



Parashat Bamidbar: Connecting to Hashem Through “Counting”

This week we begin reading from Sefer Bamidbar. In Parashat Bamidbar, Hashem counts the B’nei Yisrael. Rashi comments on the very first Pasuk (Bamidbar 1:1) explaining that Hashem counts B’nei Yisrael in order to show that we are “Dear to Him.” But why does Hashem counting us show that we are dear to him? Is it comparable to a millionaire simply counting his money, or is there a greater role we play by being *counted* by Hashem?

While the shorashim (root words) of **מנה** and **ספר** are typically used in Hebrew to express counting, the Torah actually uses different words for counting in our Parasha. This is shown in the following Pasuk that discusses the Levi'im being counted separately from the rest of the tribes:

אַךְ אֶת-מִטָּה לִּי לֹא תִפְקֹד
וְאֶת-רֵאשִׁים לֹא תִשָּׂא בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
(Bamidbar 1:49)

The shorashim used for “count” in this Pasuk are **פִּקֵּד** and **נָשָׂא**, usually meaning “to appoint” and “to lift up,” respectively. How do the verbs **תִּפְקֹד** and **תִּשָּׂא** play into counting?

Perhaps when Hashem counts us, He is also “appointing us” for something, and thereby “lifting us up” in some way. The Bnei Yisrael are a unique group of people that form a community strong enough to be called a nation. It is this “appointed” role that “lifts us up” in Hashem’s eyes; each and every member of the nation contributes something meaningful and unique that creates the whole. This is shown in the Mitzvah for each person who was counted to contribute a half shekel toward the construction of the Mishkan.

While we are just beginning Sefer Bamidbar, we are ending our count of the Omer, culminating in Shavuot, the holiday that commemorates our receiving the Torah from Hashem. May our counting of days in the Omer properly reflect Hashem’s counting of us, allowing the performance of our appointed responsibilities to lift us up to a greater purpose, fostering a greater fulfillment of our mission on this earth, to serve Hashem.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Sameach,

Rabbi Dovid Schwartz
3 Sivan 5779