

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT BAMIDBAR · 24 IYAR 5774 - MAY 24, 2014 · VOL. 21 NO. 35

PARSHA INSIGHTS

ONLY BY BEING ONE CAN WE REVEAL THE ONE BEING

“The children of Israel shall camp, every man at his camp and every man at his banner...” (1:52)

The Jewish People can only reach their ultimate purpose through unity. Only through being One can G-d's Presence be revealed in the world, as it says in the liturgy of the Shabbat Afternoon prayer: “You are One and Your Name is One, and who is like Your People, Yisrael, One Nation in the Land?”

When Yisrael is one, then G-d's Name is One – meaning that the world perceives that there is only One Power in existence.

Why then did G-d form the Jewish People into twelve *shevatim* (tribes)? Why didn't He create the Jewish People as a single entity? The very word “tribe” in English implies sectarianism; turf wars, intolerance – the very opposite of unity.

It's a common misconception that Judaism requires slavish uniformity. Nothing could be further from the truth. If G-d wanted us to be all the same, then why did he create us so different?

Klal Yisrael, the union of the Jewish People as an entity, can only be achieved by each one of us fulfilling our individual potential as human beings and Jews.

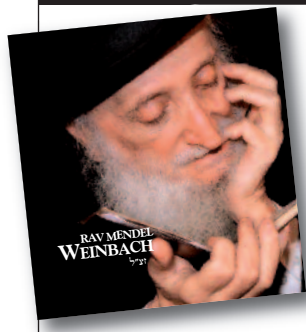
When the media show helicopter shots of a sea of several hundred thousand black hats, there is an impression that being religious means being an automaton, being just another faceless face in the crowd.

In fact, the only way we can be One is to be like the tribes in the desert: separate, individual but united by the Holy Ark – the Torah - that sat in the midst of the camp.

In the Future World, our Sages teach us, the righteous will dance in a circle and G-d will sit in the middle. Each one will be 180 degrees from each other – diametrically opposed - but they will all be equidistant from G-d.

• Sources: Based on Rabbi Shimshon Rafael Hirsch, *zt'l*, and Rabbi Zev Leff, *shlita*

A Memorial Tribute to Rav Weinbach *zt'l*



The Memorial Tribute Book for Rav Weinbach *zt'l* is available in print at Ohr Somayach.*

A PDF format is available for free download on www.ohr.edu.

* Suggested minimum donation for the printed version is 36 nis.

Proceeds will be used for the Gemach Charity Fund established by Rav Weinbach, *zt'l*.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Book of Bamidbar — “In the Desert” — begins with G-d commanding Moshe to take a census of all men over age twenty — old enough for service. The count reveals just over 600,000. The *levi'im* are counted separately later because their service will be unique. They will be responsible for transporting the *Mishkan* and its furnishings and assembling them when the nation encamps. The 12 Tribes of Israel, each with its banner, are arranged around the *Mishkan* in four sections: east, south, west and north. Since Levi is singled out, the tribe of Yosef is split into two tribes, Ephraim and Menashe, so there will be four groups of three. When the nation travels, they march in a formation similar to the way they camp. A formal transfer is made between the first-born and the *levi'im*, whereby the *levi'im*

take over the role the first-born would have had serving in the *Mishkan* if not for the sin of the golden calf. The transfer is made using all the 22,000 surveyed *levi'im* from one month old and up. Only *levi'im* between 30 and 50 will work in the *Mishkan*. The remaining first-born sons are redeemed with silver, similar to the way we redeem our first-born today. The sons of Levi are divided into three main families, Gershon, Kehat and Merari (besides the *kohanim* — the special division from Kehat's family). The family of Kehat carried the *menorah*, the table, the altar and the holy ark. Because of their utmost sanctity, the ark and the altar are covered only by Aharon and his sons, before the *levi'im* prepare them for travel.

