



BS"D

To: parsha@parsha.net  
From: cshulman@gmail.com

## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON **BAMIDBAR** - 5773

In our 18th year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to [parsha-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:parsha-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). Please also copy me at [cshulman@gmail.com](mailto:cshulman@gmail.com). A complete archive of previous issues is now available at <http://www.parsha.net>. It is also fully searchable.

---

Sponsored in memory of  
**Chaim Yissachar z"l ben Yechiel Zaydel Dov**

---

To sponsor a parsha sheet (proceeds to tzedaka) contact [cshulman@parsha.net](mailto:cshulman@parsha.net)

---

sefira@torah.org May 10 This is a Sefira reminder for Friday evening,  
May 10 The count is: 46 Today is the 46th day, which is 6 weeks and  
4 days, of the omer.

---

from: Aish.com <[newsletterserver@aish.com](mailto:newsletterserver@aish.com)> via madmimi.com  
date: Thu, May 9, 2013 at 1:01 AM subject: Advanced  
Parsha - Bamidbar  
<http://www.aish.com/tp/i/sacks/206184471.html>

### **Love as Law, Law as Love**

**by Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

On the face of it the connections between the Torah portion and haftarah of Bamidbar are slender. The first has to do with demography. Bamidbar begins with a census of the people. The haftarah begins with Hosea's vision of a time when "the number of the children of Israel will be like the sand on the sea-shore which cannot be measured or numbered." There was a time when the Israelites could be counted; the day will come when they will be countless. That is one contrast between the future and the past.

The second goes deeper. The Torah portion and the book that bears its name are called Bamidbar, "in the wilderness". The book is about the wilderness years in both a physical and spiritual sense: a time of wandering and internal conflict. Hosea, however, foresees a time when God will bring the people back to the desert and there enact a second honeymoon:

... I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her ...  
There she will respond as in the days of her youth, As in the day she came out of Egypt.

What gives the haftarah its special resonance, however, is the fact that Bamidbar is always read on the Shabbat preceding Shavuot, the festival of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. The fact that tradition chose this of all prophetic passages tells us something deeply moving about how the Jewish people understood this festival and about the Torah itself

as the living connection between a people and God. The story of Hosea is one of the strangest of that great chain of visionaries we call the prophets. It is the story of a marriage. The prophet married a woman called Gomer. He was deeply in love with her. We can infer this, because of all the prophets, Hosea is the most eloquent and passionate on the subject of love. Gomer, however, proved faithless. She left home, had a series of lovers, was serially unfaithful, and was eventually forced to sell herself into slavery. Yet Hosea, caught between anger and tender longing, found that he could not relinquish his love for her.

In a flash of prophetic insight, God leads him to understand that his own personal experience mirrors that between God and the Israelites. He had rescued them from slavery, led them through the wilderness and brought them to their new home, the land of Israel. But the people proved faithless. They worshipped other gods. They were promiscuous in their spiritual attachments. By rights, says God, I should have abandoned them. I should have called them (as the prophet called his third child) Lo-ammi, "you are not My people". Yet God's love is inextinguishable. He too cannot let go. Whatever the people's sins, He will bring them back into the desert, scene of their first love, and their marriage will be renewed.

The Talmud in Pesachim gives an extraordinary account of the dialogue between God and Hosea - the unwritten story of the episode that precedes chapter 1 of the book of Hosea:

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Hosea, "Your children have sinned." To this, the prophet should have replied, " - they are Your children, the children of your favoured ones, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Be merciful to them." Not only did he not say this, but he actually said, "Lord of the universe, the whole world is yours. Exchange them for another nation." The Holy One, blessed be He, said, "What shall I do with this old man? I will tell him to go and marry a prostitute and have children by her. Then I will tell him to send her away. If he can, then I too will send Israel away."

There are few more telling passages in the whole of rabbinic literature. If I were to summarise it, I would say: Who is a leader of the Jewish people? Only one who loves the Jewish people. Reading the prophetic literature, it is easy to see the prophets as social critics. They see the people's faults; they speak them aloud; their message is often a negative one, foretelling disaster. The Talmud is telling us that such a view is superficial and misses the essential point. The prophets loved their people. They spoke not out of condemnation but from the depths of deep desire. They knew that Israel was capable of, and had been summoned to, great things. They never criticised in order to distance themselves, to set themselves above and apart. They spoke in love - God's love. That is why, in Israel's darkest nights, the prophets always had a message of hope.

There is one verse in the haftarah so deep that it deserves special attention. God is telling the prophet about the time yet to come when He will bring His people back to the places they once visited, the desert where they first pledged their love, and there they will renew their relationship:

In that day - declares the Lord - you will call Me 'my husband'; you will no longer call Me 'my master'.

The resonances of this sentence are impossible to capture in translation. The key words in Hebrew are Ish and Baal, and they both mean 'husband'. Hosea is telling us about two kinds of marital relationships - and two kinds of culture. One is signalled by the word Baal, which not only means 'husband' but is also the name of the Canaanite god. Baal, one of the central figures in the pantheon of the ancient Near East, was the storm god of lightning and the fertility god who sends rain to impregnate the ground. He was the macho deity who represented sex and power on a cosmic scale.

Hosea, punning on the name, hints at the kind of world that emerges when you worship sex and power. It is a world without loyalties, where

relationships are casual and people taken advantage of and then dropped. A marriage predicated on the word Baal is a relationship of male dominance in which women are used not loved, owned not honoured. The word Baal means, among other things, 'owner'.

Against this Hosea describes a different kind of relationship. Here his literary device is not pun but quotation. In using the word Ish to describe the relationship between God and His people, the prophet is evoking a verse at the beginning of Genesis - the words of the first man seeing the first woman:

"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called 'woman' for she was taken out of man."

Daringly, Hosea suggests that the making of woman from man mirrors the creation of humanity from God. First they are separated, then they are joined again, but now as two distinct persons each of whom respects the integrity of the other. What joins them is a new kind of relationship built on fidelity and trust.

How we understand the giving of the Torah depends on how we see the relationship between God and the people He chose to be His special witnesses on earth. Inevitably, the language of Judaism when it speaks of God is metaphorical. The Infinite cannot be compassed in finite categories. The metaphors the prophets use are many. God is, among other things, artist, creator, king, master, warrior, shepherd, judge, teacher, redeemer and father. From the point of view of God-as-king, the Torah is the code of laws He ordains for the people He rules. From the perspective of God-as-father-and-teacher, it represents the instructions He gives His children as to how they should best live. Adopting the image of artist-creator, Jewish mystics throughout the ages saw the Torah as the architecture of the universe, the deep structure of existence.

Of all the metaphors, however, the most lovely and most intimate was of God as husband, with Israel as His bride. Isaiah says:

For your Maker is your husband, The Lord Almighty is his name... (54:5)

Likewise Jeremiah:

'Return, faithless people,' declares the Lord, 'for I am your husband.' (3:14)

This is how Ezekiel describes the marriage between God and Israel in the days of Moses:

Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you -- declares the Lord God - and you became mine. (16:8)

From this perspective, the Torah is more than a constitution and code of laws, more than a set of instructions or even the metaphysical DNA of the universe. It is a marriage contract - a token and gesture of love.

When attraction, that most fleeting of emotions, seeks to perpetuate itself as love, it takes the form of marriage: marriage as covenant, in which both parties pledge themselves to one another, to be loyal, steadfast, to stay together through difficult times as well as good and to achieve together what neither could do alone. A marriage is created not by force or coercion but by words - the word given, the word received, the word honoured in faithfulness and trust. There are such things as the laws of marriage (the respective responsibilities of husband and wife), but marriage of its essence is more than a dispassionate set of obligations and rights. It is law suffused with love, and love translated into law. That, according to this metaphor, is what the Sinai event was.

The supreme poet of marriage was Hosea. By reading this haftarah on the Shabbat before Shavuot, we make a momentous affirmation: that in giving the Torah to Israel, God was not asserting His power, dominance or lordship over Israel (what Hosea means when he uses the word ba'al). He was declaring His love. That is why it is no accident that the words with which the haftarah ends - among the most beautiful in the entire religious literature of mankind - are the words Jewish men recite every weekday morning as they wind the strap of the hand-tefillin like a

wedding ring around their finger, renewing daily the marriage covenant of Sinai:

I will betroth you to me for ever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and justice, love and compassion; I will betroth you to me in faithfulness, And you will know God.

This article can also be read at:  
<http://www.aish.com/tp/i/sacks/206184471.html>

Like what you read? As a non-profit organization, Aish.com relies on readers like you to enable us to provide meaningful and relevant articles. Join Aish.com and help us continue to give daily inspiration to people like you around the world.

