



"Written by a Multifaceted Student Body, Whose Ambition is to Enrich and Enhance Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion"

PARSHAT BAMIDBAR

פרשת במדבר

~ כ"ד אייר תשע"א ~

This week's edition of Ashreinu is sponsored in loving memory of Moshe (Morris) Hochman, grandfather of Rabbi Hochman

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JUST LIKE A WAVING FLAG

RABBI AVI HOCHMAN

פרשה (מדרש רבה: במדבר ב: ג) מדרש ה' at the beginning of this week's teaches us that when ה' revealed Himself to בני ישראל at בני ישראל, angels descended with Him arrayed in דגלים (flags). When בני ישראל saw the angels arrayed in דגלים, they began to desire their own, asking to also "be arranged in דגלים like them!" ה' said to Moshe, "Go, arrange them in דגלים as they have desired."

Why do בני ישראל maintain such a strong desire for דגלים? Furthermore, if there was such a strong desire, why does שבט לוי not have a דגל? Did they run out of colors?

The טוב שמן explains that every angel knows very clearly what their jobs and tasks are. Every שבט had its own דגל reflecting their specific talents, aspirations, and goals. When they would look at their דגל, it would remind them of their higher purpose, just like many may react to seeing the American or Israeli flag. Every שבט had to know what their goals should be and where they should be heading. Whenever they would lose sight of that direction, they would look at their waving דגל. That דגל symbolized their goal in life.

did not need the דגל to remind them of their goal in life, for their lives were completely enveloped in serving ה'. Their job was to serve ה' with the משכן, and they carried upon themselves the דגל of ה' on a daily basis.

Even though every שבט had their own דגל, they were encamped around the משכן. When they would see the משכן, the center of their camp, they were reminded that their goals were built upon spirituality and serving ה'.

What is our flag? What do we look at for our inspiration and to find a way to reach our goals? Do we go day to day without any higher purpose? Do we have a making ברכות flag? Putting on תפילין flag? Finding time to learn תורה flag? As the summer approaches, we should all do our best to create our flags that will enable us to accomplish our goals all while keeping ה' at the forefront of our mind.

UNITY WITHOUT UNIFORMITY

ZEVI LITWIN ('13)

This week's *parsha*, *Parshat Bamidbar*, commences with the counting of the Jewish people. Hashem commands Moshe, "Take a census of the entire assembly of the Children of Israel according to their families, according to their fathers' house..." (Bamidbar 1:2). The Ramban comments on this command, explaining that Hashem instructs Moshe to count each individual with honor; He told him, "Don't say to the head of the family 'How many are in your family?', but rather, 'All of them shall pass before you with awe and you shall count them.'"

There is a story told about a mother who was asked how many children she had. Rather than replaying that she has three children, she answered, "I have one Jacob, one Esther, and one Joseph." She regarded each of her children as individuals, rather than lumping them together into one unit.

Furthermore, the second *perek* of *Bamidbar* begins with Hashem telling Moshe, "The Children of Israel shall encamp, each man at his division according to the signs of their fathers' house, at a distance surrounding the Tent of Meeting" (Bamidbar 2:2). Our Rabbis explain that each tribe had its own flag and that *Bnei Yisrael* was to journey and camp in four sections surrounding the *Mishkan*. While each tribe had its own specific flag, a symbol that would usually signify the separation of the tribes, there was still unity amongst the Jewish nation. They all had the unifying factor of their encampment around the *Mishkan*.

Similarly, when Yaakov blesses his children before his death, he does not say, "You are my children and you should all be blessed," but rather, he calls upon each one individually, giving them unique blessings that fit their specific qualities and personalities. He acknowledges that each one of his sons is different; that each one possesses personal strengths that should be addressed.

These four examples portray an imperative message about the Jewish nation. We do not preach uniformity, for each of us is not same as the next; appearing as mechanized robots is not an emphasized quality of ours. We as Jews have an extraordinary ability to exist as individuals, to choose whether we want to be "Jacobs" or "Esthers" or "Josephs", yet we also have the ability to remain unified through our love of Torah and Hashem. Just as the twelve tribes all camped around the *Mishkan*, we have the unique ability to achieve unity without uniformity.

