



BS"D

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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON **BAMIDBAR** - 5770

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This week's Internet Parsha Sheet is dedicated to the memory of Rabbi Gedaliah Anemer, zt"l, Rosh Yeshiva of the Yeshiva of Greater Washington and Rabbi of Young Israel Shomrai Emunah of Greater Washington for more than 50 years, on the occasion of his Shloshim.

The FTC and Postal Square Minyanim in Washington, DC lovingly recall our Rebbe and friend, Rabbi Gedaliah Anemer, on his Shloshim.

From Rabbi Joel Tessler: Everyone at Beth Sholom Congregation in Potomac extends our sincere condolences to the Anemer family on the loss of our Rabbi, and Teacher. Rabbi Anemer was a giant in Torah and a true model of leadership with compassion. We will all miss him greatly.

Rav Gedaliah Anemer, zt"l, was niftar on April 15th, Rosh Chodesh Iyar. He was born in 1932, and was orphaned at a very young age. When he was nine years old, he left Akron to study at Mesifita Tifereth Yerusholayim, and was a ben bayis in Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l's home. At age 12, he went to the Telshe Yeshiva in Cleveland, Ohio, a yeshiva that he never truly left. He was greatly attached to Rav Elya Meir Bloch zt"l, and carried the teachings and hashkafa of the "Telzer Derech" with him for the rest of his life. Rav Anemer zt"l was gifted with great brilliance, as well as with phenomenal *pikchus*. For more than 50 years he was a Rav, a Rosh Yeshiva (of the Yeshiva of Greater Washington, which he founded in 1964), the Av Beis Din of the Vaad HaRabbonim – but in all of these things there was really only one mission – to build a Torah community that would truly be loyal to the great mesorah of Klal Yisrael. Rav Anemer was a man of great refinement and personal integrity, who combined both strength of character with an extraordinary gentleness in his ability to relate to people from all walks of life. (Courtesy of the Yeshiva of Greater Washington)

[Sefira/Omer] Day 46 / 6 weeks and 4 days - Don't Forget - Tonight, the evening of Friday, May 14, will be day 46, which is 6 weeks and 4 days of the omer.

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Bamidbar 2007 Shma Koleinu YUHSB
Means and Ends Rabbi Tanchum Cohen

I A cursory examination of the Jewish calendar as sketched out in Chumash Vayikra immediately reveals that the shalosh regalim, the three Yamim Tovim during which Jews are expected to visit the Beis Hamikdash, appear in two pockets at two opposite ends of the yearly cycle. Pesach falls during the first month and begins the relatively short period of sefiras ha'omer which culminates in Shavu'os, while Sukkos-Shemini Atseres take place six months later, in the seventh month. Separated chronologically by

half a year, there is little apparent connection between the fall regalim and those during the present season.

The Ramban, however, indicates that this superficial once-over misses an important connection. In a somewhat cryptic paragraph in his Peirush (Vayikra 23:36) he discerns structural similarity between the two sets of regalim: the six weeks of sefiras ha'omer run from Pesach to Shavu'os just as six days of chol hamo'ed Sukkos link the first day of yom tov to Shemini Atseres. This analogy implies that there thus exists some deep relationship between Pesach and Shavu'os, but the Ramban does not explicitly explain or explore the nature or significance of this link.

II One of the many mitzvot unique to the first night of Pesach is sippur yetsias mitsrayim, a detailed educational exposition of our Divine deliverance on Pesach from enslavement in Egypt. The Gemara (Pesachim 116a) records a dispute whether this sippur focuses on our redemption from physical slavery ("avodim hayinu...") or on our spiritual odyssey from a religious nadir to kabbalas hatorah ("mittehillah... ve'achshav keirevanu... la'avodaso"). The second opinion seems puzzling at first glance. While mattan torah was certainly a crucially formative event in our nation's history, what place does it have in the Pesach story?

Rav Velvel Soloveichik (al haTorah 215) suggests that this question is answered by R. Yehoshua ben Levi's comment (Avos 6:2), *ein lecha ben chorin ella mi she'osek batorah*. True personal freedom is found in conjunction with involvement in Torah study and commitment. Hence the physical and political independence gained at yetsias mitsrayim were but means enabling us to attain the spiritual cherus granted at ma'amad har sinai, and so it is fitting that the sippur deal with the objective of yetsias mitsrayim, namely kabbalas hatorah.

Rav Hershel Schachter observes that the Ramban's formerly enigmatic discussion of the present period, sefiras ha'omer, dovetails nicely with Rav Velvel's comments. Pesach and Shavu'os are not unrelated Yamim Tovim that happen to occur in close chronological proximity. They are two halves of a single unit, together a celebration of our nation finding the purpose of the Divine gift of physical geulah, employing it to attain tremendous spiritual growth and fulfillment.

The significance of sefiras ha'omer is thus apparent. These weeks constitute a time known to possess special opportunity for intense growth in our dedication to Torah and its mitzvot, and the explanation is evident. This is a time to reexamine the extent to which we use our personal abilities and gifts for their intended function, furthering our relationship with Hashem and our fulfillment of His ratson.

from Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
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Rabbi Berel Wein - Parshat Bamidbar

