



Published by Mosdot "Mikdash Le'David", Israel

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maskil Le'David

Torah Scholars – the King's Legion

"But you shall not count the tribe of Levi, and you shall not take a census of them among the Children of Israel" (*Bamidbar* 1:49).

Hashem counted Am Yisrael several times, as Rashi comments on the first verse in this week's *parsha*, because of Hashem's love for the Jewish people. Therefore He counted them frequently – when they left Egypt, after the sin of the Golden Calf, to see how many were left after the sinners were killed – and now when He rested His Presence among them. However, Hashem did not count the tribe of Levi together with the rest of the people. Rather, they were counted separately, for as Rashi explains (*Bamidbar* 1:49) in the name of the Midrash, the King's legion is worthy of being counted on its own. Rashi continues, "Alternatively, Hashem knew that all those included in the general census would die in the Wilderness, and He wanted to exclude the Levites from this fate because of their loyalty and courage in the incident of the Golden Calf."

Hashem loves His children and counts them repeatedly, like someone who is never satiated and constantly counts the golden coins in his treasury. But more than anything, He loves the tribe of Levi and singled them out to be counted separately because they did not participate in the sin of the Golden Calf. Rather, they engaged in Torah study, delighting in it all their days, even during the long exile in Egypt when they secluded themselves in Goshen.

The Rambam (*Shemittah* and *Yovel*, 13:12) summarizes the virtue and greatness of the tribe of Levi in the following way: "Why did Levi not merit inheriting a portion in the Land of Israel, and the booty from its wars, as the rest of the tribes? Because they are set apart to worship Hashem, serve Him, and instruct the public in His upright ways and righteous judgements. Therefore, they are set apart from the ways of the world; they do not participate in wars like the rest of the people, they do not inherit a portion, and do not earn their own sustenance, for they are the soldiers of Hashem."

But the Rambam finishes with this fascinating insight: "It is not only the Levites who merit all this greatness, but each Jewish person can be included in their tribe!"

This is something amazing! In other words, every single

Jewish person, if he so desires, can become a kohen or levi, if he conducts himself in an upright fashion and removes the worry of livelihood from his mind. One who commits to engaging in Torah with complete faith in Hashem, just like the Levites who tranquilly dedicated themselves to Torah study even though they did not merit any inheritance in the Land, is considered as part of this tribe and merits joining the King's legion.

What is the source for this novel insight? We are well aware that one who engages in Torah cannot perform the service in the Beit Hamikdash or carry the Aron and its vessels – this is the service of the Levites. If that's the case, how does the Rambam arrive at this exception, that any person can be included in the King's legion along with the tribe of Levi?

We can explain it in the following way. Moshe Rabbeinu told Am Yisrael (*Devarim* 29:3), "But Hashem did not give you a heart to know, or eyes to see, or ears to hear *until this day*." Rashi asks, "What happened on that day?" He answers that when Moshe gave his newly written Sefer Torah to the Levites for safekeeping, the rest of the nation protested: We too stood at Har Sinai and received the Torah, so why is Moshe giving it over to the Levites? One day the Levites might say that the Torah is theirs exclusively, and the rest of the people have no share in it. Moshe rejoiced at this demonstration of love and reverence for the Torah because it proved they had become worthy of being called "a people," as it says, "This day you have become a people to Hashem, your G-d."

When Am Yisrael objected to the Levites receiving a Sefer Torah from Moshe Rabbeinu because they too desired a share in Torah study, Moshe rejoiced! This demonstrated their strong desire to accept and fulfil the Torah, to conceive their own novel insights and continuously delve into its depths. Out of his great joy, on that day Moshe Rabbeinu wrote another twelve Sifrei Torah and gave one to each tribe! Writing so many Sifrei Torah on one day is clearly a supernatural feat.

It seems that this incident was the basis for the Rambam's insight. Even though the Levites excel in Torah study, every Jewish person who desires to serve and connect to Hashem can also join the King's Legion to which the Levites belong. However, he must realize that in this elite faction he will not find materialism. It is a lofty, spiritual world; a world which requires much faith in Hashem, that He is All-powerful and will provide for any shortage. One who achieves this level merits that Hashem take care of his every need, just as He provided for the Levites who did not have their own portion in Eretz Yisrael, as it says, "Hashem is his inheritance."

