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## maskil Le'David The Lineage of Bnei Yisrael

**"And they established their genealogy according to their families, according to their fathers' household" (Bamidbar 1:18).**

Rashi on this verse writes: "They brought documents of their lineage and witnesses of the veracity of each birth to prove they belonged to that tribe". Chazal tell us, "The nations of the world were jealous of the Bnei Yisrael. Why are they fitting to come close to Hashem through counting and belonging to a certain flag, more than us? Hashem answered them, "Bring your own documents of lineage." And it emerged that they could not verify from which maidservant each one descended."

This *parsha* praises Am Yisrael's modesty and holiness in their remaining faithful to their lineage. They refrain from intermarriage, unlike the nations of the world who do not preserve their lineage.

This *parsha* is read at the beginning of the summer, when there is a particular need to guard one's eyes. The sights one sees in the streets are very immodest and unfortunately it is almost impossible to walk outside without stumbling. A person can only prevent himself from sin if he guards his eyes, and by doing so he protects his family's lineage.

The Midrash Rabbah, expounding on the verse, "These are the creatures that you may eat" (*Vayikra* 11:2), says that Hashem considered all the nations and did not find any nation worthy to receive the Torah besides the Jewish people. The *Divrei Yoel* asks why the Midrash refers to the Jewish nation receiving the Torah specifically on the verse, "These are the creatures..."?

I would like to suggest an answer. Chazal (*Yalkut Bamidbar*, *remez* 684) tell us, "At the time the Bnei Yisrael received the Torah, the nations of the world were jealous. They said, 'Why are they fitting to come close to Hashem more than the other nations?' Hashem immediately stopped up their mouths. He said to them, 'Bring your documents of lineage just as My children bring,' as it says, 'And they established their genealogy according to their families.' Therefore, He counted them at the beginning of

Bamidbar. 'These are the commandments...' (end of *Sefer Vayikra*), is followed by, 'Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness of Sinai...Take a census...' (beginning of *Bamidbar*). They reason they merited receiving the Torah was because of their lineage."

From this Chazal it is clear that the main reason Bnei Yisrael merited to receive the Torah is because they acted with modesty and protected their lineage, unlike the other nations who do not preserve their lineage. Now we can understand why the Midrash connects the fact that Bnei Yisrael were the ones who merited receiving the Torah, to the prohibition against eating forbidden foods. Since Am Yisrael restrain themselves and do not behave like animals, it is not fitting for them to eat impure animals. This is in accordance with Chazal's statement, "Your deeds will bring you close and your deeds will distance you." Since the deeds of Am Yisrael are kosher, they were also commanded to eat food that is kosher. However, the nations of the world behave like the lowest animals and beasts. Therefore, there is no reason to forbid them from eating impure animals and other bugs and insects – the purpose of which is to increase holiness – since anyway their ways and deeds are utterly defiled.

We see from here that the way of the Chosen Nation is unlike that of the other nations. Am Yisrael said, "We will do and we will obey," and they observe the Torah with their mouths and hearts. It is implanted within them. However, even the nations of the world who say lofty words about the existence of the Creator, have their words contradicted by their deeds and their behavior is like the lowest animals.

This *parsha* is always read just before the festival of Shavuot – the festival of receiving the Torah. During these days, we must continue to strive in our *avodat Hashem*. Even though each person has been preparing himself for seven weeks during the entire *sefirah* – which are days of preparation for receiving the Torah – the last few days of the *sefirah* should not be taken lightly and one must persevere in one's *avodat Hashem* and preparations for the Chag. A person who disregards these days and cuts back in his *avodat Hashem* can be compared to an engaged couple who spend months preparing themselves for their wedding, but in the last week they take things easy, and the *chatan* ends up arriving at the *chuppah* in an old suit or arrives late. This is certainly most inappropriate.

