



# הַמִּזְרָחִי

# HAMIZRACHI

## PARSHA WEEKLY

PARSHAT BAMIDBAR 5783 • 2023










### ISRAEL Parsha Picture









וְלִירוּשָׁלַיִם עִירָךְ  
בְּרַחֲמִים תָּשׁוּב...

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120 YEARS OF RELIGIOUS ZIONISM

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World Mizrachi is the global Religious Zionist movement, spreading *Torat Eretz Yisrael* across the world and strengthening the bond between the State of Israel and Jewish communities around the world.

Based in Jerusalem and with branches across the globe, Mizrachi – an acronym for *merkaz ruchani* (spiritual center) – was founded in 1902 by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines, and is led today by Rabbi Doron Perez. Mizrachi's role was then and remains with vigor today, to be a proactive partner and to take personal responsibility in contributing to the collective destiny of *Klal Yisrael* through a commitment to Torah, the Land of Israel and the People of Israel.

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PARSHA WEEKLY

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# Yom Yerushalyim – A Call for Bridge Builders



Rabbi Doron Perez

Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

Last year, World Mizrachi was set to celebrate a historic milestone event in the Knesset, an event that should have been a great personal and organizational highlight. Ten days before the event was scheduled to take place, we canceled it – and it was one of the best decisions we ever made.

Here's why.

Mizrachi recently marked the 120th anniversary of the founding of our movement by Rabbi Yitzchak Reines in Vilna in 1902. In formally launching the Religious Zionist movement, Rabbi Reines aimed to integrate Torah values with the nascent Zionist movement. In celebration of this milestone anniversary, we planned a celebratory unity event in the auditorium of the Knesset that would bring together ministers and members of Knesset from across the general and Religious Zionist political spectrums. As a historic Zionist milestone event, we felt strongly that the event should transcend political differences, and so we planned equal billing for all of the Religious Zionist parties and equal participation from both sides of the aisle. There are times and events that call for rising above partisan politics, when all Jews must set aside their strongly-held differences and come together in celebration.

Alas, we did not anticipate how difficult this would turn out to be. Even after Herculean efforts, it was sadly impossible to hold an apolitical event at the epicenter of Israeli politics. In today's acerbic political climate, we would be forced to

give primacy to one party or another and choose between the governing coalition or the opposition – something we were not prepared to do. And so, despite months of preparation and investment, we made the difficult decision to cancel the Knesset event. We would find other places and ways to mark our historic milestone.

The reason for our decision stems from the very heart of Mizrachi's 120-year-long mission. From the very beginning, Mizrachi aimed to unite rather than divide, to become a movement of unity but not uniformity, and to provide opportunities for *Am Yisrael* to come together and find common ground.

A political party in Hebrew is called a *מפלגה*, similar to the Talmudic term *פְּלִיגְתָא*, meaning "to be divided" or "argument". After canceling the Knesset event, we coined a new phrase: that we at Mizrachi aspire to be *מְחַבְרִים* instead of *מְפַלְגִים*; our goal is to build bridges among our people instead of widening the gaps.

## The essence of Jerusalem

This is the great challenge and opportunity of Jerusalem – and its very essence. *ירושלם*: "Jerusalem is like a city that was joined together itself" (Tehillim 122:3). The rabbis explain that Jerusalem is the *עיר שְׁעוֹשָׂה כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לְחֻבְרִים*, "the city which transforms all of Israel into friends" (Jerusalem Talmud, Chagigah 3b). This is the unique power of Jerusalem. It is a city of *חֵיבּוּר*, with the power to build friendship and understanding.

The Malbim writes that the singular theme of Tehillim 122 is the unique unifying power of our holy city and the *Beit HaMikdash*. Jerusalem combines disparate limbs of the national body into one spiritual entity, creating a unity that allows the *Shechinah*, Hashem's presence, to rest in the Temple. The unity of Jerusalem, continues the Malbim, is a prerequisite for world peace; only when the people of Israel join together in Jerusalem will we finally achieve peace with our external enemies.

Just as the *Beit HaMikdash* brought our people together in Jerusalem, the *Mishkan* unified our people during our sojourn in the desert. The root word **תָּרַב** appears ten times in the thirteen verses describing the construction of the covers and curtains of the *Mishkan* (Shemot 26:1-13). **וְהִצְרִיבְתָּ אֶת**, "You shall attach the curtains to one another... so that the Tabernacle becomes one" (Shemot 26:6). The curtains were joined together through interlocking hooks and loops, transforming disparate materials into one unified entity. Whether in the *Beit HaMikdash* or the *Mishkan*, interconnectedness and unity are prerequisites for the dwelling of G-d's *Shechinah*.

### Bridge builders

The very founding of Mizrachi was an act of unity and integration, bringing together two seemingly disparate ideologies – Zionism, a largely secular nationalist movement; and Torah Judaism, a religious and spiritual belief system. Towering rabbinic leaders of that era such as Rabbis Mohilever, Reines and Kook all believed that Torah Judaism and Zionism can and must be integrated. And so, the men and women of Mizrachi learned that it was possible to remain loyal to authentic Torah values while also seeking out the points of **קִיבוּר**.

This philosophy continues to drive all that we do at Mizrachi. We look for ways to bridge modernity with *mesorah*, humanism and *halachah*, the sacred and secular, the national and religious. Through our programming and Torah, and in the pages

of *HaMizrachi* magazine, we bring the Jews of Israel and the Diaspora together as one.

In our own leadership structure, we aspire to achieve a deep synergy between our rabbinic and lay leadership. Though many organizations are led exclusively by one or the other, Mizrachi is led by both rabbis and lay people, each of whom respect the other's areas of authority and excellence. Our rabbinic leaders are responsible for all *halachic* decisions and policy making of a *halachic* nature, while our lay leaders have administrative authority and ensure good governance. The overall strategic and organizational responsibility rests on the shoulders of both together with a mutual respect and sense of genuine partnership.

This philosophy also guides the way we work with other organizations. Recognizing that no one organization can fully serve the needs of *Am Yisrael*, we create bona-fide partnerships which recognize the important contributions of each partner organization. Working together, we can accomplish so much more for *Klal Yisrael* than when we go it alone.

### The legacy of King David

Of the many remarkable achievements of King David, perhaps the greatest was unifying the twelve tribes of Israel. When first crowned as King of the tribe of Judah in Chevron, he was not accepted by the other tribes of Israel. And so when David was ultimately accepted as the King of all of Israel, he conquered Jerusalem, making the "City of David" the capital of all of Israel. Jerusalem, not Chevron, was destined to be the city of unity, where G-d's presence would rest. Nestled on the border between the territories of Judah and Benjamin, Jerusalem belonged not to one tribe but to the entire nation. Incredibly, the border between Judah and Benjamin ran through the *Beit HaMikdash* itself, indicating that no individual tribe held a monopoly on spiritual life.

While David was a warrior who fiercely fought the enemies of Israel, he was extraordinarily forgiving and kind towards his fellow Jews and political adversaries. He stood up to the senior

military brass and leadership of his tribe who simply could not understand his forgiving nature.

Sensing that David would one day replace him as king, King Saul attempted to kill him on numerous occasions. Nevertheless, David desisted from killing Saul on two different occasions when he had opportunities to kill Saul. He desisted from harming Saul even though he was threatening to kill him and it would have been halachically acceptable. David understood that killing Saul could lead to an irrevocable split among the tribes of Israel.

This also explains his remarkable forbearance and forgiveness to Avner and Amasa, generals who fought against David on behalf of Saul's kingdom and Avshalom's rebel forces respectively.

Perhaps, more than anything else, the Book of Shmuel, which in many ways is the book of David, stands out as the blueprint for achieving Jewish unity. It was David who bent over backwards to look past prior insults, grievances and disagreements to forgive others for the sake of unity, overcoming the tribalism that had plagued the people of Israel for generations. And so it was David who laid the foundations for the Temple in Jerusalem, where Hashem's presence would reside. It is for this reason that the ultimate future leader and unifier of Israel, the *Mashiach* himself, must be a descendant of David.

How blessed are we to have an independent state for 75 years and a unified Jerusalem for 56 years which we celebrate this week. But rebuilding of the third *Beit HaMikdash* and achieving peace with our enemies remain elusive. Hugely divisive issues, fractures and fissures in our internal cohesion require urgent attention.

At a time like this, the message of Mizrachi is more critical than ever. Our people need fewer **מְפַלְגִים** and more **מְתַקְרִים**. May our people soon embrace the spirit of Jerusalem and King David, and unite as one!

# A Yom Yerushalayim View From Yerushalayim



**Rabbi Reuven Taragin**  
Educational Director, World Mizrahi  
Dean of Overseas Students, Yeshivat Hakotel

Scan here to join  
Rabbi Taragin's  
daily Divrei Torah  
WhatsApp group



Hashem has blessed me with the great privilege of being able to spend my days learning, davening and teaching at Yeshivat Hakotel, overlooking the Har Habayit. I am often asked what this feels like. I would like to answer through the lens of the Yom Yerushalayim holiday we celebrate this week.

Having recently celebrated the miraculous founding, survival, and success of the State of Israel on Yom Ha'atzmaut, many wonder why we need a second, similar holiday just three weeks later.

I believe that there are two answers to this question. The first lies in the full appreciation of the 1967 salvation; the second is in a similar appreciation of the significance of the return of Yerushalayim, the Kotel, and the Har Habayit.

## The 1967 Salvation

Military experts see the 1967 victory as one of the most miraculous in modern history.

In the months leading up to the Six-Day War, people feared another Holocaust. Israel was outnumbered and outgunned on all sides by enemies who openly expressed their intention to "drive the Jews into the sea." Israelis dug tens of thousands of graves in public parks. Fearing the worst, those with foreign passports sent their children abroad to safe havens.<sup>1</sup>

Amazingly, through the confluence of numerous miraculous "coincidences,"<sup>2</sup> in a mere six days Israel not only vanquished all of those threatening to exterminate her, but also conquered territories that reinforced its future viability.

Like *kriyat Yam Suf* after *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, the Six-Day War removed the existential threat the State of Israel faced even after Yom Ha'atzmaut. Like the Jews on the banks of the Yam Suf, Israelis could see the enemies who had just hemmed them in, with the intention to destroy them, completely defeated.

## Yerushalayim

What made the miracle even more significant was its facilitation of our return to Yerushalayim.

In 1949, Israel's Chief Rabbinate recommended omitting the *berachah* before reciting Hallel on Yom Ha'atzmaut (mainly) because the fledgling state did not include the Old City of Yerushalayim.

Throughout our exile, our ancestors exclaimed, "*L'shana ha'ba'ah b'Yerushalayim.*" They yearned not just for our national home, but also for the center of our religious identity.

Jews maintained their identity through thousands of years, in tens of different cultural milieus, because they saw Yerushalayim as part of not just an illustrious past, but also their imminent future. As opposed to Rome's Pantheon, which is now just a tourist site, Har Habayit and the Kotel have remained holy sites that we seek to rebuild. The Kotel, which was never usurped by other religions, remains a pristine remnant of the past we envision in our future.

When Natan Sharansky was convicted of treason against "Mother Russia," he was asked by the court to sum up his defense. Sharansky responded: "I have nothing to say to this court, but to the People of

Israel and to my wife I say: Next year in Jerusalem."

A state that did not include Yerushalayim did not warrant a full Hallel.

When the Kotel was returned to us in 1967, we heard Hashem's call to reconnect with Him. The state founded 19 years earlier took on new meaning.

The most iconic photo from the Six-Day War is the one that immortalizes four soldiers at the Kotel. Despite the fact that most of the fighting did not take place in the Old City (and liberating the Kotel was not the initial aim of the war), once they reached the Kotel they looked back and realized that the entire process (of the war and the state) had led up to this moment.

With the Kotel and Har Habayit back in our hands ("*b'yadeinu*"), the Rabbanut sanctioned saying Hallel with a *berachah* on Yom Yerushalayim and Yom Ha'atzmaut. The return of Yerushalayim validated the religious significance of the state that had been declared on Yom Ha'atzmaut.

The declaration of the state and the 1967 victory both necessitate a celebratory holiday. Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrates our sovereignty in an independent Jewish State. Yom Yerushalayim complements that celebration by highlighting the religious significance of our return and future here.

