



# BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV TORONTO TORAH

## PARASHAT BAMIDBAR

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**DVAR TORAH BAMIDBAR** RABBI YEHUDA MANN, ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

## There Are No Innocent Bystanders

This Shabbat, we begin reading a new book called Bamidbar, or in English, *Numbers*. It is called this because the Israelites are counted several times throughout the book. There is one tribe that is counted separately from the rest of Israel, and that is the tribe of Levi. The reason for their separate counting is explained by Rashi that since the tribe of Levi was not involved in the sin of the Golden Calf, they are counted separately from the 600,000 Israelites.

The first Rebbe of the Gur dynasty, the Chiddushei HaRim, raises a question: When examining the section of the Golden Calf, it is seen that only 3,000 people sinned. It says in Shemot 32:28, "The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died." The role of the tribe of Levi was to fight against those who sinned with the Calf, and it is evident that only 3,000 people were involved. So why does Rashi state that only the tribe of Levi did not sin with the Golden Calf when almost all of Israel did not sin, except for a small minority?

The Chiddushei HaRim answers that the difference between the tribe of Levi and the other tribes lies in the fact that, unlike the other tribes who saw the moral failure of those who sinned with the Calf and remained silent, the tribe of Levi saw the

moral failure and did not stand idly by—they fought against it.

Nobel Prize laureate Elie Wiesel said in his acceptance speech: "We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must—at that moment—become the center of the universe."

This is the idea of the tribe of Levi. Although many did not sin with the Golden Calf, the tribe of Levi fought against the evil that appeared before them and did not remain silent.

The idea of the Chiddushei HaRim is not only about a moral injustice seen before our eyes, but also when we know there is someone in the community in need of physical or emotional support, and we stand by and remain silent. If we can help without hurting their feelings, we must not stand idly by; we must intervene to help!

I once heard a story about the Satmar Rebbe, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum. There was once a widowed Satmar Hasid [follower]

who was offered to meet a widowed woman. Since he did not live in her city, he asked the Satmar Rebbe whether to pursue the match. When he asked the Rebbe about the match, the Rebbe said that he did not know the woman as she did not live in his city and was not part of his congregation, but he had a Hasid living in her city who surely knew her and could inquire. Immediately, the Rebbe called his Hasid and said, "There is a widowed woman with children living in your city. Can you tell me about her?"

The Hasid replied, "Sorry, Rebbe, but I do not know her. But do not worry, Rebbe, I will find out immediately!" The Satmar Rebbe replied, "Do not call me Rebbe, I am not your Rebbe and you are not my Hasid." The Hasid asked, "Why does the Rebbe say this?" The Rebbe answered, "If you live in a city with a widowed woman who has children and you do not know anything about her, perhaps she needs financial help, perhaps her children need tutors, perhaps they need some support—you are not my Hasid. A true Hasid of mine knows to immediately check if they can help someone..."

May we all be like the tribe of Levi and meet the criteria of Rabbi Yoelish of Satmar—that when we know there is a person in need of support, we think creatively and sensitively about how we can help and not stand idly by.



## Yirmiyahu 23

Chapter 23 has two parts, addressing separate populations: The kings of Yehudah and the false prophets. Both parts carry important messages not only for their immediate targets, but for the nation as a whole.

Via Yirmiyahu, Hashem describes the kings of Yehudah as bad shepherds destroying Hashem's flock. Hashem pledges to punish the kings, but then His message turns positive, with a promise of salvation for the nation. Hashem will bring back the scattered sheep and establish good shepherds. A righteous descendant of King David will lead them with justice, and Israel will live securely. No longer will people swear by Hashem who took us out of Egypt, but by Hashem who brought us back from our exile (23:1-8).

Then Yirmiyahu, speaking in his own voice, turns to the false prophets. His heart breaks

when he witnesses their malfeasance. They flatter evildoers, telling them all will be well, and so the land is filled with social immorality as well as rejection of Hashem. As the prophets of the now-exiled Northern Kingdom prophesied for idolatry, so the prophets of Jerusalem now peddle lies. Therefore, Hashem will punish them (23:9-20).

**The words of Hashem are the words of the living G-d.**

Hashem takes back the microphone and turns to the nation, reiterating that He did not send these prophets. He was not born yesterday; they cannot hide from Him. The false prophets try to spread their false dreams alongside actual prophecies. Hashem asks, "What place is there for straw alongside grain? My words are like fire,

like a hammer smashing stone!" Hashem then issues a threefold declaration of war against the false prophets who mislead the people (23:21-32).

At this point Hashem addresses Yirmiyahu with a command, which is clearly meant for the nation's ears. At times the word masa is used in Tanach to refer to a harsh prophecy, consistent with the meaning of masa as "burden." [See Yeshayahu 13:1 and Zecharyah 12:1, for example.] But Hashem wants the nation to stop referring to the authentic prophecies they hear as masa, because this word represents their rejection of Hashem's messages as burdensome. Hashem says: When the people speak of prophecy as a masa, correct them. They should never call prophecy a masa. The words of Hashem are not a burden, but "the words of the living G-d" (23:33-40).