Taken from "Short Vorts" by Rabbi Henry Isaacs

INDIVIDUALITY THROUGH UNITY

ERAM ZAGHI ('12)

In this week's *parsha* we come across the second census of *Bnei Yisrael*. There is a striking disparity between the enumeration found in this week's *parsha* and that found in *Shemot*. In this *parsha*, Hashem commands Moshe to tally *Bnei Yisrael* "*Lemishpechotam*" (*Bamidbar* 1: 2), according to their families, whereas in *Shemot*, they were counted as one indispensable unit.

The seemingly evident question that arises is why? Why the separation? Is Hashem attempting to insinuate a support for the notion of separation rather than unity?

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky explains that the rationale behind the factionalism of our census is to evoke a conviction of the potency and creativity that is inherent in the creation of small factions and even individuals. Each individual must identify and garner those creative and distinctive talents that he or she has. Although this statement resonates quite nicely with Ayn Rand's individualistic philosophy of "personal" prowess, there arises another predicament to which we must now confront: If the Torah believes so zealously in the idea of

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individuality, why then does Hashem not command Moshe to count *Bnei Yisrael* separately in *Shemot*?

In the prerevolutionary era of the colonies that would soon coalesce into the potent country the United States, Benjamin Franklin incessantly pushed for unity. He attempted to galvanize the colonial leaders to endorse his Albany Plan of Union, a plan whose focal point was the amalgamation of the colonies. His famous cartoon consisted of a snake cut into eight sections, each symbolizing a colony, with the ominous subtitle- "Join or Die." Franklin did not only attempt to caution America against the deterioration that would surely ensue if the colonies maintained their detached state, but also tried to evince the notion of the greater aptitude and potentiality that would ensue if the unique colonies would unite under a single purpose. Franklin's concern is the exact reason behind the unified census in *Shemot*.

Rabbi Kamenetsky explicated that the Torah advocates the power of the individual. However, it also displays the jeopardy that might follow, and therefore, Hashem demands Moshe to count the nation as one only until the creation of the *Mishkan*, which would serve as the primary unifying force. Only with the creation of the *Mishkan*, an object that symbolizes the ethics and core principles of Judaism, could each tribe and individual tone in each of his or her unique talents appropriately to serve a greater purpose, which ultimately links every Jew and forms us into one indispensable force. Ayn Rand's philosophy may contain veracity, however, only when it is utilized for a purpose greater than one's self.

Carrying out and assisting in the establishment of this new Torah publication, Ashreinu, has truly been a great boon and blessing. It has not only allowed me to recognize some undiscovered personal talents, but also has also provided me with an opportunity to hone in those talents and to utilize them to create a publication that promulgates the ideals that unify us as Jews. And for that I am greatly in debt to our faculty advisor Rabbi Hochman and all those who have assisted and provided me with this opportunity. Thank you.

May we all merit to discover our own individualistic fortes and utilize them for transcendent principles that will hopefully bring *Moshiach* speedily in our days. *Shabbat shalom*.

מדור לדור

TORAH FROM OUR ALUMNI

ORGANIZATION IS KEY

HOLLY HAMPTON ('09)

The beginning of the *parsha* begins with Hashem commanding Moshe to, "Take the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by families following their fathers' houses; a head count of every male according to the number of their names" (*Bamidbar* 1:2). The Torah then lists the sum of each tribe. Most readers overlook these lengthy sections and disregard them as tedious and irrelevant. However, these few *psukim* teach one of the most important lessons that can be conveyed to any student: the importance of organization.

In order for Moshe to be able to manage *Bnei Yisrael* effectively throughout the *midbar*, the desert, he needed to have a systematic procedure. Any leader knows that one has to be organized in order to maintain control over any given project. Although organization requires seemingly unnecessary tasks such as cleanliness, lists, or role call, they ultimately aid a person in fully understanding the different aspects of a situation.