Make a secure donation at: <https://secure.aish.com/secure/pledge.php> or mail a check to Aish.com, 408 South Lake Drive, Lakewood, NJ 08701

Copyright © 1995 - 2013 Aish.com - <http://www.aish.com>

---

from: Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald <[ezbuchwald@njop.org](mailto:ezbuchwald@njop.org)> via [njop.ccsend.com](mailto:njop.ccsend.com) reply-to: [ezbuchwald@njop.org](mailto:ezbuchwald@njop.org) date:

Mon, May 6, 2013 at 7:12 PM subject: Weekly Torah

Message from Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

**Bamidbar/Shavuot 5773-2013**

**"The Invaluable Legacy of the Ancient Camp of Israel"**

**by Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald**

In this week's parasha, parashat Bamidbar, the first parasha in Numbers, the fourth book of the Torah, we read of the initial census of the People of Israel in the wilderness, and the structure and set-up of the tribal encampments.

G-d speaks to Moses (Numbers 1:2), in the wilderness of Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after the exodus from the land of Egypt, and says: "S'oo eht rosh kol ah'daht B'nay Yisrael, l'mish'p'choh'tahm l'vayt ah'voh'tahm, b'mis'par shay'moht kol zah'char l'gool'g'loh'tahm," Take a census of the entire assembly of the Children of Israel, according to their families, according to their fathers' household, by number of the names, every male according to their headcount; from twenty years of age and up...

Moses, Aaron and the twelve tribal leaders conducted the census from the first day of the month of Iyar, until the twentieth of the month.

The census was extremely exacting and comprehensive. Every Israelite male over the age of twenty years was required to substantiate his family lineage and that of his forbears, going back to the sons of Jacob. Once they declared and confirmed their pedigrees, the Israelite males were assigned a tent in which to dwell in the particular tribal area that was designated for their tribe. The encampment of each tribe was marked with a standard or a flag, and groups of three tribes were assigned to dwell on one of the four sides of the Tabernacle.

The Levites were also counted from age one month old and up, as were the firstborn among the Israelites. Only then was the census concluded.

The Midrash elaborates at length regarding the counting of the people, providing many colorful details that are not found in the biblical text, and even connecting the census to the festival of Shavuot. The Midrash in Yalkut Shimoni, Numbers 684, states that when the Children of Israel received the Torah, the nations of the world grew envious, and demanded to know why the Israelites merited to draw nearer to G-d than any other nation. G-d, however, silenced them by demanding that they bring their books of genealogy, to confirm their pedigrees, just as His children had done.

The Midrash Rabbah, Numbers 2:8, relates that when G-d instructed Moses to establish the camps of Israel, Moses was upset, fearing that no matter how carefully he allocated the tribal areas, there would be jealousy among them. "If I tell Judah to dwell in the East, he will say, 'impossible, I must be in the South.'"

The Al-mighty pressed Moses, "What is your problem? The People of Israel do not even need you in order to be properly situated. They already recognize where they are supposed to dwell, based on the long-standing testament of Jacob, their great-grandfather. Now, they are just renewing that testament. The way the twelve tribes encircled the coffin of Jacob, when he was brought from Egypt to be buried in Israel, that is the way that they will encircle the Tabernacle."

Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov cites the statement of Rabbi Chammah, the son of Chanina in the Midrash:

When Jacob, our forefather was about to depart from the world, he called his sons, and instructed them regarding the ways of G-d. They then accepted the dominion of G-d upon themselves. When he finished, he said to them, "When you carry me [to be buried in Canaan], it must be done with reverence and honor. No other person shall touch my deathbed, no Egyptian nor any of the other children, because they took of the daughters of Canaan."

He said to them, "My sons, Judah, Isaacar, Zebulun, shall carry me from the East. Reuben, Simeon and Gad, shall carry me from the South. Ephraim, Menashe and Benjamin, shall carry me from the West. Dan, Asher and Naphtali, should carry me from the North. Joseph shall not carry, since he is a monarch, and you must accord him respect. Levi too shall not carry, because he carries the Holy Ark, and he who carries the Ark of the ever-living G-d, shall not carry the ark of the deceased. If you fulfil my wishes, and carry my coffin as I have instructed you, G-d will cause His Divine Presence to dwell amongst your tribal standards."

When Jacob passed from the world, his sons carried him as he had instructed them, as it says (Genesis 50:12), "And his sons did for him, exactly as he had instructed them."

The rabbis in Numbers Rabba 1, said that the Jewish people, as they dwelt in their camps, were holy and elevated. All the nations of the world stared at them in astonishment, saying (Song of Songs 6:10), "Who is she who appears as the dawn, beautiful as the moon, clear as the sun, fearsome as the great towers?!" The nations beckoned the Israelites saying (Song of Songs 7:1), "Return, return o Shulammitte, return return, that we may look at you." Meaning, cling to us, come to us, and we will make you rulers, officers, authorities, leaders and strategists. The People of Israel, however, responded, "Why do you look at the Shulammitte? "Kim'chah'lah'ha'mah'chah'nah'yim." Since the meaning of the verse is unclear, the rabbis provide two interpretations. What greatness can you grant us? Can you be like M'chah'lah'ha'mah'chah'nah'yim? Can you do to us what G-d did to us in the wilderness? Establish the standard of Judah in the camp ["machaneh"], a standard for the camp of Reuben, can you possibly do that?

Alternatively: Why do you gaze at the Shulammitte? What greatness can you give us? Kim'chah'lah'ha'mah'chah'nah'yim, can you perhaps give us the greatness that G-d gave us? After all, we were sinners and He forgave (mah'chal) us. He said to us, "And your camps (mah'chah'neh'chah) shall be holy." And even Bilaam looked at the people, eyeing them intently, because he could not harm them. As it says (Numbers 24:2), "And Bilaam raised his eyes and saw Israel dwelling according to its tribes"—he saw the standards of the tribes of Israel arrayed according to their camps, and said, 'Who can harm these people, who know their fathers and their families?' as it is said, 'Dwelling according to its tribes.'" From here we learn that the tribal standards were a source of greatness and protection for the People of Israel.

What, then, is the connection to the festival of Shavuot? The rabbis in Yalkut Shimoni, Numbers 684, note the juxtaposition of the final verse of the book of Leviticus, and its closing words (Leviticus 27:34), "These are the commandments, which the L-rd commanded Moses for the Children of Israel on Mount Sinai," and the census that opens the book of Numbers. The sages conclude that the proximity of the two themes comes to teach that the People of Israel merited receiving the Torah only because of the purity of their lineage.

While parashat Bamidbar may seem to be merely an exacting and highly-detailed account of counting and numbers, the truth is that the establishment of the camp of Israel was a singular achievement in the long history of Judaism. It was, after all, the structure of the Jewish family and the power of the Jewish home that provided the strength and protection for the Jewish people throughout the ages. Furthermore, it is only in the merit of their sanctified homes and families that Israel received the Torah.

Consequently, it is incumbent upon every Jew to know where they came from and where they are going. The nuances and the details of parashat Bamidbar are truly the secrets of Jewish survival. We must study them, master them, remember them and thoroughly embrace them. May you be blessed.

Please note:

This year, Yom Yerushalayim, Jerusalem Reunification Day is observed this Tuesday evening, May 7th through Wednesday night, May 8th. This year marks the 46th anniversary of the reunification of the city.

Please note:

The wonderful festival of Shavuot commemorating the giving of the Torah at Sinai 3325 years ago, is observed this year on Tuesday evening, May 14th, and continues through Thursday night, May 16th, 2013.

Chag Shavuot Samayach. Have a happy and festive Shavuot.

---

from: Aish.com <newsletterserver@aish.com> via madmimi.com  
date: Thu, May 9, 2013 at 1:01 AM subject: Advanced  
Parsha - Bamidbar  
<http://www.aish.com/tp/i/pp/151850085.html>

### **The Smallest Tribe by Rabbi Ozer Alport**

The tribe of Levi contained the holiest Divine servants, yet it numbered only 22,000 (Numbers 3:30), substantially less than any of the other tribes. What is the reason for this anomaly?

Nachmanides explains that when the Egyptians enslaved and afflicted the Jews, God blessed them and caused them to become even more numerous (Exodus 1:12). Because the Sages teach that the tribe of Levi was exempt from the servitude in Egypt, they therefore didn't merit the blessing of giving birth to six children at a time.

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh answers that at the time that Pharaoh decreed that all Jewish male babies would be killed in the Nile River, Amram divorced his wife, and the rest of the Levites followed his lead. Even though Amram subsequently remarried his wife, perhaps many of the other Levites did not, and therefore their population was much smaller.