## Week 5: The Obligations of the Heart

Let us explore certain features of these obligations.

First, they include both obligations and prohibitions. Examples of obligations include believing that God created the world, there is no one like God, to love God, to fear God, to be humble, etc. The prohibitions include not coveting, bearing a grudge, or thinking about sinning.

Second, these obligations affect our ability to perform practical mitzvot, thus making the obligations of the heart primary/prior to practical obligations. As he notes:

*Our wise men said: "whoever performs a religious duty but did not intend to do it for the sake of G-d - he will not receive reward for it."*

*And since the hinge and pillar of all deeds rests on the foundation of intention and hidden sentiment of the heart, a system of the duties of the heart should precede, by nature, a system of the duties of the limbs. (Sebag translation)*

Third, as noted last week, these obligations are constant in ways that practical mitzvot are not. (Ex. One must always love and fear God.)

Fourth, concerning mitzvot of belief, is not sufficient to simply assert that one believes them. Those capable must explore them rationally and become convinced that they are true, a point earlier developed by Rabbi Saadia Geon and later by Rambam. Thus, for example, one must understand why God is one and, as much as possible, what that entails. As he notes:

*[T]he believer is not permitted by our religion to remain in ignorance, for the Torah exhorts us on this in saying "Therefore, know this day and consider within your heart, that the L-ord is G-d in Heaven above and on the earth below. There is none other" (Deut. 4:39).*

The same is the case for other commandments of the heart which we have mentioned already or will mention. The believer's faith will not be complete until he knows these duties and practices them. They are the inner science, the light of the heart, and the shining of the soul.

For the interested reader, see his proofs that one must engage in independent analysis rather than simply relying on tradition.



## Birkat HaTorah When One Stays Up for Tikkun Leil Shavuot

**Question:** Many people have the custom to study all night on Shavuot without sleeping at all—what should they do in the morning regarding *Birkat Hatorah*?

**Answer:** This question has been discussed extensively, and the following suggestions have been proposed:

### 1. Taking an Afternoon Nap the Day Before Shavuot:

There is a dispute among the early authorities (Rishonim) about whether someone who sleeps in the middle of the day needs to recite *Birkat HaTorah* again when they wake up. According to the Rosh, one must bless again because there was an interruption between the morning blessing and their learning after the nap. However, according to Tosfot, there is no need to bless again because the obligation to bless arises anew each day. Similarly, the opinions are divided in the opposite way when someone stays awake all night. According to the Rosh, there is no need to bless again because there was no sleep

interruption between the blessing of the morning before Shavuot and the Shacharit prayer of the morning of Shavuot. In contrast, according to the Tosfot, one should bless again because it is a new day that requires a new blessing.

Rabbi Akiva Eiger suggests (as brought in the *Mishnah Berurah*, Siman 47) that to fulfill the obligation according to all opinions, one can sleep in the afternoon on the eve of Shavuot. Then, in the morning, one would bless according to all opinions. It is important to note that according to Rav Chaim Kanievsky this approach is unacceptable (see *Ishei Yisrael* question 30).

### 2. Limiting the Torah Blessing of the Day Before Shavuot:

In the *Luach Eretz Yisrael*, it is mentioned regarding Hoshana Rabbah that those who stay awake on the night of Hoshana Rabbah can avoid doubt regarding *Birkat HaTorah* by having the intention that the blessing of the Torah on the eve of Hoshana Rabbah only cover until the next morning, allowing them to bless again

on the morning of Hoshana Rabbah. This means that a person has the power to limit their blessing to one day, and thus they can bless again the next morning without any doubt. It is important to note that this approach is controversial.

**3. The Easy and Common Option:** To hear the Beracha from someone who has slept during the night. Therefore, they can bless on behalf of the others who stayed up studying without any doubt. I have heard from one of the great Torah scholars (I will not mention his name because I have not seen it brought in his writings) that on Shavuot, the holiday of the Giving of the Torah, he prefers to bless the Torah blessings himself with excitement rather than rely on another person who did not study throughout the night. Therefore, he relies on the opinions that permit blessing if one stays awake all night.

Have a halachic question? Share it with Rabbi Mann at [ymanntorontorah.com](mailto:ymanntorontorah.com).



## Week 5: Listen Closely!



The Soul

By Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz  
Maggid Press, 2018

*"The Soul within us is always present and is always speaking to us, but it is usually a still, small voice that is overshadowed or silenced by many louder voices both within us and from the world around us. Our body, for example, has a powerful voice that can almost never be ignored, and it often silences the whisper of the soul." (The Soul, page 127)*

Though he doesn't state it directly, in this passage Rabbi Steinsaltz references an episode in the life of Eliyahu HaNavi.

