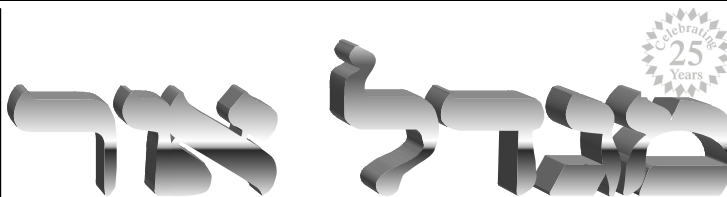


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This issue dedicated l'illui nishmas
R' Leib ben Avraham z"l
Mr. Walter Spier z"l
by his loving family.
Yahrtzeit 5 Sivan
Yehi zichro baruch.

A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

8:03 -	הדלקת נרות
8:21 -	שקיעה
8:17 -	זק"ש מ"א
9:10 -	זק"ש גר"א
10:24 -	סוף זמן תפילה
8:22 -	שקיעה
9:13* -	צאת הכוכבים
9:35 -	צאת 72

* Based on Emergence of 3 Stars

Times courtesy of MyZmanim.com

Now You Know!

Parshas Bamidbar introduces to us the flags and banners of the tribes and their encampments. Each tribe had a flag of its own, with a specific color and insignia.

Then there was a banner for each group of three tribes, as they encamped together around the Mishkan, surrounding it on four sides.

The banners of the groups of three bore the colors of the individual tribes in that grouping, as well as letters which, when combined, spelled out the names of the Avos: Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov.

An underlying message of this was that through Unity, we can access the merit of our holy forefathers, but without it, we cannot. However, the idea of a flag and colors is important for the individual as well.

There is a natural human desire to fit in, to be part of something bigger than ourselves. When we are part of a group or movement, then our own convictions are strengthened by knowing there are others who think as we do.

How we identify ourselves, and with whom we identify, are key to our success in Avodas Hashem. When you stand for something, you will be better able to resist the temptation to stray. When you hold yourself to a standard (another name for a banner, btw), you remain steadfast in your beliefs and behavior.

Hashem therefore instituted flags and colors so everyone would know where they stood.

Thought of the week:
Never forget that Hashem created you to be unique — just like everyone else.

"וידבר ה'... באחד לחדש השני בשנה השנית לצאתם מארץ מצרים לאמר." (במדבר א:א)

"Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, on the first [day] of the second month from the Exodus from Egypt saying." (Bamidbar 1:1)

The book of Bamidbar begins with the command to count the Jews. Rashi comments, already on the first verse, that because Hashem loves us so much, He is constantly counting us. Rashi further comments that when Hashem wanted to rest His countenance upon us, he counted us the third time.

The Mishkan was erected on the 1st of Nisan, so on the 1st of Iyar He counted us. If you ask that this is not "at the time" Hashem placed His Shechina upon us, we can explain that one is not considered a permanent resident in a city until thirty days has passed. Therefore, now that Hashem's presence was becoming "permanent," it was time to count us.

There may also be another level of explanation here for us to examine and learn from. The Mishkan had been erected with great fanfare. The Princes had brought their offerings for nearly two weeks, and the Mishkan was inaugurated with much pomp, circumstance, and joy. Now that this was settling down, though, and things got into a routine, there was the risk that some would feel disenfranchised.

Though everyone had contributed to the Mishkan to the best of their ability, they didn't all bring the same things. It's possible that once the initial excitement wore off, people who had not brought the most precious things could feel they were not as involved or responsible for the Mishkan as some others. They might look at their contributions and feel they were less important than those of others. They might even feel the Mishkan belonged to others more than themselves.

For this reason, Hashem said to Moshe, "Count the Jews." Hashem wanted every person to recognize that they are precious for their individual contribution to the world, which is different than anyone else's. We are each on our own track in our journey to come close to Hashem and we cannot objectively compare our successes to those of others.

Indeed, Hashem counts us at every moment, collectively but also individually. He loves us for who we are, and the uniqueness we possess. He doesn't compare us to others and find us wanting. This message had to be conveyed, and so it was done at a time when people could have begun feeling they didn't matter, so we always remember how special and precious we are to Hashem.

A king gave three men each a plot of land and told them to plant it and report back to him at the end of the season. The first man came to report that he had produced thirty bushels of wheat. The king was pleased and gave him a bag of gold. The second man, who had produced fifty bushels of wheat, was eagerly awaiting the king's response. To his shock, the king gave him a tongue-lashing about being lazy. But what happened next truly boggled his mind.

The third fellow quietly admitted that he had only produced fifteen bushels of wheat. This time the king ran over and hugged him, then gave him a very large award. The middle farmer cried foul. "I don't understand," he said, "I produced more wheat than either of them yet you castigated me and rewarded them?"

"It's quite simple," replied the monarch. "The first man's field was expected to produce thirty bushels. He worked responsibly and it did so. Your field was so fertile that it should have produced one hundred bushels, yet you produced only fifty, proof that you did not put your heart into doing my will. But," said the king, "the third fellow's field should only have produced ten bushels. If he produced fifteen, that means he went above and beyond simply because I asked. THAT is why he stands out."

Zmanim for שבועות

Wesley Hills, NY

8:04 -	הדלקת נרות
8:22 -	שקיעה
9:13* -	צאת הכוכבים
12:54 -	חצות
5:26 -	נץ החמה
8:16 -	זק"ש מ"א
9:10 -	זק"ש גר"א
10:24 -	סוף זמן תפילה
8:23 -	שקיעה
After 9:14 -	הדלקת נרות ב'
8:16 -	זק"ש מ"א
9:09 -	זק"ש גר"א
9:15* -	צאת הכוכבים
9:36 -	צאת 72

On Shavuot, we read the Megilla of Rus, the story of the Ammonite princess who converted to Judaism and clung to her former mother-in-law Naomi.