The Beis HaLevi (MiShulchano Shel Beis HaLevi) suggests that because the tribe of Levi was sustained by other Jews through gifts of tithes, God intentionally made their tribe smaller so as not to overburden the rest of the Jews.

The Netziv (HaEmek Davar) posits that the Levites were already selected to serve God and were therefore judged more harshly, and their numbers were reduced due to their sins for which they were punished immediately.

Rav Elchonon Wasserman (Kovetz Ma'amorim) writes that God created the world in a manner in which everything which is loftier is rarer. For this reason, animals outnumber people and non-Jews outnumber Jews, so too are there more non-Levites than Levites.

\*\*\*

### **WAITING ONE MONTH TO COUNT**

Rashi writes (Numbers 1:1) that God frequently counts the Jewish people to make His love for them known. Here, after He came to rest His Presence among them, He counted them once again. If the Tabernacle (Mishkan) was erected and God began to dwell there on Rosh Chodesh

Nissan, why did He wait an entire month until Rosh Chodesh Iyar (1:1) to count them?

The Sifsei Chochomim cites the Talmud (Bava Basra 8a), which rules that somebody who takes a vow that he will have no benefit from the residents of a town is permitted to have benefit from those who haven't yet lived there for 30 days, as they're not considered permanent residents until they have lived there for 30 days. Similarly, although God began dwelling in the Mishkan on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, He waited to count the Jews until His dwelling there was considered permanent, which was on Rosh Chodesh Iyar, 30 days later.

The Tzeidah L'Derech answers that the census was conducted by Moshe, Aharon, and the leaders of each tribe. On Rosh Chodesh Nissan, Moshe and Aharon were so busy consecrating the Mishkan and offering sacrifices there that they didn't have time to conduct a census. Additionally, Nachshon ben Aminadav, the leader of the tribe of Yehuda, also brought sacrifices on that day. Maimonides rules (Klei HaMikdash 6:9-10) that the day on which somebody brings an offering becomes a personal Yom Tov for him, and he is forbidden to do work on that day. As a result, the census couldn't be conducted on any of the first 12 days of Nissan, on which the tribal leaders brought their respective offerings. At that point were seven days of Pesach, and because the majority of the month had passed devoted to various spiritual obligations, the census was delayed until the following month.

\* \* \*

#### MULTIPLES OF 100

In relating the number of Jews in each tribe, the Torah records that the population of each tribe was a multiple of 100, with the exception of Gad, whose population was a multiple of 50 (Numbers 1:25). Was it really possible that every tribe had such a precisely even number of Jews, or did the Torah round the census to the nearest 50 or 100?

The Shaarei Aharon quotes the Imrei Noam, who maintains that the Torah isn't particular about small numbers, and suggests that the census for each tribe was rounded to the nearest 100. Since the tribe of Gad had precisely 50 extra people, their count couldn't be rounded either way.

As proof that the Torah rounds numbers, the Imrei Noam cites the commandment to count 50 days of the Omer even though we count only 49, and the verse ordering 40 lashes to be given to certain transgressors even though we give only 39. This is also the position of the Meshech Chochmah (3:16).

However, Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky relates that he initially assumed that the census numbers were rounded, but when he mentioned this to his father, the Steipler responded that a number written in the Torah must be exact, and God must have had a reason why He miraculously caused each tribe to have such even numbers of people.

\* \* \*

#### RAISING AN ORPHAN

Rashi quotes (3:1) the Talmud (Sanhedrin 19b), which states that whoever teaches Torah to others is considered as if he gave birth to them. The Talmud there similarly teaches that whoever raises an orphan in his home is considered to have given birth to him. Can one who is unable to have children fulfill the mitzvah of having children through these methods, as it will be considered as if he gave birth to them?

Rabbi Shlomo Kluger (Chochmas Shlomo - Even HaEzer 1:1) writes that this question is subject to a larger dispute. Whenever the Sages teach that A is considered like B, the Drisha maintains that such comparisons are not to be taken literally, and therefore a person could not fulfill the mitzvah to have children in this manner.

However, according to the Taz, who argues that the Sages intended to say that the two items being equated are legally one and the same, it would be possible for a couple to perform the mitzvah in this manner.

The Chasam Sofer (Even HaEzer 76) notes that while the Torah (Numbers 26:46) refers to Serach as the daughter of Asher, the Targum writes that she was actually the daughter of his wife from a previous

husband. Because she was raised by Asher, the Torah refers to her as his daughter, indicating that one may fulfill the mitzvah to have children in this manner.

Rabbi Yitzhak Zilberstein adds that the Torah (Genesis 46:17) includes Serach in the count of 70 people who descended with Yaakov to Egypt. As the Torah (46:26) describes all 70 of them as Yaakov's descendants, this supports the idea that an adopted child is legally considered as one's own.

This article can also be read at: [www.aish.com/tp/i/pp/151850085.html](http://www.aish.com/tp/i/pp/151850085.html)

Like what you read? As a non-profit organization, Aish.com relies on readers like you to enable us to provide meaningful and relevant articles. Join Aish.com and help us continue to give daily inspiration to people like you around the world. Make a secure donation at:

<https://secure.aish.com/secure/pledge.php> or mail a check to Aish.com, 408 South Lake Drive, Lakewood, NJ 08701 Copyright © 1995 - 2013 Aish.com - <http://www.aish.com>

---

from: **Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein**  
<[info@jewishdestiny.com](mailto:info@jewishdestiny.com)> via [rabbiwein.ccsend.com](mailto:rabbiwein.ccsend.com) reply-to:  
[info@jewishdestiny.com](mailto:info@jewishdestiny.com) date: Tue, May 7, 2013 at 1:14 PM  
subject: **Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein - Parshat Bamidbar 5773** Home Weekly Parsha BAMIDBAR  
BAMIDBAR

I have always been fascinated as to why this book of the Bible and this week's Torah reading is called Bamidbar – in the desert. The rabbis of Midrash have stated that the lesson involved here is that the Torah only remains in a person who empties all other causes from one's midst, and is as open and unoccupied as is the desert. Nevertheless, there may be other insights that may be gleaned from the use of the desert as the backdrop for the events and laws contained in this fourth book of the Torah. One of these different insights has to do with the ability of water to transform a barren desert into a productive place of lush fields and orchards. Here in Israel, the Negev desert that began fifty years ago just south of Chevron has now expanded many kilometers far south of Beersheba. This is due to the national water carrier system and other means of bringing water to that area of our country. Literally, the desert has bloomed in fulfillment of the ancient prophecies of Isaiah. Water can overcome the arid dryness and barrenness of the desert of the Negev. In California, desert valleys have been transformed into America's vegetable basket by systems of water diverted from the Colorado River. Again, in that case water was the key to transforming a desert into a garden and orchard. There are plans afloat all over the world to transform deserts into arable land. However, fresh water is a valuable and oftentimes scarce commodity and the struggle to discover and harness more of it for agricultural and human use is a continuous one.

Throughout the books of the prophets of Israel and as well as within the Talmud, the Torah itself is metaphorically compared to and even called water. Just as water has the ability to convert desolate and nonproductive desert land into a veritable Garden of Eden, so too can Torah fill the void in our hearts and souls and make us productive holy people. Torah, like the water that represents it, has this enormous regenerative power. The book of Bamidbar will, in its narrative of the many sad and tragic events that befell Israel in its sojourn in the desert, constantly remind us of the powers of water/Torah to restore the Jewish people to a purposeful existence with greatly productive achievements in spite of all of its failures and backsliding. No matter how bleak and barren the desert landscape in which we currently find ourselves, we should always be cognizant of the ability of Torah to refresh and renew us. The Jewish people are an old nation and yet our powers of rejuvenation have never waned. We were and are constantly nourished by the waters of Torah irrespective of whatever desert we found or find ourselves in. Thus the choice of Jewish tradition to call this book of

the Torah by the name of Bamidbar - in the desert – is meant to convey to us this message of hope, constant redemption and rebirth. Shabat shalom Rabbi Berel Wein

---

from: Aish.com <newsletterserver@aish.com> via madmimi.com date: Thu, May 9, 2013 at 9:53 AM subject: Cleveland Hero; Hawking's Israel Boycott; Syrian Red Line - May 9, 2013  
<http://www.aish.com/sp/ph/120-Thats-Life.html>

**120: That's Life by Osher Chaim Levene, with Rabbi Yehoshua Hartman**

**The meaning of the number 120 in Jewish thought.**

**Excerpted from the just-published book Jewish Wisdom in the Numbers.**

The number 120 marks a full lifetime. The average human lifespan (and standard measure of a generation) is associated with 70: "The days of our years are 70 years."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the optimal length of life, as echoed in the conventional blessing given for long life ("You should live until 120!") extends to 120 years. This epitomizes the sum of years in which man is to live out his life.

