



שבת פרשת במדבר/ערב שבועות
SHABBAT PARSHAT BAMIDBAR
EREV SHAVUOT
5 SIVAN - JUNE 8

Haftorah is Hosea 2:1-22. Do not say צדקה
 צדק. Pirkei Avot Chapter 6.

FRIDAY NIGHT
EARLIEST CANDLES - 6:52 PM
MINCHA/MAARIV - 7:00 PM
CANDLE LIGHTING - 8:08 PM
TZAIT - 9:11 PM

SATURDAY
HASHKAMA - 8:15 AM
SHACHARIT MAIN - 9:00 AM
LAST KRIAT SHEMA - 9:09 AM
GEMARA SHIUR - 7:00 PM
MINCHA - 8:00 PM

שבועות/SHAVUOT
 6-7 SIVAN/JUNE 9-10

SATURDAY NIGHT
MAARIV/CANDLES - 9:12 PM
TIKUN LEIL SHAVUOT - 11:30 PM

SUNDAY
HASHKAMA - 4:50 AM
NETZ - 5:24 AM
SHACHARIT MAIN - 8:45 AM
LAST KRIAT SHEMA - 9:09 AM
MINCHA - 8:10 PM
MAARIV - 8:55 PM
CANDLES - NOT BEFORE - 9:12 PM

MONDAY
HASHKAMA - 8:15 AM
SHACHARIT MAIN - 8:45 AM
LAST KRIAT SHEMA - 9:09 AM
YIZKOR - 10:30 AM
MINCHA - 8:10 PM
MAARIV/HAVDALAH - 9:13 PM

WEEKDAY DAVENING INFORMATION

	Sunday (6/2)	Monday (6/3)	Tuesday (6/4)	Wednesday (6/5)	Thursday (6/6)	Friday (6/7)	
Earliest Talit			4:14 AM	4:14 AM	4:14 AM	4:14 AM	
Shacharit			6:25 AM	6:25 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM	
Gedolah				1:34 PM	1:34 PM	1:34 PM	1:34 PM
Mincha - Maariv				8:15 PM	8:15 PM	8:15 PM	7:05 PM
Shkia				8:28 PM	8:29 PM	8:29 PM	
Tzait				9:13 PM	9:14 PM	9:14 PM	



Kiddush on Shabbat is sponsored by Elfie & Jamie Eisman in honor of their granddaughter, Nava Liba.

יגדולה לתורה ולחופה ולמעשים טובים

May they raise her to Torah, marriage and good deeds.

Kiddush/luncheon on the 2nd day of Shavuot is sponsored by the Schwitzer family with gratitude to Hashem for allowing us to be part of the wonderful and friendly Ahavat Achim shul and community!



Ice Cream Party/Perek on the Lawn, 1st Day of Shavuot, 4:00 PM, 3-03 Tanis Pl., sponsored by the Bernsteins in memory Larry's grandfather, Harry Swichar (Yoseph Aron ben Yitzchak) and Sara's grandmother, Fanny Silberman (Fraida bat Sarah).

TIKKUN LEIL SHAVUOT COLLATIONS ARE SPONSORED BY ELI ZEON

לעלוי נשמה של שלמה בין אליהו

Shavuot Schedule 2019

SHABBAT AFTERNOON

- Parent Child Learning (6pm) "Why We Read Rut on Shavuot" w/ Torah Tours
- Gemara Shiur (7pm) "Yom Tov Sheini: Believe it or Not!" R' Shestack
- B/w mincha & maariv: "Me, Myself, and You: Self Preservation in Halacha" R' Michael Hoenig

TIKKUN LEIL SHAVUOT, MOTZEI SHABBAT (THEME: "APPROACHING TALMUD")