Friday, May 14, 2010 This past week just before the Sabbath a great woman passed from our midst. Lady Amelie Jakobovits died in London. Lady Jakobovits was not only a Lady because her late husband Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits, Chief Rabbi of Britain, was a Lord who sat in the British House of Lords, she was a Lady in her own right, a forceful, knowledgeable and intelligent person of grace, aristocracy and optimism. Even after the death of her husband she still occupied the spotlight for London Jewry and her common sense, goodness and cheerfulness approached legendary proportions. She was descended from a most prominent rabbinic family, the Munks of Germany and France and her behavior and world outlook were part of this all encompassing Jewish worldview. She lived through the most fearsome time in modern Jewish history and emerged from it strong in spirit and hopeful in vision. I was privileged to hear her deliver a long lecture on her remembrances of the Holocaust and thereafter. I have attended many Holocaust lectures and many times the audience including me left feeling numbed and depressed. This is undoubtedly a natural reaction. But after her lecture the large crowd

that attended and listened to her words left uplifted and inspired. She was an inspiring person and role model and everyone was her friend. She was a friend to everyone while at the same time being able to comment clearly and sharply on public and private issues. I ate breakfast at her home a number of times both before and after she was widowed and the elegance of her table and food was dimmed by her conversation, wisdom and grasp of things, major and minor, national and personal. Her acts of charity and personal help to others were the talk of the Anglo-Jewish community. Rabbi Jakobovits told me a number of times that he felt humbled in comparison to the goodness and spirit of his wife. And she was her own person wherever she was, at the table of the Queen of England, as a table companion at weddings and banquets, in her own home and in the eyes of the general public. Even those whose views were not in concert with hers – and she let you know about that when the occasion arose – they respected her and cherished her presence within the community. In a conversation I once had with Rabbi Jakobovits he pointed out to me that in the Book of Ruth, which we will read this next week on Shavuot, it is not necessarily Ruth that is the heroine of the story as much as it is Naomi. Naomi is the unseen hand that guides Ruth and the entire course of later Jewish history to a successful conclusion. I sensed that he was talking about his difficult, sensitive and crucial role as Chief Rabbi, he being the Ruth in the story and Lady Amalie fulfilling the role of Naomi. Throughout Jewish history, such women have had major impact on the communities that they lived in and on their families and society. Rabbi Akiva said it best to his students about his own beloved wife Rachel: “All that is mine and all that is yours truly belongs only to her!” Not only Anglo-Jewry but the Jewish world generally owes a great debt of gratitude to Lady Amelie. She lived to see generations of scholarly, loyal and public minded Jewish generations that descended from her. A mother’s pride, like her love, always knows no bounds. She had a fierce loyalty to the Jewish people, its scholars and students. As in the book of Ruth, the writer of history will record that generations were born unto this Naomi as well. She and her husband often swam against the tide of then political correctness and majority opinions but no one could doubt the sincerity of positions taken and criticism voiced. She once told me: “I am not always right but I am rarely completely wrong!” She said that with conviction, yet with a sense of modesty and subtle humor. The truth is that, in my opinion, she was rarely completely wrong. She had an inspired instinct for truth and a deep sense of displeasure at hypocrisy and feigned piety. She loved Jews collectively and individually, always being able to rejoice at someone else’s good fortune and happy occasion. In her passing all of us that were privileged to know her have lost an irreplaceable friend, counselor and inspirational role model. I feel grateful that I had an opportunity to know her well and to be counted by her as one of her friends. Her memory will be a blessing to all of us. Shabat shalom. Berel Wein

Rabbi Berel Wein –
Friday, May 14, 2010

The parsha of Bamidbar - literally meaning “in the desert” – in most years, precedes the holiday of Shavuot which will occur in that very coming week. There is an obvious logic to this order of things since the revelation and acceptance of Torah by the Jewish people occurred in the desert of Sinai. There are many interpretations and insights offered as to the choice of the desert to be the locality of the granting of the Torah. An idea that has struck me is that in the ancient world, deserts were not territorial properties of nations. Egypt did not own or control the Sinai desert. Only Bedouin nomads inhabited the space and they were not numerous in number or major players in the diplomatic scene of the times. The granting of the Torah in the desert of Sinai signaled its universal extra-territorial status. Even though the Land of Israel occupies a special and central role in the Torah and in Jewish life and has many commandments that are capable of being followed and observed only there, and the Land of Israel imparts a special quality to all of the commandments performed there, nevertheless the Jewish people existed for thousands of years in very far-flung places in

the world, and were bound together by their Torah its commandments, values and traditions. The Torah was granted to us in a desert, in a place of no particular sovereignty, language, culture or government. The Torah, in its general sense, has no limitations of space or time. It represents the Eternal and therefore takes on all of the characteristics of its Creator, Who is unlimited in space and time. What makes a desert a desert is the lack of rain and water. As Israel has proven with its own Negev desert, water irrigation can push back the desert’s grip. However all deserts have particular oases and water holes. These are of immense value simply because there is no other source of water in the desert. An oasis or water hole in a country much rained upon attracts little of any attention or worth. The Torah foresaw that throughout Jewish history Jews would find themselves at times living in a spiritual desert. Immorality, licentiousness and decadence would reign in the general society. The righteous would be mocked and the wicked would be popularized and exalted. The spiritual desert, its emptiness and jadedness cannot slake our inner thirst for immortality and connection to our Creator. And the Torah, given and nurtured in the desert would then be recognized as the ultimate oasis of life giving water. The Torah is always symbolized as being water in the words of the prophets and in the Talmud. The prophet implores us that “you who are thirsty [for Godliness and spirituality in your lives] go forth to fetch the water [of the Torah.] Perhaps only one who is wandering and suffering in the desert can truly appreciate the oasis and water hole. Our times demand our presence at the oasis that only the Torah provides for us. Shabat shalom Rabbi Berel Wein

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Rabbi Mordechai Willig Modesty: A Timeless Principle

I “Hashem spoke to Moshe in the ohel moed” (Bamidbar 1:1), the private tent of meeting. Hashem had spoken to Moshe earlier from the burning bush, in Mitzrayim and in Sinai. Once the ohel moed stood, Hashem said: Tznius (modesty) is beautiful, as it says (Micha 6:8), “to walk humbly im (before) your G-d”, and He spoke to Moshe in the ohel moed. And so said Dovid (Tehillim 45:14) “Every honorable bas melech (princess) dwells within.” Bas Melech refers to Moshe...Hashem said, such is My honor, that I will speak from within the ohel moed (Bamidbar Rabba 1:3). While the medrash quotes the passuk in Micha to explain Hashem’s behavior, the passuk seemingly refers to the tznuius of man before Hashem, not that of Hashem himself. The medrash’s use of the passuk indicates, as the peirush Maharzu explains, that “im” does not mean “before,” but rather “with.” Man must be tzanua with Hashem, Who modeled tznuius by speaking from the ohel moed.

