



## הרב הראשי הרב מרדכי מלכא שליט"א נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד  
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, ת"ת דרך המלך,  
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### Parashat Bamidbar

#### "Beloved Is Man For He Was Created In G-d's Image"

The *parasha* begins with Hashem's instruction to Moshe to count the males of the Jewish Nation. Rashi (3:7) explains that each Jewish man over the age of twenty was to donate a *shekel*, which would then be counted. This follows with Hashem's instruction to Moshe to count *Shevet Levi*. They were to be counted from the age of a month and up. The *pasuk* (1:16) then states, "And Moshe counted them [- *Shevet Levi*] by the word of G-d as He commanded." Rashi comments that Moshe asked Hashem how he would be able to enter the tents to be able to count their children. Hashem told Moshe that he should do his part and Hashem would do His. Rashi continues that Moshe went and stood by the opening of the tent, and the *Shechina* preceded him. A *bat kol* emanated from the tent and told Moshe the amount of infants that were inside each tent. This is why the *pasuk* states, "By the word of G-d."

#### Questions:

- 1) The *parasha* states (1:3, 3:15) that *Shevet Levi* were not counted together with the rest of the Nation; rather, they were counted separately. What is the reason for this? 2) The *Kli Yakar* and *Ben Ish Chai* both ask that when Moshe was instructed to count the Jews (1:2), the expression "*se'u*" is used for "count." Why is specifically this expression used and not *timnu* or *sipru*? 3) Furthermore, Hashem instructed Moshe to count "all the congregation of Israel" (*ibid.*). However, if *Shevet Levi* was not included in the count, then how could it be said that all of Israel was counted? 4) Why did Hashem command Moshe to count the Jewish Nation? What could be gained by counting them? 5) Why were the Jewish Nation counted with *shekalim*, while *Shevet Levi* were counted by Hashem Himself? 6) The *pasuk* states that the Jews were counted from the age of twenty and up, while *Shevet Levi* was already counted from a month and older (3:15). What is the reason for this?

#### The World's View

People tend to think that man's worth is based on his social status, wealth, and power. Therefore, most individuals are not considered overly important since they are not influential personalities. Moreover, they may even be treated in a disgraceful manner. Even if they are not, they are definitely not shown any respect. Sometimes an individual may even allow himself to harm such a person, since he does not fear him in any way. On the other hand, if a person is someone whom society reveres, then people are careful to treat him with dignity and even to overlook his wrongdoings. When a census is taken it is only to know the number of people who comprise the population, but does not point to the importance of any one individual. However, our holy Torah teaches us a different outlook on life. It teaches us that man must know that each individual is important and that his status is in no way dependent on which financial bracket he is in. Therefore, even the simplest Jew is important, because Hashem considers every Jew His child. Our world is backwards: people who should be praised are denigrated and those who should be denigrated are praised. Every Jew must be held in high esteem, because man was created in the image of G-d, as the Torah teaches. Every Jew is vested with a soul, which is a "portion from Hashem Above" (*Iyov*), as we will soon explain.

#### Something Important is Always Counted and Never Nullified

Now we will explain the *pesukim* that discuss the commandment to count the Jews. The Torah wishes to teach us about the individual importance of every Jew. This can be illustrated by the *halacha* in *Yora De'ah* (*Hilchot Ta'aruvet*) that "*davar she'beminyan afilu be'elef eino batel.*" This means that an item which is counted individually – in other words, everyone views it as being a valuable item – cannot be nullified even it is mixed with 1000 other items. However, something which is not counted according to each individual unit is not counted. This is what Hashem is teaching us by counting the Jewish Nation – that every Jew is important. The reason for this is because every Jew was created in the Divine image, as the *Tanna* states in *Pirkei Avot*. This is how the Rambam explains the significance of *Adam Harishon* being created as an individual and not in a



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group. He writes that this teaches that every individual is considered an entire world, and that one who sustains him is considered as if he sustained an entire world. On the other hand, one who murders, Heaven forbid, is considered to have destroyed an entire world. This is why the *pasuk* uses the expression *se'u* for counting. *Se'u* shares the same root as *naso*, which connotes importance and great worth. This implies that every Jew is important, and it does not depend upon his level – he is innately important. The count teaches us that each Jew must be raised and held in esteem, for we cannot know the level that each Jew occupies. On the contrary, the Gemara teaches us that truly great people are not accorded honor in this world, while lowly people are. This is because man sees with his eyes and therefore sees superficially. However, Hashem sees what is truly inside man's heart.