- (11:30p) "Give Me Chavruta or Give Me Death: Analyzing How We Study" Chana Shestack
- (12:15a) "Getting the Most out of Gemara: 5 Lessons Learned About Learning" R' Shestack
- (1:30a) "It's What We Do...The Role of Common Custom in Determining Halacha" R' Josh Abramson
- (2:30a) "Fathers Be Good To Your Daughters: Teaching Women Torah" Haviva Tirschwell
- (3:30a) "Contemplating Miracles" Steve Plotnick
- (4:35a) 15-minute tefilla workshop w/ Haviva Tirschwell

FIRST DAY, SUNDAY

- (Immediately following the main minyan) "Getting the Most out of Gemara: 5 Lessons Learned" R' Shestack
- Perek on the Lawn @ the Bernsteins (4pm) w/ Larry Bernstein
- B/w mincha & maariv: "It's All Greek To Me!: Should I Be Learning Gemara?" R' Shestack

SECOND DAY, MONDAY

- (approx. 10am) Yizkor Drasha: "A Kingdom of Priests, A Holy Nation: A How To Guide?"
- B/w mincha & maariv: Ne'ilat Hachag, Singing & Takeaways from Shavuot Torah

Kiddush Information



- ☆ To sponsor a Kiddush (\$1000/\$613/\$318, plus scotch) email gplotnick@aol.com.
- ☆ If you are around when the Rabbi says “על המחיה”, your assistance in clean up would be appreciated.

Adult Education



- ☆ GEMARA SHIUR - Shabbat afternoon (45 minutes before Mincha), learning Beitzah.
- ☆ DAYTIME TORAH VOYAGES - Tuesdays at 1:00 PM.
- ☆ FUNDAMENTALS OF JEWISH THOUGHT - After Kiddush.
- ☆ PEREK ON THE LAWN, Pirkei Avot Periodic Shiur.

Gita Cooperwasser ע"ה Youth Program

- ☆ Youth groups start at 10:00 AM!
- ☆ Tot Shabbat, 10:40 AM!
- ☆ Contact Youth Director Aliza Kaplan to discuss our youth programming at youthdirectoraliza@ahavatachim.org.
- ☆ Aug 3 - Parent/Child Learning, studying Eichah, 6:40 PM



Stay & Play

- ☆ Next Stay & Play is at the Wigod home, June 15, 4:30 PM



Pirkei Avot Teen Learning

- ☆ For info email Ben at benjamin.greenbaum@frisch.org



Friday Evening, June 7



Ahavat Achim Future Events

- ☆ June 15 - Graduation Kiddush
- ☆ June 15 - Siyum Mesechet Bechorot at Suedah Shlishit
- ☆ June 22 - Teen Hashkama
- ☆ June 22 - New Members Lunch
- ☆ June 22 - Suedah Shlishit sponsored by Eli Zezon in memory of שמואל בן שמואל (נלב"ע כ"ד סיון תשנ"ט)
- ☆ June 22 - Billiards Tournament at Rabbi's House, Motzei Shabbat
- ☆ June 25 - General Membership Meeting
- ☆ June 30 - Kol Chaverim Carnival and Wandering Que BBQ
- ☆ July 6 - Suedah Shlishit is sponsored by the Winchester family to commemorate the 2nd yearzeit of Steve's father David Winchester, מאיר דה ע"ה בן שמואל גרשון הלוי
- ☆ Aug. 17 - Judah Levine Bar Mitzvah
- ☆ Nov. 16 - David Kor's Aufruf
- ☆ Dec. 7 - Yehuda Farajun Bar Mitzvah
- ☆ Feb. 8 - Eden Riskin Bat Mitzvah
- ☆ Feb. 22 - Yachad Shabbaton
- ☆ Sep. 14 - Aspiring Member Shabbaton

Community Events

- ☆ June 27 – **Floral Arrangement with Beth Feldman**. \$30/person. Thursday, 8:00 – 9:30 PM. To register go to <https://www.yifl.org/event/flowers>.

Perek on the Lawn

- ☆ June 29 - Garfunkel Home
- ☆ July 13 - Greene Home
- ☆ July 27 - Solomon Home
- ☆ Sept. 14
- ☆ Email Larry at lardavbern@gmail.com to host.