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2 Sivan 5784  
 8 June 2024

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Bamidbar



Hilula

2 Sivan  
 Rabbi Yisrael of Vishnitz

3 Sivan  
 Rabbeinu Ovadiah  
 of Bartenura

4 Sivan  
 Rabbi Mantzur Marzok

5 Sivan  
 Rabbi Zev of Zitomir

6 Sivan  
 Rabbi Avraham Mordechai  
 Alter, the Admor of Gur

7 Sivan  
 Hoshea Ben Bari

8 Sivan  
 Rabbi Moshe Chaim  
 of Iraq





# PARSHAH PEARLS

## Inspiring Reflections

### It's All In the Name

**"Take a census of the entire assembly of the Children of Israel according to their families, according to their fathers' household, by number of the names, every male according to their head count" (Bamidbar 1:2).**

Surely the words, "By number of the names" are redundant, since the verse has already said "Take a census of the entire assembly of the Children of Israel"?

Rabbi Aryeh Leib Tzintz, zt"l, in his *sefer Melo Ha'omer*, answers this question. He quotes the Midrash (*Vayikra Rabbah* 32:5), that in Mitzrayim the Jewish people did not change their names. This prevented them from assimilating with the goyim, for their names demonstrated that they were Jewish descendants, and reminded them not to mix with the defiled Egyptians.

The verse mentions, "According to their families, according to their fathers' household," to stress that the lineage of the Bnei Yisrael is significant. What gave them the power to remain faithful to their families and fathers' household and not assimilate with strangers? The answer lies in the continuation of the verse, "By number of the names" – it is because they kept their fathers' names whilst in Egypt.

Harav Yosef Berger, shlita, adds in the name of the Admor of Mishkoltz shlita, that he is accustomed to say the following explanation at a *brit milah*:

We bless the infant, "Just as he has entered the covenant so may he enter into the Torah, the marriage canopy, and good deeds." However, this blessing could be understood somewhat differently: "כ"שם – in the merit of the Jewish name that the baby just received, "May he enter into Torah, the marriage canopy, and good deeds." This will stand for him as a reminder at all times that he is a true Jew; he has a Jewish **נש** (name) taken from our holy forefathers. It will serve as an incentive for him to continue in the way of Torah and *yirah*, and enter into Torah, the marriage canopy, and good deeds.

### Emissaries of Kindness Merit Special Mercy

**"The Children of Israel shall encamp, each man by his banner according to the insignias of their fathers' household, at a distance surrounding the Tent of Meeting shall they encamp" (Bamidbar 2:2).**

Rabbeinu Yosef Chaim, zy"l, in his *sefer Ben Ish Chai*, writes that the above verse hints to a wonderful concept: Those who occupy themselves with the mitzvah of *tzedakah* and are gracious to others by helping to support poor and hungry people, are promised that Hashem will be gracious to them and will bring them close to Him.

This is accordance with what we are told in *masechet Shabbat* (104a), that the letters *gimmel* (גימל) and *daled* (דלת), are a hint to "One who performs kindness with the poor" (גמול דלים). In this vein we can explain the above verse. "מנגד" – this word is made up of the words "מ-ן-ג-ד" meaning that in the merit of this great mitzvah of doing kindness "גמול דלים" (hinted to in the letters ג and ד), he will be, "סביב לאוהל מועד יחנו" – Heaven will be gracious and merciful to him, always.

### Rounding Up the Count

**"Their count, for the tribe of Reuven: forty-six thousand, five hundred" (Bamidbar 1:21)**

We find an interesting phenomenon concerning the numbers of Bnei Yisrael, which are recounted in this *parsha* and other places in the Torah. The numbers are always a complete unit, and do not contain single digits. Sometimes the final number is in the hundreds and other times in the tens, but it never finishes with a single unit. This is surprising - how can it be that the total number of each of the *shevatim* was always a round number?

Rabbi Yeshaya Datrani, zt"l writes that it is not the way of the Torah to be particular on this matter. The Torah writes, "You shall count, fifty days," when in fact we count only forty-nine; and the Torah refers to forty lashes when it in fact means only thirty-nine.

In his *sefer Ta'ama D'kra*, Maran Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l, notes that the head count of each of the *shevatim* is a complete hundred, aside from the tribe of Gad whose head count numbered "...and fifty."

The reason is that with this counting they did not reckon individual numbers – if the tribe numbered more than fifty, they rounded it up to the next hundred; if they were less than fifty, they rounded it down to the previous hundred. However, the tribe of Gad numbered exactly fifty – five thousand, six hundred *and fifty*. That is why they are the only ones whose count ends with fifty.