## Our View

This is what learning and davening daily opposite the Kotel is all about.

You begin each morning with a clear view of Hashem's benevolence and the miracles He performs on our behalf.

You awake every morning to the miraculous return of our people to our past, with

*Continued on page 7*

HAFTARAH - PARSHANUT ON THE PARSHA

# Bamidbar: Eternal Engagement



**Rabbanit Shani Taragin**  
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

This Shabbat we read the *haftarah* of “Machar Chodesh” (Shmuel Aleph 20:18-42), selected each time Rosh Chodesh falls on the day after Shabbat, as a means of preparing us for the special holiday, celebrated with feast and reflection. It is an opportunity for us, like for David, to reevaluate our relationships and anticipate changes worthwhile for our future development. The *haftarah* that is generally selected as the choice *haftarah* reading by ALL Jewish communities for Parshat Bamidbar when Rosh Chodesh does NOT fall out on Shabbat or Sunday is read from the prophet Hoshea (2:1-22) beginning with the verse – “And the children of Yehuda and the children of Israel will gather together and will make for themselves a single head” (2:2). I would like to revisit this chapter in Hoshea to explain its connection both to Parshat Bamidbar and to Chag HaShavuot. As we read Parshat Bamidbar on the Shabbat before Shavuot, we have an opportunity to revisit the entire nation’s unified expression by Har Sinai – “like one man with a single heart” (Mekhilta, Shemot 19:1). This idea is reflected not only in the selection of but in the content of the *haftarah* reading from Hoshea and serves as *parshanut* on the *parasha*. The *parasha* describes the division of the nation into tribes and camps and flags, and the *haftarah* complements the picture with the introduction of a unified people of Yehuda and Yisrael.

Parshat Bamidbar opens the sefer known as *Chumash HaPekudim*, the “Book of Counting”, containing a census of the nation at the beginning and end of the *sefer*, “book-ending” their forty-year sojourn in the wilderness. This presents another inverse *parshanut* between the *parasha* and the *haftarah*; the *parasha* describes a census of the children of Israel, yet the *haftarah* opens with the declaration, “And the number of the children of Israel will be

like the sand of the sea that cannot be measured and cannot be counted.” (Hoshea 2:1). *Chazal* therefore ask: “*R’ Simali says: How can this be, that the One Who says that they are countable, returns and says that they are not countable?*” (Bamidbar Rabbah 2:14-18). If the Jewish people cannot be numbered, then what is the purpose of a census?! The Midrash answers this query in the context of Jewish history from the selection of Avraham Avinu who was implored of by Hashem to “count the stars, can you count them?” (Bereishit 15:5) through Hoshea, one of the prophets of the northern kingdom of Israel a generation before their exile. In both cases, the numbers of Am Yisrael will increase – from a countable to an “uncountable” number of stars and sand. The Midrash further asserts that when we don’t fulfill Hashem’s will, we are countable yet still no less than 600,000 as we find in Sefer Bamidbar; when we perform Hashem’s will we are uncountable!

Beyond the counting, there are other parallels between the *parasha* and the *haftarah*, most notably Hashem leading Am Yisrael into the wilderness as a means of ridding them of pagan beliefs. Hoshea’s prophecy resounds with the themes and spiritual course of Sefer Bamidbar, from the stories of complaint, sin and travails depicting the tumultuous period of courting to “And I will betroth you to Me forever” (2:21). Hoshea’s words and imagery of the wilderness delineate the path needed to repair the relationship. The *haftarah* begins by presenting sin, particularly idolatry and hedonism, as a maternal legacy, rooted in the nation’s personality from ‘birth.’ The only remedy is to return to her starting point and begin anew – “Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst.” (2:5)

The *midbar* – wilderness, is a place of new beginnings, conducive to repentance from

foundations of sin. Two main sins were committed by Bnei Yisrael in the wilderness – the golden calf, a sin of idolatry, and the spies, a sin of base passion and lust (i.e. hedonism – a desire for life without investing effort). These two sins repeat themselves in the land of Israel, and are addressed and rebuked numerous times by the prophets in Tanakh. Hoshea depicts returning to the wilderness as intended to confront and shed the people’s past of repetitive idolatry and unbridled hedonism. The wilderness will reveal the powerlessness of idols and the greatness of Hashem who is capable of providing the needs of the nation. It reminds us that we may be satisfied with the minimum necessary for survival, not carried away by social fashion or pleasure. The wilderness provides the perfect “climate” for a new beginning focused on the basics and priorities necessary for human existence, without the hedonistic distractions from a meaningful journey.

Perhaps this is the primary *parshanut* of the *haftarah* on the *parasha* – reminding us that traveling through the wilderness does not impair our relationship, but depicts the process necessary to repair and strengthen the foundation of a lasting and loving relationship with Hashem. The nation’s time in the wilderness – initially after leaving Egypt, and again six-hundred years later as they were led in exile by the Assyrians, is meant to be understood as a time of courtship. Once married, spouses cannot return to the period of engagement, of longing and dreaming for an eternal loving relationship. Hoshea’s prophecy comes to teach us that regarding the relationship between G-d and Israel, it is possible to renew our youth and covenant “And I will betroth you to Me forever” (2:21). A steadfast relationship with Hashem thereby ensues, providing faithfulness in an existential and eternal connection.

# Halachic Q&A



## Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council  
Rosh Yeshivah, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek

**Question: My wife is getting four wisdom teeth removed today and will not be able to eat any solids in the coming days. What should she do for challah on Shabbat? Is she required to eat a kezayit, and if so, can she break it into tiny pieces?**

Answer: She can break it into small pieces, and she only needs to eat enough that amounts to the size of a match box. She can wet it if that helps. If she is really in pain, she is exempt.

**Question: On Shabbat, can I put some cold water in my hot tea to cool it off? On the flipside, could I put hot water on a cold drink if it's too cold?**

Answer: It is permissible to put water (even if it was not previously cooked) into a *kli sheni*. Therefore, the first case is permissible.

The ruling of the second question depends on the ratio. If it is just a bit of hot water to make the drink a bit warmer, it is permissible. But it is forbidden to pour boiling water from a *kli rishon* on a small amount of water. See my sefer on Shabbat for more detail on the topic.

**Question: Can a mourner (for mother/father) go on a walk around the neighborhood on Shabbat with his wife and kids? Or is it similar to other prohibitions for a mourner on Shabbat?**

Answer: A hike would not be allowed, but a relaxing walk around with family is allowed. However, you should try not to walk in places where others will interact with you and it can become a social gathering.

**Question: If the only levi in the minyan is the shaliach tzibur, should he wash the kohen's hands before chazarat hashatz or let the kohen wash himself?**

Answer: The *kohen* should wash at the normal point on his own. If there is a *bechor* (firstborn), he should wash the *kohen's* hand (Magen Avraham 128:7)

**Question: Can one who is visiting Israel for the first time and is very excited make a shehechyanu?**

Answer: There are seemingly a few good reasons to make a *bracha*:

1. He is very happy, and the Bach and others believe that joy of the heart is what dictates whether a *shehechyanu* is said.
2. If it is his first time in Israel, there is room to argue that a *bracha* should be made as it is the first time he is fulfilling the *mitzvah* of Yishuv Eretz Yisrael. See my sefer on Tefillin regarding the topic of saying *shehechyanu* on doing a *mitzvah* for the first time.

However, because of the doubt, it is best to wear a new shirt (or something else new) and then make a *bracha* in joy over the *zechut* to come to Eretz Yisrael.

**Question: This year, with Shabbat falling out right after Shavuot, is one allowed to have an early minyan for Kabbalat Shabbat/Arvit?**

Answer: There seems to be no issue with having an earlier *minyan* (Magen Avraham, Taz), as there is still a *mitzvah* of Tosefet Shabbat even when Shabbat comes after

Yom Tov. This is why we light candles at the normal time and not later.

However, the question arises regarding starting a Shabbat meal which starts before *shkiah* and finishes after *tzeit hakochavim*. Should *ya'aleh veyavo* be said?

On a regular Shabbat, *retzeh ve'hachalitzenu* is said even when Shabbat is brought in early because of Tosefet Shabbat. Therefore, there is room to say that because of Tosefet Shabbat, one should say *retzeh* and not *ya'aleh veyavo*. If one also says *ya'aleh veyavo*, then the '*tarti desatri*' question arises that one is contradicting oneself by calling it a Yom Tov *seuda* and a Shabbat *seuda*. The same question arises when Rosh Chodesh falls on *motza'ei shabbat* and one eats *seudat shlishit* through *shkiyah*. Do you say *retzeh*, *ya'aleh veyav*, or both? The Mishnah Berurah brings different opinions, and seems to lean towards saying both. However, he adds that if Maariv was already said, then *retzeh* would not be said. It therefore seems that in our case, when Maariv has already been said and *kiddush* has been made, one has completely accepted Shabbat and should only say *retzeh* and not *ya'aleh veyav*.

To summarize: You may accept Shabbat early, and you may even begin your meal early. It is best to make sure you eat a *kezayit* of bread after *tzeit hakochavim*, but even if you were to finish before *shkiyah*, you have who to rely upon. In bentching, you should only say *retzeh*, even if you finish before *shkiyah*.

● Compiled by Yaakov Panitch.

# לויים או בכורות?

הרבנית שרון רימון  
Tanach teacher and author



**ב**פרשת במדבר מוקדשים הלויים לראשונה לעבודת המשכן:

הַקָּרֵב אֶת מִשֶּׁה לְוִי וְהַעֲמַדְתָּ אֹתוֹ לְפָנַי אֲהָרֹן הַכֹּהֵן וְשָׂרְתוּ אֹתוֹ: וְשָׂמְרוּ אֶת מִשְׁמַרְתּוֹ וְאֶת מִשְׁמֶרֶת כָּל הָעֵדָה לְפָנַי אֲהָל מוֹעֵד לְעִבְדָת הַמִּשְׁכָּן... וְנִתְּתָה אֶת הַלְוִיִּם לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו נְתוּנִים נְתוּנִים הֵמָּה לוֹ מֵאֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל... וְאֲנִי הִנֵּה לִקְחָתִי אֶת הַלְוִיִּם מִתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תַּחַת כָּל בְּכוֹר פֶּטֶר רֶחֶם מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיוּ לִי הַלְוִיִּם (במדבר ג', ו-יג)

עד עתה, הבכורות היו מוקדשים לעבודת ה', כפי שנאמר בפרשת בא, מיד לאחר מכת בכורות:

קִדַּשׁ לִי כָל בְּכוֹר פֶּטֶר כָּל רֶחֶם בְּבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֶדָם וּבְבִהֵמָה לִי הוּא (שמות י"ג, ב)

בעקבות מכת בכורות, הוקדשו לה' כל הבכורות. בכורות בהמה מוקדשים לקרבנות, ואילו בכור אדם אמור להיות משרת בקודש, כפי שמפרש רש"י הירש:

הבנים הבכורים יהיו אפוא נציגי ה', הנושאים, מטפחים ולוחמים עבור רצון ה' בקרב המשפחות; ואילו בכור בהמה יהיה ביטוי למסירת רכוש המשפחה לרצון ה' ולבעלותו. פעילות בכורי האדם וקידוש בכורי בהמה יקשרו את הבתים

להשפיע עליה להתקרב אל הקודש, למשוך אותם כלפי מעלה, לקרב לעבודת ה'. אך באותה מידה הוא נתון להשפעה הפוכה – הסביבה המשפחתית מחנכת את האדם ומעצבת את אופיו ואישיותו, וקשה מאד לאדם לעמוד אל מול משפחתו ולהדריך אותם ובעת הצורך למנוע מהם מעשים מסויימים.

**לעתים, דווקא אדם מבחוץ יכול להשפיע הרבה יותר.** הוא איננו מעורב רגשית ואיננו מושפע מהדינמיקה המשפחתית, ולכן יכול ללמד ולהשפיע, וכשיש צורך – הוא יכול גם לדרוש ואפילו להעניש.