Youth Shavuot Schedule 2019

SHABBAT DAY:

- Groups w/ Aliza & Torah Tours
- Parent Child Learning (6pm) w/ Torah Tours!

TIKKUN LEIL SHAVUOT, MOTZEI SHABBAT:

MIDDLE SCHOOL:

- (11:30pm-12:30am) Learning w/ Aliza & Torah Tours

HIGH SCHOOL:

- (11:30pm) "Finding a Path in Torah" R' Shestack
- (12:15am) Megilat Rut Explorations w/ Andrew Wigod
- (1:45am) 15-minute tefila workshop w/ Hayva Tirschwell

FIRST DAY, SUNDAY:

- Groups w/ Aliza (continuing until the end of R' Shestack's Shiur for adults!)
- Ice Cream on the Lawn @ the Bernsteins & Torah Tours Rockin' Program

SECOND DAY, MONDAY:

- Groups w/ Aliza & Torah Tours
- BARuch Crawl (11:30pm) @ the Spiers, Oppenheims, & Wigods

2ND ANNUAL BARUCH CRAWL SHAVUOS STYLE

MEET, EAT, WALK & SAY A BRACHA 2ND DAY OF SHAVUOS. JUNE 10 @ 4:30

Adults, Kids & Teens
DIVREI TORAH BY OUR TEENS

FOOD WILL BE DAIRY & PARVE

STARTING AT THE SPIER HOME FOLLOWED BY THE OPPENHEIMS AND WIGODS

FOR TEENS TO GIVE A DIVAR TORAH, EMAIL MICHAEL.RISKIN AT MICHAEL.RISKIN10@GMAIL.COM

EMAIL: PROGRAMMINGAN@GMAIL.COM FOR ADDRESSES

קהילת אהבת אחים Ahavat Achim



Shirley Vann has dedicated this week's Covenant & Conversation (used with permission of the Office of Rabbi Sacks) in memory of her beloved mother Necha bat Yitzchok ע"ה.



SHABBAT/EREV SHAVUOT

Crucial Halachic Notes for Shavuot. Because Erev Yom Tov is Shabbat, it is important to remember that no preparations for Shavuot may be made while it is still Shabbat, including cooking or heating of food, and candles may not be lit until after Tzait HaKochavim. After shabbat, say "Baruch Hamavdil Bein Kodesh L'Kodesh", and then candles and other fires may be taken from an existing flame, as on any Yom Tov. Other preparations such as setting the table [even though they may not be strictly defined as "work"] may also not be done on Shabbat.

To make sure one does not go into the Shavuot meal satiated, Suedah Shlishit will not be hosted by the shul Shabbat afternoon. Everyone remains obligated to eat a third meal on Shabbat, but it should be eaten on one's own as a light meal closer to the afternoon meal.

א' דשבועות / FIRST DAY SHAVUOT

We wait until tzait to count seven complete weeks. Candles brachot are "להדליק נר של יום טוב" and "שהחיינו". Many study Torah all night, say the Tikun Shavuot, and/or read listings of the 613 Commandments. In Shacharit we say "אקדמות", the long Aramaic poem praising G-D, before the Torah reading. The first Sefer Torah is Exodus 19:1-20:23. Maftir is Numbers 28:26-31. Haftorah is Ezekiel 1:1-28 and 3:12. Many have varying customs regarding partaking of dairy food on Shavuot.

ב' דשבועות / SECOND DAY SHAVUOT

We read Megillat Rut (the Book of Ruth) followed by Mourner's Kaddish. The first Sefer Torah is Deut. 15:19-16:17. Maftir is Numbers 28:26-31. Haftorah is Habakkuk 2:20-3:19, but after the second verse of the Haftorah the Maftir recites the Piyut "יצִיב פתגם". During Yizkor we pledge Tzedakah to elevate the souls of the departed.