Rabbinic literature records several scholars within the historic period of the Mishnah who lived for 120 years.<sup>2</sup> But the most famous individual whose 120-year lifespan is explicitly recorded in the Torah was the greatest Jewish leader of them all: Moses, Moshe Rabbeinu.

**The Life of Moses**

The life of Moshe began with his secret birth against the backdrop of the Egyptian edict to kill all the newly born Jewish boys. He was rescued from the River Nile by Pharaoh's daughter, who drew him from the water.<sup>3</sup> Growing up in the royal palace, he shouldered the burden of his oppressed brethren who were brutally forced into backbreaking labor.<sup>4</sup> After Moshe fled Egypt, God chose him at the burning bush to become the redeemer of Israel.<sup>5</sup> Moshe was 80 years old when he stood before Pharaoh demanding that he let the Jewish People go.<sup>6</sup> Moshe's 40-year leadership spanned the decades from the Exodus through the years in the Wilderness, until just prior to their entry into the Holy Land.<sup>7</sup>

The Torah stresses that Moshe's physical and mental prowess did not diminish nor wane in old age.<sup>8</sup> Prior to his demise, Moshe gave testimony that all his faculties were fully functional and completely intact. His inability to enter the Holy Land was due only to God having decreed it. In line with the righteous, whose years are complete,<sup>9</sup> Moshe died on the same date as his birthday,<sup>10</sup> his life in This World spanning exactly 120 years.<sup>11</sup>

The defining feature of Moshe's life was the Torah. His role in redeeming the Children of Israel from Egypt was solely so that they would receive God's Torah at Sinai, with Moshe playing an essential role in its transmission to the Jewish People.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, there is a parallel between days and years in terms of the process of Moshe's receiving the Torah. In ascending the mountain to receive the Torah, there were three 40-day periods, namely (40 x 3 =) 120 days in total.<sup>13</sup> This contains in microcosm the 120-year life of Moshe, which was dedicated to teaching Torah to the Jewish People.<sup>14</sup>

**120: Above Water**

The Jewish baby was named "Moshe" by Pharaoh's daughter because she saved him when he was an infant in a casket floating on the River Nile: "for I drew him from the water."<sup>15</sup> This reflects the unique spiritual nature of Moshe in his affinity to *tzurah*, form, which is taken out and raised above the level of *chomer*, matter. *Chomer* is exemplified by water, whose liquid state has no definite form.<sup>16</sup>

The Talmud sees a cryptic allusion to Moshe in the episode recounting the corruption in the world before the Flood. "God said: 'My spirit shall not abide in man forever, insofar as he is also flesh; therefore his days shall be 120 years.'"<sup>17</sup> The term "insofar as he is also," has the same numerical value (345) as the name Moshe.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the 120-year period in the verse is a clear reference to the years of Moshe's life.<sup>19</sup>

There are several striking correspondences between the period of the Flood and the life of Moshe. Interestingly, the theme of succumbing or rising above water features strongly in both.

Just as Moshe survived by being "drawn from the water," so was mankind temporarily spared the waters of the Flood in the merit of Moshe, and also for the equivalent time frame of 120 years.<sup>20</sup> During these 120 years, God restrained His anger. He did not immediately punish the wicked; He afforded them the opportunity to repent.<sup>21</sup> The Divine instruction given to Noach about publicly constructing the ark,<sup>22</sup> was the means of warning mankind that God was ready to bring about the destructive Flood.<sup>23</sup>

The newborn Jewish boys in the Egyptian exile were condemned to drown in the water,<sup>24</sup> with only Moshe surviving by being contained within a ark. This has its parallel in the times of the Flood, where all of civilization was similarly drowned in

the waters, with the notable exception of Noach and the remnants of civilization, who were preserved by being housed within a ark.<sup>25</sup>

The ark built by Noach over the course of 120 years symbolized a "lifetime." It was the environment in which the last remnants of civilization would live and survive until after the Flood. In its aftermath, they would reestablish themselves on the land.

**120: Life in Jubilee Cycles**

In the same way the ark was used to reestablish life on Earth after the Flood, Moshe was responsible for the acceptance of Torah, which would give the world its endurance. Indeed, even the world's creation has a connection to Moshe – the opening word of the Torah, *bereshis*, "in the beginning of ..." contains an allusion to Moshe, who is also described with the term *reishis*, first.<sup>26</sup>

By extension, Moshe's 120-year lifespan relates to the full time continuum.<sup>27</sup> The maximum length destined for the physical universe is 6 millennia: "The world will exist for 6000 years."<sup>28</sup> Time is arranged in concentric units. Hours are turned into days, days into months, months into years, years into Sabbatical cycles, and finally, Sabbatical cycles into cycles of Yovel, 50th-year Jubilee. This is the ultimate cycle – as the reaching of Yovel symbolically marks the point that a cycle is complete. It now is primed to start anew.<sup>29</sup>

If one divides the 6000 years of world existence into these 50 Jubilee cycles, one would then produce a total of 120. In the same fashion that a period of 50 years is classified as an "epoch," so too, the expanded expression of the universe's lifetime (6000) is manifest in the combination of Yovel (50) and a human lifetime (120), taken together (50 x 120 = 6000).

**120: From Moses to the Men of the Great Assembly**

The outstanding legacy of Moshe's 120-year life would be successfully transmitted through the generations. The first historical chain of Torah transmission, documented by the opening Mishnah to *Pirkei Avos*, began with Moshe and stretched down to the *Anshei Knesses HaGedolah*, the Men of the Great Assembly, who lived at the beginning of the Second Temple period.<sup>30</sup>

This lineage represents the transition from the prophetic revelation of the Written Torah (Moshe) to the grasp of the Oral Torah (*Anshei Knesses HaGedolah*). This assembly included the surviving prophets of the First Temple era. Its members included Mordechai, Ezra, and Nechemiah. They introduced many edicts to reflect the change in circumstances (e.g., the standard textual formulation of the *Amidah* prayers).

Functioning in the capacity of a Great Sanhedrin, entrusted with the preservation of Jewish life in a new epoch of Jewish history, the total composition of the *Anshei Knesses HaGedolah* was of 120 members.<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, the size of a Jewish community that necessitates a Sanhedrin is one that serves a congregation of no fewer than 120 people.<sup>32</sup>

**120: From Moses Until Today**

In truth, the mark of Moshe's life continues to reverberate in all later generations – down to this day. That Moshe died on his 120th birthday symbolizes that there is a never-ending cycle. This was Haman's fatal mistake: to think that the month of Adar – during which Moshe died – was a tragic date in Jewish history. The fact that this was on his birthday means that Moshe symbolically lives on – not through himself but through his successors. Rather than his passing creating a void, it denotes a constantly renewable state through later Torah scholars.<sup>33</sup>

The persona of Moshe is said to be reincarnated into the Jewish leaders of each era. They continue the sacred task of consecrating a life of Torah observance that animates existence and life. It is what human life is all about – a life that hopefully extends to the same length as that of Moshe – 120 years.

Click here to order a copy of *Jewish Wisdom in the Numbers*, the symbolism in the Hebrew numbers expressed in Jewish thought and practice.

1. Tehillim 90:10. See "70: The Sum of the Parts." 2. See Bereishis Rabbah 100:10 about Rabbi Akiva, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, et al. See also Rosh Hashanah 31b. 3. Shemos 2:5-6, 10. 4. Ibid. 2:11-13. 5. Ibid. 3:1-10. 6. Ibid. 7:7. See "80: With Great Might." 7. See "40: True to Form." 8. Devarim 31:2 and Rashi ad loc. 34:7. 9. See Tosafos, Chagigah 17a citing Yerushalmi, Chagigah 2:3 stating that David died on Shavuot. See Kiddushin 38a and Sotah 13b about the righteous dying on their birthdays. 10. Sotah 12b. 11. Devarim 31:2, 34:7. 12. Pirkei Avos 1:1. 13. See Rashi, Shemos 32:1 and 33:11. 14. Rokeach, Devarim 34:7. 15. Shemos 2:10. 16. Maharal, Gevuros Hashem 14. See "39: Under Development" and "40: True to Form." 17. Bereishis 6:3. 18. Chullin 139b. 19. See Rashi, Chullin 139b. 20. Maharal, Chiddushei Aggados, Chullin 139b (Vol. 4, pp.115-116). 21. Rashi, Bereishis 6:3. 22. Bereishis 6:13-16. 23. Rashi, ibid. 6:14. 24. Shemos 1:22. 25. Note the similar description of both the *teivah* of Noach and the *teivah* of Moshe being smeared with pitch (Bereishis 6:14 and Shemos 2:3; see Rashi, Bereishis 6:14). 26. Bereishis Rabbah 1:4. 27. Both Adam and Noach lived almost 1000 years – 930

and 950 years respectively. The combination of their deficient years to reach 1000 (70 for Adam and 50 for Noach) equals 120 years – the lifetime of Moshe. See Chida, Devash L'Fi, Erech Moshe. 28. Rosh Hashanah 31a; Avodah Zarah 9a. See "6000: The End of the World." 29. See "50: All the Way." 30. Pirkei Avos 1:1. 31. Megillah 17b. 32. Sanhedrin 2b and 17b; see Rambam, Hilchos Sanhedrin 1:10. 33 See Tanchuma, Ki Sisa 3, mentioned in the context of Parashas Shekalim. This article can also be read at: <http://www.aish.com/sp/ph/120-Thats-Life.html> Like what you read? As a non-profit organization, Aish.com relies on readers like you to enable us to provide meaningful and relevant articles. Join Aish.com and help us continue to give daily inspiration to people like you around the world. Make a secure donation at: <https://secure.aish.com/secure/pledge.php> or mail a check to Aish.com, 408 South Lake Drive, Lakewood, NJ 08701