The peirush Maharzu offers two explanations of the reference to Moshe as bas melech. First, Moshe may be the king (see Rashi Devarim 33:5), and Torah is the private princess, compared to hidden thighs (Shir Hashirim 7:2); just as the thigh is kept private, so too the words of Torah should be studied in private (Moed Katan 16a,b). Alternatively, bas melech may refer to Moshe, since he was raised by bas Paroh, king of Egypt (Tanchuma). Moshe, the greatest human being in history, is thus praised for his tznuius, which is undoubtedly related to his incomparable humility (Bamidbar 12:3).

The phrase “tznuius is beautiful” is found once again in the context of mattan Torah. Before giving Moshe the second luchos, Hashem told him, “No man shall ascend with you [up the mountain]” (Shemos 34:3), on which Rashi comments, “The first luchos, because they were given with fanfare and great sound and in a throng, were affected by the evil eye. There is nothing more beautiful than modesty.”

Why, indeed, were the first luchos given with such great publicity? Because the revelation at Sinai is the cornerstone of our belief in Hashem and the Divinity of the Torah (Rambam, Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah 8:1). Hashem, Who models tznuius to the point of being invisible, deemed it necessary to be uncharacteristically demonstrative so that we shall believe in the Divinity of the Torah forever (Shemos 19:9).

On Shavuot, the anniversary of matan Torah, we encounter tznius again in the story of Rus (see Rus Rabba 4:6). "To whom does that young woman belong" (Rus 2:5)? Since he saw her beautiful deeds, he asked about her. All the women bend down and gather (grain), thereby revealing the legs and highlighting the shape of the body. But she (Rus) sat down and gathered, lowering her entire body in a modest way (Etz Yosef). All the women flirted with the farmers, but she behaved modestly (matzna' as atzma).

The exemplary modesty of Rus, in both her dress and her behavior, was noticed by Boaz. As a result he married her, and she merited to be the mother of royalty, the ancestress of Dovid, and ultimately, the Moshiach.

The legitimacy of this marriage was questioned. Some said that all Moavite converts, including Rus, are prohibited (Devarim 23:4). Others argued that this restriction is limited to male converts. What is behind this dispute?

The Midrash (see also Yevamos 76b) refers to the Torah's reason a Jew may not marry a Moavite, "Because of the fact that they did not greet you with bread and water in the road when you were leaving Egypt" (Devarim 23:5). The Ramban explains that since Avraham saved Lot, the ancestor of the Moavites, their debt of gratitude to Avraham's descendants should have motivated them to greet Am Yisroel. Their display of ingratitude resulted in the marriage prohibition. Even though we would never expect the Moavite women to greet the Jewish men, they are prohibited since they should have greeted the women of Am Yisrael.

Remarkably, the Midrash, which begins by extolling Rus' modesty, concludes that her permissibility (and that of all Moavite women) is based on precisely the same notion of modesty: based on the aforementioned reference to a princess dwelling within, the way of a woman is not to go out towards wayfarers, even women, to bring them bread and water.

Hashem requires modesty from all people. The additional modesty expected of women applies to non-Jews, such as Moavites, as well (see, however, Maharshah Yevamos 77a). Indeed, Hashem's first command to mankind implies that a woman should not be a gadabout (Rashi, Breishis 1:28).

II Notwithstanding the immutability of the Torah's principle of modesty and its particular application to women, the precise details are subject to communal standards which often change and/or vary from place to place. This is true regarding some parts of a woman's body which must be covered (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 75:1). Nonetheless, there are other parts which must be covered regardless of communal standards.

The Mishna Brura draws the line at the elbow and the knee (75:2). Some interpret "shok" (Berachos 24a) as the calf (since the thigh is called yerech), and include it in objective ervah (see Chazon Ish Orach Chaim 16:8). Yet others imply that since the requirement to cover the arms and legs is das Yehudis (Kesubos 72a), i.e. a custom of Jewish women (Rashi), it may be subject to change (see Kaf Hachayim 75:2, Igros Moshe Even Hoezer 1:69). Sha'ar Hatziyun 75:5 disagrees.

However, a woman's torso is certainly ervah (see Rambam Krias Shma 3:16), and must be covered. Unfortunately, many otherwise observant women follow fashions, such as very low necklines, which expose the flesh inappropriately. Women who wear tight-fitting clothes which explicitly delineate a woman's figure are also in violation, as the Midrash, contrasting Rus and the other women, implies (see Kuntres Dinei Malbush Nashim page 12, 13).

The distinction between variable details and timeless principles is not limited to dress. It applies, in a more complex and nuanced way, to the definition of tznius in the Torah society. For example, public speaking by a woman in front of mixed audiences is commonplace in some circles and unheard of in others. For many parts of Torah society, it depends upon the place, the occasion, and other factors. Similarly, interaction between men and women, another subject of the Midrash about Rus, is also dependent upon local custom (Beis Shmuel 62:11, see Otzar Haposkim there). This

includes separate seating, entrances, mechitzos, etc. Here, too, context is clearly critical.

