

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

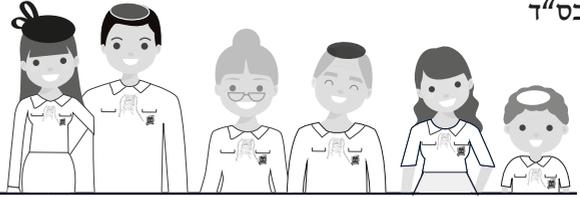
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בס"ד

SHABBAT LASHEM

THE VOICE OF BNEI AKIVA UK



THE INDIVIDUAL CENSUS

JOEL KAUFMANN
SHEVET HINEINI

In the second verse of *Bemidbar*, Hashem requests that

Moshe take a census of all Bnei Yisrael and in the second chapter, Hashem tells Moshe and Aharon how the camp is to be laid out.

וַיִּנְגַד סָבִיב לְאֹהֶל-מוֹעֵד וַיִּחַנּוּ:

'They shall camp around the Tent of Meeting at a distance.'

The *Levi'im* were placed in the centre around the *אֹהֶל-מוֹעֵד* with the other twelve tribes in each of the four cardinal directions, three on each side, making an Israelite Dodecagon with the *Levi'im* at the center.

The numbers of the people of Bnei Yisrael are listed in both of the first two chapters under different contexts. In the first chapter, we are told the numbers of each tribe individually as if in a register, purely for the sake of a census:

וַיִּהְיוּ בְּנֵי-רְאוּבֵן בְּכֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל תּוֹלְדֹתָם לְמִשְׁפַּחֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת לְגִלְגָּתָם כְּלִזְכָּר מִבְּנֵי עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמִעֲלָהּ כֹּל יָצָא צָבָא:

'They totaled as follows: The descendants of Reuben, Israel's first-born, the registration of the flags of their ancestral house, as listed by name, head by head, all males aged twenty years and over, all who were able to bear arms.'

However, in the second chapter, the numbers are listed in the context of an army, stating how many soldiers on each side:

וְהַחֲזִים קִדְמָה מִזְרָחָה דָּגַל מִחֲנֵה יְהוּדָה לְצַבְאָתָם וְנִשְׂיָא לְבְנֵי יְהוּדָה נְחֹשֶׁן בְּרִעְמִיָּאדָב:

'Camped on the front, or east side: the standard of the division of Judah, troop by troop. Chieftain of the Judites: Nahshon son of Amminadab.'

שְׂאוּ אֶת-רֹאשׁ כָּל-עֵדַת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִשְׁפַּחֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת כָּל-יֶזְכֶּר לְגִלְגָּתָם:

'Take a census of the whole Israelite company by the clans of its ancestral houses, as listed by name, every male, head by head.'

There is a very clear emphasis, on the individuality of each person in these numbers as the census specifically describes counting the people "as listed by name" in each household, rather than just counting heads.

The census was counted in three stages: First, there is a numerical count to find out the number of people. Then, there is a count by the "number of names", so as to establish an individuality for each person and to learn more about the essence of the individuals. Finally, a count of "each person according to his flag", regarding each person's place in the society and their role within.

When living in the middle of a large population, in a system in which it may seem that one is just another tree in the forest, you may begin to experience an existential crisis. You could feel frustrated at your place in society, believing that the purposes which you serve are not suited to you and you may lack a feeling of uniqueness. In Judaism, there is a strong belief in the individual. Even though we may be a small cog in a greater mechanism, we are still unique and valued and serve a purpose which is tailored to ourselves and nobody else.

JOEL IS IN SHEVET HINEINI AND IS A NIVCHAR HANHALLA

London	In 20:37 Out 21:53	Leeds	In 20:55 Out 22:23	Birmingham	In 20:50 Out 22:14
Manchester	In 20:56 Out 22:23	Nottingham	In 20:50 Out 22:14	Liverpool	In 20:59 Out 22:26
Thaxted	In 20:39 Out 22:00	Brighton	In 20:36 Out 21:55	Bristol	In 20:48 Out 22:09
Cambridge	In 20:41 Out 22:03	Oxford	In 20:44 Out 22:05	Jerusalem	In 18:56 Out 20:13

SHLICHA'S CORNER: IMOTEINU - WOMEN IN TANAKH II

DEVORA HANEVIA - A UNIQUE LEADER



Devora is one of the seven female prophets in the *Tanakh*. The *midrash* (*Tana Debei Eliyahu*, Chapter 9) teaches us that our actions are what define whether we will achieve the prophetic *Ruach*

HaKodesh or not:

“מעייד אני עלי את השמים ואת הארץ – בין ישראל בין גוי, בין איש בין אשה, בין עבד בין שפחה, הכל לפי המעשה שהוא עושה, כך רוח הקודש שורה עליו”.

“I call to witness the heavens and the earth: Jew or non-Jew, man or woman, manservant

or maidservant – everything is according to the actions that a person does; to such an extent the *Ruach Hakodesh* rests upon them.”