שבט לוי נבחר להיות מוקדש לעבודת ה', ואת כל חייהם יקדישו לעיסוק בקודש. הם לא יקבלו נחלה, לא יעבדו את האדמה, אלא כל עיסוקם יהיה בעבודת המקדש ובלימוד התורה והוראתה, על כל המשתמע מכך. כך תיווצר **קבוצה משמעותית בעם, שיכולה להדריך את העם בעבודת ה'.**

יחד עם זאת, הלויים אינם מנותקים מהעם אלא "נְתוּנִים נְתוּנִים הֵמָּה לוֹ מֵאֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל" (ט). עריהם מפוזרות בכל הארץ, כך שהם יהיו **נגישים לעם ומחוברים אליו, והם אמורים להיות נציגי ישראל בעבודת הקודש:** "וְשָׂמְרוּ אֶת... מִשְׁמֶרֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל" (ח).

והמשפחות אל הייעוד האלוהי של כלל האומה. ובכל בית ובכל משפחה ימלאו על – פי דרכיהם המיוחדות אך ורק את התפקיד הלאומי הגדול על שלל תכניו.

**הקדשת הבכור בכל משפחה לעבודת ה' מאפשרת קישור ישיר של כל משפחה אל עבודת הקודש.** באופן זה, בכל משפחה יש אדם האחראי על עבודת ה', ולכל משפחה יש נציג בעבודת המקדש. דגם זה נראה אידאלי, ומאפשר **שייכות וחיבור אישי בין העם לעבודת הקודש.**

והנה, בפרשת במדבר מפקיעים את עבודת הקודש מן הבכורות ומעבירים אותה אל שבט אחד – שבט לוי. מעתה שבט לוי יהיה אחראי על עבודת המקדש ועל הוראת התורה בקרב העם.

מה ההגיון העומד מאחרי מעבר זה?

בחטא העגל התברר שהבכורות אינם מצליחים למלא את ייעודם. הם לא הצליחו למנוע את ההידרדרות הרוחנית הקשה, ונראה שהם אפילו לא ניסו למנוע זאת.

**מתברר שהיתרון של הקדשת הבכורות הוא גם החסרון:** הבכור השייך למשפחה מסויימת יכול

Continued from page 4

a view of (the beginning) of the fruition of Jewish history.

Though many of us are not lucky enough to spend every day (or even Yom Yerushalayim) in Yerushalayim, most of us have had the *zechut* to visit and spend time in Yerushalayim. On Yom Yerushalayim, we remember these times and thank Hashem for gifting Yerushalayim (and all that it symbolizes) to us.

## Yom Yerushalayim Reflection

In addition to the celebration, Yom Yerushalayim should also be a day of reflection. It is a time to remind ourselves of the State of Israel's religious

significance and of our responsibility to respond to Hashem's miracles and kindness by returning to Him with a full heart. It is a time to consider how we can make ourselves worthy of the continuation of the *geulah* process.

When celebrating Yom Yerushalayim, let's make sure to reflect upon not only what Hashem did for us, but also on how we need to respond by strengthening our relationship with Him in order to merit the ultimate rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash.

May this reflection merit our increased celebration: "L'shana ha'ba'ah b'Yerushalayim *Ha'benuyah!*"

1. Rav Dovid Miller (who traveled to Israel to offer assistance) tells how Rav Soloveitchik asked him to tell Rav Soloveitchik's son Chaim (who was studying in Israel) that he loves him, as he feared that he might never see him again.
2. For a brief review of these miraculous occurrences, I highly recommend this Mizrachi video — [mizrachi.tv/six-days-of-miracles](http://mizrachi.tv/six-days-of-miracles).

# Everyone Matters! Take Two



**Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir**  
World Mizrahi Scholars-in-Residence

**H**ere's one of my favorite stories: In a small town there were only ten Jewish families and, among them, there were only ten Jewish men. Each day they all came to pray so that there would be a *minyan*. Because of this important commitment, even if someone felt tired or weak, he would compel himself to come and pray nevertheless. Each man felt that everything depended on him.

One day there was a huge celebration: A new Jewish family had come to live in the town! Yet the following morning, no one came to pray. Each man felt a little less responsibility, thinking that the rest of the men would make a *minyan* without him, and therefore excused himself from his previous commitment.

This week's Torah portion, parashat Bamidbar, opens with a comprehensive census in which the entire public is counted and every individual, every family, and every tribe is given a role and a higher calling.

התורה מתארת איך עם ישראל התנהל במדבר בסדר מופתי, איך בכל מקום הם הקימו את המשכן, איך בלב השממה היו להם ערכים וכללים.

כשאנחנו מספרים על הפרשה הזו בבית חב"ד בקטמנדו, החבר'ה מקשיבים היטב. גם הם במסע, ולפעמים הם רוצים לזרוק את הכול ולהיות כמו כל שאר המטיילים מכל רחבי העולם. מי צריך שבת או כשרות בנפאל? אבל החוכמה היא לא להשתנות בגלל הסיבה. אנחנו מקבלים כוח מארבעים השנים של עם ישראל במדבר, ויודעים לשמור על מה שחשוב לנו בכל התנאים והמצבים.

כשיצאנו לשליחות בנפאל לפני 22 שנים, בעלי חזקי ואני המצאנו לעצמנו את הביטוי: 'להיות צב'. צב הרי תמיד מרגיש בבית, כי הוא לוקח לכל מקום את הבית על הגב שלו, לא משנה היכן הוא נמצא. הבטחנו לעצמנו לקחת איתנו תמיד את הערכים ואת כללי ההתנהגות ואת הבתים שבהם צמחנו – עד לקטמנדו. אנחנו משתדלים. מאחלת לכולנו, בכל המבחנים והמקומות, להצליח להיות צב."

The message is that even within large groups, or even within an entire nation, each individual has a special place and a unique mission. Each person is important. And today, just as in that small town, each of us must internalize the awareness that it is impossible to function as a whole if even one part is missing.



Mazal tov. On Shabbat we begin reading the book of Numbers, Bamidbar. It starts with a census of the population. At the beginning of this book, Rashi explains why G-d counts us over and over again. He counted us when we left Egypt, after the sin of the golden calf, and now, with the construction of the Mishkan (sanctuary), once again. And so Rashi writes: "Because they were dear to Him, He counted them often." When we love, we carefully notice and count all the pieces of our treasure, all the precious parts of the object of our desire.

על הצאצאים. וכמוכן - אנחנו לא רק מושפעים אלא גם משפיעים. האם אנחנו משפיעים על סביבתנו לטובה?

ובימינו צריך לדבר לא רק על השכן בבית ממול, אלא על השכן ברשתות, שנכנס לתודעה ולנשמה שלנו הרבה יותר: אחרי מי אתה עוקב ברשתות? באילו קבוצות ווטסאפ אתה נמצא, ולמה? הפרשה הזכירה לי את המשפט המפורסם: "אנחנו מעצבים את המרחב - ואז הוא מעצב אותנו".



חני ליפשיץ, שליחת חב"ד בנפאל, שלחה לי מקטמנדו את הרעיון הבא:

"השבוע מתחילים לקרוא בתורה את ספר המסעות, ספר במדבר. כל הספר הזה מתרחש בדרך, במדבר, בין מצרים לבין ארץ ישראל. ספר במדבר מלמד אותנו איך יהודי מתנהג כשהוא נמצא בדרך, במסע. גם כשעוד לא הגעת ליעד, גם כשאתה בסוג של מדבר - אתה מקיים אורח חיים יציב.

Many people feel that they are not counted. Members of every sector of Israeli society feel that they alone are a persecuted minority, that everyone tramples them. During this uncertain time, even those who do not belong to a particular group feel transparent and vulnerable, as do many parents, teachers, elderly and others.

G-d counts us again and again, not because He does not know how many of us there are but because of his affection for us - from a desire to interact with each of us, to give each of us a feeling that we are important. None of us is any longer just a statistic but rather each of us is a unique individual. Each of us has a place. If only in the coming days we will be able to finally succeed in creating this feeling, that all will feel represented, that their voice is being heard, that they are being counted with affection.



"אני אתחבר עם האדם הזה, אבל הוא לא ישפיע עליי". "אני אצפה בסרט הזה, אבל הוא לא ישנה אותי". המשפטים האלה - מסבירה פרשת השבוע - לא נכונים. נרצה או לא נרצה, אנחנו מושפעים מאוד מהסביבה שלנו.

הפרשה מתארת איך כל השבטים הסתדרו סביב המשכן במדבר. זה לא רק תיאור טכני של מקומות. השבטים יהודה, יששכר וזבולון חנו בסמוך למשה ואהרון - ולכן הפכו לאנשים טובים ולמדנים יותר. שבת ראובן, לעומת זאת, חנה ליד קורח - וכך הוא נגרר להצטרף למרד של קורח נגד משה.

הלקחים של רש"י הם ברורים: "טוב לצדיק וטוב לשכנו. אוי לרשע ואוי לשכנו". כלומר, מי שסביבך משפיע עליך, לטובה או לרעה. פרשנינו מסבירים שלכן חשוב מאוד לדעת לענות לשאלות הבאות: ליד מי אתה נמצא בחיים, באיזו קהילה או חברה, והאם זה משפיע עליך באופן חיובי? מי קבוצת ההתייחסות שלך? מי האנשים שאכפת לך מה דעתם עליך? בפרשה רואים שההשפעה הזו היא לדורות, הסיבה משפיעה על כל הגורל המשפחתי,



# For the Shabbat Table



**Rabbi Danny Mirvis**  
Deputy CEO, World Mizrachi  
Rabbi of Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“**A**nd Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness of Sinai in the Tent of Meeting on the first (day) of the second month in the second year after they left the land of Egypt, as follows...” (Bemidbar 1:1).

This week we commence the fourth book of the Torah, named “Bemidbar” (“in the wilderness of”) after one of the opening words of this week’s Parsha. The Midrash Rabbah takes this opportunity to discuss the significance of the fact that the Torah was given in the wilderness.

Firstly, the Midrash explains that just as the wilderness is free to all people, so too the words of Torah are free and accessible to all. The Midrash then presents an alternative explanation:

“And Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness of Sinai’ – Anybody who does not make himself “hefker” (ownerless, abandoned) like the wilderness is unable to acquire the wisdom and the Torah. Therefore, it says, ‘In the Wilderness of Sinai’” (Bemidbar Rabbah 1:7).

According to this second explanation, a person must abandon his search for pleasure and glory in order to acquire Torah. He must view all his owns as ownerless and recognize that he is entirely dependent on Hashem.

At first glance, the two explanations of the Midrash seem to contradict each other. On the one hand we are told that Torah is free and accessible for all. On the other hand we are told that a person must pay a great price for Torah, foregoing pleasure, honour and (theoretical) ownership of all his property! How can we reconcile these contradicting statements?

The Sefat Emet (Bemidbar 5640) answers that the Midrash refers to two different levels of Torah study. On a basic level, Torah is “free” for all who wish to come and learn. However, to “ACQUIRE the wisdom and the Torah” – i.e. to fully internalize and fully retain our learning, requires the “payment” of self sacrifice.

As we approach Shavuot and prepare ourselves to re-accept the Torah, we must take

both these messages to heart. Firstly, we must recognize that Torah does not only belong to a select few, but to every single member of Am Yisrael. We are living in a generation which has witnessed the translation of almost every major Jewish text into English, making Torah fully accessible to us all, regardless of background. The blossoming of Torah resources online further enhances the reality that Torah is free, available and accessible for one and all.

At the same time, we must recognize that as freely accessible as Torah may be, to truly grow in Torah and to truly master and retain our learning, great effort is required. Ultimately, we will not be judged on the level we reach, but on the effort we invest. The increased availability of Torah should not be viewed as a convenient way to reduce our efforts, but as a tool to increase our potential.

Torah is free and waiting for us. We just need to make the effort.

Shabbat Shalom!



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# The Sound of Silence



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

**B**amidbar is usually read on the Shabbat before Shavuot. So the Sages connected the two. Shavuot is the time of the giving of the Torah. *Bamidbar* means, “in the desert”. What then is the connection between the desert and the Torah, the wilderness and G-d’s word?