Coming back to the Land of Israel, she married an elderly man named Boaz, and began the royal lineage of Moshiach, becoming the great-grandmother of Dovid HaMelech.

Why do we read this on Shavuot? The Midrash Lekach Tov says it is because Rus is a book full of chesed, kindness.

Elimelech abandoned his land because he refused to do kindness with them, Rus accompanied Naomi and did chesed with her, caring for her mother-in-law no matter what, and following her advice. Boaz did chesed by allowing Rus to glean in his fields, and then by marrying her though people whispered about him.

The Torah, which was given on Shavuot, is also a book of kindness, as it says in Mishlei (31:26) "...v'Toras Chesed al leshona." The Torah was given as a gift to the Jewish People with tremendous kindness from Hashem.

It is a gift because it empowers us to be great and to do amazing things. And, when we accepted the Torah, we also did an act of kindness for Hashem.

Hashem held Mount Sinai over us on Shavuot, and Chazal tell us it was like a chupa. Hashem is the groom and the Jewish People is the bride. We have to accept Hashem's gift and agree to unite with Him in order for it to work. This is our chesed back to him.

Further, in our role as the "kallah," we utilize the power of the wife, of femininity, to receive, and then create more, thereby becoming partners with Hashem.

Rus accepted and sowed the seeds of Moshiach, and so do we accept the Torah and sow the same seeds with every good deed we do.

Based on a shiur by R' Daniel Coren

Thought of the week:
Don't give 'til it hurts. Give 'til it feels good; until you crave the pleasure of doing the right thing.

"ואתם תהיו לי ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש אלה הדברים אשר תדבר אל בני ישראל." (שמות יט:ו)

"And you shall be to Me a kingdom of lords and a holy nation. These are the words, [not less and not more] that you shall speak to the children of Israel."
(Shmos 19:6)

This is the lead-up to Matan Torah, the giving of Torah at Sinai, the most important day in the history of the world, before or after. Even the days of Creation pale beside it, because, if not for the constant study of Torah, the world would return to its state of nothingness. Later, we will be adjured to tell our children of this day, and to remember always the day we stood before Hashem at Sinai.

But for now, several days prior, Hashem said, "This is what I want you to tell the Jewish People." Moshe came down with the message that Hashem wants us to become a treasured, exalted nation. What was it about this message that was so powerful? Why would these words convince the Jews to accept the Torah of their own free will?

The simplicity of the answer is mind-blowing. Hashem was telling us His "end-game." What was the plan of giving the Torah to the world, and specifically to the Jewish People? *That we become more than human.*

Human beings are frail by nature. However, by working on themselves, they can transcend boundaries no one would imagine possible. On a physical level, you have athletes who train themselves to do things others can only dream of. They run extremely quickly, or perhaps for extended periods of time. They can lift great weights, or swim for miles. They have increased endurance and strength, but they weren't born that way. Instead, they had to work for it, and they set themselves goals.

When you see an athlete doing some of the things they do, you imagine they're superhuman. They've found a way to tap into a power far beyond that of mortal men. That method is not simply physical; it requires mental and emotional conviction – but it works.

Hashem told Moshe, "the point of giving the Jews the Torah is not so I have a legion of followers. I have myriad servants and messengers. What I want to do is give these people the ability to be more than they are now; to tread among the angels, to reach top spiritual form." The way to do that is by accepting the Torah. Just as a coach trains an athlete, the Torah trains us and gives us the tools to become the superhumans Hashem described. Just as an athlete makes the mental choice to pursue these goals, so did the Jewish People make the decision, as they said, "Naaseh v'Nishma, we will do and we will listen."

The word "naaseh" doesn't only mean, "we will do." It can also mean, "we will become." We made a decision on that day, 3,337 years ago, to morph into the best version of ourselves; to become more than human.

When you follow the Torah, and it tells you to do something, or not to do it, who is controlling your choices? YOU. Lightning won't strike you instantly if you don't do what you're supposed to. But with training and effort, you become your own coach, knowing what is expected and necessary to win the race, and strengthened to control yourself.

Hashem to Moshe, "Tell the Jews not to ascend the mountain." Moshe replied, "They cannot ascend it, for You have forbidden it." At that moment, the Jews had already begun the transformation. Angels have no free will and serve Hashem. Man who has free will and chooses to serve Hashem is greater than an angel.

If you don't eat cheese because you just ate meat, or you help someone you don't like, simply because it is the will of Hashem, you are a champion. When you can do things with no one stopping you but yourself, you have become that special treasured person Hashem knows is inside you, who has risen above nature, and recreated yourself as the best version of humankind. This was the message Hashem gave the Jews. Don't accept the Torah for Me – do it for yourselves.

Baron Rothschild had purchased five apples from a grocer and as he walked down the street with his young grandson, a beggar asked for some food. Mr. Rothschild handed the man two apples then asked his grandson, "How many apples do we have?"

The boy, proud to show off the math he was learning, said, "We had five apples and gave away two, so we have three." His grandfather corrected him.

"We have two apples," he said. "The apples we will eat will be gone in a few moments, but the apples we gave to that poor man will live on as a merit forever." He paused for emphasis as he looked into the boy's eyes: "We only have what we've given away."