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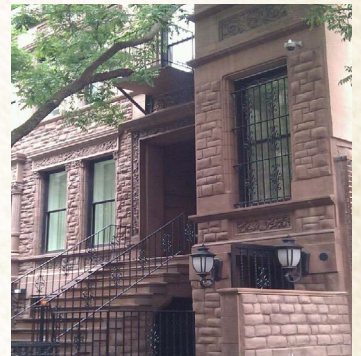
29 Iyar 5786

16 May 2026

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Bamidbar

Shabbat Mevorchin



Hilula

29 Iyar
Rabbi Meir of Premishlan

1 Sivan
Rabbi Meir HaLevi
Horowitz

2 Sivan
Rabbi Yisrael
of Vizhnitz

3 Sivan
Rabbeinu Ovadiah
of Bartenura

4 Sivan
Rabbi Mantzur Marzok

5 Sivan
Rabbi Yosef Ezra Zalicha

6 Sivan
David Hamelech





FROM THE TREASURY

Based on the teachings of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

Their Desire to come close to Hashem

“Nadav and Avihu died before Hashem when they offered an alien fire before Hashem in the Wilderness of Sinai” (*Bamidbar* 3:4).

After we completed our heartfelt prayers by the gravesite of the G-dly Tanna, Rabbi Meir Ba'al Haness, we made our way up and gazed across at the Kinneret, resplendent in the glow of the setting sun. Since it was *Erev Shevii Shel Pesach*, we recited *Shirat HaYam*, praising Hashem for the miracles and wonders He did for our fathers. A powerful street lamp attracted thousands of mosquitoes and other small insects which danced round and round the strong light without letting up. I took a closer look and saw that a number of insects which drew too close to the lamp died immediately. There were also butterflies that wanted to approach the light, and they kept dancing back and forth, coming closer and closer, but then retreating.

I contemplated their ways and the magnificent world Hashem created. Suddenly a wonderful idea flashed through my mind. Nadav and Avihu felt so close to Hashem, to the extent that they completely despised any form of materialism. Their singular desire was to cleave to Hashem alone. The problem was they saw the tremendously powerful light that Hashem's Glory emitted and had such a strong desire for it that they were unable to restrain themselves. Out of their great longing to cleave to Hashem, they drew too close and were burnt, for Hashem is a consuming flame of fire.

On the other hand, Moshe and Aharon and the other *tzaddikim*, slowly and carefully drew closer to Hashem and understood the importance of restraining their feelings; they understood until which point it is permissible to approach and where it is already forbidden. That is why they remained alive and were not burned. Concerning Aharon's two sons the Torah writes, “I will be sanctified through those who are nearest to Me.” They had such a great longing to cleave to Hashem's light that they came too close. That is why they were burned.

Hashem is a consuming fire and nevertheless dwells among us. So how do we not get burnt from Hashem's fire? This is something wondrous for which we must thank Hashem at every moment. Even though He is a consuming fire, He reduces Himself inside of us so that we shouldn't burn.

Hashem chose to demonstrate this idea to Bnei Yisrael through Aharon's sons who were burnt alive. Hashem was teaching us that in fact, this should happen to every person, but in His great kindness and compassion we remain alive. We are obligated to thank Him endlessly for this wondrous act, as we say in the Asher Yatzar blessing.



WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

A Noteworthy Blessing

I had a very good relationship with the *gaon* Rabbi Moshe Halberstam *zt"l*. From time to time, I would visit him and spend time in his presence. The *gaon* would also occasionally come to me, and send his children, to ask for a blessing in the merit of my holy ancestors *zy"ta*.

The day this *tzaddik* passed away was a dark day for me. Several hours before his passing he suffered a hemorrhage in his head. His devoted son-in-law rushed over to ask that I pray for Rav Moshe and bless him in the merit of my ancestors.

When he arrived at my office, I was meeting an Admor with his family, so the son-in-law had to wait outside until we concluded our meeting. After the Admor left, there were other prominent personalities whom I had to first attend to. He waited for quite a while until I was available to see him.