TALMUD Tips

ADVICE FOR LIFE

Based on the Talmudic Sages found in the seven pages of the Talmud studied each week in the Daf Yomi cycle

ROSH HASHANA 16 - 22

“Four things tear up a negative (Heavenly) verdict against a person. They are: giving charity, crying out in prayer, changing one's name, and changing one's deeds from negative to positive.”

Rabbi Yitzchak instructs us with this statement on our *daf* how to avoid harsh punishment for transgressions, and derives them from verses as taught in the *gemara*. An additional method is also mentioned in the name of “Others”: changing one's location. The *gemara* learns this additional way of tearing up the decree from what G-d said to Avraham: “Go for yourself... to the land that I will show you... and I will make you there into a great nation.” However, Rabbi Yitzchak did not initially quote this reason, since it is possible that it was the special and unique merit of going up the Land of Israel that helped the change for the better, which would not apply to other changes in location.

• Rosh Hashana 16b

“A person is obligated to visit one's rabbi during the Festival.”

This is another teaching from Rabbi Yitzchak on our *daf*, and he derives it from a verse in the Book of Kings. Although this teaching is found in the Mishneh Torah of the Rambam, it does not appear in the Shulchan Aruch of laws that apply in our time. Rather, explain the authorities, it applies only in the time of the Beit Hamikdash, when there is also a mitzvah “to see and be seen” in the Beit Hamikdash on Festivals. However, in our time when we can no longer fulfill this mitzvah associated with the Beit Hamikdash, it would be inappropriate to give special honor to another person – a rabbi – by means of a visit, at a time when it is not possible to display this honor to G-d by visiting in the Beit Hamikdash which is not currently standing. May it be rebuilt speedily in our days.

• Rosh Hashana 16b

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

Love of the Land, written by Rav Mendel Weinbach, zt"l • Parsha Insights written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

General Editor and Talmud Tips: Rabbi Moshe Newman • Design: Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why were the Jewish People counted so frequently?
2. What documents did the people bring when they were counted?
3. What determined the color of the tribal flags?
4. What is the difference between an “ot” and a “degel”?
5. How do we see that the Jews in the time of Moshe observed “*techum Shabbat*” - the prohibition against traveling more than 2,000 *amot* on *Shabbat*?
6. What was the signal for the camp to travel?
7. What was the sum total of the counting of the 12 tribes?
8. Why are Aharon’s sons called “sons of Aharon and Moshe”?
9. Who was Nadav’s oldest son?
10. Which two people from the Book of Esther does Rashi mention in this week’s Parsha?
11. Why did the *levi'im* receive *ma'aser rishon*?
12. Which groups of people were counted from the age of one month?
13. Name the first descendant of Levi in history to be counted as an infant.
14. Who assisted Moshe in counting the *levi'im*?
15. Why did so many people from the tribe of Reuven support Korach in his campaign against Moshe?
16. Why did so many people from the tribes of Yehuda, Yissachar and Zevulun become great Torah scholars?
17. In verse 3:39 the Torah states that the total number of *levi'im* was 22,000. The actual number was 22,300. Why does the Torah seem to ignore 300 *levi'im*?
18. The first-born males of the Jewish People were redeemed for five *shekalim*. Why five *shekalim*?
19. During what age-span is a man considered at his full strength?
20. As the camp was readying itself for travel, who was in charge of covering the vessels of the *Mishkan* in preparation for transport?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 1:1 - They are very dear to G-d.
2. 1:18 - They brought birth records proving their tribal lineage.
3. 2:2 - Each tribe’s flag was the color of that tribe’s stone in the breastplate of the *kohen gadol*.
4. 2:2 - An “ot” is a flag, i.e., a colored cloth that hangs from a flagpole. A *degel* is a flagpole.
5. 2:2 - G-d commanded them to camp no more than 2,000 *amot* from the *Ohel Mo'ed*. Had they camped farther, it would have been forbidden for them to go to the *Ohel Mo'ed* on *Shabbat*.
6. 2:9 - The cloud over the *Ohel Mo'ed* departed and the *kohanim* sounded the trumpets.
7. 2:32 - 603,550.
8. 3:1 - Since Moshe taught them Torah, it’s as if he gave birth to them.
9. 3:4 - Nadav had no children.
10. 3:7 - Bigtan and Teresh.
11. 3:8 - Since the *levi'im* served in the *Mishkan* in place of everyone else, they received tithes as “payment.”
12. 3:15, 40 - The *levi'im*, and the first-born of *B'nei Yisrael*.
13. 3:15 - Levi’s daughter Yocheved was born while the Jewish People were entering Egypt. She is counted as one of the 70 people who entered Egypt.
14. 3:16 – G-d.
15. 3:29 - The tribe of Reuven was encamped near Korach, and were therefore influenced for the worse. This teaches that one should avoid living near the wicked.
16. 3:38 - The tribes of Yehuda, Yissachar and Zevulun were encamped near Moshe, and were therefore influenced for the good. This teaches that one should seek to live near the righteous.
17. 3:39 - Each *levi* served to redeem a first-born of the Jewish People. Since 300 *levi'im* were themselves first-born, they themselves needed to be redeemed, and could therefore not redeem others.
18. 3:46 - To atone for the sale of Yosef, Rachel’s first-born, who was sold by his brothers for five *shekalim* (20 pieces of silver.)
19. 4:2 - Between the ages of 30 and 50.
20. 4:5 - The *kohanim*.

