

THE CHABAD WEEKLY

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The 603,550th Jew

In Hebrew, it's called Bamidbar ("In the Desert") and also Sefer HaPekudim ("The Book of the Countings"); in the English-speaking world, this is the biblical section known as "Numbers". And yes, there are many, many numbers in the fourth of the Torah's five books.

In its opening chapters we learn that one year after the Exodus, there were 603,550 adult Israelite males between the ages of 20 and 60, of whom 22,273 were firstborn; a separate census counted 22,300 Levites age one month and older (7,500 Gershonites, 8,600 Kehattites, and 6,200 in the Merrari clan). We are also given the figure for each of the twelve tribes, from the Judah's 74,600 to Menasseh's 32,200. Then the Torah tallies the number in each of the four "camps" into which the twelve tribes were divided: Judah's camp, which also included the tribes of Issachar and Zebulun, totaled 186,400; the three tribes in Reuben's camp totaled 151,450; Ephraim's camp included 108,100, and 157,600 pitched their tents in the Camp of Dan.

Twenty six chapters and 39 years later we're still in the Book of Numbers and in the midst of another census. Again, we get the total figure (now 601,730) and the numbers for each tribe. We notice that Simeon has been tragically decimated (22,200, down from 59,300) while Menasseh's ranks have swelled to 52,700 (a gain of 20,500). But most of all we notice how G-d's passion for counting His people has not waned.

For, as G-d says to Moses, we're not just counting people. We're "raising their heads."

When a census is taken, the count will include scholars and boors, professionals and vagabonds, philanthropists and misers, saints and criminals. Yet each counts for no more and no less than "1" in the total number. The count reflects only the one quality they all share equally: the fact that each is an individual human being.

So is a headcount an expression of the lowest common denominator in a collection of individuals? The answer depends on how one views the essence of humanity. If man is basically neutral or worse--if we all begin with zero and make of ourselves what we are -- then what unites us as individuals is indeed the least of our qualities. G-d, however, has a different perspective on the "huddled masses" of man.

As G-d sees it, the soul of man is a spark of His own fire -- a spark with the potential to reflect the infinite goodness and perfection of its source. Human life is the endeavor to realize what is implicit in this spark. Indeed, a person may lead a full, accomplished and righteous life, and barely scratch the surface of the infinitude of his or her soul. Another person may blunder for a lifetime in darkness and iniquity, and then, in a moment of self-discovery, fan their Divine spark into roaring flame.

So when G-d instructs that we be counted, it is an expression of our highest common denominator. On the Divine census sheet, our differences are transcended to reveal the simple fact of our being -- a fact which expresses what is best in us, and from which stems all that is good in us.

G-d counts us not to know our number (which He obviously knows), or even to get in touch with the quintessence of our souls (which He obviously is). He counts us to accentuate our soul of souls, to give expression to its essence and to make it more accessible to our material-bound lives.

Therein lies the deeper significance of the idiom "raise the heads" in G-d's instruction to Moses to count the people of Israel. When G-d counts us, He is stimulating the highest and loftiest part of our being, the spark of Divinity which lies at the core of our soul. (Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; adapted by Yanki Tauber) - CHABAD.ORG

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"You shall take a count of the Congregation of Israel." (1:2) When a count is taken, no distinctions are made between what is being counted. The great and the small are both equal, each having the value of one. The Torah portion of Bamidbar is always read on the Shabbat before Shavuot, the holiday on which the Torah was actually given on Mount Sinai, for all Jews stand equal on that day. Our Sages said that if even one Jew had been missing, the Torah would never have been given! (The Lubavitcher Rebbe) www.ascent.org.il

The tribe of Zebulan (Num. 2:7) In enumerating all the other tribes according to their grouping by banners, the Torah states "and the tribe of so-and-so." The tribe of Zebulan, however, is listed without the word "and" preceding it. The reason is that the Zebulanites engaged in commerce to support the tribe of Issachar, whose members studied Torah as a livelihood. Lest we conclude that they were somehow inferior to Issachar because of this arrangement, the Torah refers to them simply as "the" tribe of Zebulan, to indicate that whoever supports Torah learning is considered an important entity unto himself. (Baal HaTurim) (Lchaim 5759, #568) - lchaimweekly.org

PIRKEI AVOS

"The sages taught [this chapter] in the language of the Mishnah"(6,1) One might ask why the study of Pirkei Avot was instituted in such a manner that the chapter studied before the holiday of Shavuot includes beraitot (teachings not included in the Mishnah) rather than mishnayot, which are more authoritative.