The son-in-law described his father-in-law's difficult condition and asked that I bless him with long life.

I usually commit my blessings to writing, in order to give them added validity. Moreover, if I am not fully focused while giving the blessing, writing it down helps me gain focus. I am thus able to confer the blessing from the depths of my heart and with appropriate intentions.

But when I attempted to write out a blessing that Rabbi Moshe Halberstam merit a long life, I felt a supernatural power pushing my hand from the page. I simply could not manage to write a word.

Suddenly the door opened and my devoted secretary, R' Yaakov Ezra *shlit"ta*, walked in with the bitter tidings: Rabbi Halberstam's family was in the midst of reciting *Kriyat Shema* with him; his *neshamah* was about to depart.

The room was cast into a pall of mourning. I now understood why I was not granted *siyata d'Shmaya* when I wished to bless the *tzaddik*: Heaven prevented me from writing down my blessing. His *neshamah* was destined to ascend to Heaven at that moment, in purity and without obstacles.

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A certain G-d fearing, American Jew who generously supports Torah told me that he was actually on the plane that blew up the Twin Towers, and was even given a seat right next to one of the evil murderers! However, after he was already seated in his place, he suddenly remembered he had left something behind. He asked one of the staff for permission to leave the plane; since he was travelling with hand luggage only, they allowed him to leave but did not promise they would wait for him to return. He retrieved the item but missed the flight — and his life was saved! He said Hashem protected him by performing this enormous kindness for him, which can only be described as supernatural. Generally, a person is not willing to miss his flight because of something he forgot in the airport, but he felt an inner force compelling him to go back and fetch this item, even if he would miss his flight. Why? Because Hashem protects His loved ones who guard His mitzvot.

This Jew had many Yissachar-Zevulun arrangements to his credit; he is considered as great in Torah as those who he enables to study. And it was that merit of Torah that protected him.

WORDS OF THE SAGES



Yissachar-Zevulun — Not Just Any Partnership!

When Yaakov blessed his sons, and also when Moshe blessed Bnei Yisrael, the Torah mentions Zevulun before Yissachar. Rashi explains that this is due to their partnership: Zevulun, who dwells by the shore, engages in business and supports Yissachar who engages in Torah. Since Yissachar's Torah is supported by Zevulun, the Torah puts Zevulun first.

This gives rise to a question. Why, in this week's *parshah*, does the Torah mention Yissachar before Zevulun when recounting the names of the tribal leaders, their count, and the order of their encampment? "For Yissachar, Netanel son of Zuar. For Zevulun, Eliav son of Chelon" (*Bamidbar* 1:8-9). If having a share in Yissachar's Torah is cause to mention Zevulun first, why is this reason not applicable here?

The *sefer Talelei Orot* offers a wonderful answer, in the name of the Admor of Skulen *zt"l*: It has to be that Yissachar, who toils in Torah, is more virtuous than Zevulun, who supports Torah; it cannot be that the one who assists is considered greater than the one who actually performs. Therefore, in this week's *parsha* where the tribes are counted according to their worth — Yissachar is counted before Zevulun because they are more virtuous. However, in the *parshiot* of Vayechi and Vezot Habracha which speak about the tribal blessings, Zevulun is put first because the fate of Yissachar, who is supported by Zevulun, depends on Zevulun's blessing.

Maran HaGaon Rabbi Aharon Leib Shteinman *zt"l* asks why specifically with the mitzvah of Torah study do we find this partnership of Yissachar and Zevulun, while for other mitzvot this partnership does not exist. For example, if someone lays tefillin or eats matzah, the one supporting him will not receive half his reward for observing these mitzvot.

Due to Hashem's great kindness, our physical needs, which we need to survive, are readily available. For example, wheat for baking bread is cheap and easy to obtain. Similarly, water is essential for man's existence and is readily available, while the air we breathe, without which we simply cannot exist, is present wherever we find ourselves and we are not required to pay for this essential commodity.

