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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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DEDICATED BY
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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

RELATING TO THE WEEKLY SECTIONS OF THE TORAH AND
SPECIAL OCCASIONS IN THE JEWISH CALENDAR

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

•

Volume IX: *Bamidbar*

•

In English rendition
by
Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

BAMIDBAR

THE COUNTDOWN

Every year, we read the portion of *Bamidbar* before the holiday of Shavuos.¹ The reason given is to interpose a *Shabbos* between the rebuke of *Parshas Bechukosai* and the commemoration of the giving of the Torah. Nevertheless, since all Torah matters are characterized by precise detail, it follows that there must be an intrinsic connection between *Bamidbar* and the coming holiday,² and that this reading contains a lesson that prepares us to receive the Torah.³

Parshas Bamidbar speaks primarily of a census of the Jewish people. Indeed, because of this reckoning, and the census described in *Parshas Pinchas*,⁴ the entire book is referred to as *Numbers*.⁵ Herein lies the connection to Shavuos. For as reflected in the *mitzvah* of counting the *omer*

1. *Tosafos*, entry *Kilallos ShebeToras Kohanim*, *Megillah* 31b.

2. For example, *Parshas Nitzavim* is always read before Rosh HaShanah to interpose between the rebuke of *Parshas Ki Savo* and the celebration of Rosh HaShanah (*Tosafos*, *op. cit.*). There is, nevertheless, an intrinsic connection to the two, as reflected in the interpretation (*Likkutei Torah*, the beginning of *Parshas Nitzavim*) that the opening verse of that Torah reading, "You are standing today," refers to Rosh HaShanah.

3. The fact that, at times, *Parshas Naso* is also read before Shavuos (and *Parshas Vayeilech* is at times read before Rosh HaShanah) does not present a difficulty. For there are times when additional preparation is necessary before Shavuos (and Rosh HaShanah). *Bamidbar* and *Nitzavim*, by contrast, contain preparatory lessons which are absolutely necessary for the commemoration of the holiday.

4. See *Rashi's* commentary, *Yoma* 68b.

5. *Yoma*, *loc. cit.*

kings? the rabbis,"³³ and specifically the leader (king) of the generation). [The increase] has made it necessary to enlarge and expand "Beis Rabbeinu" further. The enlargement and expansion must be in a way that breaks through barriers, "Paratzta" (770 in Gematria), as if constructing a **new building**.³⁴

According to what was said previously concerning the pre-eminence of "Beis Rabbeinu Sh'b'Bavel" - that "the Temple traveled and settled there," and "this is the place of the actual Temple in the future," so that there the future Temple will be revealed and from there return to Yerushalayim - the great merit each and every Jew has in becoming a partner, physically and monetarily³⁵ (and all who increase are praiseworthy) in building "Beis Rabbeinu Sh'b'Bavel" is obvious. And this is like a preparation for the actual descent and revelation of the future Temple, imminently and immediately.

(Pamphlet concerning "Mikdash M'at Zeh Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel" - *Sefer HaSichos* 5752, p. 465)

33. See *Gittin* 62, end of first side. *Zohar*, vol. 3, 253b in *Raya Mehemna*.

34. Including the laying of the corner stone. [*On the eve of 18 Elul 5748 was arranged the laying of the cornerstone for (increasing and expanding) the synagogue and study hall of Lubavitch in Lubavitch. The Rebbe placed the cornerstone with his holy hands. Publisher's note.*]

35. Following the example of the Beis HaMikdash, that "everyone is obligated to build and support it themselves and with their money, etc." (*Rambam*, *Hilchos Beis HaBechirah*, chapter 1, halacha 12).

"all sevenths are beloved."²⁷ Through this [extension] is accomplished the completion of our actions and Divine service during the time of exile in all seven continents of the world. Immediately and imminently "the L-rd shall **continue to apply [yoseef]** His hand a second time, etc., and He shall **gather [Asaf]** the lost of Israel, etc." In this way, "**You have broken** (in Gematria, seven hundred and seventy²⁸) barriers for yourself," "The breaker is come up before them."

