



LT TORAH TO GO

Volume 13 - Issue 35

Edited by Rabbi Mara Nathan on behalf of generations of Torah Learners at Larchmont Temple.

EXPERIENCE TORAH THIS WEEK: May 17-23
EREV SHABBAT 8:00PM
SHABBAT AM SERVICE SATURDAY 10:30AM

SHABBAT BEMIDBAR 5769

NUMBERS 1:1- 4:20

pp. 1028-1043 in Torah, a Modern Commentary

PSHAT...*The plain/simple story*

The fourth book of the Torah, known in Hebrew as Bemidbar, or “in the desert,” or in English as “Numbers,” begins with God commanding Moses to take a census of the entire Israelite community. The commandment is given on the first day of the second month of the second year after the Israelites’ departure from Egypt. All males over the age of 20 are counted, and it is reported that there is a total of 603,550. This number excludes the 22,000 Levites, who are exclusively responsible for all services of the sanctuary and are to camp around the sanctuary at all times. After counting all firstborn Israelite males over the age of one month, Moses is instructed to compare their number of 22,273 with the total of 22,000 Levites and to charge a redemption take for the additional 273. It is to be paid to Aaron and his sons for service to the sanctuary. Moses also lists and counted the Kohathites separately from the Levites since the Kohathites are responsible for lifting and carrying the sacred objects of the sanctuary. They are not to be present when the sanctuary is either dismantled or set up.

REMEZ...*Looking for clues*

Koshi...*Why Count the Israelites?*

RASHBAM...They are preparing to enter the Land of Israel and require an army ready to go forth into battle. The census is taken to determine how many soldiers are eligible for the military challenge facing them.

RABBI JACOB WEINSTEIN...What we have in the census is not simply a call-up for military service but the creative organizing of a community. The census is a practical necessity. It enables the Israelites to identify individual talents and abilities– the important assets of leadership required for victory. Through the process of counting the people, Moses is building an organizational structure and creating a design and purpose to Israelite society even as it wanders in the Sinai desert.

DRASH...*Discovering Meaning...*

LEIBOWITZ...One of the great social dangers of our times: political, social, economic, and religious ideologies that subject the individual to the mass and see the individual as a cog in the machine of the state, assuming that if one human being is destroyed there is always another to take his place....the census was personal and individual...impressing on us the value and crucial worth of each and every soul, which is a unique creation of God and a world of its own.

HIRSCH...The individuals first group themselves into families, the family into tribes, and finally the tribes into one common ‘house of Israel.’ All are linked by a common inner factor, and each one of them must feel itself to be...a concrete and important part of this unity. The greatest diversity of tribal and family specialties...and dispositions was diligently and carefully nurtured, yet every tribe in its specialty and every family in its own peculiarity have to work at the common task of the House of Israel....The census...is a model of community responsibility for the people of Israel and all humanity. Essentially, it underscores not only the importance of preserving and promoting individual rights and creativity but also strengthens the bonds of family, diverse religions, social, political, and economic associations as the means of ensuring a secure human future.... Every member of the family is counted by name, so that each one joins the whole, conscious of the importance of his personality to the nation.

Yashar Koach to this week's B'nei Mitzvah:

SAM BLUNT & HALEY KAROW

Come hear them teach Torah this Saturday at 10:30AM

SOD...Finding Ourselves

My portion BeMidbar, describes the Israelites time in the desert. ...As the Israelites wander from then on, they face the tabernacle while they walk forward towards the Promised Land. The tabernacle gives the Israelites the motivation they need to keep going.

Each tribe of Israel has its own place to march around the Tabernacle, which according to the Book of Numbers 19:26, symbolizes that no Jew is more important than another. In addition, Moses is commanded to take a census of each tribe, Rashi teaches that this means that each individual is a partner with God to make their new world a better place.

In this portion, everyone faces the tabernacle and yet walks toward the Promised Land. Even the tribe of Judah, which is at the front of the tabernacle, has to walk backwards. The koshi I came up with is why did all of the tribes face the tabernacle even if they walked sideways and backwards as they traveled together to the same destination?

The commentary Etz Hayim teaches, [The Israelites] journeyed as they encamped, finding the path to their future by orienting themselves to their past." Etz Hayim is explaining that the Israelites were facing backwards to remember their pasts but they also walked forward towards their future. I agree with the Etz Hayim and think that it was important that the Jews gained strength from what the tabernacle represented or from what was in "their center"; it is similar to the way I live my life today.

For example, I march forward into the future but always carry with me in my heart the people that came before me. Even my name, Sam, links me to my great grandfather who died before I knew him. Yet I feel close to him because we share the same name and many of the same traditions. Finally, I gain my strength from my friends and family. Whenever the world seems too hard, I go home, play with my friends and family and I feel much better.....

So, make sure that as you move forward in your life that you remember the things that are bigger than you and the people that came before you. This serves several purposes: it helps us to remember and draw strength from people who are no longer with us and it helps us to feel that we are an important link between generations.

-SAMMY

...This week's Torah portion takes place in the middle of the desert....It starts with God commanding Moses to take a census of all the people in the desert. God tells Moses to count the men over age 20 that can bear arms, in other words record men that can fight in an army. He is to record every person in three different ways, everyone in one general group, by ancestral tribe, and by clan. ...Moses is also told to not ask the head of the family for the counted members, amount but instead out of respect for the people, has to have each member pass before him. to be counted as an individual. In this portion there were many things that caught my attention, but my focus is on the significance of the Israelites being counted three times, and Specifically the fact that the Israelites had multiple identities but were still a part of a big community. This makes me wonder how important our bloodline is to our identity as Jews. What is it that defines us as individuals?

...Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch said, that in Bemidbar "The individuals first group themselves into families, the families into tribes, and the tribes into one common 'house of Israel.'" Rabbi Rabi Hirsch continues," Diversity of tribal and family specialties... and dispositions was diligently and carefully nurtured, every tribe in its specialty and every family in its own peculiarity have to work at the common task of the house of Israel...." When Rabbi Hirsch says this I believe he means almost everyone has their own groups. Groups of big and small, family and friends, but in order for everything to function properly we must use our differences to work together and generate goodness as well as prosperity. And when the different groups work together for a common cause, this creates community.....

....A community to me is a group of people working together to get needed things done. Some characteristics of a community are friendship, respect, trust, care, help, support, a sense of belonging, and having a common purpose or goal. Communities are successful when people with different skills, understanding and perspectives. come together and decide to work together for a common purpose or goal.....

-HALEY

MITZVAH of the WEEK...

HALEY helped to organize a clean up day in connection to earth day. "My family as well as other families went around Orienta to help clean up all the garbage that people just throw around on the streets and in the parks....After doing all of that work it really makes you think about how much we really need to help our own community, and its environment, and how just one person can really make a difference to help keep our earth clean and strong."

SAMMY led a Swim Across America team in honor of his Uncle Marty Kolodny. "By organizing the team, completing the swim and raising money for cancer research and treatment we were connecting generations. For example, I had to write a tribute to my Uncle Marty which helped me to remember his legacy; my mother, sister, grandmother and I all swam together and I was proud that I finished the course despite the giant jellyfish; and finally, we raised close to \$5000 to help make sure that fewer people will suffer from cancer in the future."