SUPPORT YOUR SHUL

Donate a Sefer, etc.

The shul has Siddurim & Machzorim (\$36) and Chumashim (\$54) available to be donated. Please contact Jeff Safier at robysafier@gmail.com for details.

Yahrzeit Plaques

Memorialize a loved one with a plaque for \$300 (for members, or \$450 for non-members). We will endeavor to send you written notice of an upcoming yahrzeit, mention his or her name during the public Yizkor and list the yahrzeit in the bulletin once a year. For more information, email Larry at lardavbern@gmail.com.

Men's Club

Please contact Elliot Greene at MensClub@AhavatAchim.Org to join the Men's Club.

Scrip

Scrip is available from Men's Club. Email David at dmgarfunkel@gmail.com. Pay using Paypal (treasurer@ahavatachim.org) or use Discover, MasterCard or Visa - email treasurer@ahavatachim.org for details.

Mishebayrach

Contributions to the shul after a Mishebayrach can be via Paypal to treasurer@ahavatachim.org, or via MasterCard, Visa or Discover by sending info to Steve Winchester (contact him at treasurer@ahavatachim.org). If by check indicate on its face "Aliyah Donation."

Honoraria

The available Honoraria list will be provided upon request by contacting Steven Plotnick at seplotnick@gmail.com.

David Schwitzer^{ע"ה} Social Hall

Please contact Ben Lang at bmmnpl@aol.com to book the David Schwitzer^{ע"ה} Social Hall for an event or special occasion. \$250 per simcha (members)/\$325 for Associates/\$400 paid in advance for non-members, plus the cost of any additional clean up (plus a \$150 security/cleaning deposit refunded when the social hall is returned in the condition it started in). Private caterers must be approved in advance by the Rabbi.

Mitzvah Cards

Want mitzvah cards, contact Eita Latkin at 791-8940 or parentsof3@aol.com. Cost is \$3 per card. Also can be ordered in bulk - ten cards for \$25, which you send out yourself privately.

SUPPORT YOUR SHUL

Graduation Kiddush is Shabbat, June 15. Sponsorship is just \$36 per graduate. To sponsor just email seplotnick@gmail.com with each graduate's name, school, special graduation-related honors (e.g., valedictorian, summa cum laude, or similar honors) and her or his degree and major if graduating from college. [Note that a bulletin sponsorship announcing a graduation(s) is only available in addition to sponsoring this kiddush, but not in lieu thereof.] Graduates so far: **Hilana Agress** (Hunter-Bellevue School of Nursing, M.S., Psychiatric and Mental Health Nurse Practitioner), **Helene Brenenson** (Rutgers University, Magna Cum Laude, B.F.A. Visual Arts), **Aubrey Ellis Carpe** (University of Massachusetts, Isenberg School of Management, M.B.A.), **Keren Farajun** (Frisch), **Josh Finkelstein** (Rutgers University, Summa Cum Laude, B.A. Psychology), **Mikey Finkelstein** (TABC), **Sarah Katter** (Yeshivat Noam), **Uri Garfunkel** (TABC), **Mathew Plotnick** (Portland State University, M.P.P., Analysis), **Rabbi Ely Shestack** (Rutgers University School of Social Work, M.S.W.), and **Andrew Wechsler** (Yavneh Academy).



MISCELLANEOUS

Ahavat Achim Membership/Hospitality

Contact Arnie at aspier@verizon.net for membership details. For Shabbat hospitality contact Melanie at mkwestel@gmail.com.

Bikkur Cholim/Chesed Committee

If someone needs a visit/assistance, contact Sara at saralevine06@gmail.com or Mary Lisa at kenkatter541@gmail.com.

Personal Announcements

Various life cycle events related to members are announced in the bulletin (e.g., births, bar and bat mitzvahs, weddings and deaths, as well as travel to/from Israel to study). We also welcome new members. Other personal announcements are not appropriate except as part of the bulletin's dedication (a \$36 cost - \$54 with photo).

