

Pardes Yehuda

← Weekly Torah Journal By Yehuda Z. Klitnick →

Parshas Bamidbar 5777

year 6 #306

אבות פרק ו

פרשת במדבר תשע"ז

Scheduling the communal census when it was feasible to do so
 וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַר סִינַי בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד בְּאַחַד הַיָּמִים הַשְּׁנִי בַשָּׁנָה
 הַשְּׁנִי לְצֵאתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם... שָׂאוּ אֶת רֹאשׁ כָּל עֵדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל... (א א)
Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Sinai Desert, 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, saying. Take the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel... Rashi explains: מתוך חיבתן לפניו מונה אותם כל שעה. כשבא להשרות שכינתו עליהן מנאין.
כיבתן לפניו מונה אותם כל שעה. ובאחד בניסן הוקם המשכן, ובאחד באייר מנאין.
Because they were dear to Him, He counted them often. When He came to cause His Divine Presence to rest among them, He counted them. On the first of Nissan, the Mishkan was erected, and on the first of Iyar, He counted them. A rather obvious question emerges from this Rashi: If the Mishkan's erection was culminated on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, why then did the census take place at the seemingly-late date of Rosh Chodesh Iyyar to enumerate the Yidden? The Tzeidah L'Derech -a student of Rabbeinu Asher known as the Rosh- 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, who was the leader of the tribe of Yehuda, also brought sacrifices on that day. The Rambam/Maimonides rules in (Hilchos 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. [This ruling is from the Mishna in Taanis chapter 4] As a result of being a Yom Tov, 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 came the 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. [For this reason we do not say Tachanun the whole month of Nissan. The Mishna Berura 429 (2) says: Twelve Nesiym brought korbonos for twelve days and for each it was Yom Tov on their day, Erev Pesach, Pesach and Isru Chag added together gives a majority of the month in at least partial Kedushah, therefore the whole month is considered Kodesh. The Be'er Haitaiv quotes the gemarra in Menochos 65a that says the the first eight days were designated as a celebration for the re-establishment of the Tomid at the time of the Sadducees and no fasting was permitted on these days. YZK]

Another answer is from the Sifsei Chochomim on Rashi. He cites the gemarra (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 Hashem 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. (compiled by Yehuda Z. Klitnick)

Strength is measured by defeating the Yetzer Harah

פָּקֹד אֶת-בְּנֵי לֵוִי וְגו' כָּל-זָכָר מִבְּנֵי-תְּרֵשׁ וּמִעַלָּה תִּפְקְדֵם: (ג' ט"ו)
 "Count the sons of Levi ... from one month and up you shall count them" We see in the Torah that Shevet Levi was counted twice: once when they were a month old; and again when they reached the age of thirty, when they would begin to perform the service in the Mishkan. The question is, why count them from one month old? Secondly, what was the purpose of recounting at the age of thirty? However the Rambam at the end of Hilchos Shemitta and Rabbeinu Nissim the Ran in Mesichta Nedarim compare Shevet/tribe of Levi to Talmidei Chachamin/Torah scholars. This counting is a lesson in Chinuch. The preparation of the Chinuch to a child must begin at birth, which one would wait until 30 days when the child is ready to be redeemed. Indeed, we find that the mother of the Tanna Reb Yehoshua Ben Chananiah wheeled his cradle into the Beis Hamidrash so that he would absorb the sounds of Torah study. And indeed he was the one who reminded the sages of forgotten halachos which he remembered from when his mother took him to the Beis Hamidrash. The Chazon Ish always told his Talmidim that chinuch starts at birth. Hence the counting of Shevet Levi at the age of one month is a guideline for all future generations. However, one cannot only rely on chinuch of the parents. He must toil on his own to achieve greatness in Torah and Avoidas Hashem. Therefore there was the counting of Shevet Levi again, when they were thirty years old, to see if they had achieved the requisite level of Holiness to serve in the Mishkan. Which also implies to Klal Yisrael to make a Cheshbon Hanefesh/soul searching at the age of thirty, to see where they stand in spirituality and how much they have achieved in Torah and in the serving of Hashem. The mishna is Avos chapter 4:1 says Who is strong? One who overpowers his inclinations. As is stated (Mishlei 16:32), "Better one who is slow to anger than one with might, one who rules his spirit than the captor of a city." The Mishna Avos 5:21 states "Thirty, for strength" Therefore once a person reaches thirty and is strong, the strength is measured in defeating the Yetzer Harah. That is the prerequisite for serving in the Beis Hamikdash. (compiled by Yehuda Z. Klitnick)

A sharp insight to prepare for Kabalas Hatorah

The Rogachover Gaon once gave a lecture to his students in which he proved that chametz is permitted on Passover. He then asked his students to refute his proof. They tried in vain to do so. When they gave up, the Rogachover opened the Chumash and read them: "ולא יאכל חמץ" *"Do not eat chametz"* (Shemos 13:3). That, he said, is the only refutation necessary. All the intellectual gymnastics in the world cannot alter one sentence in the Torah. When Klal Yisrael were asked if they want to accept the Torah 'ויענו כל העם ויהיו ויאמרו כל אשר דבר ה' they answered "And all the people replied in unison and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we shall do!"