The Sages gave several interpretations. According to the Mechilta, the Torah was given publicly, openly, and in a place no one owns because had it been given in the Land of Israel, Jews would have said to the nations of the world, “You have no share in it.” Instead, whoever wants to come and accept it, let them come and accept it.<sup>1</sup>

Another explanation: Had the Torah been given in Israel the nations of the world would have had an excuse for not accepting it. This follows the rabbinic tradition that, before G-d gave the Torah to the Israelites, He offered it to all the other nations and each found a reason to decline.<sup>2</sup>

Yet another: Just as the wilderness is free – it costs nothing to enter – so the Torah is free. It is G-d’s gift to us.<sup>3</sup>

But there is another, more spiritual reason. The desert is a place of silence. There is nothing visually to distract you, and there is no ambient noise to muffle sound. To be sure, when the Israelites received the Torah, there was thunder and lightning and the sound of a shofar. The earth felt as if it were shaking at its foundations. But in a later age, when the Prophet Elijah stood at the same mountain after his confrontation with the prophets of Baal, he encountered G-d not in the whirlwind or the fire or the earthquake but in the *kol demamah dakah*, the still, small voice, literally “the sound of a

slender silence” (1 Kings 19:9-12).” I define this as *the sound you can only hear if you are listening*. In the silence of the *midbar*, the desert, you can hear the *Medaber*, the Speaker, and the *medubar*, that which is spoken. To hear the voice of G-d you need a listening silence in the soul.

Many years ago British television produced a documentary series, *The Long Search*, on the world’s great religions.<sup>4</sup> When it came to Judaism, the presenter Ronald Eyre seemed surprised by its blooming, buzzing confusion, especially the loud, argumentative voices in the *beit midrash*, the house of study. Remarking on this to Elie Wiesel, he asked, “Is there such a thing as a *silence* in Judaism?” Wiesel replied: “Judaism is full of silences ... but we don’t talk about them.”

Judaism is a very verbal culture, a religion of holy words. Through words, G-d created the universe: “And G-d said, Let there be ... and there was.” According to the Targum, it is our ability to speak that makes us human. It translates the phrase, “and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7) as “and man became a *speaking* soul.” Words create. Words communicate. Our relationships are shaped, for good or bad, by language. Much of Judaism is about the power of words to make or break worlds.

So silence in Tanach often has a negative connotation. “Aaron was silent,” says the Torah, after the death of his two sons Nadav and Avihu (Lev. 10:3). “The dead do not praise you,” says Psalm 115, “nor do those who go down to the silence [of the grave].” When Job’s friends came to comfort him after the loss of his children and other afflictions, “Then they sat down with him on the ground for seven days and seven nights, yet no one spoke a word

to him, for they saw that his pain was very great.” (Job 2:13).

But not all silence is sad. Psalms tells us that “to You, silence is praise” (Ps. 65:2). If we are truly in awe at the greatness of G-d, the vastness of the universe and the almost infinite extent of time, our deepest emotions will indeed lie too deep for words. We will experience silent communion.

The Sages valued silence. They called it “a fence to wisdom” (Mishna Avot 3:13). If words are worth a coin, silence is worth two (Megilla 18a). R. Shimon ben Gamliel said, “All my days I have grown up among the wise, and I have found nothing better than silence.” (Mishna Avot 1:17).

The service of the Priests in the Temple was accompanied by silence. The Levites sang in the courtyard, but the Priests – unlike their counterparts in other ancient religions – neither sang nor spoke while offering the sacrifices. One scholar, Israel Knohl, has accordingly spoken of “the silence of the sanctuary.” The Zohar (2a) speaks of silence as the medium in which both the Sanctuary above and the Sanctuary below are made.

There were also Jews who cultivated silence as a spiritual discipline. Bratslav Hassidim meditate in the fields. There are Jews who practise *ta’anit dibbur*, a “fast of words”. Our most profound prayer, the private saying of the *Amidah*, is called *tefillah be-lachash*, the “silent prayer”. It is based on the precedent of Hannah, praying for a child. “She spoke in her heart. Her lips moved but her voice was not heard” (1 Sam. 1:13).

G-d hears our silent cry. In the agonising tale of how Sarah told Abraham to send

Hagar and her son away, the Torah tells us that when their water ran out and the young Ishmael was at the point of dying, Hagar cried, yet G-d heard “the voice of the child” (Gen. 21:16-17). Earlier when the angels came to visit Abraham and told him that Sarah would have a child, Sarah laughed inwardly, that is, silently, yet she was heard by G-d (Gen. 18:12-13). G-d hears our thoughts even when they are not expressed in speech.

The silence that counts, in Judaism, is thus a listening silence – and listening is the supreme religious art. Listening means making space for others to speak and be heard. As I point out in my commentary to the Siddur,<sup>5</sup> there is no English word that remotely equals the Hebrew verb *sh-m-a* in its wide range of senses: to listen, to hear, to pay attention, to understand, to internalise and to respond in deed.

This was one of the key elements in the Sinai covenant, when the Israelites, having already said twice, “All that G-d says, we will do,” then said, “All that G-d says, we will do and we will hear [*ve-nishma*]” (Ex. 24:7). It is the *nishma* – listening, hearing, heeding, responding – that is the key religious act.

Thus Judaism is not only a religion of doing-and-speaking; it is also a religion of listening. Faith is *the ability to hear the music beneath the noise*. There is the silent music of the spheres, about which Psalm 19 speaks:

The heavens declare the glory of G-d  
The skies proclaim the work of His hands.  
Day to day they pour forth speech,



### Can we really claim to be listening to the voice of G-d if we fail to listen to the voices of our fellow humans?

Night to night they communicate knowledge.

There is no speech, there are no words,  
Their voice is not heard.

Yet their music carries throughout the earth.

There is the voice of history that was heard by the prophets. And there is the commanding voice of Sinai that continues to speak to us across the abyss of time. I sometimes think that people in the modern age have found the concept of “Torah from Heaven” problematic, not because of some new archaeological discovery but because we have lost the habit of listening to the sound of transcendence, a voice beyond the merely human.

It is fascinating that despite his often-fractured relationship with Judaism, Sigmund Freud created in psychoanalysis a deeply Jewish form of healing. He himself called it the “speaking cure,” but it is in fact a *listening* cure. Almost all effective forms of psychotherapy involve deep listening.

Is there enough listening in the Jewish world today? Do we, in marriage, really listen to our spouses? Do we as parents truly listen to our children? Do we, as

leaders, hear the unspoken fears of those we seek to lead? Do we internalise the sense of hurt of the people who feel excluded from the community? Can we really claim to be listening to the voice of G-d if we fail to listen to the voices of our fellow humans?

In his poem, ‘In memory of W B Yeats,’ W H Auden wrote:

In the deserts of the heart  
Let the healing fountain start.

From time to time we need to step back from the noise and hubbub of the social world and create in our hearts the stillness of the desert where, within the silence, we can hear the *kol demamah dakah*, the still, small voice of G-d, telling us we are loved, we are heard, we are embraced by G-d’s everlasting arms, we are not alone.<sup>6</sup>

#### AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:

- Where else could G-d have chosen to give the Torah to the Children of Israel? Why do you think He chose the desert instead?
- Why is listening important? Why is it “supreme religious art”?
- Do you find it hard to listen? How can you improve this skill?

1. Mechilta, Yitro, Bachodesh, 1.

2. Ibid., 5.

3. Ibid.

4. BBC television, first shown 1977.

5. Koren Shalem Siddur.

6. For more on the theme of listening, see parshat Bereishit, “The Art of Listening,” and parshat Eikev, “The Spirituality of Listening.”

# Shevet Levi in the Army



**Rabbi Hershel Schachter**

Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

**F**rom twenty years of age and up – everyone who goes out to the army in Israel – you shall count them according to their armies, you and Aharon. (Bamidbar 1:3)

According to the simple understanding, the purpose of the census in Parshas Bamidbar was to prepare for war, as implied by the instruction to count כל יוצא צבא בישראל. Based on this assumption, Rashi derives from this *passuk* that no one under the age of twenty may be drafted into the army.

Therefore, the fact that a census was not taken of Shevet Levi, “But you shall not count the tribe of Levi, and you shall not take their census among Bnei Yisrael” (Bamidbar 1:49), lends support to the well-known opinion of the Rambam that Shevet Levi is exempt from joining the Jewish army.

In recent years, the *halachah* in Hilchos Shemittah V’Yovel (13:13) has often been quoted by various *roshei yeshiv’ah* with regard to the army service of *bonei yeshivah*. In that *halachah*, the Rambam expands the charge of Shevet Levi to anyone who wishes to dedicate himself to continuous Torah study.

This argument is significant, as although the Gemara in Nedarim (32a) excludes *talmidei chachamim* from the draft, that statement does not refer to all *bonei yeshivah*.

The issue of Shevet Levi’s exemption from army service is not a simple matter, however. In fact, other *Rishonim* do not seem to agree with the Rambam. For example, Rashi (Bamidbar 1:49) cites two other reasons for Shevet Levi’s exclusion from the census in Parshas Bamidbar, ignoring the obvious explanation that its constituents are not drafted into the army. Obviously,

Rashi feels that Shevet Levi did, in fact, participate in the army.

This difference of opinion is further evident in Parshas Matos, where the Torah instructs Bnei Yisrael to assemble an army to wage war against Midyan: “Arm men from among yourselves for the army, that they may be against Midyan to inflict Hashem’s vengeance against Midyan. A thousand from a tribe, a thousand from a tribe, for all the tribes of Israel shall you send to the army. So there were delivered from the thousands of Israel a thousand from each tribe, twelve thousand armed for the army. (Bamidbar 31:3-5).

Rashi’s *girsah* of the Sifrei (157) is that the phrase לכל מטות ישראל comes to include Shevet Levi in contributing one thousand soldiers. There was a total of only twelve thousand soldiers, even though Shevet Levi was represented, because Menashe and Efraim were counted as the single shevet of Yosef. The Rambam, however, has an alternate *girsah* of the Sifrei, which states that Shevet Levi was excluded from participating in the war effort and that Menashe and Efraim must have each contributed one thousand soldiers.

On the assumption that Shevet Levi is drafted into the army, there is a further question with regard to Kohanim. Rav Shlomo HaKohen mentions a *chiddush* that he had written to his brother, Rav Betzalel HaKohen, on this topic. The Binyan Shlomo suggests that according to the view of the Sefer HaChinuch that women, who do not serve in the army, are exempt from hearing Parshas Zachor, which describes waging war against Amalek, the same may be true for Kohanim. Since Kohanim may not come into contact with the dead, they too may be unfit for the army and may be similarly exempted

from Parshas Zachor. Accordingly, perhaps a Kohen should not serve as the *ba’al korei* for the leining of Parshas Zachor, since only one who is equally obligated in a *mitzvah* is able to discharge another person’s obligation in that *mitzvah* (Rosh Hashanah 29a).

Rav Betzalel applies his brother’s *chiddush* to explain how the Chachamim during Bayis Sheini could establish Yom Nikanor on the thirteenth of Adar as a minor Yom Tov on which fasting was prohibited (Ta’anis 18b). According to Rabbeinu Tam, Ta’anis Esther was instituted much earlier, in the days of Mordechai and Esther, when the Jews assembled for public fasting and davening as they sought to defend themselves against their enemies. If so, how could the later Chachamim annul the earlier *takanah* of a *ta’anis* on this day? Rav Betzalel answers that Yom

Nikanor may have been instituted only for Kohanim, who, in this analysis, were not included in the *takanah* of fasting on Ta’anis Esther because they did not take part in the related battle.

During World War I, the British government turned to Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom Joseph Hertz and asked his opinion regarding drafting Kohanim into the British Army. A great debate ensued when he permitted the participation of Kohanim in battle, as Rav Yitzchak HaLevi Herzog disagreed based on the Rambam cited above.

One source in support of the position that Kohanim may be drafted is the Mishnah in Sotah (44a), which lists the prohibited marriages of an *almanah* to a Kohen Gadol and a *gerushah* to an ordinary Kohen as the sort of *aveiros* on account of which a soldier returns from the battlefield.

*Continued on next page*

# Making Ourselves Like The Midbar



**Rabbi Yisroel Reisman**  
Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

**T**he Sefer of Bamidbar opens with the expression most commonly found in the Torah, though includes an uncommon detail at the end.

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַּר סִינַי בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד בְּאַחַד לַחֲדָשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי בַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִיית לְצֵאתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם לְאֶמֶר - "Hashem spoke to Moshe in the wilderness of Sinai in the tent of meeting on the first day of the second month of the second year since the exodus from Egypt saying". Rather than simply introducing a dialogue between Hashem and Moshe, the Torah adds details about the date, the specific location and oddly the fact that it was taking place in Midbar Sinai. Would we have thought otherwise had this not been mentioned?

