

# Pulse OF Emunah

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life

LESSONS

## AN OPEN MIRACLE

Gary Tessler, director of the Shalom Funeral Service in Denver, Colorado, never imagined that his hearse would become the vehicle for a unique *kiddush Hashem*. One morning, Gary had a funeral scheduled at a Jewish cemetery in nearby Aurora. He placed the casket into the back of his hearse and drove to the cemetery, arriving long before the funeral. But his timely arrival was of little help when the door of the hearse refused to open. Despite Gary's best efforts, along with those of the funeral party and cemetery workers, it could not be pried open. The casket was stuck inside and the burial could not proceed.

Gary immediately reached a painful conclusion: the funeral would have to be postponed.

Gary first told Rabbi Aharon Sirota, the officiating rabbi. Then he braced himself to break the news to the family. But before he could do so, Rabbi Sirota approached the hearse while reciting the chapters of Tehillim generally used to honor the deceased. Rabbi Sirota turned the door handle and elicited a gratifying click. The door opened effortlessly!

After the funeral, Gary closed the door and it refused to open again. A mechanic ascertained that the lock clamp was still in place but the mechanism that released it had broken off and fallen to the bottom of the door. It should not have been possible, the mechanic said, for Rabbi Sirota to open it. The fact that he had done so was nothing short of a miracle.

One of Gary's colleagues, a devout Catholic, witnessed the incident. With awe, he exclaimed, "The Orthodox rabbis must be the real thing."

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gem

OF THE WEEK

## THE NATIONAL REALITY

*By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow*

Sefer Bamidbar opens with the command to take a census of the *eida*. Each member of the nation must be counted, and become aware that he counts. We pass under the staff of the Shepherd, every man counted as an independent member of the flock.

Why count in the desert? To prove that the purpose of the census was neither economic nor political. Economics and politics are irrelevant in the wilderness. Rather, the census was taken for the sake of the Torah: first it was given; then it found its resting place in the *ohel moed*; and now the *shevatim* are counted for its sake. From now on, they camp encircling the Torah, its guardians and keepers.

*Eida* is a word denoting people who join together for the sake of a common cause—i.e., a community. Individuals become a community not by through an order imposed on them by the outside, but through a shared concern that drives them from within their own hearts.

However, individuals do not form a community. The people were counted  
*continued on reverse side*

powerful  
PRAYER

TEFILLAH:  
THE GREAT UNIFIER



When the first Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, most of the Jewish people were scattered in many different countries. Even after the second Beis Hamikdash was built, most of the people were not living in Eretz Yisrael. They needed something which would keep them together as one nation, even though they were far away from each other and from the Beis Hamikdash. The *siddur* was put together by the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah. It is that very *siddur* which keeps all Jews unified. Three times every day, Jews all over the world say the same tefillos, no matter where they live.

*Adapted from Emunah in the Classroom*

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## AN ETERNAL COVENANT

*By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation*

First and foremost, Shavuot is the time to remember what took place at Har Sinai. The Ramban explains that this memory is the foundation of our faith. Several million witnesses experienced a Divine revelation, transmitting this testimony to their children and through the generations. We have no reason to believe that we have inherited a false belief. While others do indeed transmit false beliefs to their children, the original believers of these claims were duped by individuals who professed to have experienced a private revelation. No other religion or people have ever declared that the whole nation directly communicated with the Creator of the universe.

Many years ago, the Rambam received an urgent letter from the Jews of Yemen, who were suffering under a new ruler who was coercing the population to accept Islam. The Rambam responded with a classic letter now known as Iggeres Teiman, the letter to Yemen. Among other *divrei chizuk*, he stresses the importance of the Revelation at Sinai as a foundational Jewish belief.

“It is imperative, my brothers, that you engage your children in this great Revelation at Mount Sinai. Proclaim its momentousness at public gatherings. For this event is the pivot of our religion, and the proof which demonstrates its veracity ... Remember, my coreligionists, that this great, incomparable and unique historical event, is attested by the best of evidence. For never before or since has a whole nation witnessed a revelation from God or beheld His splendor. The purpose of all this was to confirm us in faith so that nothing can change it, and to reach a degree of certainty which will sustain us in these trying times.”

We, too, are experiencing trying times. What keeps us going is our faith in the absolute truth of the Torah that we received at Sinai. In spite of all that we have endured and are currently enduring, our *emunah* keeps us strong.

This love for Hashem and His Torah is described in Shir Hashirim: “Many waters cannot extinguish the love, and rivers cannot flood it. If someone would [offer to] give all the treasures of his household [in exchange], they would scorn him.”

All the attacks, the toil, the exiles will never stop *am Yisrael's* love for Hashem. All the money and honor in the world cannot entice us. We remain true to the commitment we made to Hashem when we stood by Har Sinai and declared *naaseh v'nishma*.

*lemishpechosam*, for the community consists of *shevatim*, and each *shevet* consists of families. Accordingly, individuals are counted according to their families, and the families according to their tribes. The tribes together form *adas bnei Yisrael*.

This is the uniqueness of Jewish nationalism. The nation as a whole is considered one house, *beis Yisrael*, and its members are called the children of one man, *bnei Yisrael*. At the same time, however, individual units remain, encompassed by a larger whole. This ensures that the concept of a Jewish nation does not become abstract. We are united by a common element, and each of us is an integral part.

Under the influence of this unity, a diverse group is nurtured. Each tribe expresses its own unique character trait, demonstrating that man's Divine mission is not impeded by any particular occupation. *V'shamru derech Hashem laasos tzedakah u'mishpat* does not hinge on courage, business acumen, intellect, or anything else. Warriors like the tribe of Yehuda, merchants like Zevulun, scholars like Yissachar, farmers like Asher—are all called upon to fulfill a common mission, each through his own way of life.

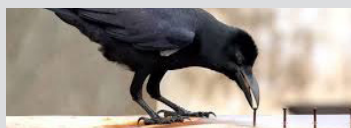
Each tribe, with its uniqueness, and each family, with its special qualities, work at one common task. They give it form, educate their children to it, and pass it on to the next generation. That's why hundreds of thousands of *bnei Yisrael* come not as a disorganized multitude, but *lemishpechos beis avosam*, as families, grouped according to their tribes.

*Based on the commentary of Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.*



## wonder WORLD

### BIRD BRAINS



*How are ravens different from other birds?*

Ravens are exceptionally smart birds who have been observed to solve complex logic puzzles. They can imitate human speech and other sounds, like other animals and even car engines, and can learn to talk better than some parrots. If a raven knows another raven is watching, it will pretend to hide its food in one place while secretly stashing it elsewhere.

Ravens have been seen doing acrobatics in the sky, flying upside down and doing somersaults. Baby ravens play catch with each other by dropping sticks as they fly and catching them before they hit the ground. The intelligence of these birds truly showcases the wisdom of the Creator.

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