All this receives added emphasis in this last period:

The Divine service of spreading Torah and Judaism and the wellsprings outward from "Beis Rabbeinu" ("770") has continued and expanded with greater vigor and greater strength, even after (the last ten years of) his life in this world, for more than forty years (5710-5750). It has done so in a way that "G-d has given you a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear."²⁹ Thus we find that "Beis Rabbeinu" ("770") is a "fortress," "the mount that all mouths turn to,"³⁰ for more than a Yovel of years (5700-5750) - "Forever."³¹

[That Beis Rabbeinu is a "fortress"] receives further emphasis when we see with our own eyes the many Jewish people, and the increasing numbers of them, that come to "Beis Rabbeinu," with greater vigor and greater strength, - "in the multitude of people is the splendor of the king"³² (which includes also "Who are the

27. *Vayikra Rabba*, ch. 29:11. See the discourse *Basi L'Gani* of the year 5750 at the beginning. Also at length, the same-named discourse of 5751.

28. [The letters of the word "Paratzta" have the numerical value of 770: Peh=80; Reish=200; Tzadik=90; Tuv=400. Translator's note.]

29. *Tavo* 29:3.

30. *Brochos* 30a.

31. *Shmuel I* 1:22 and Rashi's commentary. *Yerushalmi Brochos*, chapter 4, halacha 1. See *Kiddushin* 15a. *Mechilta* and Rashi's commentary on *Mishpatim* 21:6.

32. *Mishlei* 14:28.

before that holiday,⁶ counting serves as a preparation for this holiday.

What is unique about counting? How does counting prepare us for the giving of the Torah?

NEVER TO BE NULLIFIED

The *Midrash*⁷ explains that G-d desired a census of the Jewish people because He treasures them. It continues with an analogy: "The Jews can be compared to a grainheap. Just as grain is counted when it is brought into the silo, so too the Holy One, blessed be He, wished that the Jews be counted at all times."

The wording of the *Midrash* is somewhat problematic. Grain is dear to a mortal; he counts his harvest so that he will know how much grain he has. This does not apply with regard to G-d; He always knows how many Jews there are. Why then does He require that they be counted?

The *Sheloh*⁸ as quoted in *Chassidus*⁹ states that the Jews are counted to endow them with the status of a *davar she-biminyan*, an entity which is counted.¹⁰ For our Sages comment:¹¹ "An entity which is counted can never be nullified."

To illustrate the concept with a *halachic* analogy: When one part of a forbidden substance is mixed with more than 60 parts of *kosher* food, the forbidden entity is considered *batul*,

6. See the *sichos* to *Parshas Shemini* and *Parshas Emor* in this series, where these concepts are explained.

7. *Bamidbar Rabbah* 1:4; see Rashi's commentary at the beginning of this Torah reading.

8. *Cheilek Torah Shebichsav*, p. 347a.

9. See the *maamar* entitled *Tzohar Taaseh LaTeivah*, 5673. See also the *sichah* to *Parshas Shmos* in this series where the concept is explained.

10. I.e., items which are sold in units, and not by weight or volume.

11. *Beitzah* 3b; *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah* 110:1. If such items become mixed with other foods, they do not become *batul*, even though they are mixed with more than 60 times their volume.

nullified. Similarly, one could think that the Jewish people, “one lamb among 70 wolves,”¹² might become nullified. Nevertheless, by commanding that the Jewish people be counted, G-d endowed them with the importance inherent to “an entity that is counted,” and this prevents their existence from being nullified.

This rationale, however, is also insufficient. The reason “an entity which is counted can never be nullified” is because it possesses inherent significance. The fact that it is counted merely *reflects* the importance which exists; it does not *produce* it.

To refer to the analogue: The Jewish people are *in essence* important and worthy of being counted. Even if they were not counted, they would remain important. So why was it necessary for them to be actually numbered?

FUSING THE MATERIAL AND THE SPIRITUAL

Since *Parshas Bamidbar* serves as a preparation for the giving of the Torah, the above questions can be answered by considering the change brought about by the event at Mount Sinai.

The giving of the Torah created a connection between the material and the spiritual.¹³ Before Sinai, *mitzvos* did not affect the objects with which they were performed; they did not endow them with lasting holiness. The giving of the Torah effected a change, empowering the Jewish people to sanctify the material aspects of existence through the observance of *mitzvos*.