The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 1:7) explains the reasoning for the inclusion of "BaMidbar Sinai" is to teach us

כָּל מִי שֶׁאִינוֹ עוֹשֶׂה עֲצָמוֹ כְּמִדְבַּר, הֶפְקֵר, אֵינוֹ יָכוֹל לְהַדִּישׁ הַשָּׁנִי בַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִיית לְצֵאתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם - "Whoever does not make himself *hefker* like in the wilderness is unable to acquire wisdom and Torah"

This Midrash comes to teach us that one must be prepared to put his own personal desires aside and place the "Ani" of himself only after the will of HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

This idea can be seen in Parshat Chayei Sarah with the story of Eliezer. Though much of the storyline deals with Eliezer's search for a *shidduch* for Yitzchak, he is exclusively referred to as *Eved Avraham* throughout the whole Parsha without a single mention of his own name. The root of the success of Eliezer comes from the fact that he had no such personal requests or inclinations throughout this process, rather was solely committed to his instruction from Avraham Avinu. He was able to exemplify this trait that others struggle so much in perfecting through considering his task's true purpose and how his personal preferences were irrelevant in this matter.

Similarly, as we continue to get closer to Shvuos this needs to be the approach of Am Yisrael coming closer and closer to Matan Torah at Har Sinai. The ability to develop ourselves into people who can take all that we wish for ourselves, see that which we have approached this Chag for and be able to place our creator's command and will before our own.

The "Ani" of Leil Shavuot attacks all of us - everyone wants to have a nice seudah and get a to sleep at a relatively normal hour. This would be a reenactment of the events that took place after Moshe

came down with the *luchot* the first time. We need to fix this terrible act and push ourselves to have a Leil Shavuot the way it should be! We should use the *Sheloshet Yemei Hagbala* to prepare ourselves not just spiritually but physically as well. To rest properly, and to energise ourselves to be appropriately ready for *Matan Torah* and a night fully devoted to Talmud Torah. This preparation is not just for personal benefit on Shavuot, but rather for each one of us to do our part in helping Am Yisrael as a whole approach this time better suited and befitting for accepting the Torah.

We should always continue to Daven that Hashem to help us ignore the voice inside all of us that says *Kochi V'Otzem Yadi Asah Li Et HaChayil HaZeh* - "My own power and the might of my own hand have won this wealth for me" (Devarim 8:17). We should merit *Siyata D'Shmaya* and recognize that we can always improve on the way we treat other *neshamot* in Am Yisrael especially as we near Shavuot and be doing this we should be able to serve Hashem together *B'Simcha Rabba* now and for always.

● Edited by Zac Winkler.

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Similarly, the Gemara in Kiddushin (21b) questions whether the leniency of *yefas to'ar*, the permissibility of a Jewish soldier to have relations with a gentile captive,

applies to a Kohen, as it does to a Yisrael. The Mordechai (Gittin 432) seems to cite this Gemara as indicating that Kohanim

do participate in the army (see Doveiv Meisharim 3:69).

● Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Parsha II.

# How Structure Can Change Your Life



**Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein**  
Chief Rabbi of South Africa

This week's parshah starts *Bamidbar*, the fourth of the five books of the Torah. As its name indicates — Bamidbar means “in the desert” — this book describes the lives of the Jewish people during their 40 years in the desert. The Jews at this point had received the Torah but had yet to reach the Land of Israel, and they already had strict instructions for how they were meant to behave. This week's portion sets out the rules for how the Jews were meant to encamp around the Tabernacle.

We are told the camp had three major zones. The holiest was the *Machaneh haShechina*, the camp of the Divine Presence, on the site of the Tabernacle. Then there was the *machaneh leviya*, the camp of the priestly Levites, where families from the tribe of Levi encamped. Finally, there was the *machaneh Yisrael*, the general camp, where the remaining families were arranged according to their tribal affiliation. Each of the 12 tribes had its own unique flag and designated area, and no one could move beyond their own tribe's zone. This was how Hashem wanted it. But why was such order necessary? Why could the Jews not simply live wherever they wanted?

## Value of Structure

The Hebrew name for our prayer book is *siddur*, from the root *seder* — order. On the face of it, this seems odd. Isn't praying to G-d an emotional and spiritual experience? Isn't it about feeling a sense of inspiration? What does this have to do with order and structure?

Judaism teaches us that we can only achieve inspiration when we feel rooted in our lives. If our praying was dependent solely on our feelings in the moment,

some mornings we would wake up inspired, feeling close to G-d, and moved to pray; other mornings we would wake up feeling cynical, tired, sick and not in the mood to pray.

What the *siddur* gives us, what *seder* gives us, is a stable and orderly framework for our emotions, for our spiritual connection. Our feelings of inspiration may fluctuate, but the time and order of our prayers do not. As a result, we can take comfort in our *siddur* the way we take comfort in a loyal companion who sticks with us when times are good and steadies us when times get bad.

This sense of order helps guide us in all of our endeavors. If we applied ourselves to our marriages or jobs or friendships only when we felt like it, we would surely struggle to maintain them at all. If we only give to charity when we feel flush, few people would give much of anything. Life can be very confusing, and we often feel besieged by conflicting choices and feelings. So, it can be reassuring to follow the rules for proper behavior set out in the Torah. Such structured guidance for how to live and what to do can offer a sense of stability in a world of uncertainty.

Reb Yerucham Levovitz, one of the great educators in the Mir Yeshiva, offers the following analogy. When stringing a necklace of pearls, we typically tie a knot at the end to keep the pearls from slipping off. Reb Yerucham says the value of order is like that knot. The individual pearls represent the many values of Judaism — devotion to Hashem, prayer, kindness, charity, Shabbos, learning Torah, etc. What holds these values together is the knot at the end of the string of pearls — structure and order.

Most people crave structure in their lives. Because we like to know where we are going and what we are doing, we tend to find comfort in patterns and routines. Physically, we function best when our days heed a certain order, such as when we go to sleep and wake up around the same time every day, and in the same bed.

Spiritually, too, we are nourished by predictability. Because prayer and gratitude are baked into our daily routines — we know to say the Shema when we wake up and to *bensch* after meals — we are sure to make time for such things.

Our sages note that one of the questions we are asked in heaven is *kavata itim laTorah* — “Did you set aside time to learn Torah?” Notably, we are not asked whether we learned Torah but whether we set aside time for it. This is because the Torah prescribes set times for everything: when a person learns; when a person davens; when, how and how much a person gives charity. All of this goes to the heart of how important the concept of *seder* is to the philosophy of Judaism. To live as a Jew is to embed righteousness into the routines of ordinary life.

This helps us understand the importance of the encampments in the desert. Each tribe had its designated flag and location, its identity and sense of duty. In a period of great change and uncertainty for the Jewish people, as they wandered the desert and wondered which direction was forward, this sense of order must have been a source of comfort, an existential balm of sorts. In these uncertain times, the structure and order outlined in the Torah is no less comforting today.

# Torah – like Water, Fire and the Desert



**Rabbi Shalom Rosner**  
Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh

**A**s we begin Sefer Bamidbar, with Shavuot around the corner, we will explore a midrash (Tanchuma, Bamidbar 6), that emphasizes that the Torah was transmitted via three means: water, fire and the desert. This is derived from specific pesukim. Water, as it states: גם שמים נטפו גם עבים נטפו מים (Shoftim 5:4); Fire as it states: והר סיני עשן כולו (Shemot 19:18); and the desert as it states in our parsha, “וידבר ה' אל משה במדבר סיני” (Bamidbar 1:1). The midrash explains that these three items are free, so too the Torah is accessible to all.

The Ketav Sofer suggests that each item highlights a different attitude that is crucial when receiving the Torah. **Water** signifies humility. Just as water flows downward, so too one should exercise modesty and be humble when learning Torah. In any other area of study, the more one knows the better they feel about themselves. Yet, with respect to Torah, the more one knows, the more one realizes how much more there is yet to understand.

A story is told of a man who davened with tremendous concentration on Yom Kippur. He was later honored with the fourth *aliyah*. When the gentlemen returned to his seat, he complained to his neighbor how disappointed he was that he received *revi'i*, when the person that was honored with *shlishi*, he felt was less worthy. This individual was pouring his heart out to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. It is easy to be humble when confronting Hashem. The challenge is to be humble



**One is not expected to disengage from all amenities, but to prioritize and emphasize the significance of Torah in one's life.**

via one's fellow man. That is why Moshe is described as “*anav mikol adam*” – he was humble with respect to all men, not just before G-d. Similarly, as we know, the Torah was given on Har Sinai, rather than on the tallest and grandest of mountains, again demonstrating the importance of humility when receiving Torah.

**Fire** signifies the spark that Torah ignites in an individual and the way it enlightens the path one takes in life, as is stated כי נר מצוה ותורה אור (Mishle 6:23). Torah is our guide like a torch in a dark forest at night. Torah directs us and formulates for us the way in which we should conduct ourselves. We have to guide our decisions and actions based on Torah. As the gemara in Shabbat (31) states – one should be *kove'a itim L'torah*. Translated literally, that statement is understood as referring to establishing set times to engage in the study of Torah. Perhaps it could be understood differently. One should be *kove'a itim, L'torah!* To fit the times to the Torah, rather than adjust the Torah to fit the times.

The **desert** symbolizes that Torah was given to a nation that wandered in the desert, relying on the manna and not in

pursuit of lavish luxuries. To properly accept the Torah, one has to prioritize and seek to obtain Torah rather than materialism. When our children witness our happiness, is it when we attend a shiur, or go to a ball game? One is not expected to disengage from all amenities, but to prioritize and emphasize the significance of Torah in one's life.

In addition, Rav Neiman (Darchei Mussar), explains that the Torah was given in the desert to accentuate that one must have *emunah* and *bitachon* in Hashem, recognizing that what one has is from Hashem. As if we are in the desert and depend upon Hashem. Just as we were gifted with the manna and the *be'er* in the desert, so too all we have is granted to us by Hashem. The more we recognize our dependence on Hashem, the more Hashem will care for us. We need to place our reliance on G-d, and then we will be able to understand the depths of the Torah.

As we are about to celebrate the day on which we received the Torah, we should internalize these important messages derived from these three elements: water, fire and the desert. We should work on our humility, recognize the Torah as lighting our path and guiding our behavior and setting our priorities straight, having a “desert mentality” of not requiring much and recognizing all we have is a gift from Hashem. Let us prepare ourselves accordingly for a most meaningful *kabbalat HaTorah* this Shavuot.

# Me, You, Am Yisrael



**Michal Horowitz**  
Judaic Studies Teacher

**P**arshas Bamidbar, is always read the Shabbos before Shavuos. Many reasons have been given to explain the connection between Bamidbar and Shavuos.

R' Dr. Abraham J. Twerski writes, "The first portion of Bamidbar is generally read before Shavuos, the holiday which commemorates the giving of the Torah at Sinai. Inasmuch as there are no coincidences, we may assume that this portion is a prerequisite for receiving the Torah.

"In relating the episode at Sinai, the Torah states: וַיִּחַן-שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶגְדַּ הָהָר, and *Israel camped there, opposite the mountain* (Shemos 19:2). The Torah uses the singular (*lashon yachid*, וַיִּחַן), lit. *he camped*, rather than *vayachanu* (*lashon rabim*), *they camped*. Rashi (ibid) explains: כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד בְּלֵב אֶחָד - *they camped like one man with one heart*; the singular language indicating that all the Israelites were united as one person. It is this unity that made them worthy of receiving the Torah.

"There is nothing so dear to G-d as unity among His children. So much so, that the Gemara states that when Jews are united, G-d forgives even their gravest sins. Furthermore, the Sages teach, *You have no person without his hour and no thing without its place*' (Pirkei Avos 4:3). One of the chassidic masters asked, 'If every person has a specific time and place, why is there so much dissension among us?' He answered, 'Because many people are envious of others, and wish to occupy *their* (i.e.: the other person's!) time and place.' If we were free of envy, we might achieve the coveted unity.

What, then, is the connection between Parshas Bamidbar and Shavuos, *Zman Matan Torasainu*?