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Similarly, despite all one's preparations throughout the *sefirah*, one must continue with one's spiritual preparations right until the Chag, and purify oneself and one's thoughts, especially during the *shloshet yemei hagbalah* (the three days prior to the Chag) whose significance is so great, as the Chida writes at length in his *sefer Lev David*.

Women must also prepare themselves spiritually, by being meticulous

with their modesty, guarding their tongues and strengthening themselves in other areas. The primary merit of women is that they help their sons to learn Torah and wait for their husbands. This awards them a share in the reward for all their husband's mitzvot.

May we merit to approach the holy *chag* of Shavuot well prepared and in holiness and purity. Amen.



## WORDS OF THE SAGES

### Why Did the Avreich Stop Learning with the Lawyer?

"Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness of Sinai" (*Bamidbar* 1:1).

What difference does it make where Hashem spoke to Moshe? Chazal explain that the idea is to teach us, "With three things the Torah was given: fire, water and desert. Just as these are free for all of mankind, the words of Torah are also free."

The *sefer Ke'ayal Ta'arog* brings a powerful story about an *avreich* from Ponevezh Kollel who was hard-pressed with *parnassah*. Since he had a talent for teaching Torah in an engaging manner, he used his time between his learning sessions to tutor children from the higher grades, and also studied with *yeshiva ketana* students.

One day he was told about a religious lawyer who wished to give *shiurim* in the *beit hakneset*, but since he didn't know how to learn he was prepared to pay someone to help him prepare the *shiurim*. Of course, the lawyer's concept of payment was on the lines of a lawyer's remuneration, not an *avreich's*...

This *avreich* decided to learn with him for two hours once a week, and from that one session he earned much more than he used to get from a whole week of tutoring children. He was happy that he was able to utilize his intermission to learn Torah, and no longer had to 'waste his time' tutoring young children.

At the end of the first month he received his due wages. That night, he placed his glasses next to his bed as he always did, but they somehow fell and broke. Since he had very expensive lenses, the cost of replacing them amounted to the exact sum he received from the lawyer!

In actual fact, he did not have a good feeling about learning with the lawyer. He was perturbed by the lawyer's approach to Torah. For example, each time the *avreich* would explain the Rambam's words, the lawyer would say, "It is not possible that this is what the Rambam had in mind. Nevertheless, this idea that you are putting into the Rambam's words is excellent, and I will repeat it in my lecture."

Another month passed and once again the *avreich* received a nice amount in cash. He arrived home and was greeted with the news that while his wife had been trying to remove one of the window shutters in order to clean it, it had fallen right down to the ground floor and only by a miracle did not kill someone. The cost of replacing the shutter was the same amount he had received from the lawyer!

He saw that things were getting more complicated – this incident involved danger to life – and he decided to go and speak to his Rosh Kollel, Maran HaRav Shteinman, zt"l, and ask him for his insight on what was happening. Maran listened to the story, weighed up all the details including the lawyer's approach, and then explained to the *avreich*:

"When someone teaches Torah, it can be for one of two reasons. Sometimes it benefits the one who is learning, even though it might seem that the one teaching is not gaining anything. This could be the case when learning with a child or a beginner *ba'al teshuva*. In this case, one should teach and Hashem will enable him to grow through a different avenue. But sometimes, the learning is of benefit to the one who is teaching. For example, when giving a *shiur* to people who do not concentrate so well, or to people who could learn just as well on their own. In this case, the one who is teaching is the one who benefits because through his preparation he clarifies the material for himself. This is also a reason to teach.

But if there is no benefit, neither for the one learning nor for the one teaching, and the only gain is money – one doesn't teach Torah for money alone. In your case, the lawyer does not believe in the truth of the Torah, so he cannot derive any benefit from this kind of learning, and there is no benefit for you either. This being the case, you should stop teaching him."



## IN OUR FATHERS' FOOTSTEPS

Nuggets of guidance based on *Masechet Avot*, culled from the teachings of Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita.

### Chapter Six

"Torah is greater than priesthood and royalty" (*Avot* 6:6).

There is a well-known Gemara (*Yoma* 71b) about a Kohen Gadol, ignorant in Torah, who left the Beit HaMikdash after Yom Kippur accompanied by crowds of people. However, upon meeting Shemaya and Avtalyon, they left the Kohen Gadol and followed Shemaya and Avtalyon.