Moreover, the Rambam tells us that: ‘Prophecy is bestowed only upon a very wise sage of a strong character, who is never overcome by his natural inclinations in any regard’ (*Yesodei HaTorah* 7:1), thus we must apply these attributes to Devora as well.

Devora is called ‘*eishet Lapidot*’, the ‘wife of Lapidot’. *Chazal* teach us that her husband was in fact an *Am Ha'arezt* (ignoramus):

“Devorah’s husband was an ignoramus. She said to him, ‘Here, let me make wicks for you and you can take them to the temple in Shilo – that way, your portion may be among the upright men there, and so you may merit the world to come.’ And he would make the wicks thick, in order that their light should be plentiful. Therefore his name was called ‘Lapidot’ (torches).”

Despite being a unique individual with special characteristics, Devorah married a simple man, never underestimating him, but rather encouraging him to progress in this world – ultimately earning him a place in the next, by

getting him engaged with the *mishkan* and the *kohanim* within it. This is also evidence of her *anava* (humility), of her dedication and educational understanding. She knew how to seize opportunities when they came across and not let them get away.

Devora, the loyal judge and leader, is sent by Hashem on a national mission: to lead *Am Yisrael* to war. She initiates the war, ascends to Mount Tavor and supports the warriors.

‘And she said to Barak: Get up! For this is the day where Hashem has given Sisera into your hand.’ (*Shofetim* 4:14)

“PROPHECY IS BESTOWED ONLY UPON A VERY WISE SAGE OF A STRONG CHARACTER, WHO IS NEVER OVERCOME BY HIS NATURAL INCLINATIONS... WE MUST APPLY THESE ATTRIBUTES TO DEVORA”

She knows how important it is to maintain high spirits among the troops, to remind them that Hashem is fighting for us. She bravely remains there until the miraculous victory, when Hashem caused a commotion in Sisera’s camp, making the victory for *Am Yisrael* that bit easier. Although she could take the credit for herself, instead Devora burst into praising Hashem for the battle, thanking him for his protection of the nation. This song is known as ‘*Shirat Devora*’. It is

no coincidence that her song is the haftara of *parashat Beshallah*, when we read about *Shirat HaYam*. That Shabbat is called “*Shabbat Shira*” (Shabbat of Song). *Chazal* even view some of the miracles of this war as completing the splitting of the sea, after leaving Egypt.

Devora, with her humility and modesty, with her wisdom and unique way of praising Hashem, is the paradigm ‘*Eishet Chayil*’, woman of valour, who can be a leader of *Am Yisrael*, and serves as a role model for us too.

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TORAH FROM AROUND THE WORLD

SA'ADIA GAON | NAHALA 26TH IYYAR

Lots of content today so only a brief description of my travels! From Fez [FEZ] to Paris [CDG] to Istanbul [SAW] to Baghdad [BGW], and then two and a half hours in the car down to Al-Manathera, roughly where stood the academy of Sura, a thousand years ago.

Sa'ad ben Yūsuf al-Fayyūmi, better known as Sa'adiyah ben Yosef Gaon, is possibly the most well-known of the *geonim*. The title of *gaon* was bestowed upon whomever held the position of the heads of the *yeshivot* of Sura and Pumbedita. These two academies were the venerated seat of Talmud study across the Jewish world, and the voices of the *amoraim* had formerly echoed in their halls. This position was not, however, without political considerations. The *geonim* were appointed by the *reish galuta*, or exilarch, the senior 'lay leader' of the Jewish community, and he in turn was formally appointed by the Caliphate, taking into account the considerations of the Jewish community. At times, the relationship between these two positions was fraught, as we shall see below regarding Sa'adia's own position as *gaon* of Sura.

Sa'adia was born in Fayyum (hence the appellation 'al-Fayyūmi', cf. *Shabbat Lashem Vayeitzei*) in 882, the son of an unlearned tradesman but whose family lineage could be traced back to R' Chanina ben Dosa (which presumably led to the naming of his first son 'Dosa', otherwise it's a slightly strange choice). By his late twenties, he had already composed a number of works on matters both grammatical and polemical, and amassed a student following. These polemical works attacked the position of the Karaites, who had in the last century become a strong, unified movement with definitive goals, and often succeeded in turning Jews against Rabbinic Judaism. By way of brief introduction, the Karaites were a sect who believed in the 'simple' meaning of the written Torah (or *mikra*, leading to *karaites*), and rejected the oral law interpretations that, in their view, were capriciously invented by the Rabbis in order to circumvent the written law. (Yes, I know it doesn't make sense and that even their 'simple' meaning is really an oral interpretation of the text – clearly they'd never read Roland Barthes' *'Death of the Author'*.) Unfortunately, these anti-Karaite tendencies earned him not a few enemies, and according to some accounts a group of Karaites broke into his home and burned his writings. Ultimately, he ended up leaving Egypt and making his way to Babylonia.