"770."²¹ This number in Gematria is "**Paratzta**," derived from "You shall spread out [U'Faratzta] west and east and north and south."²² This indicates that from this house light will go forth to all four corners of the world, in a manner of **breaking through barriers**, so that all four corners of the world will be elevated to the status of the land of Israel. (In the future the land of Israel will extend to all the lands.) This means in particular that all the synagogues and study halls throughout the world will be established in the land of Israel and connected to the Beis HaMikdash in the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach. For about him it says,²³ "**You have broken barriers for yourself**," which our Sages of blessed memory explain²⁴ as follows: "This is Moshiach, about whom it is said,²⁵ "**The breaker** is come up before them."²⁶

...In the completeness of the number seven (seven hundred and seventy) can also be found an allusion to the completeness of the Divine service of our Rebbe during his complete lifetime of **seven** decades, **seventy** years (5640-5710). His Divine service was concluded and completed in the lower hemisphere in the **seventh** decade (from the house whose number is seven hundred seventy). [This completeness] includes as well the extension of his Divine service in the years afterwards, through the **seventh** generation -

so in regard to an established dwelling). This is particularly true in our case, when the number becomes **the name of** the house, as discussed below.

21. Whether in Hebrew, Yiddish or English - "Seven Seventy."

22. *VaYeitze* 28:14.

23. *VaYeshev* 38:29.

24. *Aggados Bereishis*, end of chapter 63. See *Bereishis Rabba*, end of chapter 85 and Rashi's commentary on it.

25. *Micha* 2:13.

26. One should note that "Beis Moshiach" in gematria is "Paratzta" (770). Consider this carefully. [*Gematria is the numerical analysis of words. Translator's note.*]

12. *Esther Rabbah* 10:11; *Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Toldos*, sec. 5. See also *Yoma* 69b.

13. See the exegesis of the verse (*Shir HaShirim* 1:3): "Your oils are fragrant," in *Shir HaShirim Rabba*. Note also the *sichah* to *Parshas Lech Lecha* in this series, where this concept is explained.

mentioned above).

It may be added, that this concept is also alluded to in the name¹⁵ of "Beis Rabbeinu" in our generation:

"Rabbeinu" [our Rebbe] - His two names alluded to the Redemption: His first name - Yosef - "And it shall come to pass that on that day, the L-rd shall **continue to apply** [yoseef] His hand a second time to acquire the rest of His people that will remain from Assyria and Egypt, etc. and from the islands of the sea, etc, and He shall **gather** [Asaf] the lost of Israel and the scattered ones of Judah He shall gather from the four corners of the earth."¹⁶ His second name - Yitzchak - refers to the laughter and rejoicing that will be complete in the future Redemption, and which will be completed through our righteous Moshiach. Thus it is written,¹⁷ "Then our mouths will be filled with laughter [S'chok]. It specifies "then," in the future,¹⁸ when they will say to Yitzchak (specifically), "Because you are our father."¹⁹

And **Beis** (Rabbeinu) [**The House** of our Rebbe] - its number is seven hundred seventy.²⁰ The name by which "Beis Rabbeinu" is called by all Jews has been universally accepted to be this number,

15. As is well-known, the name indicates the content and nature of the thing called with that name (*Tanya*, "*Shaar HaYichud v'HaEmunah*," end of chapter 1. See at length *Teshuvos u'Be'urim* (Kehos, 5734), section 1 and the cross references there).

16. *Yeshayahu* 11:11-12.

17. *Tehillim* 126:2.

18. Which is not the case during the time of exile, when "it is forbidden for an individual to be completely joyful [literally, fill his mouth with laughter] in this world, since it is written that "Then our mouths will be filled with laughter [we will be completely joyful]" (*Brochos* 31a).

19. *Yeshayahu* 63:16. Shabbos 89b.

20. One should note the customs of the leaders of the Jewish people, who learned allusions and lessons in Divine service from secular matters as well (for example, the number of wagons in the train, which is incidental, and all the more

The object of the Jews' Divine service after the giving of the Torah is to make the world holy, to transform it into a dwelling for G-d. For this reason, the importance of the Jewish people must be expressed in a way that can be appreciated by the material world. Even were the virtue of the Jewish people to be solely spiritual, this virtue could never be nullified within the worldly environment, for there is no way that any worldly circumstance can prevent a Jew from carrying out his Divine service. But in such an instance, the Jews' virtue would not influence their environment.

When the Jews were actually counted, their inherent virtue was expressed by an activity that could be appreciated within the material world. This enabled that virtue to have an effect within the world.

