounding the Machane Leviya and the (disassembled) Machane Shechina retained their respective status of Kedushas Machane. The Kedusha was not dependent on the Mikdash being stationary. This was different than the Kedushas Beis Hamikdash, which has a Kedushas Makom associated with a specific location.

This concept of a "transient Mikdash" with no fixed place described in Parshas Bamidbar has been fundamental to the ability of the Jew to survive in Galus for so many years without a functional Beis Hamikdash. Even though we no longer have the Kedushas Mechitza of a Beis Hamikdash that we can see and enter, the Jew has never lost the Mikdash from the standpoint of Kedushas Machane. The notion of a "traveling Beis Hamikdash", a Machane, has accompanied us from place to place throughout our history.

The Bris Avos obligated Bnay Yisrael to keep the Mitzvos of Hashem in return for being given Eretz Yisrael. The Bris at Mount Sinai was different in that it had no dependency on Eretz Yisrael. The Jew accepted the Torah at Mount Sinai to keep the Mitzvos of Hashem no matter where he may be. Hashem said to Bnay Yisrael that they shall be a kingdom of Priests and a holy nation for everything belongs to Hashem. The Kedushas Machane can be found anywhere the Jew may find himself:

"Vatem Tihyu Li Mamlachos Kohanim Vgoy Kadosh... Ki Li Kal Haaretz".

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