

זכור את יום השבת לקדשו.
ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל מלאכתך,
ויום השביעי שבת לה'

SHABBAT LASHEM

THE VOICE OF BNEI AKIVA UK

PARASHAT BAMIDBAR

29TH IYAR 5780

22ND & 23RD MAY 2020

VOLUME 30 ISSUE 34

BNEI
AKIVA
UNITED KINGDOM



בס"ד



THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

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SHEVET TZION

Counting. What is the significance of counting? At present we are counting the Omer, the days from Pesach to Shavuot. This counting has an obvious significance: we are counting to reach a goal, a defining event in our history. However, what about everyday life? We often find ourselves counting the items we own, our possessions. We may even count the things we love, not out of love but rather out of worry. Counting, caring, recounting...sounds a bit like paranoia.

Bamidbar is literally translated as 'in the desert'; nevertheless, perhaps a more accurate representation for the events in this book is the English title - The Book of Numbers. Indeed, there are repeated listings, relating to the census and the designation of the people. Having already had two previous countings, what could possibly be the significance of counting Am Yisrael on this particular occasion?

If we look more carefully at the dates and the sequence of events, the census described in Chapter 1 was taken in the second month (Iyar) of the second year; however, Chapters 7,8 and 9 describe events that took place during the first month (Nis-

san) of the second year- chronologically before Sefer Bamidbar began. The Torah puts this census before any other event to teach us something very significant. Rav Yair Kahn explains that at the beginning of Bamidbar we are not just being told arbitrary groups of numbers but rather the fundamentals of the establishment of the Camp of Israel. That there is a need, even though we are talking about the general nation, for self-expression within the nation. Every person is numbered, every person is counted by the head. The special characteristics of each person were not ignored; in fact they are part of the expression of the whole people. This seems quite confusing as it defies the natural conflict of nation vs individual, or more commonly, communism vs capitalism. Here we have something different: everyone has to be counted and everyone has their job in the framework of the society; we have to recognise and use the characteristics of all individuals and not put them down. What is significant here is the combination of what is special in individual people and the needs of the community together in harmony.

איש על מחנהו ואיש על דגלו

"every man at his camp and every man at his flag" (Bamidbar 1:52).

Flags are not only essential for societal development and individual recognition but are also key for human development.

continued on next page

London In: 20:41 Out: 22:06
Manchester In: 20:56 Out: 22:31
Cambridge In: 20:40 Out: 22:10

Oxford In: 20:44 Out: 22:12
Bristol In: 20:48 Out: 22:15
Birmingham In: 20:50 Out: 22:21

Leeds In: 20:55 Out: 22:31
Liverpool In: 20:39 Out: 22:33
Jerusalem In: 18:58 Out: 20:16

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

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The Malbim explains that our flags pose as signs for ourselves, that a person has to feel comfortable and part of the camp. People want to be in a supportive environment, being in a place you don't feel comfortable really deters a person from being able to fulfil themselves. *איש על־מַחֲנֵהוּ* is a prerequisite of an individual fulfilling their self-expression: the need to be in an environment that allows them to reach *איש על־דָגְלוֹ*. Says Rav Amital, in order for your flag to fly you have to be in an environment, a machane, that is conducive for that to happen. To have self-expression you have to feel that you can express yourself.

According to Rav Kook, we have a duty to find

and discover our special way of serving God: a path woven with greatness and humility. We must recognise what is good for us and what isn't - we all have different objectives and must do what is best for our character. Everyone has something different to give, we have to identify what it is and then go and do it. Your importance is not reflected by anyone, you were created with the breath of God:

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹקִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

"And God created Adam in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." (Bereishit 1:27)

בְּצַלְמוֹ - in His own image - and then *בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹקִים* - in the image of God - we are all made in our own image, not in the image of anyone else. Never forget that in the nation there are individuals and that the individual is vital.

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Rabbi Sacks says, "counting devalues the individual and tends to make him more replaceable". However, here, as Rashi points out, God is showing Israel an act of love. Even in a massive crowd, God still refers to us individually: *"שׂוּאוּ אֶת־רֹאשׁ"* "Lift up the head"

(Bamidbar 1:2) in order that every individual knows they are significant. The census teaches us that there is a contribution that each individual can bring to the masses. As Rambam writes, "each of us should see ourselves as if our next act could change the fate of the world."

TALIA WAS A MADRICHA ON BET CHALUTZI MACHANE 5779.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. Why is the phrase *שׂוּאוּ אֶת־רֹאשׁ* (lit. lift up the head) used to mean 'take a census'? (See **Ramban on 1:2**)
2. What does the fact that the Levi'im were not counted in the census tell us about its purpose? (See **Ibn Ezra on 1:49**)
3. In what way does the arrangement of the camp reflect the Heavenly Court? (See **Rabbeinu Bahya on 2:2**)

BAMIDBAR 5780:

RAV JOEL KENIGSBURG | RAV SHALIACH



The beginning, contrary to popular belief, is not always a very good place to start.