On this basis, we can understand the connection between *Parshas Bamidbar* and the giving of the Torah. Taking a census of the Jews expressed their importance in a material way. This empowered the people to continue in their Divine service within the material plane, and make this world a dwelling for G-d.

CONQUERING THE WORLD

The above explanation also helps us understand why the census involved only those above the age of 20.¹⁴ On the surface, every Jew should have been counted, for the act endowed each with the power of "an entity that is counted," preventing nullification among the gentiles. Why then was the census limited to those above 20?

This question can be resolved by focusing on the difference between the Divine service performed by a Jew before he reaches the age of 20 and that performed afterwards. Before 20, a Jew's primary efforts are centered on Torah study. Starting at age five, he must spend five years studying the

14. See *Bamidbar* 1:3.

Written Law, and then five years studying the *Mishnah*, and then five years studying the *Talmud*.¹⁵

Torah study is directed primarily inward; the intent is not to change the world, but to change oneself.¹⁶ Indeed, with regard to intellectual understanding in general, there is an advantage in solitude.

At the age of 20, by contrast, a person becomes outwardly oriented, his efforts center on “pursuit.”¹⁴ And at this age, a person becomes obligated for military service, i.e., he must go out to war to conquer the world. This is the spiritual parallel of the command:¹⁷ “Be fruitful and multiply; fill up the world and conquer it.” In this way, one makes the world a dwelling for G-d through the observance of *mitzvos*.¹⁸

For this reason, the census did not include those below 20 years of age, for their fundamental concern is personal spiritual development, not the changing of the world. The essential virtue which every Jew possesses is sufficient to carry out that objective. When, however, a Jew attains the age of 20 and is charged with conquering the world at large, this intrinsic virtue must be expressed in a manner that will be noticed by the world at large.

APPRECIATING THE ESSENTIAL ONENESS

As mentioned above, the Book of *Bamidbar* is also called *Numbers*. A name, particularly, a name in *Lashon HaKodesh*,

15. *Avos* 5:22; *Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Hilchos Talmud Torah* 3:1.

16. See *Eruvin* 54a, 55a. See also the *sichah* to *Parshas Chayei Sarah* in this series, which contrasts the attainments of a *zakein* (an individual who centers on Torah study) to a *bo bayomim* (one whose Divine service centers on *mitzvos*).

17. *Bereishis* 1:28. See *Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Hilchos Talmud Torah* 3:1, from which one can infer that from 20 on, one should father children.

18. In this context, it is important to note that the giving of the Torah — and thus the recollection of the census which prepares us for it — comes about through prefacing the promise “We will do” (observe the *mitzvos*) before “We will listen” (understand the Torah’s laws). See also *Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar* 16c.

and completed. Through the elevation of the lowest possible place all the other lands of the nations are also elevated.¹¹ This [objective] is achieved through "**Beis Rabbeinu**" [Our Rebbe's House] in the lower hemisphere, from which light goes out to all the world, to make the whole world (until the furthest corner of the world) into the land of Israel. This is the concept that "In the future the land of Israel will extend into all the lands,"¹² and "In the future, Yerushalayim will extend over all the land of Israel."¹² For then there will be established a connection between all the synagogues and study halls throughout the entire world and the Beis HaMikdash. [This will occur] in the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach, the leader of the generation, who is the Moshiach (the Redeemer of Israel) of the generation. Further, and this is also essential, he is the leader of the Torah of Chassidus,¹³ since through the spreading outward ("when your wellsprings spread forth," until there is nothing beyond, to all corners of the world) is achieved the coming of the king Moshiach.¹⁴

Therefore the greatness of "Beis Rabbeinu" can be understood. It is the essential "Temple in microcosm" of the final exile, "that the Temple traveled and settled there." Therefore, it is the actual place of the Temple of the future; not only that, but the future Temple will be revealed there, and from there return to Yerushalayim (as

cross-references.

11. "As in raising the walls of a house, it is necessary to raise the lower beam and then the upper beams will be raised automatically; this is not the case if one begins in the middle of the wall, one does not raise the lower beams" (*Torah Or Bereishis* 4, beginning of side a).

12. See *Sifrei Devarim* at the beginning. *Pesikta Rabbasi, Parshas Shabbos v'Rosh Chodesh. Yalkus Shimoni, Yeshayahu, remez* 503.