Abarbanel

ON PARSHAT BAMIDBAR

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

In this week's Parsha the Torah details the census that was taken of all males from the age of twenty and up after their departure from Egypt. Abarbanel questions the need for this census since one year earlier the same population was counted through each individual's donation of a half-shekel towards the construction of the Tabernacle (Mishkan). Abarbanel is also puzzled by the fact that the count is exactly the same in both instances, an impossible result since there would have been a significant number of individuals who were nineteen years old at the time of the first census and would only be counted at the second census.

Regarding the first question he answers that at this point the nation would soon be entering the Land of Israel, which would have to be conquered militarily. Just as a king would take a careful census of his available troops before embarking on a military campaign, the Torah specifically states that Moshe counted "...from twenty years of age and up, everyone who goes out to the legion in Israel..." The command to conduct the census was specifically given to Moshe alone, as he would be functioning like a king at the head of his army. This is indicated by the end of the above-mentioned verse which states, "...you shall count them according to their legions."

The Torah then goes on to designate a leader for each of the tribes, since they would have to know how many men would be under their command as they would have to assume, as the Ramban emphasizes, that they could not rely on miracles such as one man chasing a thousand of the

enemy. Additionally, since there would be a division of the Land amongst the tribes, each leader had to know the population of his tribe in comparison to the others. Since this census was part of an upcoming military campaign which would ultimately result in the division of the Land, the mixed multitude of Egyptians that accompanied the Jews into the desert were excluded from the census as they would have no inheritance in the Land. Even though Abarbanel does not elaborate, perhaps we can assume as well that their questionable loyalty and commitment would preclude them from military service as well.

In answer to the second question, Abarbanel points out that the Torah makes it clear that the Levites were not part of the second census. At this point the Tabernacle had been completed and it was the Levites' role to be involved in all the activities centered in the Tabernacle, including taking it down, transporting it and re-erecting it. Since the Levites would be excused from military service and would not have a specific portion in the Land of Israel, there was no need to count them in the second census. The first census, however, took place before the Levites were specifically designated for service in the Tabernacle, and since they also contributed a half-shekel to the Tabernacle they were counted along with all the other tribes. Thus, even though thousands of just-turned-twenty young men were added to the number of the second census, we have to subtract the approximately 22,000 Levites who were not counted in the second census.

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

TOMBS OF THE SANHEDRIN

In the northern part of Jerusalem are the Sanhedria and Sanhedria Murchvet neighborhoods. Their names are derived from their proximity to what is known as the "Tombs of the Sanhedrin".



Tradition has it that there are buried the members of the Great Sanhedrin, Jewry's highest court of law and the ultimate religious, judicial and political authority in Eretz Yisrael thousands of years ago.