Copyright © 1995 - 2013 Aish.com - <http://www.aish.com>

from: Rabbi Yochanan Zweig <genesis@torah.org> reply-to: genesis@torah.org to: rabbizweig@torah.org date: Wed, May 8, 2013 at 5:05 PM subject: Rabbi Zweig - Parshas Bamidbar

<http://www.torah.org/learning/rabbizweig/5773/bamidbar.html> **Rabbi Zweig**

### **Parshas Bamidbar**

#### **Everyone Counts**

"...according to the number of names..."(1:3)

Chazal refer to the fourth book of the Torah as Sefer HaPekudim - The Book Of Counting. Presumably this is because of the census found in this week's Parsha. However, this is not the first census Bnei Yisroel took. We find a similar census in Sefer Shemos. What is unique about this census that Chazal would define an entire Sefer by it?

Counting can be used for two purposes. One purpose for counting is to combine individual elements as a group. The other purpose for counting is to give each of the different elements within a group its own identity, giving the individual the feeling that "he counts". This is accomplished by focusing on each individual separately, rather than on the group as a whole. The purpose of the counting found in Sefer Shemos is to unify the Jews as a nation following their exodus from Egypt. In Sefer Bamidbar we find the expression "bemispār shaymos" - "they were counted according to their names". The reason for this is that the focus of the counting is to emphasize the individuality of each person within the group. Identifying a person by his name is a way of focusing upon his individuality. This expression does not appear in Sefer Shemos, for if the function of the counting is to unify the people as a nation, there is no need to identify individuals by name.

Very often when a person is part of a large group, he senses a loss of his individuality and self-expression. To compensate for this, he has a tendency to break away from the group. The message of the counting in Sefer Bamidbar is that there is room for individuality and self-expression within the confines of the group. Indeed, interpersonal relationships within the group can enhance individuality and offer the opportunity for self-expression.

This explains why the division of tribes and their banners are mentioned in the census of Bamidbar, and not in that of Shemos.<sup>1</sup> The ability to identify oneself in connection with a particular tribe and represented by a particular banner, further enhances a person's sense of individuality.

1. See 1:20-44, 2:2

Assuming Communal Responsibility

"...from twenty years of age and up..." (1:3)

In this week's Parsha, Hashem commands Moshe to take a tribe-by-tribe census, including only individuals above the age of twenty. A Jew reaches legal majority at the age of thirteen. Why then, would he not be included in the census? Perhaps the answer lies in resolving another difficulty. According to Chazal, Heavenly punishment is not meted out until one reaches the age of twenty.<sup>1</sup> However, according to Jewish law a person is held responsible for his actions from thirteen years of age and above. If one can be put to death at the age of thirteen by our courts, why would the Heavenly Court punish only from the age of twenty?

Every sin contains two elements: the destructive nature or consequences of the act itself, and the rebellion or defiance towards Hashem involved in doing the act. In our court of law, we punish a person for his actions. In the Heavenly Court of Law punishment is not administered based upon the actions of the individual, rather on the degree of rebelliousness involved in the act. During a person's adolescent years he grapples with discovering his own identity. There tends to be a focus on his individuality, which can manifest itself in non-conformity and rebelliousness. At the age of thirteen a person is accountable for the consequences of his actions and will be punished in a court of law. However, the Heavenly Court will not punish a person until he is twenty, for the rebelliousness that he shows is

not a rejection of, nor a direct affront to Hashem; it is an outgrowth of his struggle for self-expression and individuality. By the time a person has reached twenty years of age, he is able to conform to society at large and focus on the needs of his community. Only then is he ready to be counted as one of "Adas Yisroel", the community of Israel.

1. Shabbos 89b, see Pardes Yosef beginning of Parshas Chayei Sarah

Desire For Intimacy

"...and an alien who approaches shall die" (1:51)

The Talmud relates a story concerning a gentile who, while passing by a house of study, overheard the description of the Kohein Gadol's garments. He then went to the great Sage Shammai requesting to be converted so that he may become a Kohein Gadol. Shammai, unimpressed with the motivations of this individual, sent him away. The gentile then appeared before Hillel with the same request. Hillel converted him, but informed him that before becoming a Kohein Gadol, a person must study all of the laws pertaining to the High Priest position. When the convert reached the verse which records the prohibition of a "zar", literally "stranger" to perform the Priestly service, he inquired as to the type of person to which the Torah is referring. Hillel answered that even King David, ruler of Israel, was prohibited from serving in the Beis Hamikdash, for he was not of Priestly lineage. The convert realized that if the monarch of Israel could not perform the Service, for a convert to perform the Service would be inconceivable. The Talmud concludes the story by stating that this individual praised Hillel for his tolerance and expressed his gratitude for being accepted as a member of the Jewish people.<sup>1</sup>

The Rambam rules that a conversion is only permitted if the person wishing to convert is not motivated by any external factors. If a person requests to convert for honor, wealth, or marriage, his request should be denied.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, asks the Maharsha, since the gentile was motivated by his desire to become a Kohein Gadol, how could Hillel have converted him based upon his initial request?<sup>3</sup>

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos states that we should not behave as servants who work for reward.<sup>4</sup> However, Rav Chaim Velozhiner points out that Hashem's purpose in Creation was to benefit mankind. The system of rules to which man is subject serves to allow man the sense that he has "earned" the right to Hashem's benevolence. How then, can the Mishna say that the basis for our service of Hashem should not be reward?<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, there appears to be a contradiction between the above Mishna and the following Mishna: "One should perform the mitzvos that have the appearance of being less stringent with the same care as one would perform those that appear more stringent, for the reward of each mitzva is not known."<sup>6</sup> The implication is that if we would know with certainty which mitzvos have greater reward, then performance of those mitzvos would be stressed. How do we reconcile this implication with the message of the first Mishna which states that our motivation to serve Hashem should not be reward?

There are two different and opposite reasons to give reward. One reason to give reward is as an incentive or compensation, as in a business setting. In such a case there exists an adversarial relationship; the business owner requires a task to be performed, and his employee, although he would prefer not to, performs the task because he is motivated by the money that he will receive. The owner would prefer not to part with his money, but then his employee will not do the job. Therefore, the money symbolizes the adversarial nature of this relationship. The second reason to give reward is to signify the closeness and appreciation that the person giving it feels for the person receiving it. In this case, the person receiving the reward is not motivated by it, rather, he uses the reward as a method of calibrating the relationship.

The first Mishna uses the term "peras" to express reward. "Peras" refers to an object which is broken off from its source. If reward is used in an adversarial relationship, there is a separation between the two parties and the reward reflects this separation. It divides rather than binding the two parties, and is therefore, described as "broken off". The reward mentioned in the second Mishna is called "sechar" This term reflects the closeness of a relationship. The desire to receive "sechar" is not viewed with disdain; on the contrary, since the motivation that a Jew should have in serving Hashem is to become close to Him, "sechar" is the manner by which we gauge that this goal has been achieved.

Shammai perceived that the convert's only motivation to become a Jew was the honor connected to being a Kohein Gadol. Therefore, he dismissed him abruptly. Hillel realized that the gentile was seeking to serve his Creator in the greatest possible manner. His desire to be a Kohein Gadol was motivated only by his wish to be close to Hashem. Therefore, he was an appropriate candidate for conversion.

