



From the desk of
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Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

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TORAT

Parashat Bamidbar

HAMELECH

We're Counting on You!

In Parashat Bamidbar, the Jews are counted. Shevet Levi is counted separately. When nations of the world take a census, they reduce men into figures. Upon counting Klal Yisroel, each Jew is raised upon spiritually, as it says, "Naso," – "raise up."

What gives a person prominence? Is it money or prestige, position or power?

Each Jew has so much prominence, in the very fact that he is a Jew. All Jews are princes and princesses, children of the King.

In Avot (chap. 3), Rabbi Akiva relates: Cherished is man, for he was created in the image of the Almighty... Cherished are Yisroel, for they are called children of Hashem... Cherished are Yisroel, for the coveted article [i.e., the Torah] was given to them...

Three levels of adoration appear here. For one, "Odom" is "chaviv" for he was created in the image of Elokim. The text-proof brought to support this point seems to refer to mankind at large. At the same time, it could be that the other nations forfeited this status, as we also find Hashem telling Yisroel, "You are called 'Odom,'" and heathen nations are not called 'Odom.'

Servants or Sons

The wicked Tornosrufus challenged Rabbi Akiva, "If Hashem loves the destitute, why does He not support them?"

Rabbi Akiva responded, "He wanted us to get the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*!"

Tornusrufus retorted, "Y'know what that's like? A king locked up his servant and decreed that no one is to give him food. Whoever feeds him is punishable by death!"

R' Akiva answered, "No, it's more like a king who got upset at his own son and had him imprisoned with a decree not to feed him. But in this instance, whoever feeds the prince will be handsomely rewarded, for although the king got upset with his boy, his love for him never wanes." (Bava Batra 10a)

Yes, Hashem says of Yisroel, "You are children of the Almighty." Says R' Meir: Whether they behave themselves or not, they are always His children. (Kidushin 36a)

Giving of the Torah

What inspired Yitro to convert? He heard of Matan Torah. At the time of Matan Torah, Hashem's Voice travelled around the world.



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Other nations heard a loud noise, but could not make out the words. It was frightening for them. Even their monarchs shook and shivered in their palaces. All nations ran to their prophet Bilaam to ask him: "What in the world is going on? Is Hashem bringing another flood?" they wanted to know.

"Naah!" said Bilaam. "Don't worry. Hashem has this treasure around for 974 generations and now He decided to deliver it to His children."

The nations, inspired, said, "May Hashem bless His Nation with peace." (Zevachim 116a)

Dear Children

Yes, R' Akiva let us know that Hashem holds us dear. And R' Akiva also stresses that Hashem demands of us, first and foremost, that we hold each and every Jew dear (Yerushalmi Nedarim 9:4).

A person has three parents: Hashem, his father and his mother. (Nidah 31a) Hashem provides the *neshamah*. The *neshamah* of a Jew comes from a totally different place. It has very little in common with the *nefesh* of a non-Jew. Only Jews are called children of Hashem.

In reference to *Sipur Yetziat Mitzrayim*, the Torah speaks of four children. Although one is called

wicked and one is called unlearned or foolish, all of them are dear children.

Rabbi Elazar ben Shamua tells us that the honor of our *talmidim* is to be as dear to us as our own. (Avot chap. 4)

R' Moshe Rosenstein, *mashgiach* of Yeshivat Lomza, was once testing a child on his learning. Rav Yaakov Neiman asked him, "Who is this boy?"

R' Moshe responded, "He is a son of Hakadosh Baruch Hu!"

This was a tremendous lesson in *chinuch* for Rav Neiman. Treat each child like a son of the King. Give him the honor he deserves. You will have a much easier time being tolerant of his misbehavior or slowness if you view him as a prince.

When the Alter of Slobodka, Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, would notice that one of his pupils was not performing up to par, he would fast as a merit for the boy. These were the great *mechanchim* of yesteryear.

Special Clan

If most Jews were counted from age twenty, why was Shevet Levi counted from one month old?

When something is very valuable, even the tiniest amount matters so much!



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Bricks and wood planks are sold by the ton. Potatoes are sold by the pound or kilogram. When you weigh gold, you pay attention to several digits to the right of the decimal point, as each little bit makes a big difference.

So too, while all Jews are special, Shevet Levi outshines them all. Who is Shevet Levi of today? Those who put aside pursuit of physical comfort and wholeheartedly dedicate themselves to the study of Torah and performance of mitzvot.

What does Rambam say of Shevet Levi? That Hashem designated them to serve Him and to teach His upright ways and righteous rules to the masses... Therefore, they have been set aside from the way of the world. They do not participate in battle nor do they receive acres of land for planting. They are Hashem's brigade and He provides for them. (Shemittah v'Yovel 13:12)

Rambam adds (13:13): Not only Shevet Levi but any person in the world who understands that he is to set himself aside to stand before Hashem, to serve Him... and he goes straight as Hashem made him, and he released from his neck the yoke of many considerations which people seek. Such a person is very holy – *kodesh kodashim*... Hashem will give him what he needs in this world, just as Hashem provides for Kohanim and Leviim...

A Nation of Princes

So we read Parashat Bamidbar before Chag Shavuot to remind ourselves how special are Shevet Levi and all those who dedicate their whole lives to the study and teaching of Torah.

Let us remember that every Jew is a prince – the son of the king. Let us respect each individual. Let us also realize that we have a loving Father in Heaven who does not give up on any of his children.

Hashem loves us boundlessly. A person who is encumbered with difficulties knows that Hashem can activate His Compassion at any given moment. All of our mitzvot are there to remind us of one thing: We have a unique relationship with the Source of it all. Hashem places a person in trying circumstances just so that he will turn to Him. That is why our Matriarchs were childless for so many years... so that they would pray to Him. The biggest *nebuch* in the world is the one who feels that he has nothing to *daven* for. He stands to lose his *keshet* with Hashem.

Let us appreciate ourselves and all fellow Jews as children of Hashem.

Shabbat Shalom,
Mordechai Malka