It can be explained that the Beraita reflects the manner in which the Torah descends into the world at large, showing how every new idea developed by an experienced sage was in fact granted to Moshe at Sinai. In this manner, it demonstrates the dynamic allowing for the continuation of the chain beginning when "Moshe received the Torah...and transmitted it." For it shows how the Torah can be internalized within a mortal mind, and then transmitted to subsequent generations. The Lubavitcher Rebbe (From: In the Paths of Our Fathers by Eliyahu Tauger, Kehot) www.ascent.org.il

This Shabbat we bless the new Hebrew month of Sivan. The theme of the month of Sivan is intertwined with the main festival of the month, Shavuot.

On the first day of Sivan the Children of Israel encamped in the wilderness of Sinai ready to receive the Torah. Concerning this the Torah states, "And Israel encamped there..." using the singular form of the verb "encamped" regarding which our Sages teach us that this means that the people were like one person with one heart.

Though many other times when the Jews made camp there was strife and contention, when they encamped to receive the Torah they were totally united.

Thus, it is clear that one of the prerequisites for receiving the Torah--and every year at this time we prepare to receive the Torah once again--is to enhance and foster unity amongst the Jewish people.

The "easy way" to become more united with other Jews is to follow two essential teachings of our Sages: "Love your fellow as yourself; Judge every person favorably."

Where is the place to start? The place to start is with ourselves and our own families. This, of course, doesn't mean that we have to perfect these relationships before we can extend the teachings to others, but it is certainly the correct place to start as "charity begins at home."

If we keep these fundamental teachings in mind we will certainly foster Jewish unity in our own little world, which will ultimately impact on the entire world. (Based on the Works of the Rebbe, From: Living with Moshiach 5760) - moshiach.net

The ascent of the soul¹ occurs three times daily, during the three times of davening. This is particularly true of the souls of tzadikim who "go from strength to strength."² It is certain that at all times and in every sacred place they may be, they offer invocation and prayer on behalf of those who are bound to them and to their instructions, and who observe their instructions. They offer prayer in particular for their disciples and disciples' disciples, that G-D be their aid, materially and spiritually. (FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM, IYAR 29.)
 FOOTNOTES 1. Of the departed. 2. Tehillim 84:8, i.e. from level to level.

Lack of clarity can be a blessing.

If everything were spelled out -- exactly what you are supposed to do, when, how, with whom and for how long -- what room would be left for your sense of accomplishment?

This is why the details of a person's mission in this world are held back from him: Out of G-d's great kindness, so that this little creature can decide on its own, and take credit for it.

From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; rendered by Tzvi Freeman.

PARTICIPATE IN WEEKLY CLASSES

<u>Sunday</u>	8:00 AM	Gemara-Tractate Rosh Hashana (men)
<u>Monday</u>	8:00 PM	Chumash (men and women)
<u>Tuesday</u>	8:00 PM	Gemara-Tractate Sukka (men)
<u>Wednesday</u>	8:30 PM	Halacha and Tanya (women)
<u>Thursday</u>	10:00 AM	Chassidus (women)
	8:00 PM	Class for Beverly Hills Highschool Students
<u>Daily</u>	6:45 to 7:15 AM	Chasidus
	Between Mincha and Maariv	Halacha

SHABBOS PARSHAS BAMIDBAR
Shabbos Mevorchim
 May 10, 2002 - Iyar 28, 5762

Candlelighting (Los Angeles): 7:25 PM
Friday Mincha: 7:40 PM
Early Minyan: 6:10 PM

LATEST TIME FOR SHEMA: 9:22 AM

SHABBAT MORNING

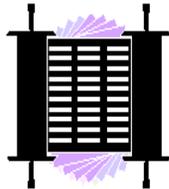
- Tehillim 8:00 AM
- Shacharit 9:30 AM followed by Kiddush, Cholent. & Farbrengen
- Pirkei Avos 6:30 PM
- Mincha 7:15 PM followed by Seuda Shlishit
- Shabbat ends 8:25 PM

Happy Birthday to David and Isabelle Suissa & Miriam Mishael.

DAILY MINYONIM

Shacharis: Mon -Fri: 6:00 AM & 7:30 AM
 Sunday: 9:00 AM

Mincha/Maariv: 7:40 PM



A Sefer Torah is being written in memory of the fathers of Rabbi & Mrs. Shusterman.

Anyone who is interested in participating should contact Mendel Shusterman at (310) 497-2643

GOOD SHABBOS!

SHAVUOS 5762

The shul will be open the entire night of Shavuos for classes and learning. Refreshments will be served. There will be an early minyan at 5:15 AM in addition to the regular 9:30 AM minyan.