13. One should note that the Torah of Chassidus is the aspect of the Yechida in Torah (See the pamphlet concerning "On the essence of Chassidus), which is connected with the aspect of Yechida in Israel - the soul of our righteous Moshiach (*RaMaZ on Zohar* vol. 2, 40b and other sources).

14. *Igros Kodesh* of the *Baal Shem Tov - Kesser Shem Tov* at the beginning.

settling serves] as a preparation for the future Temple, which will be revealed there first, and from there return (with G-d and the Jewish people) to Yerushalayim.

...Perhaps it can be said that the statement in the Midrash,⁷ that "at the time when the king Moshiach comes, **he will stand on the roof of the Beis HaMikdash** [Temple] and announce to the Jewish people, saying, Humble ones, the time for your Redemption has arrived," refers to the roof of the Beis HaMikdash which is **the Temple in microcosm** outside the land,⁸ which takes the place of the Temple in Yerushalayim ("The Temple traveled and settled there"). [This may be said] because after the future Temple is revealed and descends to the earth below, there is no need to **announce** to the Jewish people that "the time for your Redemption has arrived."

...The above can be applied to "The House of our Rebbe in Bavel" **of our generation**, the house (the synagogue and study hall) of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation:

...In this generation, the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption, "our actions and Divine service during the time of exile"⁹ to make the lands of the nations into the land of Israel even in **the lowest possible place**, that is, **the lower hemisphere** (where the Torah was not given¹⁰) has been concluded

settled in Bavel. Translator's note.]

7. *Yalkut Shimoni, Yeshayahu, remez 499.*

8. Accordingly, the expression "He stands on the roof of the Beis HaMikdash" becomes clarified; that "roofs... do not become sanctified" (Rambam, Hilchos Beis HaBechirah, chapter 6, halacha 7). Hence this alludes to the lands outside of Israel in comparison to the holiness of the land of Israel.

9. *Tanya*, beginning of chapter 37.

10. See *Igros Kodesh of the Rebbe RaYaTZ*, vol. 2, p. 492 ff. See there for

expresses the essence of the object named.¹⁹ Since the entire book is called *Numbers* because of the census described in the first reading, it follows that this census contains the fundamental element of the book.

Counting does more than communicate inherent importance; it generates a positive quality in and of itself. And because of this positive quality, *Parshas Bamidbar* prepares us for the holiday of Shavuos just as the counting of the *omer* prepares us for Shavuos. For with regard to the counting of the *omer*, the concept of revealing inherent virtue does not apply.

The positive aspect of counting is that all are equal; the great are not counted as more, nor are the small counted as less. Although there are various different levels among the Jewish people, in the census, each one is counted the same.

In this, there is a parallel to the counting of the *omer*. For although there are differences between the days — there are *Shabbasos*, festivals, days of *Chol HaMoed*, and *Rashei Chodashim*, when counting the *omer*, all days are counted the same.

Counting all Jews as one reflects the essence of the soul, a quality possessed by all Jews equally. With regard to our revealed, conscious powers, intellect and emotion, however, there are differences between one Jew and another. With regard to the essence of the soul, by contrast, all are the same.

There is a fundamental difference between the Divine service associated with the revealed powers and the Divine service associated with the essence of the soul. With regard to the revealed powers of intellect and emotion, each person's individual identity causes him to see himself as distinct from G-dliness. The person thus observes the Torah and its *mitzvos* because his understanding and feelings compel him to do so.

19. See *Bereishis Rabbah* 17:4; *Sheloh, Hakdamas Beis HaMikdash*; *Tanya, Shaar HaYichud VehaEmunah*, ch. 1.

But when he “awakens” and reveals the essence of his soul (“the one which affirms Your Oneness”²⁰), he realizes that the very core of his being is one with G-dliness, as it says:²¹ “Israel, the Torah, and the Holy One, blessed be He, are all one.”

The essence of the soul, common to all Jews, is expressed in the counting of the *omer*, in which all the days are considered equal. From the standpoint of intellect and emotion, there are differences between one day and another. The ordinary weekdays are not the same as *Rosh Chodesh*, *Shabbos*, or the festivals. On these special days, a person’s Divine service is charged with vitality. But when it comes to an ordinary weekday, when one must fulfill the charge²² “Know Him in all your ways,” a person may not feel any special vitality.

