



Greater Washington Community Kollel
**SHABBOS
 DELIGHTS**

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"L

Of Numbers and Names

Presented by Rabbi Zacharia Schwartz
Former Kollel Scholar, and currently a Kollel Adjunct

"Count the heads of all of the congregation of the Children of Israel...by the number of names..."
(Bamidbar 1:2)

This week we start the book of Bamidbar, which begins with Hashem commanding Moshe to take a census of the Jewish people. The Torah instructs that the census is to be "by number of names," which Rabbi Shimshon Pincus zt"l finds to be a troubling description. When someone counts members of a group by number, says Rabbi Pincus, it is clear that what is important to him is the group itself, not the individuals that comprise it. Relating to individuals by name, however, is indicative of a special concern for each individual, as opposed to the group to which they all belong. Given these disparate objectives, why does the Torah order that the census be conducted both by number and by name?

Rabbi Pincus answers that where the group and the individual intersect, a new type of relationship is formed. This relationship, he explains, is one where the entire group is lacking if even a single individual is not counted. Such is the love for each individual. It is as if Hashem says, "I have an entire Jewish nation, but it is significant to Me if even one of My children is missing."

We all face numerous challenges in our lives. We may be tempted at times to give in to these challenges, perhaps asking ourselves, "Does G-d really care?" What we learn from our Parsha is that G-d does, in fact, care. Small as we may be in our own eyes, Hashem considers each of us to be so significant that without us the Jewish people is considered lacking. May each of us be inspired by the message of this Parsha to recognize the significance of our actions and the love that Hashem has for each and every one of us.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos and Yom Tov!

TABLE TALK

POINT TO PONDER

I have taken the Leviim from among Bnei Yisrael, in place of every firstborn... (3:12)

"Through the first born I acquired the Leviim; I took them in exchange for the firstborn. The firstborns had performed the avoda, but when they sinned with the Golden Calf they were disqualified. The Leviim, who did not participate in the idol worship, were chosen instead of them" (Rashi).

It seems from Rashi that the firstborns were destined to serve in the Bais Hamikdash, however, they lost it due to their worshipping of the Golden Calf.

When Yaakov gave the berachos (Vayichee 49:3-4) to his sons, he told Reuven that he was destined, as firstborn, to be a Kohen and serve in the Bais Hamikdash, however, he lost it due to his haste. When did the firstborns lose their status, when Reuven sinned or at the sin of the Golden Calf?

PARSHA RIDDLE

Even according to the opinions that after Mashiach the avoda will return to the firstborns, which two avodas will the Kohanim still perform?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

Which day of the Omer does everyone refer to as B'omer?

Answer: The thirty-third day of the omer is referred to as 'Lag B'omer', not Lag L'omer. (This is interesting because that day is the yartzeit of the Rema, and it is his opinion to say B'omer, and not L'omer.)

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Bemidbar* (1:2), Hashem commands Moshe to count the Jews "with the number of their names." The *Sforno* explains that this census (as opposed to the one at the end of *chumash Bemidbar*) included their names, since everyone from that generation had names that alluded to their personal nature, a distinction that the subsequent generation did not possess.

Elsewhere (*Bereishis* 29:35), the *Sforno* opines that the names that Yaakov Avinu's wives chose for their children were not invented by them, but were preexisting names that they chose due to their linguistic applicability to their personal circumstances.

According to the *Sforno*, then, Biblical names were not necessarily natively Jewish. The Talmud itself contains a similar opinion about the name Esther. According to one view, Esther's true name was Hadassah, while Esther was the name that the "nations of the world" called her, alluding to "*Istahar*" (*Megilah* 13a), meaning either the moon (Rashi), or the planet Venus (*Yaavetz, Targum Sheni Megilah* 2:7).

This etymology of the name Esther as being of non-Jewish origin has an important ramification for the law of *gittin* (bills of divorce). A fundamental dichotomy in these laws exists between "Jewish" and "non-Jewish" names, with different rules applying to how they are written in a *get*, and the question arises as to how to categorize a name like "Alexander": on the one hand, it is certainly of Greek, and not Jewish, origin, but on the other hand, it was already a common Jewish name in the Talmudic era. One of the classic works on the laws governing the writing of names in *gittin*, the *Get Mesudar* (*Mavo Shearim, Peshar Davar* #2), rules in favor of the view that "Alexander" is treated as a Jewish name, for "even the name Esther did not sprout from holy ground, for it is from the Persian language ... but it is nevertheless considered a Hebrew name since it had become common among Jews back when they still spoke the Holy Tongue, and it is also written in the Holy Scriptures, and so too Alexander and similar [names]."

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

WHO AM I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I'm from the Wholesome one's funeral.
2. For me you blow a Shofar.
3. Four split.
4. Stop and Go.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I have weeks before a week.
2. Third or ninth.
3. Reception happened in me.
4. Did you see the van?

Last Week's Answers:

#1 Yovel (Seven sevens define me; for me you blow a Shofar; "forever" is until me; I am referred to on the statue of liberty.)

#2 Torah (Learn me day and night; if you listen to me you'll be blessed; to 'walk in me' means to be involved; I was given in a week and a half..)

All children
13 and under
who answer a
"Who Am I?"
correctly will
be entered
into a raffle to

win

WATERPROOF
NIGHT VISION
BINOCULARS!



THE NEXT
RAFFLE WILL BE
JUNE 6TH!

*Congratulations to Naphtali Tzvi Graham
and others for last week's correct answers!*

Answer as many as you can.

**Each correct answer will entitle you to another
raffle ticket and increase your chances of winning!**

Visit gwckollel.org to submit your answers.

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and the entire community a wonderful and joyous Shavuot!*