Chazal say concerning the mitzvah of charity (*Horiyot* 13a): A *mamzer* who is a *talmid chacham* has priority over a Kohen Gadol who is unlearned. This is true even though there is a positive commandment in the Torah to honour the Kohen, as it says (*Vayikra* 21:8), "You shall sanctify him," which Chazal explain to mean, "He is the first one called up to read in the Sefer Torah, he is appointed to lead the Bircat HaMazon, and he has first choice when being served at a meal." However, in a situation where the Kohen is an *am ha'aretz* (unlearned), the *talmid chacham* is given priority.

The Torah atones even when we don't have priesthood and offerings, as we find in the Gemara (*Menachot* 110a), "If one occupies himself with the laws of the sin-offering, it is considered as if he has offered a sin-offering; if one occupies himself with the laws of a guilt-offering, it is considered as if he has brought a guilt-offering."

Where do we see that Torah is greater than royalty? The Gemara (*Mo'ed Katan* 16b) relates that when King David would study under his master, he did not sit on pillows and couches; instead, he would bend his hands and legs and sit on the ground. When he was learning Torah he behaved with submission, even though he was a king.

There is a positive commandment in the Torah for a king to write a Sefer Torah and take it with him wherever he goes, as it says (*Devarim* 17:19), "He shall read from it all the days of his life, so he will learn to fear Hashem, his G-d, to observe all the words of this Torah." Chazal say (*Sanhedrin* 21b), "When he goes out to war he takes it with him; when he returns from battle he brings it back with him; when he sits in judgment it is with him; when he sits down to eat it is opposite him. The reason is not just so all his actions will be in accordance with the Torah; it is also to show that Kingship does not have priority over Torah but is entirely subordinate to the laws of the Torah.

My esteemed father, zy"a, told me that once when the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Benbenisti, zy"a, came to Morocco, he went to pay his respects to Rabbi Yehuda Pinto, zy"a, father of the revered Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy"a. He accorded him great honor and from then on upon his return to Yerushalayim, he used to send him money. Once his students asked him, "Why does Rabbeinu accord so much honour to the tzaddik Rabbi Yehuda Pinto? Rabbeinu has his own *zechut avot* (ancestral merits), so why does he defer himself so much to Rabbi Yehuda Pinto?"

The tzaddik replied, "Only one who possesses *zechut avot* knows how to sincerely appreciate *zechut avot*. Since I possess *zechut avot*, I appreciate the *zechut avot* of Rabbi Yehuda.

Therefore, I defer myself to him."

## "LET HER BE PRAISED"

Portrayal of the True Eshet Chayil  
In memory of Rabbanit **Mazal Medlin Pinto**, a'h



"She is like a merchant's ships"

The Chozev of Lublin, Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak HaLevi Horowitz, zt"l, was famous for his fiery speeches concerning the care one must take in every action. He formulated a profound and original outlook, which he absorbed from his teachers, the Maggid Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezritch and Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk, zt"l, to which he added a new dimension from his own personal experience.

The Chozev used the following scandalous incident, which took place in Lublin, to teach his followers a practical lesson.

There was a famous jeweler in the town who used to sell the most beautiful, custom-made jewelry. One day an elegant woman, whose sophistication was a clear statement of her wealth, entered his store. She started to pick out different pieces of expensive jewelry.

The jeweler, who realized she was someone of means, told one of his assistants to help her select the diamonds. As soon as she was satisfied, she started walking towards the door with a bunch of valuable jewelry in her hand.

The assistant turned to her and asked her how she was planning to pay for the merchandise. She promptly replied that there was no need for him to worry. Her rich husband, a famous doctor, would first take a look at the jewelry she chose and, "If he is satisfied, he will pay you the full amount that you deserve..."

The jeweler was slightly suspicious about this agreement, but he was calmed when she said, "If you are concerned, accompany me home."

The jeweler thought for a moment and then asked his assistant to take care of things until his return, and he went along with the women to her home. They arrived at one of the fanciest houses in the town. After passing through many entrance ways, they entered the house and the merchant was asked to sit and wait for the husband who would soon finish working... He sat and waited. Time passed but nothing happened.