Numbers & Info

- ☆ ERUV – To subscribe for updates, email fairlawneruv@groups.io. Check status at <https://groups.io/g/fairlawneruv> or call 201-254-9190.
- ☆ MIKVAH – 201-796-0350. At Shomrei Torah, 9 PM–10:30 PM, Motzei Shabbat from 1¼ hours after Shabbat ends for 1½ hours. Kaylim Mikvah: Sun. 10 AM-3 PM
- ☆ TWITTER: AhavatAchimFL
- ☆ FACEBOOK: [facebook.com/groups/ahavat.achim/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/ahavat.achim/)
- ☆ INSTAGRAM: [instagram.com/ahavatachimfl/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/ahavatachimfl/?hl=en)
- ☆ FLICKR: [flickr.com/photos/ahavatachim/albums](https://www.flickr.com/photos/ahavatachim/albums)

Shul Calendar

- ☆ To add events to the shul calendar email Larry at lardavbern@gmail.com.



Please welcome our newest members Liz & Alan Jacob, and their children Ariella, Daniel and Samuel.



Points To Ponder

- ☆ (1st) The name of the sefer and parsha we begin today is Bamidbar, which midbar, wilderness is the Torah referring to?
- ☆ (2nd) The word נָשָׂא (lit. to raise) is used to describe the process of counting the Jewish people here and elsewhere. How is the word used for Leviim who are not counted in this aliyah?
- ☆ (4th) What makes the firstborns special?
- ☆ (6th) How much is paid to "redeem" the firstborns from the Leviim? How many firstborns must pay?

- ☆ (1st) The Sinai Desert (v.1)
 ☆ (2nd) They aren't "raised" in a count, they נָשָׂא, (lit. carry) the Tabernacle.
 ☆ (4th) They are mine (Hashem's). They are sanctified/separated/wonderous (kadosh) by virtue of not being killed in Egypt along with the Egyptian firstborns
 ☆ (6th) 5 Shekel each. 273 firstborns. The others were "exchange for Leviim.
- Answers to Points To Ponder**



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8 Ball

1. **OBJECT OF THE GAME.** Eight Ball is a call shot game played with a cue ball and fifteen object balls, numbered 1 through 15. One player must pocket balls of the group numbered 1 through 7 (solid colors), while the other player has 9 thru 15 (stripes). **THE PLAYER POCKETING HIS GROUP FIRST AND THEN LEGALLY POCKETING THE 8-BALL WINS THE GAME.**
2. **CALL SHOT.** In Call Shot, obvious balls and pockets do not have to be indicated. It is the opponent's right to ask which ball and pocket if he is unsure of the shot. Bank shots and combination shots are not considered obvious, and care should be taken in calling both the object ball and the intended pocket. When calling the shot, it is NEVER necessary to indicate details such as the number of cushions, banks, kisses, caroms, etc. Any balls pocketed on a foul remain pocketed, regardless of whether they belong to the shooter or the opponent.
3. **ALTERNATING BREAK.** Winner of the lag or coin flip has the option to break. Players (teams) will alternate breaking on each subsequent game.
4. **JUMPING BALLS AND MASSE SHOTS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED.**
5. **LEGAL BREAK SHOT.** To execute a legal break, the breaker (with the cue ball behind the head string) must either (1) pocket a ball, or (2) drive at least four numbered balls to the rail. If he fails to make a legal break, it is a foul, and the incoming player has the option of (1) accepting the table in position and shooting, or (2) having the balls re-racked and having the option of shooting the opening break himself or allowing the offending player to re-break.
6. **SCRATCH ON A LEGAL BREAK.** If a player scratches on a legal break shot, (1) all balls pocketed remain pocketed (exception, the 8-ball: see rule 9), (2) it is a foul, (3) the table is open. **PLEASE NOTE:** Incoming player has cue ball in hand behind the head string and may not shoot an object ball that is behind the head string, unless he first shoots the cue ball past the head string and causes the cue ball to come back behind the head string and hit the object ball.
7. **OBJECT BALLS JUMPED OFF THE TABLE ON THE BREAK.** If a player jumps an object ball off the table on the break shot, it is a foul and the ball is spotted. The incoming player then has the option of (1) accepting the table in position and shooting, or (2) taking cue ball in hand behind the head string and shooting.
8. **8-BALL POCKETED ON THE BREAK.** If the 8-ball is pocketed on the break, the breaker may ask for a re-rack or have the 8-ball spotted and continue shooting. If the breaker scratches while pocketing the 8-ball on the break, the incoming player has the option of a re-rack or having the 8-ball spotted and begins shooting with ball in hand behind the head string.
9. **THE OPENING BREAK** is not a "called shot." Any player performing a break shot in 8-Ball may continue to shoot his next shot so long as he has legally pocketed any object ball on the break.
10. **OPEN TABLE.** The table is "open" when the choice of groups (stripes or solids) has not yet been determined. When the table is open, it is legal to hit a solid first to make a stripe or vice-versa. Note: The table is always open immediately after the break shot. When the table is open it is legal to hit any solid or stripe or the 8-ball first in the process of pocketing the called stripe or solid. However, when the table is open and the 8-ball is the first ball contacted, no stripe or solid may be scored in favor of the shooter. The shooter loses his turn; any balls pocketed remain pocketed; and the incoming player addresses the balls with the table still open. On an open table, all illegally pocketed balls remain