Pirkei Avos Chapter 6 פרקי אבות פרק ו

The heavenly voice

אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי, בכל יום ויום בת קול יוצאת מהר חורב ומקרית ואומרת אוי להם לבריות מעלבונה של תורה: (פרק ו משנה ב)

"Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Every single day a heavenly voice emanates from Mount Horeb..." (Avos 6:2)

The mefarshim question what is the reason for the heavenly voice to come forth every single day. Would it not suffice to

be heard once a week or so? The answer can be The gemarra (Berachot 32b) states ת"ר ארבעה צרכין חזק ואלו הן תורה ומעשים טובים תפלה ת"ר ארבעה צרכין חזק ואלו הן תורה ומעשים טובים תפלה Four things require bolstering, constant effort to improve, and they are: Torah, good deeds, prayer, and occupation. The reason for this bolstering is since every day brings its own challenges, and sometimes even seemingly insurmountable obstacles, along the road to Divine service. Likewise, the Yetzer Harah/Evil Inclination gains additional strength every day (Succah 52b). Anticipating those developments, Hashem provided the perfect antidote -- the daily renewal of the Ten Commandments. In the Shema we remind ourselves of this renewal, saying: that I command you today (Devarim. 6:6) -- the Enochi, the word "I" with which the Ten Commandments begins, is experienced anew every day. Moreover, this heavenly voice is imploring us to regain our freedom by immersing ourselves in Torah study. Just as we were liberated from Pharaoh, so we can be extricated from the clutches of the Evil Inclination. Hence the heavenly voice is to bolster our drive to serve Hashem and to gain strength to overcome the Yetzer Harah. (Yehuda Z. Klitnick based on the Sfas Emes)

STORY OF THE WEEK (by Yehuda Z. Klitnick)

The Baal Shem Tov teaches a valuable lesson to his student

The second day of Shavuos is the Yahrzeit of the heilige Reb Yisrael Baal Shem Tov. There were two carts clattered along the dusty road. Inside one sat Rabbi Meir Margulies, author of the Meir Netivim. In the other sat the Baal Shem Tov. Rabbi Meir asked the Baal Shem Tov "They say you can perform miracles and can even read people's minds," he began. "Is that true?" "Well, I'll just tell you this," replied the Baal Shem Tov. "When you were praying this past Shabbos, you accidentally chanted the weekday blessings instead of the special insert for Shabbos." "Yes, it's true!" replied Rabbi Meir in amazement. "Now, please tell me what I can possibly do to correct this lack." The Baal Shem Tov advised him to carefully scrutinize his deeds and think thoughts of remorse, the standard course of correction for such an error.

"Rebbe," said Rabbi Meir. "I was looking for something more " "In that case," replied the Baal Shem Tov, "you should be sure to be patient in judgment." With that, the two men returned to their respective carts, and they were off. Rabbi Meir made a point to travel through every Jewish town and hamlet in the area at least once a year. Upon his arrival in a rural community, the villagers asked the rabbi to help them solve a weighty problem that had torn their tight-knit group apart.

"You see," explained one of the elders, "there is a young man who lives a ways out of town. None of us know who he is or where he comes from. He dresses all fancy, like a non-Jewish prince, and operates a tavern. One day, one of

our men asked his wife to go pick up some vodka at the tavern. She took her time in returning. Things seemed just a bit suspicious, and rumors began to swirl about the tavern keeper." After listening to the accounts of various villagers, the rabbi determined that the situation did seem suspicious, and called the tavernkeeper to appear before him.

Sure enough, the young man soon swaggered in, decked out in colorful silks and furs. Yet despite the accusations of the villagers, the man steadfastly maintained his innocence. Unable to conclusively rule on the matter, Rabbi Meir left the village, feeling uneasy about the entire affair.

As he traveled along, he came upon the Baal Shem Tov once again. He stopped his horses and asked the Baal Shem Tov to do the same. Sitting in the Baal Shem Tov's cart, Rabbi Meir recounted the chain of events that he had just encountered.

"Did I not tell you to be patient in judgment?" the Baal Shem Tov chided him. "You should know that in every generation there are 36 righteous people in whose merit the entire world stands. That tavernkeeper is the greatest of them all." Rabbi Meir immediately climbed into his cart and asked his driver to return to the village so that he could personally beg the young man for forgiveness.

But it was too late. The mysterious man was already gone without a trace. All Rabbi Meir could do was share the Baal Shem Tov's words with the villagers, thus at least restoring the tavernkeeper's good name.

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Wishing all a freilichen Yom Tov Shavuos. Next issue will be Parshas Behaloscha.