



Ohr Yerushalayim News

שבועות תשע"ו – במדבר – 4th June 2016 - Volume 8 - Issue 47

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Marcel Marks on the occasion of Yisroel Chaim's Bar Mitzvah on first day Yom tov. The Kehilla is invited to a Kiddush after second Minyan at their home 6 Lancaster Drive.

חיים ארוכים

We wish **חיים ארוכים** to Mrs Vivienne Fagleman on the Petira of her father, Mr N. Sher

Annual Mishnayos Siyim

A reminder that the annual Siyom Mishnayos takes place on Shabbos Parshas Behaalosecha. This year we are learning Sedorim Moed and Noshim. There are still some slots available to learn, see the list on the notice wall.

How Precious Life Is

Rabbi Yissocher Frand (Torah.org)

Parshas Bamidbar begins with a census of the Jewish people. In fact, rabbinic literature refers to the book of Bamidbar as the "Chumash of the counts" (Chomesh haPekudim). Even in the secular world, the fourth of the "Five Books of Moses" is referred to as the Book of Numbers. The Torah in this parsha goes through every single tribe, listing how many people (males above the age of 20) were in that tribe, and then at the end provides a final tabulation: "These were all the counted ones of the Children of Israel, according to their fathers' house, from twenty years of age and up, everyone who goes out to the army in Israel: All their counted ones were 603,550." [Bamidbar 1:45-46].

The Torah's narration then moves onto the story of the "Flags". There were four Camps, each with 3 tribes. The Torah lists which tribe was in each camp. For instance the Torah says [Bamidbar 2:3-4]: "Those who encamp to the front, at the east, shall be the division of the camp of Judah according to their armies – and the prince of the children of Judah is Nahshon son of Amminadav – its army and their counted ones are 74,600." So too, for each of the tribes the Torah tells us the prince of the tribe and the number of people in that tribe – even though the Torah just listed these exact numbers in the previous chapter describing the census! If this were not enough, at the conclusion of the description of the flag encampments the Torah once again gives us the sum total of all the camps: "These are the counts of the Children of Israel according to their fathers' house; all the counts of the camps according to their armies, 603,550." [Bamidbar 2:32]

If any parsha in the Torah contains redundancies – this is it. We know the Torah is usually so stingy with its words. Normally we expound major laws from even an extra (letter) vov. The Medrash here comments on this: The redundant reference to the numbers of Tribes of Israel individually and the redundant reference to the population of the entire nation collectively is indicative of Hashem's love for the Jewish people. We are so precious to Him that – as it were – He loves to count us repeatedly.

We can appreciate this if we imagine a collector of rare coins. He has a special place where he keeps his coin collection and every so often, he takes them out and counts them repeatedly. This is his treasure. The Medrash says we are the treasure of the Almighty so He counts us

repeatedly — by tribe, by grand total, and again by tribe and by grand total.

The Ramban, however, gives a different explanation for the apparent redundancy. The Ramban notes that three weeks transpired from the time when they were originally counted until the day they actually set up the system of travelling with the flags. During those 21 days, miraculously, no one died from the entire nation. They had 603,550 people at the start of the period and they had the exact same 603,550 people at the end of the period. According to actuarial tables, in 21 days, out of a population of 600,000+, it is inevitable that there will be deaths! I read a statistic recently that every single day there are 100 military funerals in the United States (of veterans of past wars). The Ramban claims that the reason the Torah repeated these numbers is to

The Week Ahead

פרשת במדבר

Mincha	7.30pm
Candle Lighting	7.52-8.00pm
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	8.54am
1st Mincha	2.00pm
2nd Mincha	6.00pm
3rd Mincha	9.15pm
Seder HaLimud & Shiur	following

ליל א שבועות

Maariv & Kabbolas Yom Tov	10.55pm
Candle Lighting	No earlier than 10.55pm

יום א שבועות

Tikun Leil Shavuot	1.00am
1st Shacharis	2.38am
2nd Shacharis	9.00pm
Mincha followed by a Shiur from R' Shaya Klyne	9.25pm

ליל ב שבועות

Maariv	10.30pm
Candle Lighting	No earlier than 10.56pm

יום ב שבועות

Shacharis	9.00am
Mincha followed by	9.25pm
Oneg Yom Tov	
Maariv & Motzei Yom Tov	10.57pm

Tues / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.45pm

highlight the miracle that in 21 days nobody died. However, we can still ask as follows. The Torah is so stingy with its use of letters. Why is this miracle so important that it was worthy of expending all these pasukim [verses] to tell us about this “miracle”? Reb Leib Rotkin wrote an insight on this question that he said he heard in the Yeshiva in Kletsk. He writes that this miracle is so important because of a major principle of Judaism: Whoever preserves the life of a single Jew is considered as if he preserved the entire world (kol ha'mekayem nefesh achas m'yisrael k'ilu kiyem olam maleh). Life is so precious, that even saving one individual is like saving an entire world.