In Melachim Alef, perek 19, Eliyahu finds himself in a cave at Har Chorev and there learns a profound spiritual lesson. Tanach records, (pesukim 11-12) "And, behold, Hashem passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains, and broke the rocks into pieces before Hashem, but Hashem was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but Hashem was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but Hashem was not in the fire. And after the

fire a still, small voice." Eliyahu recognizes then that Hashem exists not in the wind, earthquake, or fire. Hashem is in the subtle voice.

As in this moment with Eliyahu, we are constantly bombarded by sounds and lights and oftentimes they take our attention. However, the Soul, like Hashem, does not always exist in the bombastic experiences. Instead, Hashem speaks to us, and our Soul speaks to us, in those still, small, voices.

May we allow ourselves to listen for these moments and to hear God's true message.

I hope that reading *The Soul* has been an enriching experience! **Whether you read the book or not, please join me on June 16th at 8:00 pm at Yeshivat Or Chaim for an exploration of a related topic: "The Reincarnation of the Soul: Were You a Mushroom in your Past Life?"**

The Soul can be purchased from Koren Publishers at [tinyurl.com/KorenBMZD](http://tinyurl.com/KorenBMZD). Use the code *TorontoTorah* for a 10% discount on this or any other book on their website



## TABLE TALK RABBI NOAH SONENBERG, DEAN

### Source: Bamidbar 1:2

Take a headcount of the **entire congregation** of Bnei Yisroel according to their **families** to the **house of their fathers** counting the names of all males **individually**.

### Questions to Discuss

- How does the framing of how a person is counted

affect the way they might relate to their role in the nation?

- How can we balance the rights of an individual against the needs of the entire congregation?
- Of the four methods of framing a person's place in the nation, which do you find to be most religiously compelling?

*After Shabbat, please share your family's answers with us at [nsonenberg@torontotorah.com](mailto:nsonenberg@torontotorah.com) to enter our raffle for a \$15 voucher for Grodzinski Bakery!*

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

<b>Shabbat</b>	Halacha from the Parasha	Clanton Park	After Hashkama Minyan	Rabbi Mann
	Gemara	BAYT	Between Mincha & Maariv	Rabbi Gutenberg
<b>Sunday</b>	Tzurba M'Rabanan – Halacha	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30 AM	Rabbi Shor
	Men's Semichat Chaver: Hilchot Smachot	Clanton Park	9:00 AM	Rabbi Spitz & Rabbi Mann
	Shiur b'Ivrit	BAYT (Milevsky/Mizrachi)	9:00 AM	Rabbi Mann & Rabbi Lax
	Sefer Shemot	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 PM	David Koschitzky
<b>Monday</b>	David and Batsheva	Zoom: <a href="https://tiny.cc/shlomo2024">tiny.cc/shlomo2024</a>	8:00 PM	R' Rakovsky
	Men's Halacha	Shomrai Shabbos	8:30 PM	Rabbi Mann
	Introduction to Gemara: Learn how to learn	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 PM	Rabbi Sonenberg
<b>Tuesday</b>	Then and Now: Returning to the Land of Israel – a Study in Tanach	Zoom	1:30 PM	Rabbi Horovitz
	Women's Gemara Shiur	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30 PM	Rabbi Anstandig
	Women's Contemporary Halacha Shiur	Clanton Park	8:00 PM	Rabbi Mann
<b>Wednesday</b>	Men's Contemporary Halacha	Clanton Park	1 hour before Mincha	Rabbi Mann
	The Torah's Insights on Building a Just and Equitable Society	Zoom	10:00 AM	Rabbi Sonenberg
	Men's Gemara Bekiut	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 PM	Rabbi Sonenberg
	Antisemitism: From Tanach to our Campuses	Shaarei Tefillah	8:00 PM	R' Rakovsky
<b>Thursday</b>	Tanach: Sefer Shmuel	Zoom: <a href="https://tiny.cc/BMZDtanach">tiny.cc/BMZDtanach</a>	1:30 PM	Rabbi Horovitz
	Men's Tzurba M'Rabanan	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 PM	Rabbi Turtel
	Men's Gemara Iyun	BAYT (Milevsky/Mizrachi)	8:00 PM	R' Diena
<b>Sun–Thu</b>	Men's Community Night Seder	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00–9:00 PM	

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS - SHAVUOT NIGHT LEARNING

Yeshivat Or Chaim	Rabbi Sonenberg and Rabbi Mann	11:30 PM–1:00 AM
Clanton Park	Rabbi Mann and Rabbi Sonenberg	1:00–2:00 AM, 3:15–4:00 AM
Shaarei Tefillah	R' Diena and R' Rakovsky	3:00–4:00 AM
Shaarei Shomayim	R' Diena and Rabbi Anstandig	2:15–2:45 AM
Mishkan Avraham	R' Diena	1:00–2:00 AM

## YOUR BEIT MIDRASH

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