It must be noted that the opposite of tznius is pritzus (Kesubos 3b), a term linked to one who breaks a fence (Koheles 10:8), and different communities legitimately build their fences in different places. As such, a garment, speech, or event can be labeled as pritzus in one place, but be acceptable in another.

However, even though the details can change, the Torah principles are eternal. General society rejects the Torah's inherent emphasis on modesty and its distinction between men and women. In particular, egalitarianism is antithetical to the Torah's principles of modesty and gender distinction (see Igros Moshe Orach Chaim 4:49). Even in changing times, the Torah has established absolute gender specific parameters regarding a woman's public role which can not be included in the category of communally dependent details. Even if sincerely motivated, efforts to impose external values on the halachic system, instead of interpreting and applying timeless halachic values, are unacceptable.

Parshas Bamidbar and Shavuot coincide with the summer season, when the lack of tznius in dress is most flagrant. The principles of modest behavior, for men and even more so for women, do not depend on the time or the season. They are Divine principles derived from Hashem's choice of the ohel moed, the inwardness of a princess, Moshe, and the Torah, and the modesty of Rus. Even as details vary, we must practice and accept the eternal fundamentals of Torah - na'aseh venishma.

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Rabbi Frand on Parshas Bamidbar

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Parshas Bamidbar

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The Book of Numbers Teaches Us A Lesson in Counting

In Rabbinic literature, the book of Bamidbar is referred to as the book of censuses (Sefer haPekudim), which is no doubt roughly equivalent to the common English name for the book - the Book of Numbers. In this week's parsha, there is a counting at the beginning of their sojourn in the Wilderness and there is another counting in Parshas Pinchas, towards the end of their sojourn in the Wilderness.

The command to count the people is formulated as follows: "Take a census of the entire assembly of the Children of Israel according to their families, according to their fathers' house, BY NUMBER OF THE NAMES, every male according to their head count." [Bamidbar 1:2]. The expression "b'mispar sheimos" [by number of the names] is somewhat peculiar. What does it really mean? Beyond that, it seems like it is an oxymoron. The term "number" and "names" are almost mutually exclusive. When we talk about numbers we imply anonymity. (We hear all the time: "I don't really count for anything I am just a number!") The word "names" has the exact opposite connotation. A name gives a person singularity and a quality of being special - more than just a number!

Here we are told to count the Jewish people "by the number of their names". Which is it - was the census concerned with the overall numbers (the "klal") or was the census interested in the individual names (the "prat")?

Rav Mordechai Gifter, of blessed memory, writes that numbers by their very definition are finite. Stating a number, one quantifies an item such that the quantity is no more and no less than the number stated. A human being, by his very definition, is not finite in this sense. He has a soul and strengths, and characteristics. He has unlimited potential to grow and expand his capabilities. Trying to put a number on an individual limits him and restricts

his ability to reach untold heights. There fore, when we speak of a "minyan" we are not speaking of a "mispar" [a number]. We cannot just "count" Jews. When we enumerate people and treat them as numbers we in effect say they are defined and limited. This is certainly not the way the Almighty wants us to view the Jewish people.

How does one get around this problem? If it is so detrimental to put a number on the individuals within Klal Yisrael, how can one take a census of the Jewish people? For this reason, Rav Gifter writes, the Jewish census never involved "the counting of noses". Intermediate items (such as half-shekel coins, as specified in Parshas Ki Tisa) were always utilized to avoid the problem of counting the people by number. The message is the same - the Jewish people are not finite ('mugbal'). We may be finite in terms of our bodies, but in terms of our souls we are infinite.

In fact, when Dovid HaMelech [King David] decided to count Klal Yisraela, and he counted them directly (as is recorded at the end of the book of Shmuel), a terrible plague resulted. The lesson of that - says Rav Gifter - is that when people are viewed as finite rather than as individuals with unlimited potential, the result is destruction. The indirect method of taking a Jewish census, on the other hand, is symbolic of the infinite measure and infinite potential of each person counted within that census.

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Parshas Bamidbar

The Timeless Rav Hirsch by Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein
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Parshas Bamidbar
In Praise of Child Labor1 Count the children of Levi...every male from a
month and upward.

For better or worse, many of us tend to impute a cause-and-effect to the various roles and rules that govern the tribe of Levi. First and foremost, they were meant to serve in the holiest places and capacities - Kohanim in performing the active avodah; Levi'im as porters of the Mishkan, and as guardians of the later batei mikdosh. Because they ought to be devoting their time to those holy pursuits, they are discouraged from full time occupation with more mundane affairs. Therefore, they do not receive a portion in the Land, which would preoccupy them with lesser activities. Because they cannot provide for themselves like everyone else, we make it up to them by giving them what they need to live. We furnish their livelihood through the gifts of terumah and ma'aser.

Oh, yes. Since there were always more Levi'im than required for the actual work shift in the beis hamikdosh, most of them had time on their hands. Therefore, they could develop into strong talmidei chachamim, and

share their knowledge with the rest of the people. They developed into a cadre of Torah teachers, readily available to instruct the nation.

Our pasuk suggests that we may have our causes and effects - and perhaps our priorities - backwards.

We are instructed here to count the Leviim from the age of one month, or essentially from the time they achieve legal personhood. (It takes a month for a newborn to establish his viability.) This is strange enough, considering that no one else is counted this way. Stranger still is a parallel passage just a perek away, in which the Levi'im themselves are counted from age thirty and up! Given that the labor of some of the Levi'im was taxing and challenging, the thirty-year figure makes sense. It marks the age at which the Levi'im are brought into actual service of their duties. The one-month figure must, then, point to a different calling - one that is so important and complex, that it requires training from birth.

