



Bamidbar – Count Them, Because They Count!



The Sefer of Bamidbar is known by Chazal as Sefer Hapikudim. In English, it is referred to as the Book of Numbers, rather than the Book of the Desert, which would be the accurate translation. Rashi begins his commentary on the Parsha by noting that 'because of His profound love for them, Hashem counted them multiple times.' He then identifies three specific occasions when Hashem performed a census of the Jewish People, all within one year. Hashem did not require these counts for His knowledge. Rashi elucidates that the purpose of these censuses was to convey a message to us, affirming that we, His Nation, are greatly cherished and beloved by Him in every situation.

The Jewish People experienced a particularly eventful year. During this time, they exited Egypt, crossed the Sea of Reeds, received the Torah on Mount Sinai, committed the transgression of the golden calf, and established the service in the Mishkan. This year was marked by significant spiritual ascents and profound spiritual descents. It was specifically during this year that Hashem decided to take multiple censuses of the Nation. In the same way that a devoted father cherishes his child despite their flaws, Hashem expressed His love for us.

What To Count

The mental picture many individuals recall from their childhood regarding a wealthy person often depicts them seated in a vault, encircled by golden coins, meticulously counting their wealth daily. We imagine this person clad in a top hat, and upon finishing his counting, he immerses both hands into the enormous heap of coins, hurling them into the air, and grinning with joy as his fortune showers down upon him. This affluent individual has demonstrated to us what he holds dear. His wealth holds such significance and is so precious to him that he engages in its constant counting.

A person counts items that are meaningful and valuable to them. The higher the value they attribute to a specific item, the more thorough and personalized the assessment will be. Walking into a grocery store, you will notice how different products are sold. For example, grapes are sold by weight. An individual grape possesses negligible value until it is grouped with others to form a quantifiable weight. A single slice of bread is not sold alone. However, certain products are available for individual purchase. One can acquire a single bagel, a donut, or a head of cabbage. These items are valued as singular entities and do not need to be merged with others for counting.

Different Roles

In Tehillim, it is written, 'He counts the number of the stars; He assigns names to each one.' Each star possesses such significance that they are not merely counted, but each star is bestowed a name that denotes uniqueness. The Torah compares the Jewish people to the stars in the heavens. Every Jew is important and has a unique purpose and role in shaping this world. More specifically, this role pertains to their place within the Jewish nation. When Hashem counted the Jewish People on three separate occasions, the year after they departed from Egypt, He was not merely demonstrating His love for the Nation, but also showcasing His love for everyone within that Nation.



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Every person is endowed with a distinct mission that only they can complete. Who is qualified to assert that one mission is more important than another? Without the sanitation department, a city would soon become uninhabitable. The streets would be infested with rodents and illness. Without the Department of Transportation, the roads would be impassable. Is one of these roles more significant than the other? If a garbage collector opts today to engage in road paving, and a traffic inspector decides to handle waste collection, the city would be unable to function. Each role is necessary, and everyone must perform their given role.

The Tapestry of Our Nation

Hashem conducted a census of the Jews in the desert, recognizing them not only as a collective nation but also as individual persons. Each person possesses unique talents and challenges that are specifically aligned with the mission assigned to them. It is crucial to have learned men who will engage in study and disseminate knowledge to the populace. There is also a pressing need for remarkable women who will manage educational institutions and cultivate the next generation of leaders and mothers. Furthermore, it is imperative to have both men and women who will participate in charitable endeavors. The nation will require individuals dedicated to personal growth; there must be those focused on raising families in alignment with the principles of the Torah. In the absence of these and many other roles being fulfilled, the Jewish Nation would be profoundly deficient.

Every time an individual looks at their reflection in the mirror and sees the person that Hashem loves for who they genuinely are, because of their unique mission looking back at them, they have achieved a significant accomplishment. Hashem has a 'need,' so to speak, for a broad and diverse nation to serve Him. When an individual embraces their role with joy, they can unlock the immense potential inherent in every Jew. The beautiful tapestry of the Jewish People illustrates that we are a very diverse and multi-faceted nation, yet we share a singular mission. We are Hashem's beloved People, the people He counts one at a time.

Have a wonderful Shabbos,

Binyomin Stolov



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