1. Shabbos 32a 2. Yad Hil. Isurei Biah 13:14 3. Shabbos Chidushei Aggados 32a 4.1:3 5. Ruach Chaim ibid 6. Avos 2:1

from: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com> to:  
Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com> date: Thu, May 9,  
2013 at 4:00 AM subject: **Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib  
Scheinbaum - Parshas Bamidbar**

**PARSHAS BAMIDBAR** And with you shall be one man from each tribe; a man who is a leader of his father's household. (1:4) The Kli Yakar sees a redundancy in this pasuk: "One man from each tribe; a leader of his father's household." Being the appointed one of each tribe is quite a distinctive position. Why is it necessary to add that he be a leader of his father's household? In his Toras Chaim, Horav Chaim Toyto, Shlita, explains this in his inimitable manner - with two stories.

It is related that when the venerable Kotzker Rebbe, Horav Menachem Mendel, zl, was a young boy, a fire broke out in his hometown. In those days, houses were made of wood; thus, they were highly combustible. A fire would destroy a house in a manner of minutes, leaving over a pile of ash. His father's home was destroyed along with a good part of the Jewish community.

Mendele's mother quickly spirited the children from the home. As they all stood there and watched their home and everything in it go up in flames, the Rebbetzin began to weep bitterly. Mendele went over to his mother and asked, "Is a house made of wood that meaningful that one must cry incessantly over its loss?"

"No, my child," replied the Rebbetzin, "it is not the house or even the furniture that is the reason for my weeping. I am crying for the megillas yuchsin, genealogical scroll, recording my family's distinguished lineage, that has been destroyed. My pedigree was very important to me."

Mendele looked up at his mother, and in all sincerity said, "Mama, do not weep. I will write a new scroll for you with a distinguished lineage that begins with me." His words rang true, as he was the progenitor of a chassidus that was unparalleled in its encyclopedic knowledge of Torah. His incredible brilliance and utter devotion to the truth rendered it difficult for the average student of Torah to establish a relationship with him. His derech ha'limud v'ha'yirah, approach to Torah study and fear of G-d, spawned the greatest Admorim. The chassidus of Gur was among these.

The second story concerns Horav Yisrael Rishiner, zl. When his third daughter became engaged to Horav David Halperin, the chosson's father, Rav Yaakov Yosef, extolled his distinguished pedigree. The Rishiner politely interrupted his mechutan, saying, "Our attitude towards yichus, pedigree, differs from the common approach. Most people pride themselves on their ancestral lineage. We, however, focus more on the distinguished qualities of our descendants. For example, my holy great-grandfather, the Mezritcher Maggid, zl, lauded his son, the notable Malach; while my grandfather, the Malach, reveled in the qualities of his son, my father. I, too, take immense pride in the success of my son. This is what David Ha'Melech means when he says, Tachas avosecha yiheyu banecha, Succeeding your fathers will be your sons (Tehillim 45:17). Yichus avos, ancestral pedigree, will be replaced with yichus banim, the distinctive lineage of their sons."

These two stories express a common idea: the individual who stands at the helm of a tribe, who rises above the rest to serve in a leadership position, must be a man of impeccable credentials. He must have yichus atzmi, his own personal lineage, which warrants his ascension to a position of authority. Pedigree is important, and illustrious lineage is a plus, but it does not supplant personal qualities. One cannot live off his ancestor's reputation - regardless of its eminence. Ish rosh l'bais avosav hu, "One must himself be worthy of being the leader of his father's house."

Perhaps, we might view ish rosh l'bais avosav hu, from a different perspective. I just read an inspiring article by Horav Ahron Lopiansky, Shlita, in which he notes that each generation is judged on how well it has received our tradition from its forebears, and how well the members of the generation are passing it on. He posits that, in the 3,300 years since yetzias Mitzrayim - the Egyptian exodus, and assuming that there are four generations to each century - we, today, are the one hundred thirty-third generation since the Exodus. If we are passing on the tradition to our children, then, apparently, we have received it from our predecessors.

One hundred and thirty-two rosh l'bais avosav, fathers who transmitted the legacy of faith, the legacy of commitment, the legacy of devotion. It was not easy. Some suffered greatly; others were victims of the most heinous persecutions; they lived and died for their beliefs. They always made sure to see to it, however, that the next generation was prepared to "step up to the plate" when its time to lead materialized.

Every Jew must view himself as a "leader of his father's household." We are not here just for the "ride." We have an obligation and a responsibility to assure that what we have received is transmitted to our children - or else we have failed in our function as parents. We are the keepers of a treasure that has traveled one hundred and thirty-two generations. It is our sacred duty to pass it on in its pristine nature.

Ostensibly, there are those who have difficulty accepting this charge. They either feel unworthy of the task or they simply do not acknowledge its significance. They forget that as Jews we are different - very different - with greater responsibilities

and a higher calling. This idea was aptly expressed by a secular Jew, Benjamin Disraeli.

In one of his most famous responses in the English Parliament, Disraeli, born a Jew, but baptized by his father as a child, answered a slight to his Jewish ancestry with this famous quote. Daniel O'Connell, an Irish Catholic politician, made a negative reference to Disraeli's Jewish lineage. The Prime Minister replied, "Yes, I am a Jew, and, when the ancestors of the right honorable gentleman were brutal savages in an unknown island, mine were Priests in the Temple of Solomon." We have so much pride to share with our children. Who but the Jewish nation has been reviled, persecuted, put to death, yet has survived all of our antagonists? We are the eternal nation. Thus, we must perpetuate our legacy by transmitting it to the next generation.

Bnei Yisrael shall encamp, each man by his banner, according to the insignias of their fathers' household. (2:2)

Klal Yisrael was to travel as a collective group in formation, three tribes, each with a distinctively colored banner/flag representative of its individual characteristic. Each triumvirate group was led by a designated tribe. Each tribal banner was the same color as its corresponding stone on the Breastplate, Choshen, of the Kohen Gadol. Their positions around the Mishkan were to be the same as those designated by Yaakov Avinu for his sons when they were to escort his coffin for burial. This is what is meant by ossos l'bais avosam, "According to the insignias of their fathers' household." This idea is quoted by Rashi from the Midrash Tanchuma, which elaborates upon this theme. What is the connection between the Patriarch's funeral and the nation's journey through the wilderness? There must be some overriding significance if Yaakov's original formation had become the blueprint for the Jewish nation's forty-year trek to Eretz Yisrael. It is almost as if Yaakov had specifically desired that his moment of parting from his sons should be indelibly engraved on the nation's psyche.

Horav Pinchas Friedman, Shlita, explains this with an episode which took place concerning Horav Meir Premishlaner, zl. A chasid once approached him as he was about to take leave of the venerable sage and asked, "Rebbe, how can I possibly retain throughout the year the same inspiration which imbues me during my stay in Premishlan? I feel so spiritually uplifted during the weeks that I spend learning here in the presence of the Rebbe. How do I 'bottle' this emotion, so that it inspires me throughout my mundane endeavors?" It is a powerful question which applies across the board to so many of us who: spend a weekend of inspiration; go to the yeshivah for the Yamim Noraim, High Holy Days; take a spiritual journey to the Holy Land, visiting its holy sites - people - both past and present. We are all inspired, moved to great spiritual heights. How do we get it to last?

The Rebbe replied that, when a student parts from his rebbe, there wells up within him a sense of longing, a craving for more, a sense of yearning not to leave, to remain in the shadow of his mentor always. After time, this aspiration begins to wane, the passions slowly starting to abate. How does one succeed in keeping the passion alive? In his mind, he should visualize their parting moment, the mood of their farewell, and keep this experience ingrained in his mind. This will keep the feeling alive. The inextricable bond between rebbe and talmid, student, endures through the reinforcement of this sense of virtual imagery.

A parting moment becomes a lasting memory, an enduring experience retained in the heart and mind of one who is privy to the occurrence, when it is taken seriously. At one point or another, we are all conscious of such a moment. What we do with it impacts its lasting impression on us. Yaakov Avinu was taking leave of his family. It was an emotionally laden experience which could be transformed into a lifelong inspiration to be transmitted to each ensuing generation. This was to be facilitated through the vehicle of the Degalim, whereby the deathbed/funeral scenario would be relived through the Degalim formation, with each tribe traveling in the same formation as did its progenitor when Klal Yisrael escorted the Patriarch to his eternal rest.

Seeking to reassure his father, Yaakov, that their separation did not leave him spiritually impaired, Yosef sent a message concerning the last subject that they had studied together: The laws of Eglah Arufah, the Axed Heifer. His father had inculcated in him the notion never to forget the rega ha'preidah, parting moment. Yaakov now understood that, although Yosef had been separated from him all of these years, he had kept the "light on" in his heart by remembering their parting moment.