pocketed.

11. CHOICE OF GROUP. The choice of stripes or solids is not determined on the break even if balls are made from only one or both groups. THE TABLE IS ALWAYS OPEN IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE BREAK SHOT. The choice of group is determined only when a player legally pockets a called object ball after the break shot.

12. LEGAL SHOT. On all shots (except on the break and when the table is open), the shooter must hit one of his group of balls first and (1) pocket a numbered ball, or (2) cause the cue ball or any numbered ball to contact a rail.

13. PLEASE NOTE: It is permissible for the shooter to bank the cue ball off a rail before contacting his object ball; however, after contact with his object ball, an object ball must be pocketed, OR the cue ball or any numbered ball must contact a rail. Failure to meet these requirements is a foul.

14. SCORING. A player is entitled to continue shooting until he fails to legally pocket a ball of his group. After a player has legally pocketed his entire group of balls, he shoots to pocket the 8-ball.

15. SCRATCHING is considered a foul and the opposing player gets ball in hand.

16. FOUL PENALTY. Opposing player gets cue ball in hand. This means that the player can place the cue ball anywhere on the table (does not have to be behind the head string except on opening break). This rule prevents a player from making intentional fouls which would put his opponent at a disadvantage. With "cue ball in hand," the player may use his hand or any part of his cue (including the tip) to position the cue ball. When placing the cue ball in position, any forward stroke motion contacting the cue ball will be a foul, if not a legal shot.

17. COMBINATION SHOTS. Combination shots are allowed; however, the 8-ball cannot be used as a first ball in the combination except when the table is open.

18. ILLEGALLY POCKETED BALLS. An object ball is considered to be illegally pocketed when (1) that object ball is pocketed on the same shot a foul is committed, or (2) the called ball did not go in the designated pocket. Illegally pocketed balls remain pocketed.

19. OBJECT BALLS JUMPED OFF THE TABLE. If any object ball is jumped off the table, it is a foul and loss of turn, unless it is the 8-ball, which is a loss of game. Any jumped object balls are spotted.

20. LOSS OF GAME. A player loses the game if he commits any of the following infractions:

- * Fouls when pocketing the 8-ball (exception: see 8-Ball Pocketed on The Break).
- * Pockets the 8-ball on the same stroke as the last of his group of balls.
- * Jumps the 8-ball off the table at any time.
- * Pockets the 8-ball in a pocket other than the one designated.
- * Pockets the 8-ball when it is not the legal object ball.
- * Scratches during the attempt to make the 8-ball.