The halacha is that we desecrate Shabbos to save a person's life. We even desecrate Shabbos to give a person a couple of extra hours. The Torah lets us know how important Jewish life is by spending all these pasukim to tell us one thing: nobody died! Human life is so precious that this is a miracle that bears repeating repeatedly in an elaborate manner with redundant verbiage, as the Torah does in this parsha. Every life makes a difference. Every person makes a difference. Every day of living makes a difference.

Who Counts Most

Rabbi Pinchas Winston (Torah.org)

Take the sum of all the congregation of the Children of Israel . . . (Bamidbar 1:2)

The very word “desert” conjures up images of lots of very dry sand, scorching heat, a tremendous lack of water, and therefore, very dangerous conditions. Yet, the Jewish people spent 40 years in the desert and rarely did they complain about such circumstances. Even when they complained about a lack of water it was before they were even thirsty.

This is because in reality, the Jewish camp was a traveling oasis. Bread fell from the sky, special clouds plowed the desert and protected them from deadly elements, the light of G-d led them on their journey, and a mystical well followed them everything they went. Even their clothes did not need cleaning or repair. Their environment had been more than ideal.

This situation was not only while the Jewish people traveled in the desert. It is the situation of the Jewish people as they travel through history. History is a desert for the descendants of Ya'akov, and protection from its elements is purely by the grace of G-d then, and now:

The whole world is sustained by [G-d's] charity. (Brochos 17a)

This may not be so obvious now, but it was during the Holocaust, and the pogroms of Europe, and before that the Crusades, and before that, Roman persecution, and before that, Greek persecution, etc. For over a thousand years survival was not something a Jew took for granted. For over a thousand years, Jews knew they survived by the grace of G-d.

I'm sure it has been pointed out many times before, but it is far more than ironic that the Torah makes a big deal about counting the Jews, and that the Holocaust did as well. Tattooed numbers became synonymous with the horrors of the Holocaust, just as they are synonymous with G-d's love of the Jewish people in the Torah, as Rashi explains.

Though the two numberings seem worlds apart, they really are quite connected. This is the way Hashgachah Pratis works: an energy meant for the sake of redemption left unused is “kidnapped” by the realm of impurity for anti-redemption purposes. There was something about the numbering of Jews during the Holocaust that had been intended for a redemption-oriented goal, was left unused, and was turned against the Jews instead.

What that positive purpose was meant to be is anyone's guess now. Unless, that is, it still resulted in its intended goal, only through an evil and deadly manner.

A clue might be in this week's parshah, regarding which it says:

Because they were dear to Him, He counted them often. When they left Egypt, He counted them (Shemos 12:37); when [many] fell because [of the sin] of the golden calf, He counted them to know the number of the survivors (Shemos 32:28); when He came to cause His Divine Presence to rest among them, He counted them. On the first of Nissan, the Mishkan was erected, and on the first of Iyar, He counted them. (Rashi, Bamidbar 1:1)

According to this explanation, G-d constantly counts the Jewish

people because they are dear to Him. People who love money constantly count it, even if they already know how much they have. G-d values the Jewish people, so He counts them even though He already knows how many they are.

This explains why G-d counted the Jewish people on the way out of Egypt. He wanted to make sure, so-to-speak, everyone who was meant to leave in fact did, and that not one Jew was left behind. It also explains why G-d counted the Jews after the incident of the golden calf. Almost three thousand Jews had died as a result of Divine retribution for the sin, so G-d wanted to see, so-to-speak, how many remained.

What this does not explain is why G-d counted the Jews when it came time for his Presence to dwell on the nation, or why He counted them when the Mishkan was erected. What did these events have to do with how many Jews were around at the time? Why did G-d choose to express His love of the people by counting them at these times as well? Nothing had been lost, only gained.

Counting has two different types of impact. With respect to the Machtzis HaShekel, the Half-Shekel that was given to count the Jewish people in the desert, it was to tell each Jew that he is part of whole. He should never consider him to be overly individual, or set himself apart from the rest of the nation. Achdus, Jewish unity should be a stronger value than Jewish independence.