It is the same in spiritual matters. The world exists in the merit of Torah study, as it says, "If My covenant with the night and with the day would not be; had I not set up the laws of heaven and earth." This mitzvah is more essential to man than any other Torah commandment. Its reward is also much greater than all other mitzvot, as the Mishna says, "... and the study of Torah is equivalent to them all." This is why every Jew is given the possibility of performing this mitzvah, and one who cannot observe it himself through his own study can fulfil it through supporting Torah; by creating a partnership with one who studies Torah.

The *gaon* Rabbi Aharon Leib related to his *talmidim* that someone once came to see him. While they were speaking, this man was overcome with a spirit of generosity and pledged to support Torah with his assets.

On his return journey to *chutz la'aretz*, he was killed in a road accident *r"l*. Several days later he appeared to Rav Shteinman in a dream and told him that just the fact that he had sincerely pledged to support Torah, even though he had not managed to fulfill his promise, assisted him greatly in his Heavenly judgement.



PARSHAH PEARLS

Inspiring Reflections

The Individual Has Importance When He is Part of the Whole

"Take a census of the entire assembly of the Children of Israel according to their families" (*Bamidbar* 1:2).

The *sefer Simchat HaTorah* asks two questions on this verse: Firstly, why does the Torah use the expression "Se'u – take a census," and not "count?" Secondly, why does it mention "the assembly of the Children of Israel?" This expression refers to the general public, so why is it mentioned here when talking about counting each individual?

The answer is, the expression "se'u" comes from the term "to raise" and does not refer to counting. Hashem is well-aware of the number of His people. However, by counting each individual, He is, so to speak, appointing each Jewish person as a member of the King's legion, and this elevates his status and importance.

But, the importance of each individual is only if he is part of "the assembly of the Children of Israel." Indeed, the Jewish people's majesty and loftiness is enhanced through the counting of its assembly, the realization of their greatness.

Why Did the Levites Walk Around Barefoot?

"Thus shall you do for them so that they shall live and not die" (*Bamidbar* 4:19).

The Midrash writes that the tribe of Levi was more elevated than the rest of the Jewish people: while everyone walked around with shoes, the Levites who carried the vessels of the Mishkan would go barefoot.

However, Rabbi Shmuel Ben Zaken *zt"l*, Rav of Pass, in his *sefer Pri Etz Hagan*, asks following question: The Gemara says (*Shabbat* 129a), "Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav, a person must sell his home [if need be] so that he have shoes to wear." Rashi explains: There is nothing lowlier than one who walks around barefoot in the market place. So why is the fact that the Levites walked barefoot considered to be elevated?

He answers as follows. A Jew may not degrade himself. However, if he does so for Hashem's honor, it is considered a virtue. David Hamelech said in front of the Aron of Hashem, "And I shall behave even more humbly than this, and I shall be lowly in my eyes" (*Shmuel* II, 22). This could be the intention of the Mishna (*Avot* 4:6), "Whoever honors the Torah is himself honored by people." Even if one diminishes one's self-respect, if he does so for the honor of the Torah he will be honored by others. And on the contrary, there is no greater lowliness than one who deflates his own honor before Hashem.

This is why the Midrash praises the tribe of Levi. They were required to go barefoot and lower themselves for the honor of the Mishkan, because it is the resting place of Hashem's Presence.

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



Go with the Truth All the Way

“Not long ago,” related the Rav of Carmiel, the *gaon* Rabbi Avraham Tzvi Margalit *shlit”a*, “I participated in a Sheva Brachot that took place in Chatzor Haglilit. One of speakers was someone from Arad who established the Shuvu School in his town, and he told over the following story:

“Rabbi Moshe Zilberberg of Ashdod, a Chassidic Jew and great *talmid chacham*, worked tirelessly to bring Jews from the Soviet Union closer to a Torah way of life. After establishing the Shuvu School, we invited Rabbi Moshe to the mezuzah-fixing ceremony, a notable event that took place with the participation of the students and their parents.

“Rabbi Moshe came dressed in black from head to toe – hat, long coat, *gartel* (Chassidic belt) tied at his waist. He stood by the door, swaying to and fro, and recited the blessing for affixing the mezuzah with fiery fervor, in Chassidic pronunciation: ‘*Burich Ato Hashem Elokaini meilech Ho’oilom...*’ not caring what anyone thought of him. He did not try to adapt himself to the crowd, neither in dress nor in speech, and did not deviate one iota from his customary service of Hashem.