COVENANT & CONVERSATION

THOUGHTS ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA
FROM RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

בס"ד



I am deeply touched that Covenant & Conversation has been generously sponsored by THE MAURICE WOHL CHARITABLE FOUNDATION in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl ז"ל. Maurice was a visionary philanthropist on a vast scale, driven throughout his life by a sense of Jewish responsibility. Vivienne was a woman of the deepest humanity and compassion, who had a kind word for everyone. Together, they were a unique partnership of dedication and grace, for whom living was giving. Through their Charitable Foundation, they continue to bring blessings to Jewish communities around the world. — RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

במדבר תשע"ט
Bamidbar 5779

COVENANT & CONVERSATION: FAMILY EDITION

Covenant & Conversation: Family Edition is a new and exciting accompaniment to Rabbi Sacks' weekly *Covenant & Conversation* essay, aimed at connecting older children and teenagers with his ideas and thoughts on the *parsha*. To download the accompanying Family Edition to this Covenant & Conversation essay, please visit www.RabbiSacks.org/CCFamilyEdition or subscribe to Rabbi Sacks' free mailing list via www.RabbiSacks.org/Subscribe.

Leading a Nation of Individuals

Bamidbar begins with a census of the Israelites. That is why this book is known in English as 'Numbers'. What is the significance of this act of counting? And why here at the beginning of the book? Besides which, there have already been two previous censuses of the people and this is the third within the space of a single year. Surely one would have been sufficient. And does counting have anything to do with leadership?

The place to begin, is to note what appears to be a contradiction. On the one hand, Rashi says that the acts of counting in the Torah are gestures of love on the part of God:

Because they (the children of Israel) are dear to Him, God counts them often. He counted them when they were about to leave Egypt. He counted them after the Golden Calf to establish how many were left. And now that He was about to cause His presence to rest on them (with the inauguration of the sanctuary), He counted them again. (Rashi to Bamidbar 1:1)

So we learn that when God initiates a census of the Israelites, it is to show that He loves them.

In contradiction to this, centuries later King David counted the people, but there was Divine anger and 70,000 people died. How can this be, if counting is an expression of love?

The Torah is explicit in saying that taking a census of the nation is fraught with risk:

Then God said to Moses, “When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each must give to God a ransom for his life at the time he is counted. Then no plague will come on them when you number them. (Ex. 30:11-12).

The answer to this apparent contradiction lies in the phrase the Torah uses to describe the act of counting: *se’u et rosh*, literally, “lift the head.” This is a strange, circumlocutory expression. Biblical Hebrew contains many verbs meaning “to count”: *limnot*, *lifkod*, *lispor*, *lachshov*. Why does the Torah not use these simple words, choosing instead the roundabout expression, “lift the heads” of the people?

The short answer is this: In any census, count or roll-call there is a tendency to focus on the total: the crowd, the multitude, the mass. Here is a nation of 60 million people, or a company with 100,000 employees or a sports crowd of 60,000. Any total tends to value the group or nation as a whole. The larger the total, the stronger is the army, the more popular the team, and the more successful the company.

Counting devalues the individual, and tends to make him or her replaceable. If one soldier dies in battle, another will take his place. If one person leaves the organisation, someone else can be hired to do his or her job.

“In any census, there is a tendency to focus on the total. Counting devalues the individual.”

Notoriously, too, crowds have the effect of tending to make the individual lose his or her independent judgment and follow what others are doing. We call this “herd behaviour,” and it sometimes leads to collective madness. In 1841 Charles Mackay published his classic study, *Extraordinary Popular Delusions And The Madness Of Crowds*, which tells of the South Sea Bubble that cost thousands their money in the 1720s, and the tulip mania in Holland when fortunes were spent on single tulip bulbs. The Great Crashes of 1929 and 2008 had the same crowd psychology.