The two callings of the Levi'im are really complementary. We could sum up their role in the beis hamikdosh - their first calling - as guardians of the place where the physical evidence of Divine Revelation - the luchos - is enshrined. The Aron, taken together with the rich symbolism that surrounds it, is a reminder to Bnei Yisrael of the moment of ma'amad Har Sinai that transfigured us, that turned us into believers, that sustained us for the millennia to follow. More important, however, than safeguarding the symbol of the Torah is securing the Torah itself. They do this in the only way we have ever known: by becoming talmidei chachamim, and by taking their Torah back to the people. This vital role cannot wait for age thirty, or twenty, or even younger. To do it best on a national plane, it calls for nothing less than pressing the child into service - if only through a carefully scrutinized chinuch - while still in the cradle. Right from birth, the Levi should be prepared and directed to live differently than everyone else, to focus on loftier affairs.

We can perhaps tease out a third role for the Levi'im, one that also finds a place for young children in the beis hamikdosh, rather than thirty year old adults. The general duties of the Levi'im within the beis hamikdosh are called a mishmeres, a charge. This charge is called different things by the Torah. Sometimes it is called a mishmeres hamishkan, or a mishmeres Aharon haKohen, or mishmeres kol ho'edah. All of these phrases used by the Torah reflect a role of human beings performing their duties on behalf of the Jewish people in the beis hamikdosh.

One phrase modified by the word mishmeres stands apart from the others: mishmeres be-shem Hashem. This is a charge unlike the others. The Gemara[2] finds in it a call for the Levi'im to provide musical accompaniment to the korbanos. This service is truly done "in the Name of Hashem." Here they act, as it were, more as emissaries of Hashem than of the Bnei Yisrael. When they perform the divinely inspired songs, they stand as surrogates for G-d Himself. They convey to the nation His message - what He would be saying Himself, would He not use them as His instruments.

In this charge, young children were indeed allowed to take part and assist. It may not explain why Levi'im should be counted from as early as one month, but it does add another dimension to a role that they play far earlier than the one that begins at thirty. 1. Based on Hirsch Chumash, Bamidbar 3:13 2. Arachin 13B Join the Jewish Learning Revolution! Torah.org: The Judaism Site brings this and a host of other classes to you every week. Visit <http://torah.org> or email learn@torah.org to get your own free copy of this mailing. Permission is granted to redistribute, but please give proper attribution and copyright to the author and Torah.org. Both the author and Torah.org reserve certain rights. Email copyrights@torah.org for full information. Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 Baltimore, MD 21208 <http://www.torah.org/> learn@torah.org (410) 602-1350 FAX: (410) 510-1053

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[YI_Torah@lb.bcentral.com] Sent: Thursday, May 25, 2006 11:32 PM To: Shulman, Charles Subject: NCYI Dvar Torah: Parshat Bamidbar
May 27, 2006

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It is most significant that on this Shabbas, which precedes the holiday of Shavuot, that we should read the Sedra of Bamidbar. It serves as an effective preparation for the Yom Tov of "Kabbolas Hatorah," receiving of the Torah. The famous Chidushei Harim, founder of the dynasty of Gerer Chasidus, said that the two of the three Shabbosim that precede the Shalosh R' Golim (Pesach, Shavuot, and Succot) were crowned with special names: Shabbos Hagadol before Pesach, and Shabbos Shuva before Succot. It is only fitting, he reasoned, that the Shabbos before Shavuot should also have a special title: the most appropriate one being Shabbos Derech Eretz, Shabbos of Ethical Behavior! This is consistent with the teaching of Chazal that "Derech Eretz Kodmah L'Torah," "Ethical behavior preceded the Torah" (Vayikra Rabbah Ch. 9-3).

The Ethics of the Fathers (Ch. 6, Mish. 5-6) lists the forty eight d'varim, things, by which Torah can be acquired, and many of them deal directly with diverse ethical and moral character traits. Proper mastery of these 48 steps will lead to great heights of spiritual growth in Torah and Derech Eretz, which are conjoined by Chazal, "Where there is no Torah there is no proper conduct," and "Where there is no proper conduct, there is no Torah." This would mean that while Torah or Derech Eretz may begin alone, neither one of the pair can endure or attain a completely developed state without the other.

It is also brought in the Chidushei Harim, that each day of the counting of the Omer is for improving and refining one of the 48 d'varim needed to acquire Torah, and the extra 49th day of Sefirah is for an overall review of the d'varim!

The Medrash Rabah on Sedra Bamidbar (Ch.1-7) indicates to us, through symbols, the correct approach toward fulfilling the 48 d'varim which lead to the developing of the Torah Jew. The Medrash deduces from different verses that the Torah was given in conjunction with three material things: with fire, with water, and in a desert.

Symbolically fire represents the burning desire in the heart of a Jew to reach the great heights of kinyan Hatorah, a Torah personality. This inner fire of enthusiasm and zeal should manifest itself in accomplishing the steps to Torah and derech erez through performance permeated with sincere fervor and dedication.

Yet, just as physical fire must be fueled and maintained in order to continue exuding its light and warmth, so must fervor for Torah be uniformly maintained. To symbolize this uniformity the Torah was "given with water." Water as a liquid is consistent in its flow. If no barrier is set up its course is constant and continuous and, as "Old Man River," it keeps rolling along. The fostering of a consistency in one's zeal as well as in one's performance will lead to a singleness of purpose- a true Torah Jew meriting the mastering of Torah.