At the start of Sefer Bamidbar we find one of the most famous examples of the principle “אין מוקדם ומאוחר” – *“בְּתוֹרָה* – the events of the Torah are not (necessarily) written in chronological order. Parashat Bamidbar contains the census that took place at the beginning of the second month (Iyar) after Bnei Yisrael left Egypt, whilst later on in Parshat Beha'alotecha (Bamidbar Chapter 9) we are told about the Korban Pesach which was brought in the first month of (Nissan). Why was the order changed around?

Rashi explains that it was in order not to disgrace the Jewish people. During the entire 40 years in the desert the Korban Pesach was brought only this once, and thus it would have been shameful to mention it explicitly at the beginning of the Sefer. Doing so would call attention to the fact that for the rest of their time in the desert Bnei Yisrael failed to perform this most basic of mitzvot, so central to Jewish identity.

Upon reflection, Rashi's comments seem difficult. The Torah explicitly states that the mitzvah of bringing the Korban Pesach becomes binding only upon entry into the land of Israel. Furthermore, Chazal tell us that the desert conditions did not allow for Brit Milah to be performed in a safe manner. It turns out that Bnei Yisrael were not transgressors – they were exempt from the command! Why then was it to their discredit that the Korban Pesach was brought only once?

Some commentators explain that the disgrace is the fact that Bnei Yisrael

remained in the desert at all. The 40 years of wandering were decreed only as a result of the sin of the spies. Had it not been for that disastrous episode they would have entered Eretz Yisrael immediately and the Korban Pesach would have been brought that entire period.

But an alternative approach, suggested by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, is that the entire nation should have learned from the actions of a few individuals. After the Korban Pesach was brought, those who were unable to participate came to ask Moshe Rabbeinu for another opportunity, and they were granted Pesach Sheni. If individuals could make the case of “why should we be left out”, then how much more so could the entire nation? The criticism lies not in the fact that Bnei

Yisrael didn't perform a mitzvah from which they were temporarily exempt, but from the fact that they accepted the situation.

Rather than acquiesce in silence, they should have pleaded to Hashem for the same opportunity.

Today once again we find ourselves in a situation where we are unable to perform some of the most basic rituals of Jewish life. But what matters most is the attitude we create in response. Of course, we can't return to *tefilla betzibbur* until it's safe to do so, but do we miss it? Do we long for it? It's up to us to show our desire for mitzvot in the ways we can and to yearn not just for a return to ways of old, but for the day (hopefully soon) when we re-enter our *mikdashai me'at* with a newfound appreciation.

Shabbat Shalom!

FOLLOW RAV JOEL ON FACEBOOK (RAV SHALIACH PAGE) AND ON TWITTER (@JOEL KENIGSBURG)

WHAT'S GOING ON?

- This week is **Mental Health Awareness Week**. Check out our posters on Facebook for some useful self-care tips. The Mazkirut are here for you if you ever want a friendly chat - head to **bauk.org/contact** to get in touch! For professional support and resources check out **jamiuk.org**.

- See poster below for information about our **Tikkun Leil** taking place over Zoom on **Tuesday night!**

- **Sichot B'Ivrit**, our new Ivrit class taught by the Bnot Sherut continues on **Sunday at 4.30pm**. To sign up head to **bit.ly/ba-ivrit**. For more information contact Eli at **israel@bauk.org**.

- Help us reach **100 Acts of Kindness!** By (anonymously) sharing your deeds you will inspire others to give their time, and let them know where and how they can! Fill in the form at **tinyurl.com/BA-100AOK**.

- Missing sviva? **Virtual Sviva** takes place at **3pm every Sunday** over Zoom. ID: 208-209-1319, Password: YadAchim. Email Zoe

at **svivot@bauk.org** for more details!

- **Student Bet Midrash** continues this Thursday 28th May! We encourage everyone to continue with their regular chavrutot/chaburot over video chat, and invite you to join us at **7.50pm** for a thought from one of our Lilmod U'flamed participants followed by a shiur. Email Chana at **chinuch@bauk.org** for more details or if you have any questions. Zoom links will be posted on the Student Bet Midrash Facebook page.

- Be sure to like our **Facebook page (Bnei Akiva UK)** and follow our **Instagram (bneiakivauk)** to stay informed of our online content!

- To receive weekly copies of **Shabbat Lashem** and our **Choveret Chinuchit** activity pack, sign up for our mailing list at **bauk.org/contact**.

- Visit **bauk.org/feedback** for contact details for all Mazkirut members and to leave any general feedback!

SHABBAT SHALOM!!!



SAVE THE DATE

STUDENT BET MIDRASH PRESENTS.....

SHAVUOT TIKKUN LEIL

IN THESE UNPRECEDENTED TIMES UNFORTUNATELY WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO BE TOGETHER FOR TIKKUN LEIL ON SHAVUOT.

THIS YEAR WE HAVE COME TOGETHER TO HOST A PRE SHAVUOT TIKKUN LEIL.

THE PROGRAMME WILL INCLUDE SHIURIM, CHABUROT, SINGING AND WILL END OFF WITH A BEAUTIFUL TEFILLA.

WATCH THIS SPACE FOR THE FULL PROGRAMME OVER THE NEXT WEEK!

תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה קהלת יעקב

TUESDAY 26th MAY • 10PM - SHACHARIT • LIVE ON ZOOM



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