Now we can explain why *Shevet Levi* were counted separately and by Hashem Himself: There are some people who value every penny. There are some who value only dollars, but do not pay much attention to anything less. Then there are those who value a ten dollar bill; some only care about hundreds, and some thousands. It all depends on how wealthy he is. A very wealthy man, who makes millions and even billions, doesn't care at all about a few dollars. Now we can understand the difference between the rest of the Jewish Nation and *Shevet Levi*. It is clear that *Shevet Levi*, who were holier, were more important. Therefore, the rest of the Jews were counted by Moshe Rabbeinu with *shekalim*. However, *Shevet Levi*, due to their importance, were counted by Hashem Himself. They were the Torah scholars and leaders of the Jews, and they were therefore more important in the eyes of Hashem. This is why they were counted separately, and also why they were counted from a younger age than the rest of the Jews. This points to their superiority, which was due to the fact that their lives were dedicated to Divine service.

### Man is Beloved

In *Masechet Avot* (3:18) it states, "He [- Rabbi Akiva] used to say: Beloved is man, for he was created in G-d's image. This great love, indicated by the fact that he was created in G-d's image, was made known to him, as it states (*Bereishit* 9), 'In the image of G-d, He made man.' Beloved are the Jews for they were called 'sons' of Hashem, as the *pasuk* states, 'You are sons of Hashem your G-d.' Beloved are the Jews, for they were given a delightful vessel ... as the *pasuk* states (*Mishlei* 4), 'For I have given you a good acquisition; do not forsake My Torah.'" It appears that Rabbi Akiva's teaching is based on the important principle that he taught in the *Yerushalmi* (*Nedarim* 9:4), "Love your fellow like yourself – Rabbi Akiva said: This is a great principle of the Torah." This teaches us that the entire Torah is predicated upon this mitzva. Rabbi Akiva especially understood this after 24,000 of his students died because of not respecting one another sufficiently. Therefore, in *Pirkei Avot* he elaborates and explains the way that one can fulfill the mitzva of loving one's fellow like he loves himself. If he contemplates the fact that every human being is created in the image of Hashem and that he is the son of Hashem – all the more so, if he merits studying the Torah of Hashem – how could he ever have the audacity to harm or disgrace him? There is no doubt that if he was acquainted with a king's son, he would forgive him even if he was insulted by him. He would certainly not respond to his insult and would always be very careful to treat him kindly, since he is the king's son. If this is the case with the son of a mortal king, how much more so does it apply to the son of the King of All Kings, Hashem.

Rebbi Akiva enumerated three aspects which make man beloved: 1 – he was created in the image of Hashem. 2 – the Jews were chosen to be the sons of Hashem. 3 – Hashem gave them the Torah. Being created in the image of Hashem means that the Jews received a *neshama*, a special soul possessed only by the Jews. The gentiles have a *nefesh*, similar to that of an animal. A gentile is alive in the same manner that an animal is alive, and they do not possess the higher levels of the soul, known as the *ruach* and *neshama*. The Gemara (*Shabbat* 50b) states that a man should wash his face, hands, and feet every day to honor his Creator. It then quotes the *pasuk* that everything Hashem created, He created to honor Him. Therefore, since man was created in Hashem's image, he must clean himself and maintain his appearance. Our Sages furthermore state (*Sanhedrin* 58b) that one who smacks another Jew in the face is as if he smacked the *Shechina* in the face, as it



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were. They furthermore state (*Shabbat* 151b) that a wild animal cannot harm a person unless the person appears like an animal in its eyes. As a source, it quotes the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 49:13), "He is likened to the silenced animals." This is due to the fact that he possesses a Divine image. Let us relate stories that illustrate this.