By nature, a person tends to begin a new activity with a great deal of interest and fervor. As time passes, he starts performing perfunctorily, by force of habit, without the original zeal. Our Baale Mussar, teachers of ethics, stress this point in explaining a Sifre in Parshas Behalosicha. The Sifre says in praise of Aaron, the Kohen Gadol, that he didn't alter his performance of the lighting of the Menorah during the 40 years in the desert. This was his praise! Aaron didn't succumb to the human weakness of habit and mechanical performance. He maintained the momentum of the original enthusiasm apparent in a truly punctilious performance pervaded with perfect concentration, throughout the 40 years. This is true greatness.

Lastly, the giving of the Torah in the desert symbolizes the third ingredient necessary in striving to develop the true Torah person. A desert is barren of produce and is a lonely place. The zeal and consistency of purpose depicted by fire and water should be enveloped with the realization and acceptance of the need to forgo the luxurious pleasures and desires of

temporal life, for the sake of Torah. Our sages tell us, "Torah is mastered only by he who sacrifices himself for it," forgoing luxuries and subsisting only on bare necessities of life. He who wants Torah as his guide in life must be willing to accept loneliness and isolation from a world that is not appreciative or understanding of the greatness of a Torah way of life.

Standing at the threshold of Shavuot, ready to receive the Torah, are we prepared? Are we cognizant of the 48 things needed to acquire Torah? We can be likened to a person who is trying to enter the chamber without possessing the right keys. We desire to accept the Torah on Shavuot. Shouldn't we, at least know the steps towards proper acquisition of the Torah? The Chidushei Harim's thought of studying one d'var each day during sefira is a beautiful one. Yet, let us not despair. This shabbos we study the sixth perek of Avos which lists all the steps. Let us study them and prepare properly for Kabbolas Hatorah. Reb Shlomo Kluger mentions that not everyone is able to rise to the great heights of complete mastery of Torah by attaining all the 48 steps. Yet, each is separate and as a person masters each of them, he progresses on the royal road to becoming a Torah personality. Let us, therefore, prepare as best we can the steps to Torah: drinking from the life giving waters of Torah and Talmud, by learning Daf Yomi, permeated with the basic ingredients of enthusiasm, consistency, and relinquishment of temporal pleasures.

In this manner, our sincerity of purpose will earn us the divine blessing of success in Torah learning; as it is written, "He who comes for purification is helped from Heaven." In Torah lies our strength and perpetuity as a nation. Israel became a nation at Mount Sinai. We read in Exodus (19:5), "And now if you listen to My voice, then you shall be My chosen nation." The preservation of both Israel and the land of Israel is conditioned on our loyalty to the Torah of Israel.

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Bamidbar

Parshas Bamidbar Everyone Counts "according to the number of names..."(1:3)

Counting can be used for two purposes. One purpose for counting is to combine individual elements as a group. The other purpose for counting is to give each of the different elements within a group its own identity, giving the individual the feeling that "he counts". This is accomplished by focusing on each individual separately, rather than on the group as a whole. The purpose of the counting found in Sefer Shemos is to unify the Jews as a nation following their exodus from Egypt. In Sefer Bamidbar we find the expression "bemispār shaymos" - "they were counted according to their names". The reason for this is that the focus of the counting is to emphasize the individuality of each person within the group. Identifying a person by his name is a way of focusing upon his individuality. This expression does not appear in Sefer Shemos, for if the function of the counting is to unify the people as a nation, there is no need to identify individuals by name.

Very often when a person is part of a large group, he senses a loss of his individuality and self-expression. To compensate for this, he has a tendency to break away from the group. The message of the counting in Sefer Bamidbar is that there is room for individuality and self-expression within the confines of the group. Indeed, interpersonal relationships within the

group can enhance individuality and offer the opportunity for self-expression.

This explains why the division of tribes and their banners are mentioned in the census of Bamidbar, and not in that of Shemos[1]. The ability to identify oneself in connection with a particular tribe and represented by a particular banner, further enhances a person's sense of individuality.

Assuming Communal Responsibility

"...from twenty years of age and up..." (1:3)

However, [1] according to Jewish law a person is held responsible for his actions from thirteen years of age and above. If one can be put to death at the age of thirteen by our courts, why would the Heavenly Court punish only from the age of twenty?

Every sin contains two elements: the destructive nature or consequences of the act itself, and the rebellion or defiance towards Hashem involved in doing the act. In our court of law, we punish a person for his actions. In the Heavenly Court of Law punishment is not administered based upon the actions of the individual, rather on the degree of rebelliousness involved in the act. During a person's adolescent years he grapples with discovering his own identity. There tends to be a focus on his individuality, which can manifest itself in non-conformity and rebelliousness. At the age of thirteen a person is accountable for the consequences of his actions and will be punished in a court of law. However, the Heavenly Court will not punish a person until he is twenty, for the rebelliousness that he shows is not a rejection of, nor a direct affront to Hashem; it is an outgrowth of his struggle for self-expression and individuality. By the time a person has reached twenty years of age, he is able to conform to society at large and focus on the needs of his community. Only then is he ready to be counted as one of "Adas Yisroel", the community of Israel.

1. Shabbos 89b, see Pardes Yosef beginning of Parshas Chayei Sarah Desire For Intimacy

"...and an alien who approaches shall die" (1:51)

The Talmud relates a story concerning a gentile who, while passing by a house of study, overheard the description of the Kohein Gadol's garments. He then went to the great Sage Shammai requesting to be converted so that he may become a Kohein Gadol. Shammai, unimpressed with the motivations of this individual, sent him away. The gentile then appeared before Hillel with the same request. Hillel converted him, but informed him that before becoming a Kohein Gadol, a person must study all of the laws pertaining to the High Priest position. When the convert reached the verse which records the prohibition of a "zar", literally "stranger" to perform the Priestly service, he inquired as to the type of person to which the Torah is referring. Hillel answered that even King David, ruler of Israel, was prohibited from serving in the Beis Hamikdash, for he was not of Priestly lineage. The convert realized that if the monarch of Israel could not perform the Service, for a convert to perform the Service would be inconceivable. The Talmud concludes the story by stating that this individual praised Hillel for his tolerance and expressed his gratitude for being accepted as a member of the Jewish people[1].