Answers R' Dr. Twerski, "This portion of the Torah describes the organization of the Israelites in the desert (which is

necessary for delineating their tribal encampment around the *Mishkan*). As the verse says: *The Children of Israel shall encamp, each person by his banner according to the insignia of his father's household* (Bamidbar 2:2). *Each person knew his place*. The Kohanim had their place, the Leviim had their place, and every single person knew his rightful place. It was this knowledge and *acceptance* of one's place that enabled the Israelites to be a (single, cohesive) *unit* rather than fragmented.

"We may conceptualize unity of a nation as a symphony orchestra, where each musician has a designated assignment. If the percussionist or the flute player would balk at his assignment because the violinist plays a better part, the performance would suffer. No one musician is of greater importance than another. This is equally true of the Jewish nation. We all have specific assignments: Kohanim, Leviim, Israelites, men, women, Torah scholars, lay people. We are one harmonious unit.

"The message of Parshas Bamidbar is the message of unity: '*The Children of Israel encamp, each person by his banner*.' This is why the Torah reading of Bamidbar precedes Shavuos. Unity is the prerequisite for acceptance of Torah" (Twerski on Chumash, p.268).

In the dessert, *Bamidbar*, each tribe camped under their *unique flag and banner*, in the formation that Yaakov Avinu had prescribed for them (and the formation by which the brothers - the fathers of the tribes - carried the remains of Yaakov Avinu from Egypt, to Israel, for burial). Each one recognized his place, strengths, uniqueness and contributions to the nation; as well as recognizing the strengths of his fellow Israelites, who camped under their own flag and banner, in their own place.

No one tribe and no one flag was more

important than the next. Each of the tribes came together, with unity, to make a united people, *Am Yisrael*. It is no wonder, then, that we read this parsha before Shavuos, when we recall that *achdus*, unity, is THE prerequisite for Torah.

R' Dr. Twerski tells over the following story, which he calls "one of my favorite folktales of the wise men of Chelm." One day, a citizen of Chelm was at the public bathhouse. It suddenly dawned on him that without clothing, most people look alike. He became quite anxious with the thought, "When it comes time to go home, how will I know which one is me!?"

After some thought, he came up with a brilliant solution. He found a piece of red string and tied it around his big toe. He was now distinctly identifiable! Unfortunately, in the process of sudsing and showering, the red string fell off his foot, and when another bather stepped on it, it stuck to his foot!

When it was time to leave, the first bather looked at his foot, and seeing nothing on it, was perplexed. Then he noticed the other man with the red string on his foot. He approached him and said, "I know who you are, but can you tell me, who am I!?" (The Rabbi and The Nuns, p.163-164).

As we come to accept the Torah again this year we must remember the lessons of our desert encampment. To be part of *Am Yisrael* is to be *proud of who I am, happy with whom my friend is*; to know my own distinct flag and banner, and to respect the flag and banner of my friend. Only then can we camp *b'achdus*, like one man with one heart, ready to accept the Torah anew again.

The Kotzker Rebbe (d.1859) would say, "If I am I, because I am I; and you are you, because you are you; then I am I and you are you. But If I am I because you are you, and you are you because I am I, then I am not

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# The Order of the Shvatim



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**T**he twelve tribes are listed numerous times in Chumash, yet for some reason, each time that they are listed in Parshat Bamidbar – their order seems to change!

**The Leaders:** The presentation of tribal leaders 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*.

**The Census:** The census follows basically the same order as the leaders, however it already reflects the ‘transfer’ of shevet Gad into the camp of Reuven, placing him in the position of Levi (#3). Most likely, this is because this census will be the basis for the organization of the tribes into groups of three.

**Surrounding the Mishkan:** The organization of the *shvatim* around the Mishkan reflects not only Gad’s new position within the camp of Reuven, but also Yehuda’s leadership role in travel formation, for he is destined to be the leader of all the *shvatim*. Therefore, this list begins with Yehuda, followed by the tribes of his camp, then Reuven and his camp, etc. etc.

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.

Parshat Naso describes the dedication of the Mishkan with special *korbanot* offered by the “*nsiim*”, that took place during the first twelve days of Nisan (see 7:12-83). However, when you review the list of “*nsiim*”, you’ll notice that the order by which the “*nsiim*” offered their *korbanot* (on the first of Nisan), was exactly the same as the order by which the tribes encamped around the Mishkan, as established on the first of Iyar.

This proves that the special order of the tribes already existed on the first of Ni-

san, a month before the census was taken on the first of Iyar! This suggests that this order was already significant, even before Bnei Yisrael prepared for travel to Eretz Canaan!

To explain why, we must recognize that this special organization of the *shvatim* served a double purpose – both military and spiritual:

\*MILITARY – To prepare the camp for travel in military order, in anticipation of their conquest of Eretz Canaan.

\*SPIRITUAL – To emphasize to the entire nation that the Mishkan is located at the CENTER of the camp, in order that they recognize the G-d’s SHCHINA dwells among them.

The census in Parshat Bamidbar is of military nature, for it counted all the males above the age of twenty – “*kol yotze tzava b’Yisrael*” – because they will be fighting the battle to conquer Eretz Canaan (see 1:3).

Furthermore, the subsequent organization of the twelve tribes into four divisions, was also of a military nature. Finally, the census is taken on the first of Iyar, for only 20 days later Bnei Yisrael will actually leave Har Sinai (see 10:11) and begin their journey to conquer Eretz Canaan.

One month earlier, when the Mishkan was dedicated, we find that this same order of the *shvatim* already existed. This implies that even before the census, the camp of Bnei Yisrael had already been organized in a manner so that the Mishkan would be located at its center. 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.

This would imply that even when Bnei Yisrael were still encamped at Har Sinai, it was already important that they be reminded (by placing the Mishkan at the center) that G-d’s presence was in their midst, and act accordingly.

Recall that in response to “*chet ha’Egel*”, G-d had instructed Bnei Yisrael to remove their ‘crowns’ that they had received at Har Sinai (see Shmot 33:5-6), a sign that He is removing His *shchina* from their midst. For the very same reason, G-d then instructed Moshe to move his tent (the site where G-d 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 G-d would have to go to the ‘Ohel Moed’ located OUTSIDE the camp.” (Shmot 33:7)

The very location of this “*ohel moed*” OUTSIDE the camp served as a constant reminder to Bnei Yisrael that G-d had removed His *shchina* from their midst. 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” (see 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 G-d has indeed returned His *shchina* to the camp.

Because of its significance, a ‘remnant’ of this camping arrangement of the tribes ‘around the Mishkan’ continued even after the forty years in the desert, when Bnei Yisrael finally conquered and settled the land.

Recall from Sefer Yehoshua, that when the tribes receive their “*nachalot*” (as described in chapters 13->19), we find a very similar configuration!

Note how in both configurations the site of the SHCHINA – be it the Mishkan in the desert, or the Mikdash in “*nachalat Bin-yamin*” – is surrounded by the same four ‘leadership’ tribes!

One could suggest that the Torah dedicates such minute detail to this manner of trav-

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# Perfecting Our Middot Through Parenting



**Rabbi Eli Mansour**  
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**T**he Torah in Parashat Bamidbar briefly recounts the death of Nadab and Abihu, Aharon's two older sons: "Nadab and Abihu died before G-d...and they had no children" (3:4). The Gemara in Masechet Yebamot interprets this verse to mean that Nadav and Abihu died because they did not beget children. On this basis, the Gemara establishes that one who does not involve himself in *Periya Ve'ribya* – the Misva of begetting children – is liable to death, just as Nadab and Abihu died because of their refusal to have children.

The commentators raise the question as to how the Gemara can attribute Nadab and Abihu's death to their decision not to have children. After all, the Torah right here in this Pasuk states explicitly that they died on account of their irreverence toward the Mishkan, for bringing an unwarranted offering. And the Midrash gives other reasons for their untimely death – drinking wine before entering the Mishkan, and acting disrespectfully toward Moshe and Aharon. How, then, are we to understand the Gemara's comment that Nadab and Abihu died because of their decision not to beget children?

The Hatam Sofer (Rabbi Moshe Sofer of Pressburg, 1762-1839) explained that Nadab and Abihu's refusal to have children is the root cause of their other sins, which all have to do with a lack of respect. The irreverence they showed toward Moshe and Aharon and toward the Mishkan was the result of their failure to cultivate proper *Middot* (character traits) – a failure which could have been averted if they had

begotten children. Parenting, the Hatam Sofer says, is the most effective means of perfecting one's character. Children look to their parents as examples to follow, and thus parents have no choice but to be careful how they speak and act. Keenly aware of the effect our behavior has on our children's character development, we are forced to conduct ourselves in a dignified, respectful and becoming manner. Strange as it may seem, parenting is not only about building our children, but also about building ourselves. We perfect our characters by being parents, as the role forces us to conduct ourselves in the way we want our children to behave. And so, the Hatam Sofer says, Nadab and Abihu died because they did not have children. Being childless denied them the opportunity to develop their characters and their sense of humility and respect, and thus indirectly caused their untimely death.

On Shabuot we read the Aseret Hadibberot – the Ten Commandments that Beneh Yisrael heard at Sinai. The Midrash comments that the Ten Commandments are divided into two sets of five, and each commandment corresponds to the parallel commandment in the other set. Thus, for example, the first commandment – "I am Hashem your G-d" – corresponds to the sixth commandment – murder – because murder constitutes the destruction of the divine image. The second commandment – idolatry – corresponds to the seventh commandment – adultery – because worshipping a foreign deity is a betrayal of G-d comparable to marital infidelity. Interestingly enough, according to this structure, the fifth commandment

– honoring parents – corresponds to "Lo Tahmod," the prohibition against envy. The Midrash explains that somebody who is envious of other people will have children who disrespect him and will show respect to other people in their lives, instead, and this accounts for the implied link between these Misvot.

Why are disrespectful children the consequence of envy?

If children grow up around envious parents, who frequently speak of their desire to have what others have, then they, the children, will naturally become envious people. And it is then likely that they will be envious of their friends' parents. If we cause our children to be jealous people, we may very well be causing them to disrespect us – because they will be jealous of their friends and show greater respect to their friends' parents than to their own parents.

Parenting is a precious privilege and opportunity for many reasons, and one reason which we should not overlook is the way it can help us become better people. But this will only happen if we remember how much our behavior affects our children's development, that the way we act directly impacts upon their characters. By being careful how we act and speak around our children, we not only help them develop and cultivate proper Middot – but we help ourselves perfect our own characters, as well.

# In the Name of Shame



**Rabbi Moshe Weinberger**

Congregation Aish Kodesh, Woodmere

**T**osafos explain (Megilla 31b) that parshas Bamidbar is always read on the Shabbos before Shavuos. One of the focal points of our parsha is (Bamidbar 2:2) “The Jewish people camp each person by his division, by the flags of his father’s house, they camped corresponding to and surrounding the Tent of Meeting.” In the desert, the Jewish people camped with the Mishkan in the central position, the Levi’im in the middle circle, and the other tribes in the outer circle. If this is a focal point of the parsha which is read just before Shavuos, we must understand how our encampments and flags are central to properly receiving the Torah.

There is an often-overlooked pasuk in which the Torah identifies the purpose of the giving of the Torah on Shavuos. The pasuk (Shmos 20:17) says, “And Moshe said to the nation, ‘Do not fear because Hashem [has come] in order to lift you up and in order that fear of Him should be upon your faces so that you will never sin.’” Rashi explains that the Hebrew word “תִּוַּשׁ” means “lifting up and greatness, as in the pasuk (Yeshayahu 62:10) says ‘Lift up a flag.’” We therefore see that the purpose of Sinai was to lift us up so that we will attain a fear of G-d which will help us avoid sin.

In what way does fear of G-d help us avoid sin? The Gemara (Nedarim 20a) says, “In order that the fear of Him should be upon your faces,” refers to embarrassment, ‘so that you will never sin,’ teaches that embarrassment brings to fear of sin ... Anyone who has the trait of embarrassment will not soon come to sin and if someone lacks the trait of embarrassment, his parents certainly never stood by Mt. Sinai.” We see from here that the critical “take away point” from the Sinai experience was attaining the quality of embarrassment, which is the key to the self-motivation to

avoid sin. In fact, Chazal tell us that this trait (embarrassment) is one of the hallmarks of a Jew (Yevamos 79a). We might have thought that the quality of embarrassment is a good thing, but is tangential to a Jew’s nature. These teachings, however, demonstrate that the attainment of the quality of embarrassment is an essential part of the purpose of the Sinai experience and what it means to be a Jew.