When, by contrast, a person awakens the essence of his soul, and the entire substance of his being becomes one with G-dliness, this affects his intellect and emotion as well, causing them to approach the weekdays with the same energy as *Shabbos* or the festivals. Regardless of what the person is doing, his efforts will be permeated by G-dliness.

On this basis, we can appreciate how the census of the Jewish people and the counting of the *omer* both serve as a preparation for the commemoration of the giving of the Torah. The Ten Commandments begin “I am G-d, your L-rd,”²³ i.e., G-dliness is not an incremental element of one’s existence, but is *E-lohecho*, which can be interpreted²⁴ as meaning “your strength,²⁵ and your vitality.” When a person comes to this awareness, he serves G-d, not only through the

20. Cf. *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 327; *Yechidah l'yachdecha* in the Hebrew original, referring to the soul as *yechidah*, which refers to the highest of its five levels.
 21. See *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 73a.
 22. *Mishlei* 3:6; *Rambam*, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos De'os* 3:3. See also the *sichah* to *Purim* and *Parshas Terumah* in this series, where this concept is explained.
 23. *Shmos* 20:2.
 24. See *Likkutei Torah*, *Shelach* 40c; *Balak* 73c.
 25. See *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim*, ch. 5.

BESURAS HAGEULO The Announcement Of The Redemption

70

It may be suggested that the Temple of the future (“it will be revealed and come from heaven already built and perfected”¹) will first be revealed in the place “That the Temple traveled and settled there”² in the time of exile (“The House of our Rebbe in Bavel”³); from there it will be transported to its place in Yerushalayim.

...Perhaps it can be said that this is alluded to in the Rambam's choice of words (in *Hilchos Melech HaMoshiach*⁴) “And build the Temple **in its place**.” For apparently [there is a question]: what is the need to inform us here that the building of the Temple will be **in its place**? On the other hand, why isn't the place specified: “And build the Temple in **Yerushalayim**?” [It must be] that “in its place” alludes as well to the place of the king Moshiach in the time of exile (**before** [the status of] “behold he is certainly Moshiach”). Therefore, while he is still **in exile** (for there he sits⁵ and waits and anxiously looks forward to redeeming the Jewish people, and the Divine Presence with them in exile) the king Moshiach builds a Temple (in microcosm). This is an illustration and example of the Temple in Yerushalayim (like “the synagogue of He slipped and settled,”⁶ “that the Temple traveled and settled there.”). [This

1. Rashi's commentary and Tosfos on *Sukkah* 41, end of side a and in other sources.
 2. *Aruch*, entry *Shaf* (brought in the *Chiddushei Aggada MaHaRaSHA*, on *Megillah* 29a).
 3. *Megillah* 29a. [In Hebrew, “*Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel*”. *Translator's note*.]
 4. End of chapter 11.
 5. See *Sanhedrin* 98a: “*He is dwelling at the gate of Rome*.” [In the referenced passage, *Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi* asks *Eliyahu HaNavi* where *Moshiach* can be found. The quotation actually combines the end of the question (“*Where is Moshiach dwelling?*”) and the answer (“*At the gate of Rome*”). *Translator's note*.]
 6. *Megillah* 29a. [The phrase is a reference to the Divine Presence going into exile with the Jewish people: *G-d's Presence slipped away from Jerusalem and*

a) a stage of preparation that draws down and reveals the essence of the soul. This is accomplished through the census of the Jewish people.

b) a stage of preparation involving the cultivation of our conscious powers, until they can serve as receptors for that essence. This is accomplished through the counting of the *omer*.³⁵

(Adapted from *Sichos Shabbos Parshas Bamidbar*, 5722)



35. These two phases of preparation parallel the two dimensions of the holiday of Shavuot: a) that it is celebrated on the sixth of Sivan; b) that it is celebrated on the fiftieth day of the counting of the *omer*. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Emor* in this series, where this concept is discussed.

study of Torah and the observance of its *mitzvos*, but in every aspect of his life.

TWO COURSES OF ACTION

The fact that the commemoration of the giving of the Torah requires both the recollection of the census and the counting of the *omer* indicates that each contributes an element which is lacking in the other; both are necessary to prepare us to receive the Torah.

The census focuses on counting the Jews, nothing else. The counting of the *omer*, as its name implies, involves counting other entities: the number of days which have passed since the *omer* offering was brought. This reflects a connection with our Divine service.