That is the message for the person who considers himself to be too unique from the rest of the Jewish nation. For the person who feels apart from the nation, but not by choice, there is a different message in counting. He wants to belong, but feels left out for some reason or another. His own lack of self-esteem, or just humility, makes him question his right to belong to an illustrious group.

For such people, counting is inclusive. For the person who longs to be only one of a collective whole, counting does exactly this for them. It says to them, “From G-d's perspective, you are no different than the next Jew, and He wishes to include you in what has been achieved with the rest of the nation.”

The emphasis on counting the Jewish people in the Holocaust had both aspects to it. On one hand, the losses were unimaginable, on such a scale as to make one believe their death didn't matter, that their loss would be felt by no one. It could be years before anyone even knew they were gone, or how they died.

Counting the Jews said, “I am G-d, and you are My people. I take note of each and everyone of you, and the loss of each of you will be noticed and felt by Me. I know who you are, where you are, what you have gone through, and what you have earned as a result in terms of eternal reward.”

Counting the Jews during the Holocaust also said, “This deadly and dark period in history will lead to something important and positive. It will be an important turning point in Jewish history and a crucial step towards the Final Redemption. Though your fellow man treats you as subhuman and as if you have no worth, I treat you just the opposite. Some of you will die, and some of you will survive. But all of you have a part in this threshold to redemption. You will share in its benefits in both this world and the eternal one.”

It doesn't matter that the Nazis ysv”z chose to number the Jews for evil purposes. It doesn't make a difference to the message that their obsession for meticulousness was the reason for going to the trouble of tattooing every Jew. During times of the “desert,” that is, in exile, G-d often uses the distorted intentions of people to accomplish His holy acts.

Not only this, but though the Nazis were defeated and disappeared from life, the numbers did not. They continued on long after the Jews were liberated and had a chance to rebuild their lives elsewhere. How many survivors could be seen later enjoying life, but with a distinct number still quite visible on their arms?

If they had known at the time what it meant and what it would later mean, the Nazis probably would have kept track of the Jews in a less obvious manner. During the Holocaust, the numbers represented Jewish vulnerability and worthlessness to the rest of mankind. After the Holocaust, the same numbers testified to the resilience of the Jewish

nation, and the love of their Creator for them.

Of course, many did not view their survival that way. The numbers on their arms were a horrible reminder of what had once occurred, what G-d had allowed to happen. When they slept they had nightmares, and while awake, the number was a nightmare as well. They could not associate it with anything positive, and certainly not with love from G-d. Such people have been called "Holy Disbelievers." They lived through hell, and then some. They had been pushed to psychological limits that, in the eyes of many, excuses them from their agnostic and even atheistic behavior.

The numbers on their arms say, "Even still, I include you. You are one of my loved ones, and though you cannot see or understand that today, you will one day. I will make a point of it."

"Stand up and be counted" has a different meaning for a Jew. It doesn't just mean, state your support for something. It means being part of a people whose G-d never loses track of a single member, loving them all and keeping track of them now, and forever.

Twins – People, United

Rabbi Yehudah Prero (Torah.org)

Although the date is never explicitly stated in the Torah, the holiday of Shavu'os occurs on the 6th (and in the Diaspora, on the 7th) day of the month of Sivan. The B'nai Yisaschar explains that the astrological sign for the month of Sivan is Gemini, the twins. This sign relates to dual aspects of the holiday of Shavu'os. We all know that when the nation of Israel left its enslavement in Egypt, it emerged as a nation that would now be free to serve the only Master, the Master of the World. When Hashem gave the Torah to the nation of Israel shortly thereafter, unity of purpose, holiness and love was evident between Hashem and the nation. Those siblings who are developed and born together – twins – symbolize this unity. Just as a special unity and bond exists between twins, so too is there this unique feeling between Hashem and the Nation of Israel.

The special unity experienced and evidenced by the giving of the Torah was not merely between G-d and His people. It existed amongst the people in the nation of Israel as well. There was harmony and unanimity in purpose. The feelings of camaraderie were so great that the Torah refers to the encampment of the nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai in the singular, "And he (Israel) camped there." This unity, as well, is alluded to by the sign of the month of Sivan, the twins.