In his distress he turned to one of the servants and asked him where he could find his master. He was shown to a door at the end of the corridor, and the jeweler made his way over to the room. He knocked quietly on the door and was told to enter.

After a few minutes the elderly doctor, who specialized in evaluating the mentally sick, turned to him and asked him why he had come. The jeweler told him the story and made it clear that he was waiting to be paid in full.

"I indeed heard from my wife," the doctor was quick to reply, "that there is a sick person waiting to see me, who invents stories and constantly imagines that people owe him money. He even considers himself rich despite being poor, and he is fantasizing that the doctor's wife owes him a large amount of money... However," the doctor continued, "before I can take care of you, I will need to ask you several questions..."

The jeweler could not believe his ears. He pinched himself to check whether he was dreaming or not, but the doctor didn't give him a chance and continued describing the method of treatment for difficult cases like his. He started to grasp the extent of the women's deceit and almost fainted...

The tzaddik finished recounting the story, bringing out the following lesson: Sometimes we fall into the clutches of the evil inclination. He slyly gets us to sell him our achievements in exchange for different promises and questionable guarantees. Only after some time do we uncover the deceit.

## WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

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



A Kiddush Hashem Through a Break-in

In Iyar 5771, I was receiving people in the yeshiva, and I intended to stay until late at night.

Against all logic, at about five o' clock I suddenly thought I must go home. It is most perplexing to me – I was supposed to remain in the yeshiva for several more hours, receiving people and being available for the Klal. But I acted on the thought and returned home. As I walked up the steps of my building, three men brushed past me on their way down the stairs. I did not attach any significance to this, but as soon as I arrived at my door, I realized what had just happened. The front door was wide open – thieves had entered my home...

I immediately connected this to the three men who had rushed down the stairs. Seemingly they were the ones involved. With Hashem's kindness they did not manage to steal anything, because one of them had been on the lookout by the window and signaled to them that I was on my way home, so they ran for their lives. The special Divine intervention was clear to me – Hashem had put this unexpected idea into my head to get up and return home. "How can I repay Hashem for all His kindness?"

As per the law, police officers arrived in order to investigate the details of the incident and to take finger prints. After surveying my home, one of the officers asked me, "How come the Rav does not have a television?" In France it is rare to find a house without this despicable device.

"What do I need this machine for?" I replied. "In order to see all kinds of abominations? Killing and idolatry and immorality which corrupt and destroy the soul? You, in your position as police officers, are surely intimately familiar with how many criminals and dangerous people are lurking around, and it is clear that they picked up their despicable ways from all kinds of repulsive and offensive programs that they watch."

The officers nodded their complete agreement. Some of them even had tears in their eyes and with great distress told me about difficult issues that they were facing with their own children as a result of all the programs they watch on this detestable device.

I was handed a questionnaire and asked to fill in a declaration about the items that had been stolen. I told them that thank G-d, nothing was taken.

One of the officers turned to me in disbelief: "It is the first time that I am witnessing this phenomenon. Someone experienced a break-in yet nothing was stolen! You have the opportunity to claim that many valuable objects were taken, and you will receive full compensation from the insurance company."

"This is the common practice," he added ...

I was shocked at the idea and said, "Do you think that for the sake of a bit of money I will lie?! G-d forbid that I will do such a thing! Our holy Torah forbids us to lie. In addition, this shameful act could result in a terrible *chilul Hashem*. The thieves will be questioned and they will deny taking anything, as is really the case. In the end it will be evident that my claim was fabricated. How can I do this to G-d?!"

The officers could not hide their great amazement at my instantaneous rejoinder, and Baruch Hashem I merited to sanctify Hashem's Name. In fact, this was not a challenge for me, for one who conducts his life according to the Torah and mitzvot, knows that this is the correct way to behave. It is neither silver nor gold that stands in front of our eyes, but the will of Hashem alone. We believe with full faith that even in concealed places the Eye of Hashem **looks and sees us. This perception causes a person to be overcome with fear of sin.** But for one who has not yet merited this level and is far from living a life of Torah and mitzvot, every small challenge appears enormous, and he requires almost superhuman strength in order to overcome the test. A person who does not possess Torah does not have the necessary tools to handle the evil inclination.