If this is so, then why does the Torah round its numbers for the people within each tribe? Should it not be concerned about giving exact counts? The sums given in this section are either a multiple of 50 or 100.

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Each individual's importance is considered through their giving of the half shekel for the census, but the rounding of numbers was actually an organizational method for Moshe. While preparing for battle against the Canaanites, he knew this was an effective way to count the troops. What originally may appear as a lazy method of counting is actually a military strategy. In fact, one of the top American military websites includes a section that teaches how rounding is a "skill of approximation," and useful for combat. Therefore, this section teaches an important lesson to any leader about the necessity of organization.

חשיבות הפרטים הקטנים בתוך מטרה גדול

SAGIV ZEHAVI ('13)

חומש במדבר נקרא גם חומש הפקודים, משום שמסופר בו על מספר מפקדים. אם נעיין במפקדים נראה, שהספירה היא בעצם ספירה לקראת הכניסה לארץ. הספירה היא ספירת אנשי הצבא "מבן עשרים שנה ומעלה כל יוצא צבא" (א, כד). המפקד הוא של הצבא, והמטרה היא להיכנס לארץ ישראל, ארץ הקודש, ולנחול אותה. אפשר גם לראות, שהמפקד בפרשת במדבר מתרחש, כאשר בני ישראל חשבו שבעוד 11 יום הם יכנסו לארץ.

בסופו של דבר חטאו בני ישראל בחטא המרגלים ונשארו ארבעים שנה במדבר, והמפקד הבא נמצא בפרשת פנחס, בשנת הארבעים לפני הכניסה לארץ.

רש"י מביא את דברי חז"ל על ריבוי המפקדים ואומר: "מתוך חיבתן לפניו מונה אותם כל שעה".

לפעמים כשאנו עושים דברים גדולים, כשאנו צועדים לקראת משימות חשובות, נראה לנו שאין משמעות לפרטים. התורה משמיעה לנו שזה בדיוק להפך. דווקא כאשר המטרה חשובה, כל פרט מקבל משמעות גדולה, כל פרט נעשה חביב יותר. דווקא בהליכה אל המטרה הגדולה של ארץ ישראל מונה הקב"ה את עם ישראל ורואה חשיבות בכל אחד ואחד "מתוך חיבתן לפניו מונה אותם כל שעה".

גם לחיצוניות יש משמעות

בפרשה מודגש מאד עניין הדגלים: "איש על דגלו באתת לבית אבותם" (ב, ב). אומר רש"י, שלכל שבט היה דגל בצבע אחר על פי צבעי האבנים בחושן, וכן צורה שהיתה מיוחדת לכל שבט.

המדרש מאריך מאד בתאור דגלים אלה, ומתאר את צבעו של כל דגל ואת צורתו. מכל הפירוט הזה מובן שהדגל איננו רק דבר טכני, למרות שגם הצד הזה קיים בו כמו שאומר המדרש: "כדי שיהיו ניכרים בני ראובן לעצמן ובני שמעון לעצמן".

לדגל יש משמעות בפני עצמו כמייצג של המחנה הקדוש, מחנה ישראל. וכך מובא בהמשך המדרש: "אמר הקב"ה: יש לעכו"ם דגלים, ואין חביב עלי אלא דגלו של יעקב, שנאמר איש על דגלו".

להבנה זו יש השלכות הן במישור הלאומי והן במישור הפרטי. במישור הלאומי צריך להבין, שדגל המדינה מבטא רעיון. כשאנו מניפים דגל אנו מצליחים להביע את אמונתנו במדינה כשלב בצמיחת הגאולה של עם ישראל. ובמישור הפרטי כבר אמרו חז"ל: תלמיד חכם שנמצא כתם על בגדו חייב מיתה. אמנם העיקר הוא מה שבפנים, אבל גם מאד חשוב שהפנימיות הזאת תשתקף כלפי חוץ.

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