“In truth, I was slightly embarrassed and thought to myself, ‘What do these school children think? They don’t know anything about Judaism, all the more so about Chassidut. How do they view his strange conduct, standing and swaying like a lulav, loudly crying out incomprehensible words...? And what do their parents, Russian immigrants, think about this “performance?”’

“Sometime later, I was speaking to one of the students and he asked me, ‘Who was this *tzaddik* who fixed the mezuzah? We were so moved to hear him recite the blessing...’

“If someone acts out of an inner truth, it doesn’t matter what language he speaks. Words that come from the heart enter the

heart. ‘Truthful words are recognized.’ I was the one who erred. At the time I wondered what they thought of him. Some crazy person? But I made a big mistake. They were enthused specifically by his demonstrative behavior.

“We,” concluded Harav Margalit (*Mapik Margaliot*), “must follow our truth until the end and not be concerned about what others will think or say. The only thing that must guide us is how the Torah considers our actions. Are our deeds compatible with what is written in the Torah and the spirit of its pages? Irreligious Jews appreciate someone who stands by his principles. Sometimes you meet a secular Jew who says, ‘You know, this orthodox Jew is not exactly religious; it’s all just a show. When he is among the orthodox he acts like the biggest orthodox Jew. But when he is among the secular crowd, he suddenly behaves differently, dresses differently, is not so particular about the best *kashrut*, speaks a different language, and even prays differently. He adapts himself to his surroundings, does what he wants. Is it okay to sometimes waive one’s religion, when one fancies?’

“On the surface it seems as though such a person is bridging the gap between the orthodox and the secular. He gets along with everyone and can thereby bring others closer to their Father in Heaven. But the truth is that a Jew one who is particular about even the smallest details and does not forgo mitzvot and customs in the slightest, even if it seems awkward, garners the most respect. If he is waiting for an elevator, and the doors open with a woman inside, he does not say, “It’s not nice of me not to enter, what will she think of the orthodox?” Instead, he pretends he forgot something and waits until the elevator is strictly kosher.

“This is what *Chazal* teach us: ‘Which is the proper path that a man should choose for himself? That which is a credit to himself

and earns him the esteem of fellow men.’ Man must first of all behave in a way that is a credit to himself, to conduct himself precisely according to all the Torah laws, and it is particularly this that will ‘earn him the esteem of fellow men.’ By upholding the truth, he will be held in high regard by others.”

This is the meaning behind the commandment in this week’s *parshah*, “This shall you do for them so that they shall live” (*Bamidbar* 4:19). The way a Jewish person conducts himself, following all the Torah laws with vigorous precision without rounding corners, creates a glorious edifice!

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt”l* once travelled to Yeshiva by bus. In all innocence, a lady sat down on the empty seat next to him. He found himself in a dilemma. It was clearly not proper for him to sit next to a strange woman. But how could he change seats without insulting her? So what did he do? Hagaon Rabbi Shlomo Zalman got up from his place, stood by the door, and got off the bus at the next stop, although still far from Yeshiva. In this way the woman wasn’t insulted; she assumed that he stood up because he had to get off at that stop.

“The beginning of wisdom is the fear of Hashem.” One must possess fear of G-d to distance oneself from anything distasteful. But to do this one must use wisdom. The first and most essential component in *yirat Hashem* is wisdom. One must recruit all one’s wisdom and intelligence so as not to insult a fellow Jew.

Even those who are far from a Torah way of life appreciate the man of truth who acts consistently according to Torah dictates and does not swerve in the slightest to the right or left. Such a person does not cause a *chillul Hashem*. On the contrary, this is the way to publicly sanctify G-d’s Name.



“Contemplate and see that Hashem is good”

Exciting update: With *siyata diShmaya*, the *shiurim* of Moreinu v’Rabbeinu, the Admor Rabbi David Chananya Pinto *shlit”a*, are now available in Hebrew, English, French and Spanish

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