The Rambam rules that a conversion is only permitted if the person wishing to convert is not motivated by any external factors. If a person requests to convert for honor, wealth, or marriage, his request should be denied[2]. Therefore, asks the Maharsha, since the gentile was motivated by his desire to become a Kohein Gadol, how could Hillel have converted him based upon his initial request?[3]

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos states that we should not behave as servants who work for reward[4]. However, Rav Chaim Velozhiner points out that Hashem's purpose in Creation was to benefit mankind. The system of rules to which man is subject serves to allow man the sense that he has "earned" the right to Hashem's benevolence. How then, can the Mishna say that the basis for our service of Hashem should not be reward?[5] Furthermore, there appears to be a contradiction between the above Mishna and the following Mishna: "One should perform the mitzvos that have the appearance of being less stringent with the same care as one would perform

those that appear more stringent, for the reward of each mitzva is not known." [6] The implication is that if we would know with certainty which mitzvos have greater reward, then performance of those mitzvos would be stressed. How do we reconcile this implication with the message of the first Mishna which states that our motivation to serve Hashem should not be reward?

There are two different and opposite reasons to give reward. One reason to give reward is as an incentive or compensation, as in a business setting. In such a case there exists an adversarial relationship; the business owner requires a task to be performed, and his employee, although he would prefer not to, performs the task because he is motivated by the money that he will receive. The owner would prefer not to part with his money, but then his employee will not do the job. Therefore, the money symbolizes the adversarial nature of this relationship. The second reason to give reward is to signify the closeness and appreciation that the person giving it feels for the person receiving it. In this case, the person receiving the reward is not motivated by it, rather, he uses the reward as a method of calibrating the relationship.

The first Mishna uses the term "peras" to express reward. "Peras" refers to an object which is broken off from its source. If reward is used in an adversarial relationship, there is a separation between the two parties and the reward reflects this separation. It divides rather than binding the two parties, and is therefore, described as "broken off". The reward mentioned in the second Mishna is called "sechar" This term reflects the closeness of a relationship. The desire to receive "sechar" is not viewed with disdain; on the contrary, since the motivation that a Jew should have in serving Hashem is to become close to Him, "sechar" is the manner by which we gauge that this goal has been achieved.

Shammai perceived that the convert's only motivation to become a Jew was the honor connected to being a Kohein Gadol. Therefore, he dismissed him abruptly. Hillel realized that the gentile was seeking to serve his Creator in the greatest possible manner. His desire to be a Kohein Gadol was motivated only by his wish to be close to Hashem. Therefore, he was an appropriate candidate for conversion.

1. Shabbos 32a 2. Yad Hil. Isurei Biah 13:14 3. Shabbos Chidushei Aggados 32a 4.1:3 5. Ruach Chaim ibid 6. Avos 2:1

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Rav Anemer zt"l frequently focused on the middah of avdus – the necessity incumbent upon each and every Jew to see themselves as Avdei Hashem. The following D'var Torah is very illustrative of his approach in this important middah.

“Zos Chukkas HaTorah” – the famous introductory words with which the Torah introduces the parsha of Parah Adumah. Parah Adumah – the red heifer that was simultaneously “metaher es ha'te'meim” and “metamei es ha'tehorim” – is the quintessential chok, for the ashes of the heifer are used to purify those who are tamei meis, who have come into contact with a dead body, and yet the person who prepares, carries, or sprinkles the ash upon the person who was to be purified himself becomes tamei, becomes impure. Indeed, Rashi quotes the Maamar Chaza”l that “because the Satan and the Umos HaOlam mock Klal Yisrael regarding this mitzvah, saying,

what is this mitzvah? What reason can it have? Therefore the Torah wrote (this mitzvah as a) chok – it is Hashem's decree, and you may not question it in any way".

The Klei Yakar notes that the pasuk states "Zos chukkas HaTorah" – and he asks, would it have not been more correct to say, "zos chukkas HaParah", inasmuch as it is the Parah Adumah that has the paradoxical halachos, and is in fact the subject of the parsha – not the whole Torah!?

Rav Anemer zt'l answered this question by first referring to a Midrash about Shlomo Hamelech. Shlomo Hamelech said "Amarti echkama v'hi rchoka mimeni" – "I sought to gain wisdom, but it remained distant from me". The Midrash says that his refers to the mitzvah of Parah Adumah, which Hashem refused to allow Shlomo Hamelech to understand. Though, in fact, Moshe Rabbeinu was granted the ability to comprehend the reason for this mitzvah, the Midrash explicitly states that Hashem refused to grant Shlomo this understanding. It is clear from the Midrash that, in fact, if Hashem would have agreed to reveal the ta'am hamitzva to Shlomo Hamelech, he certainly could have understood it – he was the "chacham mi'kol adam", the wisest person who ever existed – yet Hashem did not want Shlomo Hamelech to know it. Why was this so?

Rav Anemer zt'l answered that our purpose in life is to be Avdei Hashem, servants of Hashem. An eved is a person who must serve the master even if the eved does not understand the reason behind the master's command. This defines the word "eved" – for if an eved acts only because the eved understands the reasons for his mission, then he is not truly an eved. Had the Ribbono Shel Olam granted Shlomo Hamelech the ability to understand the mitzvah of Parah Adumah, then Shlomo Hamelech could never have been a true Eved Hashem. Moshe Rabbeinu, on the other hand, was called "Moshe Avdi" – the Ribbono Shel Olam himself testified about Moshe that he was a true eved, and thus there was no reason to hide the reasoning behind the mitzvah of Parah Adumah.