Each man by his banner, according to the insignias of their fathers' household. (2:2)

Each tribe received a designated spot around the Mishkan. At first, Moshe Rabbeinu was concerned that a dispute might arise between the tribes. Quite possibly, each individual tribe had its own idea concerning its placement. Hashem told Moshe that he need not worry. The tribes knew their place, understanding that the configuration determined by their Patriarch, Yaakov Avinu, would apply now

as well. The tribes accepted their grandfather's decision; what he had decided hundreds of years earlier was still applicable today.

How are we to understand this? The tribe that might question Moshe's decision could just as well question Yaakov's designation. What guarantee was there that, since Yaakov had earlier arranged the tribes in a specific manner, it would be acceptable today as well? Could they not argue that times had changed; this was not a funeral; it was not merely twelve brothers, but twelve tribes comprised of thousands of people. Perhaps the configuration should now be altered. How did Hashem assuage Moshe's concern?

Horav A. Henach Leibowitz, zl, explains this by applying his deep understanding of human nature. The average intelligent person has a fair and impartial sense of judgment. This sense of objectivity is applicable as long as he has no negios, vested interests, to cloud his impartiality. If the individuals who stand before him are strangers, and if the question presented to him has no bearing on him personally, his ability to remain aloof and render clear, concise judgment should not be impugned. Once the question pertains to friends, however, the playing field changes drastically. This is also true if he has a personal stake in the issue.

Nonetheless, if an earlier episode had produced an accepted cogent response, it can now be studied objectively and acknowledged as being correct, despite the fact that now, in an unrelated case, the emotional factors are rising high and threatening to derail the truth process. The incident concerning Yaakov had taken place many years earlier. It was accepted as correct - despite the present involvement of Klal Yisrael in an unrelated, but similar, question. Thus, even though under other circumstances the tribes might have taken umbrage with Moshe's decision concerning their placement, they could not argue with Yaakov's decision, since that decision had been accepted and agreed upon from an objective viewpoint. It was, therefore, a "done deal."

This, explains the Rosh Yeshivah, is the power of a previously resolved intellectual decision. Such a decision has the ability to withstand the compelling and often convincing pressures of persuasiveness which are the result of emotional bias. Thus, we are able to navigate the course of truth through the ambiguities of life's challenges.

This leads us to the powerful question which has destroyed more than one weak believer: How can we tell if we are right? How do we ascertain if certain reasoning has its source in our yetzer tov, good-inclination, or yetzer hora, evil-inclination? As we confront temptation and find ourselves confused and disoriented, to "whom" do we listen?

Indeed, the best way to avoid this issue is to determine the correct behavior before the situation arises. Regrettably, we do not always have the luxury of "looking back" or "planning ahead." The Rosh Yeshivah suggests that when we have the opportunity to review our past, or think about and plan the future prior to a given situation, at that point, when we are not under the pressure of bias, we should realize what we should be doing, what is the emes, truth; thus, we avoid becoming a victim to uncertainty when temptation strikes.

As an example of this process, the Rosh Yeshivah posits that, when we study the laws of lashon hora, slanderous speech, if we arrive at the realization that our friend's faults do not justify speaking lashon hora about him, we should accept this as axiomatic and as the unwavering truth to which we will firmly adhere. As a result, when the topic of our friend's "family" comes up in a conversation, we will subdue our feelings, ignore the rationalizations, regretting them as lame excuses to slander another Jew. By an advance charting of our life's course, which clearly requires self-discipline, we determine right from wrong objectively - before the challenge arises. We are then able to ensure that the ideals and values of Torah thinking will guide us as we "stay the course" through the often stormy and confusing seas of life.

Bnei Yisrael shall encamp, each man by his banner, according to the insignias of their fathers' household, at a distance surrounding the Ohel Moed shall they encamp. (2:2)

The words *mineged*, which is usually defined as "opposite," and *saviv*, which means "surrounding," contrast one another. Were the Jews opposite the Ohel Moed, or were they camped surrounding it? Veritably, these terms complement one another, as explained by Horav Chaim Toyto, Shlita, with the following story. An observant physician from Germany decided that he wanted to visit the blossoming Torah world of Lithuanian Jewry. After all, he was a *frum*, observant, doctor who meticulously adhered to all the mitzvos. He wanted to see what about Lithuanian yeshivah life differed from his lifestyle.

One can imagine the culture shock when this refined Western European Jew visited the great yeshivos of Lithuania. One had simply to open the door of the bais ha'medrash and listen to the cacophony of sound that emanated from there to be in a total state of spiritual euphoria. Understandably, the man was reasonably impressed, but the impression took its toll on his emotions. Suddenly, he no longer

felt worthy of the title "observant." I must emphasize that even we who have tasted the sweet taste of Torah in America and imbibed of its true flavor have no idea concerning the devotion and utter *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, that characterized the Torah study of a mere seventy years ago in Europe. It was a different world, a different era, and a different mindset. This in no way minimizes the incredible plateau of Torah study achieved in America - but it is not Europe.

This doctor was beside himself, anxious about the fact that perhaps he was off base in his *frumkeit*. He traveled to Radin to speak with the saintly Chofetz Chaim. Perhaps the sage could enlighten him. Entering the Chafetz Chaim's "study" and gazing at his countenance was in itself an unparalleled experience. Gathering up his courage, he asked, "Rebbe, until now I was at peace with myself and happy with my lot. I felt that I was an observant Jew, adhering to all of Hashem's mitzvos, performing acts of *tzedakah v'chesed*, charity and kindness. I go to shul and pray with a *minyán*, quorum, three times daily. I do my part in healing the sick and reaching out to those in need. I have saved many lives and feel that I have been *mekadesh Shem Shomayim*, sanctified the Name of Heaven. Until I visited Lithuania, I was sure that I was destined for *Olam Habba*, a place in the World to Come, but now, I no longer know if I will make it. The Torah giants of Lithuania with their outstanding *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, steeped in Torah and Mussar, ethical character refinement, are beyond anything I have ever experienced. What should I do?"

The Chafetz Chaim calmed the man and said, "Let me explain to you the Torah's perspective concerning a Jew's obligation to serve Hashem. The Torah in Parashas Bereishis writes: *V'Eitz HaChaim b'soch ha'Gan*, 'The Tree of Life was (situated) in middle of the Garden.' Rashi confirms the meaning of *b'soch ha'Gan* as reference to the Tree's position in the center of the Garden. We wonder what difference it makes whether the Tree was in the middle of the Garden or at the side. The important message is that the Tree grew within the Garden of Eden.

"Obviously, the Tree has unique significance in that it alludes to true life, eternal life, the only life that really counts. The Torah teaches us that *chaim nitzchiyim*, eternal life, is available to everyone equally, regardless of his individual approach to serving the Almighty. What matters is not the 'how' but for what purpose and to whom. *Shevet Yissachar*, the Tribe of Yissachar, has its unique approach through the vehicle of Torah study, while *Zevulun* is an observant businessman, engaged in commerce, while himself finding time to learn Torah and sustain others who make Torah study their full-time vocation. Some spend a good portion of their waking hours performing countless acts of *chesed*, kindness; others spend hours in devotional prayer to Hashem. I was 'placed' in Lithuania, a major Torah center, for the purpose of Torah pursuit. I was given the opportunity to study and disseminate Torah, which I have attempted to execute to the best of my ability. You were placed in Germany and enabled a secular education, so that you could minister to the sick and thereby sanctify Hashem's Name. You set aside time for Torah study on a regular basis, thereby fulfilling your predestined goal in life. Each of us has his individual function which is our vehicle for reaching the *Eitz HaChaim*, eternal life. As long as we are all focused on that 'center' - the *Eitz HaChaim*."

Utilizing the above story, we can understand that there is actually no dichotomy between *saviv* and *mineged*. There are Jews who seem to encamp "opposite," whose approach to serving the Divine differs from the one we have either chosen for ourselves or was chosen for us. We should clearly understand that we are all on the same side, as long as we are *misaviv*, encircled around the *Mishkan*, *Tabernacle*, *Tree of Life*. Thus, the Torah writes *mineged* and *saviv*, for although they appear to contrast one another, they actually complement each other.

If I may add, much has been written concerning the definition of the "centrist" Jew and *centrist* Judaism, with each side claiming the other is either to the "right" or to the "left," but certainly not in the "center." Perhaps the Chafetz Chaim was teaching us the true meaning of centrism: One who focuses on the Tree which grows in the center of the Garden, the *Eitz HaChaim*, the only road to eternal life. Clearly, reducing our commitment, so that we enable a greater sense of inclusiveness to those who want to have their cake and eat it, will not increase our chances for a seat in the center of the Garden.