### Story About R' Chanina ben Dosa

Our Sages relate (*Berachot* 33a) that there was a snake which was harming people. R' Chanina ben Dosa was informed and requested to be shown the hole in which the snake hid itself. They showed him the hole, and he placed his heel upon it. The snake emerged, bit his heel, and died. He placed it on his shoulder and carried it to the *beit midrash*. There he said, "You see my children? It is not the snake that kills; rather, it is the sin that kills." They then said, "Woe is to the man who is bitten by a snake, and woe is to the snake that bites R' Chanina ben Dosa." This does not only apply to the generations of the *Tannaim*; it applies to subsequent generations as well.

### The *Ohr Hachayim* in the Lion's Den

The *Ohr Hachayim* was an expert welder. He would earn his livelihood working in a factory and would work until he earned enough money to sustain himself. The rest of the time he would spend studying Torah. The king was planning a wedding, and he was wondering how he could obtain special silver vessels for the upcoming celebration. He was told that the factory in which the *Ohr Hachayim* worked was an outstanding one that employed skilled welders who could fashion beautiful vessels. The king therefore placed a large order and told the owner of the factory that he needed them by a certain date. The gentile factory owner urged the *Ohr Hachayim* to quickly finish his work, since the king had placed a large order, and they did not have an abundance of time. The owner decided to encourage the *Ohr Hachayim* to work faster by offering him more money, but the opposite resulted – the *Ohr Hachayim* worked less! For this was his way: the moment he had earned enough money to sustain himself, he stopped working and only learned Torah. Now that his wages were increased, he would need to work **less** than before, not more! The owner of the factory told the *Ohr Hachayim* that he must increase his hours, but he refused to do so. None of his requests helped, and the king inquired about how the work was progressing. The owner told the king that the only worker who was skilled in this form of craftsmanship was a Jewish worker he employed. However, no matter how much money he offered him, he refused to work additional hours. The king grew furious and warned the *Ohr Hachayim* that if he would not finish the work by the scheduled date, he would be sentenced to death. The *Ohr Hachayim* did not concern himself with the king's threats, and when the date arrived, he was still not close to filling the order. Enraged, the king decided to exact revenge upon the Jewish worker, whose righteousness he was unaware of. He therefore decreed that he be thrown into the lion's den. The *Ohr Hachayim* requested his *tefillin* and several *sefarim*, and was granted his request. But at the same time, the king and his men laughed at him. Usually, even before the unfortunate person was finished being lowered into the lion's den, the starving lion's already tore him to pieces. However, this time they were in for a surprise. They lowered the *Ohr Hachayim* into the lion's den, and the lions did not move towards him. The king's servants were amazed; perhaps the lions were not hungry? However, shortly thereafter, they saw the *Ohr Hachayim*, in his *tefillin*, sitting and studying Torah, with all of the lions sitting around him like they were his students. One day passed and then another, and the servants were surprised that they had not heard any screams emanating from the lion's den. They decided to see what was taking place there. They were stunned by what they saw. All of the lions were sitting attentively around the *Ohr Hachayim*! They immediately went and related to the king about the great miracle they had seen. In disbelief, the king went to see for himself. When he witnessed it, he understood that the *Ohr Hachayim* was a holy man, and he therefore commanded them to immediately take him out. They accorded him royal honor and freed him. This is the power of the *tzaddikim* – they can control nature because they refined their Divine image.



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**Words of Mussar**

We have learned from our *parasha* that every Jew is beloved by Hashem because he was created in the Divine image. He is even considered to be the son of the King of All Kings. This requires each one of us to respect one another and to treat each person like he is important. All the more so, should we not insult a person in any way. Someone who has the merit to study Hashem's Torah and prepare himself for *kabbalat haTorah* elevates himself above and beyond the entire creation and becomes the crown of creation. It should be His Will that we all merit receiving the Torah with joy, forever and ever, and that the Torah never ceases from the mouths of our descendants.

Shabbat Shalom,  
Rav Mordechai Malka