What, then, is the source of the quality of embarrassment? The Alter of Novardok, in his essay “The Essence of Truth,” explains the foundation of the trait of embarrassment through the story of Eliyahu Hanavi on Har Carmel. At that time, during the reign of Achav and Izevel, the worship of the Baal was rampant among the vast majority of the Jewish people, even though the people believed in and served Hashem as well. Achav’s wife, Izevel, had all of Hashem’s prophets executed. The only survivor was Eliyahu who, in his zeal to uphold G-d’s honor, decreed a famine in the land which lasted three years.

After three years, the people begged Eliyahu to rescind the decree and end the famine. He agreed, on the condition that they hold a “showdown” between the prophets of the Baal and he, Eliyahu, to demonstrate the falsity of Baal worship. They agreed, but before the “contest” between the 450 prophets of the Baal and Eliyahu began, he gave the Jewish people the following introduction (Melachim 1:18:21): “How long will you dance on two sides of the fence?! If Hashem is G-d, go after Him! And if Baal is, go after him!” Rashi explains that the two sides of the fence are the two thoughts regarding who G-d is.

The Alter of Novardok explained that the purpose of Eliyahu’s introduction was to sensitize them to the fact that Divine service and Baal worship are mutually exclusive; the two cannot coexist. He wanted to

infuse them with “a feeling of contradiction.” They must realize that the worship of Hashem and Baal cannot coexist. They cannot have it both ways. In response to Hashem’s demonstration on Mt. Carmel that only He is G-d, and not the Baal, the Jewish people responded enthusiastically (Id. at 39), “Hashem is G-d! Hashem is G-d!”

The root and foundation of the trait of embarrassment is the feeling of cognitive dissonance one experiences when he realizes that he is living a contradictory life. When one realizes that, he feels embarrassed to continue deluding himself into thinking that he can “have it all.” Why do people think they can live this double life? Chazal say that (Shabbos 31b) “The wicked know their path ends in death.” Chazal also teach (as quoted by the Alter Rebbe in Tanya 11) that “The wicked are full of regrets.” Why do people continue sinning even when they know it is wrong and that they will not profit from it in the long term? It is because they only know this intellectually, but lack “a feeling of contradiction.” They do not feel embarrassed by sinning because they lack a conscious awareness that the way they live and what they know to be true are mutually exclusive. The Gemara (Shabbos 119b) says “Yerushalayim was only destroyed because people had no embarrassment in front of one another.”

As the pasuk says in this week’s parsha, the center of the Jewish camp is the Mishkan, Hashem’s dwelling place. We must ensure that all aspects of our lives surrounding that center are consistent with it. With Hashem’s help, may we merit to receive the Torah and attain the sensitivity to be embarrassed by any inconsistency in our lives which contradicts our Divine service. May we then merit the day when we can cry out for a final time, without any embarrassment or shame, “ה' הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים ה' הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים,” “Hashem is G-d! Hashem is G-d!”

# It Is Not Enough to Be Good; We Have to Stand Up for Good



Rabbi YY Jacobson  
TheYeshiva.net

**Y**ankel of Chelm was always very busy and was always tired. He always told his friends that when he retires, he will finally have time to rest. When the time of retirement came, he was very excited.

A few days later, his friend sees him walking around town yawning loudly. When asked why he is still so tired, Yankel responds: “When you are not working, you don’t have opportunities to take a break!”

The weekly Torah portion Bamidbar, commencing the book of Numbers, begins with the Torah’s command to take a census of the Jewish Nation. Each male over twenty years old from every tribe was to be counted. The Torah enumerated in detail the number of those individuals for every respected tribe, Reuven, Shimon, Judah, Naftali, etc.

However, the reader will immediately notice that there was one exception, the tribe of Levi was singled out to remain uncounted in the national census. Levi was counted separately and differently. Its children were counted from a month old as opposed to twenty years old.

Why did the tribe of Levi merit such distinctive treatment?

The Midrash and Rashi explain that G-d specially designated them. They were considered as the “King’s special legions,” the Royal Army of G-d. During the tragic event of the Golden Calf, when so many of their fellow Jews served the idol, the tribe of Levi was stalwart in its opposition. Thus, Levi was chosen to serve in the Temple in the place of the firstborns, who were originally designated to perform the service. The Midrash quotes G-d as saying, “the Levites made themselves close to me, and I will be close to them.”

But Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Alter was perturbed by this explanation. Not everyone served this idol, only around three thousand. Why, then, was only the entire tribe of Levi singled out to serve in the Sanctuary and subsequently in the Holy Temple? Why didn’t G-d select

anyone who did not serve in the Golden Calf regardless the tribe? Why base it on tribe, rather than on personal virtue?

The answer is simple and profoundly relevant. The tribe of Levi did much more than passively not serve the idol. When Moses, in the aftermath of the creation and worship of the Golden Calf, cried out, “Who is for G-d? Let them gather to me!” The Torah testifies that “all the children of Levi gathered by him.” The only collective group who responded were the Levites.

Many Jews may have refrained from worshipping the Golden Calf, but when Moses proclaimed “Who is for G-d? Let them gather to me!” the others remained silent. They were ready to do the right thing, but they were not ready to stand up and fight for the right thing. They were ready to silently be good, but they were not ready to take a stand and declare war against bloodshed, idolatry, and adultery (which were practiced during the orgy of the Golden Calf.) Only those who stood up and protested against the heinous crimes during the Golden Calf debacle were capable of becoming spiritual leaders of the nation, the ambassadors of G-d in the Holy Temple.

This was not a punishment; it was a demonstration of reality. To be a leader you can’t only choose to do the right thing in the privacy of your own domain; you must be ready to stand up and cry out against injustice; you have to be ready to fight publically for truth. If not, you are incapable of leadership.

Even if most of the people are silent, you must be ready to stand up for what is right. Bill Clinton once said that “running a country is a lot like running a cemetery; you’ve got a lot of people under you and nobody’s listening”.

In Western society, there is a concept called an “innocent bystander.” In Jewish law, if you just stand by, you are not innocent. In American society, you’re guilty for doing “something.” In Jewish law, you’re guilty for doing nothing.

“*Lo taamod al dam reacha*,” Leviticus states. “Do not stand idle by your brother’s blood.” Remaining passive or neutral is not an option.

It has been said that there are three types of people in this world: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those whom you must tell what is happening.

The triumph of evil does not occur because of the perpetrators of evil alone; it happens because of the many ordinary men and women who don’t care enough or are too afraid to stand up for what is right. “For evil to flourish, it only requires good men to do nothing,” is as true as it gets.

When ordinary people of good moral standing lose the courage or willingness to protest injustice, morality is dead. When multitudes of people of moral stature do not feel an urgent responsibility to combat the flames of hate and evil burning in their society, evil flourishes.

This is true concerning every crisis—physical or spiritual—that faces our people and communities today. When good people do not speak out about child abuse, domestic violence, women trapped by ruthless men who refuse to give a divorce; when rabbis avoid taking a strong stand on their followers disobeying instructions of health officials to save lives during a pandemic—we allow innocent people to suffer.

Leaders must profess the courage to speak up. Silence, in the face of a tragedy, is a crime all its own.

This is a powerful lesson. Sometimes there are occasions in life where the clarion call goes out to rally around G-d’s banner—the banner of Torah, of justice, morality, goodness and holiness. If upon hearing that call, one rises to the occasion, his actions can have ramifications until the end of time. If one fails to heed the call and does not respond, that too can affect not only that person, but also his children and his grandchildren, for all generations.

# Bamidbar (5) / Yom Yerushalayim: Connected



**Rabbi Judah Mischel**

Executive Director, Camp HASC; Mashpiah, OU-NCSY

The *heilige* Ribnitzer Rebbe, Reb Chaim Zanvil Abramowitz, zy'a, was an extraordinary *tzadik* and a legendary *baal avodah*, whose sacrifice for Yidishkeit and holiness suffused all the different places he lived — Russia, Romania, Eretz Yisrael, Los Angeles and Monsey — bringing down blessings for petitioners across the globe. Describing the Ribnitzer's righteousness, Reb Shlomo Freifeld, zt'l, Rosh Yeshivah of Shor Yoshuv, said meeting him was like meeting a *tzadik* from the days of the Baal Shem Tov.

A group of young men once visited the Ribnitzer at his home in Boro Park. One of them, Yechiel Reich, stepped forward and introduced himself. The Ribnitzer looked up and exclaimed, "Ah. *Shalom Aleichem!* Now you I know already; we are bound up together for a long time." Yechiel was taken aback, certain that he'd never met the Rebbe before. "Really?" he stammered.

"You've been to Kever Shmuel haNavi, no? From there I know you." The young man looked confused, but the Ribnitzer repeated: "Once you went to daven by Shmuel haNavi. That's where we know each other."

On the car ride home, Yechiel turned to his friends who were asking about the mysterious interchange. "I feel bad saying this, but the Rebbe is mistaken! I was at Kever Shmuel haNavi only once, more than a decade ago when I was a *bachur* learning at the Tchebiner Yeshivah in Yerushalayim. A whole *chevreh* of us went to daven... and I'm telling you, there is no way that the Rebbe was there!"

Late that night Yechiel lay awake, haunted by the experience. He tried to recreate that *tiyul* to Kever Shmuel in his mind, going over as many details as he could remember. Finally, with a sudden jolt, he sat up and cried "What?!" A subconscious memory had surfaced, but it seemed too unbelievable to be true. He leapt up, ran to his bookshelf, and his hands soon found a worn *Sefer Tehillim* which he had originally acquired second-hand, and had not used in many years.

On the inside cover, he saw the text of the *Hareini Mekasher*, a short declaration of *kavanah* intoned before davening: "I hereby bind myself to all the true *tzadikim* of this generation..." Next to this sentence, someone had handwritten the phrase "...*U-b'frat* ('and specifically') to the Tzadik of Ribnitz, Rebbe Chaim Zanvil Ben Moshe v'Yitta Tzipporah..."

Shaking his head in wonder, Yechiel recalled that he had spontaneously read that *Hareini Mekasher* before reciting Tehillim at Kever Shmuel haNavi. Now, with a laugh, he held the *sefer* to his heart and repeated the sentence over and over, as if reuniting with an old friend.

This weekend marks the 28th of Iyar, today known as "Yom Yerushalayim", the day in which we celebrate the reunification of the Holy City in the aftermath of the miraculous victory of the Six Day War. For centuries before the war, the 28th of Iyar had already been recognized as the *hillula* or 'yahrtzeit' of Shmuel haNavi, and was marked as a day of pilgrimage to his resting place on a high hill overlooking Yerushalayim.

One of my teachers, the noted author Rav Ari Kahn, Rabbi of the Mishkan Etrog community of Givat Ze'ev, is widely respected for his creativity and originality in Torah commentary. In his *sefer Emanations*, he provides historical background and context of the Jewish holidays through the prism of the Rabbinic perspective. Relevant to Yom Yerushalayim, he underlines the important bond between Shmuel haNavi and David haMelech.

Shmuel haNavi was the *rebbe* and mentor of King David and the one who anointed him and guided his development in his role. Together, they sought to begin the process of *binyan haMikdash*, laying the spiritual framework of building the Temple in Yerushalayim. And as one, they prophetically identified the Divinely intended location for the Beis haMikdash (*Zevachim*, 54b). The *minhag* to ascend to the resting place of

Shmuel haNavi expresses yearning for the Divine inspiration, human friendship and closeness with Hashem that Navi Shmuel and King David manifested in their days.



Every time we open our hearts in prayer, we turn our face to Yerushalayim. Connecting to the *Ir haKodesh*, the Holy City, is at the core of our *tefillah*. Chazal were very specific in formulating the *nusach* of the Amidah prayer and order of its *brachos*; as a unit, they form a spiritual narrative, an unfolding of our collective destiny with Yerushalayim, as follows:

#### ... על הצדיקים

A blessing for the *tzadikim*, sages, rebbes and guides of our People... Hashem is their support and trust and will clearly answer their prayers for *Klal Yisrael*. Thus we place our lot with them; we bind ourselves to them in our prayer...

