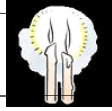


KUSHNER COMMENTS



Shabbat Candle Lighting: 7: 49 PM
Havdalah: 8: 49 PM

(Times are for Livingston, NJ)

Parsha Summary: *Parshat Bamidbar*

As *sefer Bamidbar* opens, Hashem commands Moshe to conduct a census of *Bnei Yisrael*. This census serves as the basis for *Bnei Yisrael*'s formation as they travel and encamp in the desert. In this way they prepare for their reaching and ultimately conquering *Eretz Yisrael*, events which they believe to be imminent (having not yet committed *chet hameraglim*, the sin of the spies.) Those from *shevet Levi* are counted in a separate census, and in this *parsha* Hashem transfers the special duties that were originally granted to all of the first born males in *Bnei Yisrael* to the *Levi'im*. The *Levi'im* will now have the special duties relating to the *Mishkan*. As such, in the nation's encampment the *Levi'im* are situated directly around the *Mishkan*, which lies in the heart of the nation's formation.

A Lasting Legacy

Rabbi Yehoshua Gold

"And they established their genealogy according to their families, according to their father's house" (1:18)
In his commentary on this *passuk*, *Rashi* explains that *Bnei Yisrael* brought both documents of lineage and witnesses to the status of their birth in order to prove their ancestry to the tribe to which they claimed to belong. *Chazal* tell us that the other nations also claimed their stake in the Torah and were rejected by Hashem due to their lack of *yichus*, or lineage. This idea is difficult to understand, however, because surely just as *Bnei Yisrael* could trace their lineage back to Avraham, so too *Bnei Eisav* could trace their pedigree to Yitzchak and therefore to Avraham as well. So what is meant when the *passuk* says they presented their documents of lineage?

The Pupa Rav explains this assertion of *Chazal* by saying that *zechut avot*, the merit of one's ancestors, is credited to children only when one "sees the *avot* in the children," when the ancestors' goodness is reflected in their descendants' actions. *Chazal* teach us that *Bnei Yisrael* were redeemed from the Egypt because they did not change their Hebrew names, language or traditional manner of dress. They adhered to the legacy of their ancestors. While they were spiritually lacking in many areas, they still had a bond with their forefathers.

When the other nations came to complain, Hashem asked them to produce their documents of lineage. Hashem was telling them that in order to stake a claim, they had to show that they carried on their ancestors' legacy. One cannot expect to invoke the memory of his or her forebears if he or she does not demonstrate a relationship with them. An individual cannot dress, speak, and act inappropriately and expect to be part of the Jewish destiny just because one is able to trace one's lineage to the Patriarchs.

In his commentary to the mitzvah of "*Pru Urvu*," "Be fruitful and multiply," Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch explains that it is not enough to simply perform the act "*pru*," of bearing the products of the human fruit, children. It is important that these children achieve independence and become human beings who carry within

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פרשת במדבר



In the opening of the book of *Bamidbar*, Hashem commands Moshe and Aharon to count *Bnei Yisrael*. The *midrash* explains that this is one of the ten times *Bnei Yisrael* would be counted in Biblical history. This year, in 2010, America is also conducting a census, which only occurs every ten years. The census is meant to benefit Americans by accumulating data and statistics to make America a better place. What can we learn by comparing the American census to the one that Hashem commanded us to perform in our *parsha*?

Rashi comments on this *passuk*, saying, "Because they are precious to Him, He counts them all the time," meaning that *Hashem* counts us constantly due to His love for us. *Rashi* then continues to mention three other times that Hashem counted *Bnei Yisrael*. They were also counted after they left Egypt, after they sinned with the golden calf, and after they built the *Mishkan*.

In response to this *Rashi*, the Lubavitcher Rebbe asks the seemingly obvious question: How could *Rashi* say that Hashem constantly counts *Bnei Yisrael*, while he then goes on to list three specific times that He counted them? In addition, the *midrash* says that *Bnei Yisrael* would only be counted ten times in history, not all the time!

One answer can be found when in *Parshat Bo*, which does not mention that a counting occurred, and yet says that there were there "about six hundred thousand men" (12:37) who left Egypt. This proves *Rashi's* statement that Hashem counts *Bnei Yisrael* constantly, as there is no mention of Moshe and Aharon counting them. In fact, the Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that when *Rashi* mentions the golden calf, he means to prove that we were counted even after we strayed from God's path and turned to *avodah zarah*. Even at the lowest point in Jewish history, Hashem still showed His love for us and brings us closer to Him by counting us.

When the government asks us questions about the specifics of our families and households, it is not to show us love, rather it is for the government's own purposes. The contrast between this census and the one in *Bamidbar* illuminates the special status of God's counting of *Bnei Yisrael*, for G-d counts us for our sake, not for His own gain.

We have the opportunity to demonstrate this same love to Hashem when we count *sefirat haomer*. During this time we count the days until we received the Torah and became Hashem's special nation. By counting the *omer*, we return our love for Hashem in a way that He relates to us, through counting. As the period of *sefirat haomer* comes to a close and we draw closer to *Matan Torah*, we must remember the unwavering love and support we receive from Hashem, and we should return the affection to the One who constantly counts us.

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them the noblest traits of godliness. One must therefore also fulfill "urvu," the commandment that the family should multiply, which Rav Hirsch explains as meaning that parents must duplicate themselves in their children. The children are to be not only replicas of the physical traits, but also of the spiritual and moral characteristics of the parents. Accordingly, the parents have to impart these traits in their children, carefully and lovingly nurturing their development. They have to leave their imprint upon their children's personae.

We devote consider time and effort toward the proper development of our children. This very behavior is why Hashem gave the Torah to the Jewish people. We can stand up and say that we are living proof of the continuation of the legacy and chain of our forefathers.

(Adapted from a dvar Torah from *Peninim Al HaTorah* by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum)

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