

**דרכים
בפרשה
במדבר**

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שאו את כל עדת בני ישראל

Take a count of the entire congregation of Bnai Yisroel (1:2)

Chumash Bamidbar begins with HaShem commanding Moshe to count the Bnai Yisroel. Although they had been counted a few months earlier, HaShem still wanted them to be counted again. Rashi explains that *כי-מתוך חִיבֹתָן לִפְנֵי מוֹנֵה אוֹתָהּ כֹּל שְׁעָה* - because they are beloved before Him, He counts them at all times. When they left Mitzrayim; after they fell at the *chet ha'eigel* in order to see how many remained after the sinners died, and now once again, when He was to rest His *Shechina* on them.

Upon looking at the different moments that are mentioned, perhaps we can gain an insight into how HaShem wants us to view a relationship. HaShem counted us with love when He extricated us from Mitzrayim. Let us keep in mind that the *Malachim* made the claim that we should not be saved because at that point, we weren't all that different from the Egyptians. We didn't even have a bank account full of mitzvos to boast of, as it is written, *וְאַתָּה עָרֹם וְעָרִיָּה* - and you were without clothing or ornament, and HaShem still showed us love.

HaShem counted us with love even after we did the worst aveira possible "leaving" HaShem for another god (*eigel hazahav*). And yet, HaShem showed us love. Finally, at the sterling moment of achievement when we built the mishkan- a beautiful home for HaShem, He showed us love again.

Regardless of time place and circumstance, whether we are doing good, doing bad, or not doing anything at all, HaShem always shows us His love. *אֲהַבֶּתָּ עוֹלָם בֵּית* - HaShem's love for his children is eternal and unconditional, through good times and bad, through thick and through thin.

This idea of unconditional love can be seen from the wedding ring that is given under the chuppa. The minhag is (*Even Ha'ezer 31:2*) that the ring does not have a stone in it. The reason is because a precious stone in a ring may cause a kallah to overestimate its

value, possibly leading to a marriage based on false assumptions that this man is wealthy. Such a *kedushin* would be invalid, because it lacks a meeting of the minds, and is considered a *mekach ta'os*. This halacha is underscored by the gemara in Yevamos (94b) which rules that a conditional marriage does not work.

But there is a much deeper reason here. If a stone gets damaged, it cannot be repaired. You may be able to repurpose or redesign it but the scratch remains forever. However, with a wedding band, even if it gets damaged, it can be reshaped and restored. In a relationship, mistakes can happen, so under the chuppa we give a wedding band without a stone. This shows that no matter what happens, it can be repaired.

Parshas Bamidbar is always read right before Shavuot. Shavuot is the great chasuna between HaShem and klal yisroel, and the kesuba is our Torah. Our relationship with HaShem as well, it is unconditional. Even if we have made scratches and dents along the way, it can be fully fixed. Not only that, Hashem actually desires us to repair the damages and make the relationship whole and beautiful again.

Admittedly, in a practical relationship, it may be difficult to look aside from the scratches. There is a chassidische p'shat from the great Rebbe, R' Yechezkel Taub (kuzmir/ modzhits) that can help. Rashi mentioned that HaShem counts us *כֹּל שְׁעָה*. Chazal teach us (*avos 4:3*) *אֵין לָךְ אָדָם שֶׁאֵין לָהּ שְׁעָה* - every person has his moments, ie: that each person has his moment of greatness and glory. Accordingly, he explains Rashi to be saying that HaShem counts us according to the very best time of our lives, and in that way we are all beloved before Him. If we approach our relationships with the attitude of thinking of the other always in their best light, it will be much easier to look away from the scratches.

And finally, the same way that we hope that HaShem will look away from our scratches, when things happen in this world which appear to our naked (*fleishige oxygen*) eyes like they are scratches; we must think *אֲנִי מֵאֵין מֵאֵין* and strengthen our love.

May we be zoche to receive the Torah this Yom Tov b'ahava, always strengthening our bond with HaShem and always feeling His eternal love.

מרדכי אפפלי, Good Shabbos