There is additional significance to the sign of the month as it relates to the giving of the Torah. The B'nai Yisaschar quotes a parable. A king was preparing the wedding canopy for his daughter, and he wanted to display the beauty and splendor of his daughter in a way that truly befit a princess. One of the king's advisors suggested that she ride upon an elephant. She would be elevated above the throngs and masses, seated in lofty splendor, in true royal fashion. Another advisor noted that although the elephant may be tall, it is lacking the dignity and majesty of other animals, and therefore the beauty of the princess bride would not be fully complimented. He suggested instead that she ride upon a horse, well groomed, muscular, and dignified. A third advisor chimed in. He observed that while an elephant may be tall, and a horse may be majestic, neither of these beasts have the ability to verbally expound on the beauty of the princess nor the ability to physically demonstrate their respect for her, nor to bring her the joy befitting a bride with antics and entertainment. He therefore suggested that she be carried upon the shoulders of men. In that way, her beauty will be seen and she will be properly honored.

The month of Nissan is the first in the Jewish calendar. Accordingly, the astrological sign of that month, Aries, the ram, is the highest ranking, so to speak, of the astrological signs. Each astrological sign brings with it certain attributes and characteristics that are imparted, perhaps in a metaphysical sense, during the month. The nation of Israel left the land of Egypt in Nissan. However, Hashem did not want to give the Torah in Nissan as well. Just as the elephant signifies an elevation above, so to does Aries. Hashem did not want to give the mistaken impression that the respect or honor for Torah had to be bolstered or enhanced, which could occur by having it associated with the "highest" of astrological signs. The Torah was to be respected in it of itself, and therefore Nissan was not the choice of month for presentation of this gift.

The sign for the next month, Iyar, is Taurus, the bull. The bull, just as the

horse in the parable, signifies a powerful physical presence and beauty. We know that during the month of Iyar, the trees begin to blossom and plants begin to grow after their long wintry slumber. The beauty of spring is truly one of G-d's wonders. Yet, Hashem did not want to convey the mistaken impression that somehow the giving of the Torah needed to be enhanced by beautiful manifestations. He did not want people to think that the Torah was not worthy of being honored and praised if it stood alone. Therefore, the Torah was not given in Iyar.

But, as we know, the Torah was given in Sivan. Gemini, the twins, represent the people carrying the princess in the analogy. The twins, as people, have the ability to praise, show respect and give honor. The ultimate respect for the Torah comes from us. We, creatures of flesh and blood, were endowed with the ability to comprehend and verbally express our thoughts. It is with these powers that Hashem wanted the praise of the Torah to come. It is from people who can see the Torah, appreciate the Torah for what it is, and express that appreciation, that glory comes to the Torah and G-d. Therefore, Sivan was the month of choice for the giving of the Torah.

We have the opportunity, come Shavu'os, to recall how our forefathers accepted the gift of all gifts, the Torah. They accepted it as a unified nation. They accorded it the honor, respect and dignity due to such an exalted gift. The offer and acceptance of this gift firmly cemented the special relationship, the unity of heart and soul so to speak, that existed and continues to exist between Hashem and the nation of Israel. Let the lessons of Gemini not be lost on us.

The Giving of the Torah

Rabbi Dr. Meir Tamari (Torah.org)

One of the fascinating aspects of the Shem Mi Shmuel is the teaching that the discussions in the Talmud, even when they concern purely legal and ritual issues, in effect present different perspectives and emphases of religious, spiritual and ethical aspects. This is an affirmation that the Divine Law revealed at Sinai is justice, spirituality and truth. Apart from showing great scholarship, the approach adopted by the Shem Mi Shmuel adds a spiritual dimension to what are usually taught as purely legal and ritualistic matters. A short discussion, prior to presenting the texts regarding this festival, may help to describe this approach.

The Talmud (Shabbat, 21b) discusses the order of the lights of Chanukah in which are presented the opposing views of Bet Hillel and Bet Shammai. The former held that one commenced by lighting one candle the first night and increasing the number till the final eighth candle, while the latter commenced with eight candles and decreased them till the remaining one light on the last night.

There are many legal discussions among the commentators regarding this difference of opinion, yet the Shem Mi Shmuel saw it neither as technical nor as religious ritual. Rather it represents a difference of how the world is to be redeemed, whether first by departing from evil 'Sur Mi Rah' or 'Asei Tov, doing good. Bet Shammai gave priority to 'Sur Mi Rah', teaching that to do otherwise would be like one who immersed in the mikveh for purification, yet still held onto that which caused the impurity. It is obvious that the efforts- physical, spiritual and mental- to desist from evil, are greatest at the outset, and that once the first steps are taken, each step is easier. Therefore, the first night there are eight candles, decreasing till one at the end of Chanukah. Bet Hillel agreed that both things had to be done, except that 'Sur Mi Rah?' at the outset was practically impossible. Therefore, one should do as much good as one could and such good would grow until evil would be destroyed. So on the first night there are eight candles and the numbers increase to eight. Shem Mi Shmuel: Shavuot, 5670, 5671 and 5672.