GRAVESIDE

From: Gary

Dear Rabbi,

Is there any benefit to visiting deceased people at their grave? Since if anything is accomplished, it's spiritual, does it matter that one is physically present at the place of burial? Anyway, after time there are no remains of the body in the ground. Why should we go there?

Dear Gary,

These are all very good and relevant questions.

In Judaism, burial, and the burial site, are very important.

It is a Torah requirement to bury, and to make every effort to be buried. Except in the most extreme scenarios, it is strictly forbidden to dispose of a body in any other way.

Since burial is so important to G-d, it follows that the burial site is also very important. In fact, the Torah often makes reference to burial sites, emphasizing the significance of the site remaining until this day. One example of this is the burial site of Rachel, which is identified by the Torah as being on the way to Beit Lechem. This reveals that the actual physical location of the grave is also important.

In the case of Rachel, Scriptures and the Talmud explain why: When the Jews were exiled, they were led past the burial site of Rachel, who is described as weeping and wailing over the fate of her children, beseeching G-d to have mercy on them and return them to their Land, the Land of Israel. G-d is swayed by her supplications and assures Mother Rachel that

her prayers will be answered.

Why did the Jews have to be brought before the burial site for this to happen? Rather, you see from here that there is a special connection made between the living and the deceased at the burial site itself.

The reason for this is that even though the body eventually decays, a component of the soul remains connected to the remains at that spot. It is through this residual aspect of soul that the soul fully returns to the body upon resurrection. And this is also why the Hebrew name should be engraved in stone at that place, which anchors the soul there. In fact, that stone is called "nefesh" – a term referring to the lowest level of soul, mostly connected with the body.

The soul-connection to the grave is not only a function of place. It's also affected by time. At certain times the presence of the soul is greater than at others. For example, this is so on days of judgment or on the "yahrzeit" (the annually commemorated day of departing). These occasions are considered particularly conducive to connecting between the living and the departed, which is considered especially helpful for both at these times.

In addition to all that, just making the effort to be physically present at the grave demonstrates great respect for the deceased. It also usually engenders much more palpable recollections of the departed and our relationship with them, making our remembrance of them more moving and significant. Finally, since the soul of the deceased is actually there in some measure, particularly during certain special occasions, the actual soul-connection is much stronger than when we "visit" them from afar.

IT'S NOT Quite That Simple

by Rabbi Dr. Yitzchak Greenblatt

MARRYING OFF CHILDREN

Lavan is not one of Judaism's favorite characters, to say the least. Brother to Rivka and father of Leah and Rachel, he was an archetypal hater of Israel, charged by our Sages of being even worse than Pharaoh. Pharaoh, you see, "only" wanted to kill all Jewish males, whereas Lavan wanted all Jews wiped out.

But he had a (kind of) redeeming trait. He was fiercely protective of his family. When his sister Rivka came into the house wearing jewelry given to her by a man next to the well, he was the first to dash outside to meet this man. Remember the famous story of how he tricked Yaakov into marrying Leah, his older daughter, before Rachel, the younger? What was his justification? "It's not the done thing is our area for the younger to marry before the older!" This shows real sensitivity to the feelings of Leah, albeit at great cost to poor Yaakov, who was

hoodwinked into another seven years of hard labor! But from the point of view of dedication to family, we try to emulate Lavan.

It seems reasonable and sensitive to marry off children in order of age, to avoid jealousy. The Shulchan Aruch, the authoritative code of Jewish Law, rules that "...regarding the celebration of a feast or a wedding, we use the criterion of age to determine primacy." (Yoreh De'ah 244:18) One of our foremost halachic authorities, the Bach, Rabbi Sirkis (1561-1640), explains that when arranging weddings for children one should not marry off the younger child first.