At this time, Baghdad was a thriving hub of creativity – one of the centres of the Islamic Golden Age; it saw both Muslims and Jews alike wrestling with the effects of Neoplatonised Aristotelianism, and advances into medicine, science and the study of language. In this cultural environ, Sa'adia thrived, eventually writing what could be considered the first work of 'Jewish philosophy', but more on that later. As soon as Sa'adiya arrived, the calendar controversy erupted. The rabbinic authorities in Israel competing with those in Babylonia disputed the way the latter had fixed the calen-

dar and contested their dates for major Jewish festivals. This led to a schism in the Jewish world, with Jews observing *Rosh Hashana* on different days! Sa'adiya stepped in and wrote a work defending the Babylonian position so successfully that essentially all Jews were swayed by his argument, and he was appointed *gaon* of the yeshiva at Sura, a position he would hold for fourteen years... ish. The *reish galuta* at this time was David ben Zakkai, who presented the two *geonim* at the time with a will that would give him a large inheritance. Sa'adia rejected the will, on the grounds that it was an abuse of power by the exilarch to claim such an amount of money. David ben Zakkai promptly put Sa'adia in *cherem*. Sa'adia responded by putting David ben Zakkai in *cherem*. David ben Zakkai then hired a 'replacement' for Sa'adia as *gaon* of Sura, so Sa'adia hired a replacement for ben Zakkai as *reish galuta* (come on guys, real mature). The power of the exilarch was too strong for Sa'adia to remain in Sura, and so he went into exile. It is during this time that he wrote one of his most influential works.



This book, the first of its kind, was *Kitāb al-Amānāt wal-tiqādāt* (more commonly known as *Emunot veDeot*, or *Beliefs and Opinions*). In this philosophical work, Sa'adia put forward the position that came to be known as 'Jewish *kalam*', in which Jewish beliefs and Scripture are reconciled with philosophy. Since the author of the Torah is the author of the world, there cannot be any contradiction between the two. For example, since philosophy dictates that God is incorporeal, all the physical descriptions of God must be understood allegorically. Alternatively, since donkeys cannot speak, Bil'am heard a voice from nearby, and thought instead that the donkey was talking. Conversely, Sa'adia also challenged philosophy where, in his opinion, it erroneously disputed Jewish teachings. For example, Sa'adia disputes the idea of an eternal universe on philosophical grounds, arguing for what he believed to be the Jewish position of *ex nihilo* from a philosophical standpoint.

Sa'adia also wrote a translation on (probably all of) *Tanakh*, known in Arabic as *tafsir*, which is still used to this day in many Yemenite communities. When translating, one is faced with the dilemma of to what extent to preserve the original linguistic idiosyncrasies of a language, and to what extent to apply interpretation. Sa'adia opts for the latter; in his *tafsir*, he has forty-seven different translations of the letter *vav*! Unlike translators like Robert Alter, who would preserve the natural Hebrew parataxis, Sa'adia uses his translation to present what he believes to be a definitive interpretation of Scripture, without the room for ambiguity present in the original Hebrew.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

- **Birmingham SBM** continues this **Monday 22nd May!** Join us at the usual location.

- **Manchester SBM** continues this **Monday 22nd May** at the **Manchester Bayit!**

- If you have **exams coming up**, join other chavirim studying at **Revision B'bayit**, with helpful bogrim on-hand to assist! Plus some Torah and refreshments.

- **Lishmah** for bogrot and sixth-form women continues this **Tuesday 23rd May**. Join this **dynamic mekom Torah** for women!

- **Tikkun Leil** will be happening at Bnei Akiva! Join us from 12:00am for shiruiim from **Rabbi Dr Raphael**

Zarum, Mrs Chava Wolwick and **Rav Avichai**, as well as **chaburot** and **chavrutot** throughout the evening! Sign up at tinyurl.com/tikkun-leil-5783.

- **London SBM** continues on **Thursday 1st June** at **Kinloss!** Make sure to sign up so we can order enough food.

- **Summer Machane** applications are open! Visit bauk.org/camps to sign up.

- **Tafkidim** for **Summer Machane** are open! Visit bauk.org/tafkid to sign up.

- To give any **comments** or **suggestions** to Bnei Akiva, please visit bauk.org/feedback.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ANY OF THESE EVENTS, PLEASE CONTACT BEN AT CHINUCH@BAUK.ORG

BNEI AKIVA  **T"ו**

BNEI AKIVA UK INVITES ALL CHAVERIM TO...

TIKKUN LEIL 5783

12:00AM – 4:15AM @ THE LONDON BAYIT

FEATURING SPEAKERS:

-  **Rabbi Dr Raphael Zarum** – "How much Torah was really given at Sinai?"
-  **Mrs Chava Wolwick** – "Would you be happy to marry King David?"
-  **Rav Avichai Goodman** – Not Black and White: Torah's Wisdom for the Grey Areas of Life





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