*Va'ani Tefillah Shema Yisrael.*

Hear O' Yisrael! These words convey a powerful message. We go through life deceiving ourselves, refusing to concede that perhaps we might actually be wrong. This presents two problems. First, it impairs our relationship with our peers. A person who cannot face the reality that he could be wrong has a serious problem. The second - and primary - problem is with regard to our relationship with Hashem. One who cannot own up to his indiscretions presents an insurmountable barrier between himself and Hashem. The stellar dialogue between Hashem and man is: *Shema Yisrael! Listen! Wake up and hear what is going on! There can be a relationship only when we are willing to hear what Hashem has to say to us.* As Horav Shlomo Freifeld, zl, points out, we must be willing to listen to each other,



but first, we must tune in to ourselves. Yes, we must listen with honesty, with humility, with courage and without fear - ready to accept what we "hear" and willing to do something about it. We must listen to who we are, what our goals are, and how we expect to achieve them. Otherwise, we go through life fooling ourselves and destroying our relationship with Hashem.

Sponsored li"n R' Alter Chaim Dovid ben R' Menachem Shmuel z"l niftar 28 Iyar 5767 t.n.tz.v.h. from Menachem Shmuel and Roiza Devora Salamon In memory of Mr. David Salamon z"l Peninim mailing list Peninim@shemayisrael.com

---

from: Yeshivat Har Etzion <office@etzion.org.il> reply-to: Yeshivat Har Etzion <office@etzion.org.il> to: yhe-holiday@etzion.org.il date: Mon, May 6, 2013 at 5:08 AM YESHIVAT HAR ETZION ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM) SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA <http://vbm-torah.org/archive/sichot73/29-73yomyeru.htm>

#### YOM YERUSHALAYIM

#### SICHA OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT" A

The Multifaceted Relationship between Jerusalem and the Land of Israel

Translated by Kaeren Fish "A song, a psalm of the sons of Korach: Great is the Lord, and highly praised, in the city of our God, the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole world – Mount Zion, the sides of the north, the estate of the great King. God is known in her palaces as a fortress." (Tehillim 48:1-4) In these opening verses of the chapter of Tehillim recited on Mondays, the psalmist speaks of Jerusalem as an independent location – both in terms of esthetics, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole world," and in terms of the Divine Presence dwelling there – "Great is the Lord, and highly praised, in the city of our God, the mountain of His holiness." However, there is also another perspective on the holy city – one that views Jerusalem as an integral part of Eretz Yisrael, drawing from the holiness of the land and radiating its own holiness outward. I would like to focus on this aspect of Jerusalem, as part of Eretz Yisrael, rather than as a separate, secluded jewel. The relations between Eretz Yisrael and Jerusalem are mutual: on the one hand, the holiness of Jerusalem is the pinnacle of the holiness of the land; on the other hand, the holiness of Eretz Yisrael is not just the framework for the holiness of Jerusalem, but its very foundation. In Hilkhot Terumot (1:5), the Rambam writes that Eretz Yisrael attained its holiness for all future generations only through the conquest and settlement at the time of Ezra: "All of the lands that [the Jews] who ascended from Egypt took possession of were sanctified in the first consecration [of the land]. When they were exiled, that sanctity was nullified. [The rationale is that] the initial consecration came about because of the conquest. [Hence,] its consecration was effective for the time [it was under their rule], but not for all time. When, by contrast, the descendants of the exiles ascended [from Babylon] and took possession of a portion of the land, they consecrated it a second time. [This consecration] is perpetuated forever, for that time and for all time." [1] In contrast, in Hilkhot Beit Ha-bechira (6:14), the Rambam writes that Jerusalem was consecrated for all generations already in the building of the First Temple. He goes on to explain the difference between the two categories of holiness: "Why do I say that the original consecration sanctified the Temple and Jerusalem for eternity, while in regard to the consecration of the remainder of Eretz Yisrael, in the context of the Sabbatical year, tithes, and other similar [agricultural] laws, [the original consecration] did not sanctify it for eternity? Because the sanctity of the Temple and Jerusalem stems from the Shekhina (divine presence), and the Shekhina can never be nullified... In contrast, the [original] obligation to keep the laws of the Sabbatical year and tithes on the Land stemmed from the fact that it was conquered by the [Jewish people, as a] community. Therefore, when the land was taken from their hands [by the Babylonians,] their [original] conquest was nullified. Thus, according to Torah law, the land was freed from the obligations of the Sabbatical year and of tithes because it was no longer Eretz Yisrael. When Ezra returned [to Eretz Yisrael] and consecrated it, it was not sanctified by means of through conquest, but rather through chazaka (possession). Therefore, every place which was repossessed by the [exiles returning from] Babylon and consecrated when Ezra consecrated [the land] the second time, is sacred today. Thus, as explained in Hilkhot Teruma, it is necessary to keep the laws of the Sabbatical years and the tithes [on this land] even though it was taken from [the Jewish people in later years]." (ibid., law 16) The Ra'avad (ad loc.) disagrees: "This is the Rambam's own conclusion; I do not know how he arrives at it. For in several places in the Mishna we find, 'If there is no Temple, it [the produce set aside as ma'aser sheni] rots [because it cannot be brought to the Temple]'... According to the view that the first sanctification was not meant to be forever, there is no distinction between the Temple and Jerusalem, and the rest of the land of

Israel." The Ra'avad seems to suggest that the two levels of holiness – the holiness of Eretz Yisrael and the holiness of Jerusalem – exist in parallel; there is no separating them. However, Ra'avad seems to be disagreeing with the Rambam for a different reason. According to the Rambam's explanation, there was a certain period in history, between the destruction of the First Temple and the construction of the Second Temple, when Jerusalem held its consecrated status, and consecrated foods could be eaten there, while the rest of Eretz Yisrael did not have its ritual status of holiness. Ra'avad's argument against the Rambam is that Jerusalem cannot be regarded as an extra-territorial unit: the sanctity of Jerusalem is drawn from the holiness of the land; it cannot be severed from the rest of Eretz Yisrael. Ra'avad does, however, agree that the holiness of Jerusalem not only is based on the holiness of Eretz Yisrael, but also influences it. Thus, for example, many of the Rishonim maintain that according to Ra'avad's view, the sanctified status of Eretz Yisrael was lost in the wake of the destruction of the Temple – the symbol of the destruction of Jerusalem. The relationship between the sanctity of the land and the sanctity of Jerusalem is thus two-directional, with the two levels or aspects of holiness resting upon and being nourished by one another. The mutual relations between Jerusalem and Eretz Yisrael exist not only on the ritual, religious level, but also in the political realm. In chapter 122 of Tehillim, King David describes Jerusalem as a dual capital: on one hand, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the House of God'" (Jerusalem as a religious capital); on the other hand, "There are set thrones of justice, the thrones of the House of David" (Jerusalem as a political capital). Here, again, the national status of Jerusalem is both inspired by and an inspiration to the rest of Eretz Yisrael. On the one hand, Jewish sovereignty in the land is the foundation and necessary precondition for sovereignty over Jerusalem; on the other hand, sovereignty over Jerusalem is the key to and symbol of sovereignty over the land. There is no monarch without a capital, and there can be no capital without a country. Throughout nearly two thousand years of exile we lifted our eyes to Jerusalem as "the joy of the whole world," but also as the symbol of Jewish sovereignty over Eretz Yisrael as a whole. Specifically in our times it is important to emphasize the mutual relationship between Jerusalem and Eretz Yisrael, since the connection between the two values seems to be in danger of being severed – from both ends. On the one hand there are groups who glorify Jerusalem as an independent, stand-alone jewel with God's house at its center. They emphasize the values associated with Jerusalem alone, forgetting or neglecting the significance of Eretz Yisrael as a whole and the values associated with it. On the other hand, there is a sense that among other groups the recognition of Jerusalem's significance and its unique contribution is being eroded. The awareness of the importance of the connection between Jerusalem and Eretz Yisrael, which swept through the entire nation in 1967, has suffered a setback. We, in the beit midrash, must be sure to maintain our excitement and maintain our feeling of the two-directional current running between Jerusalem and Eretz Yisrael. We must also radiate this feeling outwards, and do our part to intensify and strengthen this awareness, which burned with such clarity when we returned to Jerusalem, rather than allowing it to subside. Even if we lack influence on the political level, it is important that we, as students in the beit midrash, uphold this view on the ideological level. On this day, as we commemorate and celebrate Jerusalem, let us also strengthen our awareness of the important bond between Jerusalem, the holy city, and Jerusalem the capital, and between Jerusalem and Eretz Yisrael as a whole. (This sicha was delivered on Yom Yerushalayim 5760 [2000].)