But, as with virtually all things in Judaism, it's not quite that simple.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986), the most preeminent halachic decisor of the last generation, understood the

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THE SHEMONEH ESREI - THE FIRST BLESSING (2)

“Our G-d, and the G-d of our Fathers”

One may ask why we mention today’s generation of Jews before mentioning the generations of our ancestors. After all, they were first in establishing a connection with G-d; we merely received our faith and way of life from them. Now, since it is through transmission from generation to generation that Judaism has survived, it would seem that the blessing should have mentioned our Fathers first.

Faith and Knowledge

The Dover Shalom explains (in the Siddur “Otzar Hatefillot”):

The reverse order is meant to teach the necessity for the individual to establish a personal and direct connection with G-d through his own Torah study and observance, as it is written: “Know the G-d of your Fathers, and serve Him” (Psalms). The implication is that one must not rely on *mesorah* (tradition) alone. Rather, one must establish his own connection to G-d by developing a clear knowledge for himself of who G-d is.

One must be cautioned, however. Knowledge alone is not enough. It must be prefaced with the proper faith — that which was passed down to us throughout the generations by our holy Fathers. We therefore mention both aspects of our belief: that which we initiate, as well as that which we received from our Fathers.

In connection to the above the Baal Shem Tov taught that each person must recognize G-dliness from his own efforts, and also through the efforts of his ancestors. These are reflected in faith and knowledge. Faith is passed down from generation to generation, while knowledge is attained by the work and effort of the individual.

Keeping the Torah Alive

There is another benefit one experiences by establishing a strong intellectual connection of his own to G-d through Torah and *mitzvot*. He insures that his Divine service will be full of depth and vitality. Those who rely on tradition alone without making any attempt to understand the real meaning behind Jewish practice risk becoming like so many to whom Judaism appears as a religion of trivial rituals. Once detached from the heart and soul of true Torah observance, Jewish life will seem like a body without a soul.

Thus we see the unfortunate failure in passing on a tradition based only on blind faith to the next generation. The youth of today will not settle for a religion empty of substance and meaning. They will instead opt for other alternatives. In contrast, when children see through the living example of their parents that a life of Torah is all-encompassing and full of meaning, as it is explained by the Sages of each generation, they will embrace the religion with all their heart and proclaim: “The G-d of my Fathers is my G-d.”

IT’S NOT *Quite That Simple*

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Shulchan Aruch’s words quite differently. (Igrot Moshe, Even Ha’ezer II:1) He understood that there is no prohibition at all for a younger child to marry before an older one. According to Rabbi Feinstein the idea that a man should have to delay marrying and having children simply because his older brother has not yet found a bride is, if you’ll pardon the pun, inconceivable. After all, G-d commands every man to marry and have children. (Note that this reasoning cannot be applied to a woman because women are not commanded to have children — but that’s a column for another time.) The Shulchan Aruch is only talking about a case when both children are engaged to be married and the question is only which one should be married first. In such a case, the elder sibling gets to go first. Actually, the words of the Shulchan Aruch do suggest this interpretation: “...regarding the celebration of a feast or a wedding, we use the criterion of age to determine primacy.” It makes sense to say that it is only decisions regarding the celebrations which are at stake here.

To return to Lavan, he was extreme in his zealous concern

for his family’s “best interests” at the expense of everything else. Lying, cheating and scheming were no problem. Another famous Biblical figure, Lot, famously tried to protect his guests (secretly angels) from being sodomized by the people of, well, Sodom, by offering the assailants his two virgin daughters. “Let me bring them out to you,” he offers, “and do what you like with them”. Not exactly father of the year. Lot valued his responsibility to his guests greatly and took this to such an extreme that he neglected his duty to his daughters, which so obviously should have taken precedence.

It is all too easy to be over-simplistic. Lavan valued family above everything. Lot valued his obligations to his guests above everything. But life is more complicated than that. It is all too easy to take one extreme viewpoint and refuse to temper your views for anyone or anything. But it is not *emet* — it is not truth. *Emet* comes from balancing things. Many things may be good in and of themselves, but it takes much learning to be able to discern what is really *emet* in any given case.