Another great work, Gustav Le Bon’s *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1895) showed how crowds exercise a “magnetic influence” that transmutes the behaviour of individuals into a collective “group mind.” As he put it, “An individual in a crowd is a grain of sand amid other grains of sand, which the wind stirs up at will.” People in a crowd become anonymous. Their conscience is silenced. They lose a sense of personal responsibility. Crowds are peculiarly prone to regressive behaviour, primitive reactions and instinctual behaviour. They are easily led by figures who are demagogues, playing on people’s fears and sense of victimhood. Such leaders, he said, are “especially recruited from the ranks of those morbidly nervous excitable half-deranged persons who are bordering on madness”, a remarkable anticipation of Hitler. It is no accident that Le Bon’s work was published in France at a time of rising antisemitism and the Dreyfus trial.

Hence the significance of one remarkable feature of Judaism: its principled insistence – like no other civilisation before – on the dignity and integrity of the individual. We believe that every human being is in the image and likeness of God. The Sages said that every life is like an entire universe. Maimonides says that each of us should see ourselves as if our next act could change the fate of the world. Every dissenting view is carefully recorded in the Mishnah, even if the law is otherwise. Every verse of the Torah is capable, said the Sages, of seventy interpretations. No voice, no view, is silenced. Judaism never allows us to lose our individuality in the mass.

There is a wonderful blessing mentioned in the Talmud to be said on seeing 600,000 Israelites together in one place. It is: “Blessed are You, Lord ... who discerns secrets.” The Talmud explains that every person is different. We each have different attributes. We all think our own thoughts. Only God can enter the minds of each of us and know what we are thinking, and this is what the blessing refers to. In other words, even in a massive crowd where, to human eyes, faces blur into a mass, God still relates to us as individuals, not as members of a crowd.

That is the meaning of the phrase, “lift the head,” used in the context of a census. God tells Moses that there is a danger, when counting a nation, that each individual will feel insignificant. “What am I? What difference can I make? I am only one of millions, a mere wave in the ocean, a grain of sand on the sea-shore, dust on the surface of infinity.”

Against that, God tells Moses to lift people’s heads by showing that they each count; they matter as individuals. Indeed in Jewish law a *davar she-be-minyan*, something that is counted, sold individually rather than by weight, is never nullified even in a mixture of a thousand or a million others. In Judaism taking a census must always be done in such a way as to signal that we are valued as individuals. We each have unique gifts. There is a contribution only I can bring. To lift someone’s head means to show them favour, to recognise them. It is a gesture of love.

There is, however, all the difference in the world between individuality and individualism. Individuality means that I am a unique and valued member of a team. Individualism means that I am not a team player at all. I am interested in myself alone, not the group. Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam gave this a famous name, noting that more people than ever in the United States are going ten-pin bowling but fewer than ever are joining teams. He called it “Bowling alone.” MIT professor Sherry Turkle calls our age of Twitter, Facebook, and online (rather than face-to-face) friendships, “Alone together.” Judaism values individuality, not individualism. As Hillel said, “If I am only for myself, what am I?”

“Judaism values individuality, not individualism.”

All this has implications for Jewish leadership. We are not in the business of counting numbers. The Jewish people always was small and yet achieved great things. Judaism has a profound mistrust of demagogic leaders who manipulate the emotions of crowds. Moses

at the burning bush spoke of his inability to be eloquent. “I am not a man of words.” He thought this was a failing in a leader. In fact it was the opposite. Moses did not sway people by his oratory. Rather, he lifted them by his teaching.

A Jewish leader has to respect individuals. He or she must “lift their heads.” However large the group you lead, you must always communicate the value you place on everyone. You must never attempt to sway a crowd by appealing to the primitive emotions of fear or hate. You must never ride roughshod over the opinions of others.

It is hard to lead a nation of individuals, but this is the most challenging, empowering, inspiring leadership of all.

Shabbat Shalom.

“It is hard to lead a nation of individuals, but this is the most challenging, empowering, inspiring leadership of all.”

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