This is the answer to the Klei Yakar's question. The chok of the Parah Adumah is not just an isolated mitzvah that happens to be, to us, inexplicable. The chok of the Parah Adumah is the yesod of avdus, it is the fundamental understanding that ultimately our relationship with the Ribbono Shel Olam is not based on understanding, it is not based on what our meager intelligences can grasp. We are Avdei Hashem, and it is as Avdei Hashem that we approach each and every mitzvah, performing each mitzvah because that is the Ratzon Hashem, the Will of Hashem, and so the Torah writes "Zos Chukas HaTorah", for this is, in fact, our approach to the entire Torah – to perform each and every mitzvah simply because Hashem has so commanded us.

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Parshas Bamidbar

Do not allow the tribe of the Kehasi families to be cut off from among the Leviim. (4:18)

The Mesillas Yesharim 20 employs the concluding pesukim of the parsha as basis for the concept of mishkal ha'chassidus, the balance of piety. How often do we get carried away in the pursuit of a mitzvah, only to discover that it really was not a mitzvah? We must carefully weigh our actions to make certain that what we think is a mitzvah, really is a mitzvah. This is part of the repertoire of tricks of the yetzer hora, evil inclination. With guile, it is able to convince us that aveiros, sins, are really mitzvos and vice versa. What seems to be appropriate action might, quite possibly, be the converse.

The Ramchal is emphatic about the importance of striking a balance when it involves frumkeit, piety/observance. He views this as a "precarious area, fraught with great danger, because the yetzer hora can reject many

good things as bad and seduce one to carry out an evil deed by making it appear as a mitzvah."

Someone who lives by the letter of the law, who takes a meticulous approach to following the precepts as outlined by the Shulchan Aruch, has his observance outlined for himself. What is permissible, he does, and what is forbidden, he refrains from doing. It is as simple as that. He knows that one may do certain activities on Shabbos and may not do other activities on Shabbos - and the list goes on.

The problem arises when one strives to go beyond the letter of the law, when he strives to practice chassidus, piety. No cut and dried guidelines exist for piety. In their absence, the yetzer hora has a field day. It can convince the aspiring chasid that certain activities are desirable - when, in fact, they are not and vice versa. No authority determines whether the practice is appropriate or not. Often, it depends on the identity of the individual who is undertaking it on his religious status quo. Is he "there" - or does he simply think that he is?

Consider the mitzvah of tzedakah. Some individuals convince themselves that they have other priorities concerning where to spend their hard-earned money. Others feel that the only way they can fulfill the mitzvah of tzedakah is by giving it all away. They have an almost obsessive-compulsive attitude to tzedakah. Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski recalls a member of his father's shul in Milwaukee who took it upon himself to give tzedakah beyond the Torah's imposed limit of one-fifth of a person's earnings. This individual was far from wealthy and went into debt to cover his self-imposed tzedakah obligations. He was highly respected for his self-sacrifice, but he suffered as a result of his kind-heartedness. Once there was an appeal for an especially worthy cause in the shul, and this man came forward with a check for one hundred dollars, which was a sizable sum in those days. The Milwaukee Rebbe, zl, refused to accept the check. The Rebbe later explained to his son, "Shlomo Hamelech says in Kohelles (7:16), Al tehi tzaddik harbeih, 'Do not be a tzaddik to excess.' This is what this man is doing. It is not normal. It is not right." Rabbi Twerski remarks that, many years later, he realized how right his father was. The tzaddik became wealthy as a result of a shrewd real estate investment. How disappointed everybody was when he suddenly became a miser. It was practically impossible to extract one dollar from him for tzedakah! He had it all wrong. When he did not have - he gave. Once he had - he clenched his fist tight and refused to help. Will the real chasid step forward?

The Chafetz Chaim would visit the bais medrash in his yeshivah late at night and send the students to sleep. He felt that the "urge" to continue learning into the wee hours of the morning was quite likely a response to the yetzer hora's crafty influence. By staying up late at night, they would be exhausted the next day. Sure, some students had the stamina to burn both ends of the candle, but this was not the norm. There might be those who question this, but they should ask themselves whether it is not the yetzer hora who is asking the question.

Horav Avraham Pam, zl, cited by Rabbi Shalom Smith in "A Vort from Rav Pam," applies the significance of mishkal ha'chassidus to yahrtzeits and, if I may add, Kaddish and "grabbing" the amud during the year of mourning for a parent. Kaddish and davening for the amud, leading the services, bring about a tremendous merit for the neshamah, soul, of the departed, but at whose expense? While it is traditional that a son recites Kaddish and davens for the amud during the year of mourning for a parent, in certain instances, a person who possesses a modicum of seichel, common sense, or a drop of human decency, will defer his right and accede to another.

Note the following vignette: It is related that on the day that Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl, had yahrtzeit for his father, he happened to be in a shul where there was another Jew who also had yahrtzeit for his father. The gabbai, sexton, in charge of allocating the privilege of leading the services authorized Rav Yisrael the honor. Rav Yisrael declined, suggesting that the gabbai grant the honor to the other Jew. The Gabbai was puzzled, wondering why Rav Yisrael would relinquish such an honor on his father's

yahrtzeit. The founder of the Mussar, ethical/character development movement, replied, "I know that the other Jew will have chashishus hadaas, great heartache, if he would not be able to daven for the Amud on his father's yahrtzeit. I think that foregoing my own obligation and, instead, allowing another Jew to be spared the emotional pain will ultimately bring greater merit to my father's soul than my "davening for the amud."
He knew how to balance chassidus.