"Rava said,' The third day mentioned in the Torah refers to their encampment at Sinai. Rabbi Acha the son of Ya'akov said,' This refers to the commencement of their journey from Refidim to Sinai'. They disagreed concerning the Shabbat commandment given to Israel at Marah. Rabbi Yehuda said in the name of Rava,' As I commanded you ' [in the Ten Commandments (Devarim, 5:12)], means that they were given Shabbat laws at Marah [' There He gave them edicts {Shabbat} and social laws(Shmot, 15:25)]. One scholar said that at Marah they were commanded only concerning the 39 types of work forbidden on Shabbat but not with regard to techumin, thus they were able to travel from Refidim. The other scholar taught that at Marah they were given

even Techumim, and therefore the 3rd day refers to their encampment According to Tosaphot, here, this refers to the laws regarding transferring from one reshut to another" (Talmud Shabbat 86b). There is an intrinsic difference between these two types of work. The 39 types of work all make a change in the article worked upon, whereas the transfer from one reshut, domain, to another, makes no change in the article. Here the change is only in the person who desires to have a article in one area rather than in another. We know that the reason why it is forbidden to transfer articles from reshut harabbim to that of the yachid, and vice versa, from one domain to another, is because the holiness of the public domain is that of materialism and the mundane, whereas in the private domain the sanctity is that of holiness. When one transfers into or from another domain, this causes a mingling of the holy and the mundane in Heaven. The Baal Shem Tov taught that "The Lord is your shade (Ps. 121: 5), means that just like a person's shade follows them, so too does HaShem and their actions have an effect above.

"Raboi Yehushua ben Levi taught, that the 26 verses of the Great Hallel correspond to the 26 generations that the Holy One blessed be He maintained in this world only through mercy, since he did not give them a Torah and judge them accordingly. The upper worlds were not affected by the actions of people here on Earth and there was no awakening above in response to actions below" (Talmud, Pesachim, 118a). It is obvious therefore that before Matan Torah the movement from one domain to another initiated by people, was not considered to be spiritually significant. Therefore at Marah, they were only instructed in the 39 types of work. The Seven Noachide laws as well as those given to Israel prior to Sinai were only meant to affect and change people, as a preparation for Matan Torah. After Sinai, it became possible for their actions and deeds to affect and sanctify even the Heavens above. However, for this one needs to be ?tamim? unblemished and innocent. Avraham was told at the time of the brit milah to walk before HaShem and be Tamim. This was necessary since Avraham feared that after the Brit Milah, which separated him from the rest of the world, he would no longer be able to draw them close to Heaven; which was his whole mission and drive. By being tamim, he would be able to rise above the satisfaction of his own spiritual needs and thereby continue to affect the world despite the separation induced by the Brit Milah.

"When Israel said, 'we will hear and we will do', 60,000 ministering angels came down and put 2 crowns on each of their heads; One for Na'aseh and one for Nishmah. When they sinned with the Golden Calf, 120,000 angels of destruction descended and took from them both crowns" (Talmud, Shabbat 18a). The Avnei Nezer questioned this, arguing that since they had sinned by their actions only the crown of Naaseh should have been taken. They still had retained the merit of Nishmah. However, 'crown' is a matter of kingship that separates the king from the rest of the people, so too, their crowns separated each person from their own personality and own individuality. All their actions were only for the sake of Heaven, rather than for the spiritual satisfaction, status or good feelings that they may bring. For such an achievement not only actions are needed but also 'Nishmah'. After the Golden Calf, their religious actions were once again primarily for their own spiritual benefit and not primarily for the sake of Heaven. So the angels took back both the crown of Naaseh and that of Nishmah.

There is a link between the 6 ears of wheat that Boaz gave to Ruth (Ruth, 3:15), and the need for an Avodat HaShem, Divine worship, that is solely for the sake of Heaven.. ?By the merit of these ears of wheat, Boaz merited being the ancestor of 6 spiritual giants, the kings David, Chikiyahu, Yoshiyahu, the prophets Chananya, Mishal, Azariah and Daniel, and the King Messiah? (Ruth Rabbah, chapter 7). The whole book of Tehillim is replete with the expression of this by David, and all of them inherited this from Boaz. He gave the ears of Barley to Ruth, knowing of the merit they would bring, even though it was not at all clear or definite that he would be the source; there was another kinsman who had prior claims. Nevertheless, Boaz was prepared to subject his own spiritual and religious achievements or rewards. The sole consideration was the fulfillment of the Avodah.