One may infer that the census of the Jewish people is associated with the essence of the soul, which is perfect at all times. With regard to this level, no Divine service is necessary. Because this potential is sometimes hidden, counting (all as equals) arouses and reveals it.

The counting of the *omer*, by contrast, refers to toil with our revealed powers (both of the G-dly soul and of the animal soul)²⁶ which we must refine and elevate. This involves a two-phase process: first comes a general influence created by bringing the *omer* offering, and then more particular efforts as reflected in the endeavor to refine a single emotional quality on each of the 49 days of the counting. (We have seven emotional qualities, each of which includes all the others, bringing us to a sum of 49. Thus each of the 49 days of the counting of the *omer* involves the refinement of a particular emotional quality.)

26. See the commentary of the *Tzemach Tzedek* to *Shir HaShirim* on the verse (1:4): "Draw me forth, we will run after You." "Draw me forth" uses a singular form, referring to the arousal of the G-dly soul on Pesach. "We will run after You," refers to the striving of both the G-dly soul and the animal soul during the counting of the *omer*.

Based on the above, we can also appreciate why the *mitzvah* of counting the *omer* is incumbent on every person as an individual, rather than on the nation as a collective.²⁷ Since the counting of the *omer* reflects an effort on the part of every person to refine his revealed powers, there are differences between the performance of one Jew and another. Thus it is possible that one Jew will have a different reckoning than another,²⁸ or will not count the *omer* at all.

With regard to the census of the Jewish people, by contrast, all Jews are counted equally, for this counting relates to the essence of the soul, which all possess equally.

REFRACTIONS OF LIGHT

The above does not contradict the statement that with regard to the counting of the *omer*, all the days — *Shabbos*, holidays, and weekdays — are the same, that because the counting is connected with the essence of the soul, one's service on *Shabbos* and festivals is the same as one's service during the week.

Our Divine service during the counting of the *omer* involves drawing down the soul's essential light to our individual powers, elevating those powers to the essence. This is alluded to by the command:²⁹ "And you shall count from the day after the day of rest." *Usefartem*, the Hebrew for "And you shall count" relates to the word *sapir*, referring to a shining sapphire,³⁰ in analogy, the light of the soul's essence. The term "from the day after the day of rest" implies that this light should be transmitted outwards.³¹

27. *Menachos* 65b. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Emor* in this series, where this concept is explained.

28. I.e., when one crosses the International Dateline in the midst of the counting of the *omer* (*ibid.*).

29. *Vayikra* 23:16.

30. See *Likkutei Torah*, *Vayikra* 35b.

31. *Ibid.*:36b

The census of the Jewish people arouses the essence of the soul, and spurs it to express itself in the world. The intent of the counting of the *omer* is to refine our conscious powers and lift them to the level at which a person's conduct becomes a fitting expression of his soul's essence.

THE NEED FOR TWO PHASES OF PREPARATION

On this basis, we can appreciate why both the census and the counting of the *omer* are necessary before the commemoration of the giving of the Torah. As mentioned previously,³² the giving of the Torah brought about a fusion between the spiritual and the material. This fusion was twofold in nature: "the higher realms [the spiritual] descended to the lower realms [the material], and the lower realms [the material] ascended to the higher realms [the spiritual]."³³

A parallel exists within our souls: The essence of the soul — the higher realms — should be joined to our conscious powers — the lower realms. This enables our conscious powers to appreciate G-dliness as an integral part of their existence, just as the essence of the soul is "cleaving... to You, the one which affirms Your Oneness."²⁰

This concept is also reflected in the command: "I am G-d your L-rd." *Enochi* refers to G-d's essence, a level above our comprehension,³⁴ and which is joined to the essence of our souls. This level becomes *E-lohecha*, the power and life-energy internalized within the Jewish people.

Therefore, before the giving of the Torah, two phases are necessary:

32. See the *sichos* to *Parshas Yisro* and *Parshas Mishpatim* in this series, where this concept is discussed.

33. *Shmos Rabbah* 12:3.

34. This refers to a level of G-dliness above the name *Havayah*, one which "cannot be contained within a name, and which is not alluded to by a letter or even the point of a letter (*Likkutei Torah*, *Parshas Pinchas* the *maamar* entitled *Kodesh Yisrael*, ch. 3).