#### ... ולירושלים עירך

As a result of our unified prayer, the Shechinah will return to full revelation in and through Yerushalayim; the Temple will be rebuilt and the throne of David reestablished there...

#### ... את צמח דוד

Then the shoot of David will spring forth, with the brilliant rays of Complete Redemption spreading throughout the world.

Today, the 28th of Iyar continues to be a day of prayer, pilgrimage and yearning for holiness and Redemption. As our ancestors did for countless generations, we have the right and the privilege to ascend to Yerushalayim and celebrate our deep connection and *hiskashrus* to the *tzadikim*, to Hashem, to His holy city — and to each other. Indeed, as we discover how we are bound to each other, unified and interwoven, may we sing the prophetic words of the Psalmist:

יְרוּשָׁלַיִם הַבְּנוּיָהּ כְּעִיר שֶׁחִבְּרָהּ לָהּ יְחֻדָּו:

Yerushalayim! She is built as a city bound together in oneness!

(*Tehillim*, 122:3)

# Load of a Lifetime

## Mrs. Shira Smiles

International lecturer and curriculum developer

In Parshat Bamidbar the Levites received their specific tasks for travel in the desert. The task of Elazar the son of Aharon was to carry all of the supplies needed for the Mishkan, such as the oil, spices, etc. This responsibility would require superhuman effort, since there were so many supplies to carry.

Even if you understand that his responsibility was to delegate the carrying of these supplies, the task was still daunting. Yet Elazar gladly accepted his mission and succeeded. We can learn many lessons from this verse, beginning with Elazar's name. His name means, "G-d will help," and therein lies the key to his success.

Elazar understood that no task, neither great nor small, can be completed successfully without G-d's help. He also understood that in order to receive that help, man must put in his own effort to complete the task. Man must create an opening through which Hashem's help can enter. Even if the opening is small, Hashem will stretch that opening as large as it needs to be for the necessary help to pass through. As part of this effort, Elazar also understood that delegating was not enough. He knew that even if he delegated, he himself must carry at least his fair share of the load along with his designees, or the task would not be successful. This was not just a matter of morale, but also a matter of modeling. It is the model we have from Hashem himself, who carries the burden of our exile on His own shoulders, so to speak, to make our troubles bearable.

These concepts apply not only to physical, material tasks. We are also enjoined to complete spiritual tasks. Each soul has its own predestined mission in life. All the circumstances surrounding us, both good times and challenges, were created specifically to help each of us fulfill our designated mission. As we work on our inner core, we must recognize that our success depends on G-d's help. When Hashem sees that we desire to strengthen our relationship with Him, He will help us achieve. Our accomplishments come as a result of Hashem's help.

In the desert. Bnei Yisrael camped in formation around banners, each tribe under its own banner. Where did this formation come from? The Midrash tells us that when Hashem revealed Himself to Bnei Yisrael at Sinai, 22,000 angels descended with Him. They came down in formation, in camps, each under its own individual banner. Each banner signified the specific mission of a particular angel. Some of these missions may have appeared to be more important than others. Yet the angels were not jealous of each other. No angel wanted to take another angel's mission. Each angel knew that its task was specifically designed for him. Each angel was happy with where he stood, for he realized that he was completely fulfilling the will of the Almighty, that the task was the result of the love Hashem had in creating him. At that moment, Bnei Yisrael also wanted banners to identify who they were, to accept with love the position of each family and each individual. Hashem

gave them banners to show His love for them.

The census of Parshat Bamidbar further revealed this love. Unlike the other times Hashem counted the people, this census was not done by means of the half shekel. Rather, each individual passed before Moshe, Aharon, and the leaders of the tribes, and stated his name and his family's name. Each individual was recognized as unique, with his own mission and talents, and each was valued and counted.

Elazar understood this completely, and therefore accepted the mission Hashem gave him. He knew that if he performed his mission with love, Hashem would reward him by helping him complete the task successfully.

This concept is clearly alluded to in the omer ritual at the time the Holy Temple. Bnei Yisrael would bring the first of the barley harvest and wave it before Hashem, symbolically stating that we understand that not just this first barley that we bring as an offering, but all that follows in our harvesting belongs to Him.

Each of us has a mission imprinted within our souls. Each of us has a name that our parents, together with Hashem, gave us at birth. The name hints to the mission Hashem gave us. It is our privilege and responsibility to accept this personalized mission with love, and in doing so, acknowledge that Hashem will help us to accomplish.

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*Continued from page 16*

I and you are not you" (Quoted in Great Jewish Wisdom, Artscroll, p.45).

As we prepare to once again declare, "all

that G-d has spoken, we will do and we will listen" (Shemos 24:7), let us embrace our place, our strengths, our banner, our

identity, and let us rejoice and respect that of our friend's. So that I am I, and you are you, and *together*, we are *Am Yisrael*.

# From the Stories of the Women of Bamidbar



**Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi**  
Popular Torah teacher and author

**T**his week I was with a large group of women at the tomb of the martyr, the righteous Sol Hachuel, in Fez, Morocco.

Sol is one of the few women to whose grave people make pilgrimages, like Rachel Imeinu and the mothers buried in Maarat HaMachpelah. We like to talk about her horrible death when she refused to convert to Islam and was brutally executed, but my great-grandfather, Rabbi Chaim Shoshana zt'l, a dayan and poet, insisted that he was moved precisely by the way Sol lived...

In an Islamist, patriarchal country, he was amazed by a young girl who knew how to say the word "no." She said it not only to the son of the Emir who fell in love with her, she said it not only to the Sultan who ordered her to convert to Islam, she did the hardest thing of all, my grandfather

told, she said "No" to the people of her community who tried to persuade her to live as a slave, and so she did not risk her life and their lives. She said no to the rabbi of the community and to her parents (!) who begged her to convert to Islam for safety. For Sol, my grandfather said, it was not just a "religious" issue.

My grandfather used to say that the word "no" in the Ten Commandments is very important, but only insofar as it draws its strength from the "yes": the first commandment that explains to whom and why we are loyal...

The Book of Bamidbar is full of stories about women who said no: no to the sin of the calf, no to the sin of the spies, no to the decree of the daughters of Zlafchad who were to be without share and inheritance.

But Jewish religiosity must not become a world of "no"! Sol did not die because she

was a slave of the desires exercised on her. She died as a queen.

When the excited Ruth says to Boaz, "Though I am not so much as one of your maidservants!" (I am not worthy to be your slave), he corrected her, for that is not the Jewish religion she wanted to join. He said to her, "You are not one of the slave girls (*amahot* in Hebrew)! You are one of the mothers (in Hebrew *imahot*)!" What a brilliant and wonderful study of Judaism!

The women of Bamidbar mostly said, yes. Yes to the land of Israel, yes to a person to share and inherit, yes to the Torah.

*Continued from page 17*

el, to emphasize how the Mishkan serves this double purpose:

- 1) It acts as a symbol of G-d's presence within the camp of Israel (see Shmot 25:8 and above), and...
- 2) It functions as a constant reminder to Bnei Yisrael, as they travel, of their Divine purpose.

As Bnei Yisrael prepare their departure from Har Sinai towards the conquest of the Land of Israel, they will face new challenges. For example:

Can they translate what they have learned at Har Sinai into the norms of the daily life of a nation?

Will they be 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?

This week, as we celebrate Yom Yerushalayim, this challenge takes on special significance. Can we, the nation of Israel, continue our 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*"?

Although the Bet-Mikdash, the symbol of this challenge, was destroyed some two thousand years ago – both Parshat Bamidbar and Yom Yerushalayim can serve as a yearly reminder of this eternal challenge.

# Hebrew Language in the Parsha



**David Curwin**

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In Parashat Bamidbar, we read how the Levites replaced the first-borns as those who would officiate in the Sanctuary:

...הִנֵּה לְקַחְתִּי אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם מִתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תַּחַת כָּל־  
בְּכוֹר פֶּטֶר רֶחֶם מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיוּ לִי הַלְוִיִּם:

"I hereby take the Levites from among the Israelites in place of all the first-born, the first issue of the womb among the Israelites: the Levites shall be Mine." (Bamidbar 3:12)

The word בְּכוֹר - "first born" derives from the root בכר, which has the meanings "to bring forth," "to be first," and "to be early." It provides us with several words with a related meaning.

On Shavuot, we are commanded to bring בְּבִרְיָם - "the first fruits." A connected word

is בְּכוּרָה - "first ripe fig," as found in Yeshayahu 28:4.

In Modern Hebrew we find the word בכיר meaning "senior, superior." This is a back-formation from the biblical word בכירה meaning the elder sister, as Lavan referred to Leah:

וַיֹּאמֶר לָבָן לֵאמֹר יַעֲקֹב כֹּן בְּמִקְוֹמֹנוּ לָתֵת הַצְּעִירָה לְפָנָי הַבְּכִירָה:

"Lavan said: Such is not done in our place, giving away the younger before the first-born" (Bereshit 29:26)

And of course we have the word בכור, as found in our parasha. Sometimes in plural it appears as בְּכוֹרוֹת and other times as בכורים. While today there is no distinction between the two, some linguists claim that

originally בְּכוֹרִים referred to people, and בְּכוֹרוֹת applied to animals.

One less familiar word in this family is בֶּכָר, a young camel. It only appears once in the Tanakh, in Yeshayahu 60:6. It got its name from the root בכר because young camels were considered to be living at an earlier stage than their mature relatives.

While בֶּכָר is rare in Biblical Hebrew, it has a cognate in a familiar English word. The Arabic word *bakr* was borrowed into Portuguese and Spanish as *albacora*, and somewhere along the way it began to refer to a large kind of tuna – which we know today as "albacore." The connection between tuna and camels isn't clear. Some say it's because of the size. I wonder if perhaps the large dorsal fin reminded them of the hump of a camel.

## Parsha Riddle



**Reb Leor Broh**

Mizrachi Melbourne

Find five consecutive words that appear 3 times in the Parsha. In one case they are at the start of a verse, and in two cases they are at the end of a verse.

### Answer to the Parsha Riddle

Rather, Moshe in counting the Benei Yisroel was counting letters of the Sefer Torah with all its kedushah. To convey this thought, the five words "אָרְיָה" were positioned at the beginning of the verses. By doing so, these words rather than meaning "as G-d commanded Moshe", could have the meaning "equal to G-d's commands to Moshe" le: to the Torah and its commandments, was the counting of the Benei Yisroel by Moshe Rabbenu, because every Jew is a letter in the Sefer Torah.

וְהָיוּ לְפָנָי הַבְּכִירָה (א): וְהָיוּ לְפָנָי הַבְּכִירָה (ב): וְהָיוּ לְפָנָי הַבְּכִירָה (ג): וְהָיוּ לְפָנָי הַבְּכִירָה (ד): וְהָיוּ לְפָנָי הַבְּכִירָה (ה):

## DUST AND STARS THIS WEEK in Jewish History

- Iyar 29, 2884 (877 BCE):** Yahrzeit of the prophet Shmuel, the last of the Judges; author of *Shoftim*, *Shmuel* and *Ruth*; and anointer of Shaul and David as Kings of Israel.
- Sivan 1 (year unknown):** "The ground split beneath" [Korach and his men]... "And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up." (*Numbers* 16:31-32).
- May 22, 1799:** Napoleon invited "all the Jews of Asia and Africa to gather" under his flag "in order to re-establish the ancient Jerusalem."
- May 23, 1965:** Eli Cohen, a Mossad spy whose information was crucial to the capture of the Golan Heights in the 6-Day War, was caught and hung in Syria without trial.
- May 24, 2000:** The IDF unilaterally withdrew from the security zone in southern Lebanon to the international border, in full compliance with UN Resolution 425.
- May 25, 1991:** In 35 non-stop flights, Operation Solomon covertly transported 14,325 Ethiopian Jews to Israel in 36 hours.
- Sivan 6, 2448 (1313 BCE):** The Ten Commandments were proclaimed in Divine revelation to the entire Jewish people at Mount Sinai, an event celebrated every year since on Shavuot.

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Midreshet Eshel  
Midreshet HaRova  
Midreshet Rachel vChaya  
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Young Israel of Woodmere

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