

Pulse OF Emunah

ANI
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Foundation

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life

LESSONS

ON DISPLAY


By Rabbi David Ashear, Author of *Living Emunah (Artscroll)*

Chadera is a small, mostly secular city in north Israel. When a new bowling alley opened that was not shomer Shabbos or kashrus, most people didn't care, but the frum community was troubled. They tried talking to the owners, writing letters to local newspapers, and protesting, but there was no change.

One day, a group of second graders from a Lev L'Achim kiruv school came to the bowling alley. They bowled for a while, then ate lunch and sang Birkas Hamazon together, loudly and clearly, just like they did in school. Many people turned to watch.

A few days later, Rabbi Benzion Nordman, a Lev L'Achim coordinator, got a phone call from the owner of the bowling alley. "A few days ago," she said, "your students were here. I was so impressed. They were quiet; they ate nicely, and when they finished, they sang the blessings with such pride, I started to cry."

Rabbi Nordman beamed. What a kiddush Hashem! But the story wasn't over. A few months later, the woman enrolled her son in the school. She wanted him to be like the boys who had come to her bowling alley—well-mannered, and proud of his Judaism. Eight months later, the bowling alley was closed on Shabbos, serving only kosher food during the week.

What a zechus for those children. Just by doing mitzvos the right way, they accomplished what adults could not do with letters and protests. According to Rav Dessler, this is the meaning of the mitzvah of v'halachta b'drachav: emulate Hashem, so that we can properly represent Him in this world. Teaching by example is more powerful than any lecture or speech. 



gem

OF THE WEEK

DIVISIBLY UNITED

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

The Nation of Israel consists of twelve tribes (*Batei Avos*), which are made up of families (*Mishpachos*), which are in turn comprised of individuals. Individuals are first grouped by family, then by tribe, and finally by nation. Accordingly, in the census at the beginning of *Parashas Bamidbar*, individual men are counted by family, families by tribe, and tribes combined to form the total of *Beis Yisroel*.


This is the uniqueness of Jewish nationalism: The nation as a whole is always considered one house: The House of *Yisroel*, and the members of the nation are called the children of one man: The Children of *Yisroel*.

Yet the distinct units of the individual, the *Batei Avos*, and the *Mishpachos* remain preserved — existing as integral parts encompassed by the larger whole.

Viewing the nation as the "House of *Yisroel*" and its members as the "Children of *Yisroel*" ensures that the concept of the Jewish nation remains a tangible reality rather than an abstract concept or a fictional union of elite representatives. *continued on reverse side*

powerful
PRAYER 

MIZMOR LESODAH:
HEAVENLY SUPERVISION

In the days of the *Bais Hamikdash*, a person who had survived a life-threatening experience—sickness, travel, or imprisonment—brought a *korban todah*. Although they could never repay Hashem for His kindness, they could express their gratitude. The truth is, though, that we experience miracles every day. Cars speed toward us and turn away just in time. We step safely over slippery ground. Hashem is constantly taking care of us, even when we don't notice. We say *Mizmor Lesodah* every day, thanking Him for His constant guidance. 

Adapted from *Biur Tefillah (Ani Maamin Foundation)*

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WAKE UP AND SMELL THE COFFEE

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

In last week's column, I wrote how surprising it is that, for many of our community, who have not been directly affected, life seems to be moving forward as if nothing frightening was happening. Half a dozen years ago we went through Covid, and imagined that life would never be the same after. Weddings were reduced to tiny crowds that had to maintain social distancing. Shuls and schools were closed, and millions of victims across the world perished. When it was over, we saw very little change or improvements over the way life was before the pandemic.

At the present time, Jews are being harassed around the world, and the propaganda is reminiscent of the German propaganda of the 30s and 40s; stabbings and shots fired at shuls; car ramming and blatant antisemitic legislation in many parts of the world; Chareidim in Israel being treated as if they were hardened criminals. But, for those still living in relative safety, life moves on. Vacation spots; emphasis on food and styles, and the obsession with technology.

I wish I had a solution that would change our situation, but, of course, I don't. But here is something to ponder. R' Elchanan Wasserman quoted from the writings of the Vilna Gaon that this world is a copy of the upper world (heaven). R' Elchanan explains: When you stand in front of a fruit store, you may see in the window a display of plastic fruits. You understand that this is just an artificial duplicate of the real fruits inside the store. Likewise, when anti-Semitism continually increases, it is merely a facsimile of what is going on in Heaven, a massive accusation against *Am Yisroel* is being brought before the Heavenly tribunal.

In *Shamayim* there is a balance scale. On one side, the Master of the Universe places all the merits that His children have accrued. The *Yeshivos*, the *Kollelim*, and the seminaries. *Hatzalah*, *Bikur Cholim*, *Tomchei Shabbos*. The enormous amount of *tzedakah* given to the needy. *Daf Hayomi* and *Oraysa*, and so much more.

But there is another side to the scale. On it are placed all the *aveiros*, the infighting, the *lashon hara*, the *chilul Shabbos*, the Pride parades and the blatant hatred of the Torah way of life coming from the secular segment of our people. How fortunate we are if the side of *zechuyos* outweighs the side of *chovos*. But how frightening to even think that perhaps the demerits are heavier than the merits.

The *Gemorah* says that when a person does a *mitzva*, he might be tipping the scale for himself and even for the whole world. When he does an *aveirah*, it might be just the opposite.

If you have no solution to change the corruptive circumstances in our Jewish world, there is one thing you can certainly do: increase your merits and *Hashem* will place them on the corresponding side of the scale with all the good deeds of our Jewish brothers and sisters. More learning, *chesed* and *kavana* in *tefilah* can accomplish so much. So let's wake up, sense the imminent danger and begin piling *zechuyos* on the scale

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The Jewish nation is the actual, unified entirety of all Jewish people. Bound by a common inner element, every individual is an irreplaceable part of the whole.

Our forefather *Yisroel* was one man. Even when his descendants grew to six hundred thousand men, they remained members of "one house" and sons of "one man." Every heart and soul was stamped with the same stamp, bearing through the ages a shared heritage of one mission and one destiny.

Even within this fundamental unity, a diversity of qualities and traits unique to each tribe and family is preserved and nurtured. Only in this way can the ultimate goal — To reveal to the world that *Hashem* is the creator and directs everything in His creation — be accomplished. It will be achieved by a diversity of special qualities and character traits; a diversity of professions, and positions in life.

Each tribe in its specialty and each family with its special qualities are to work at the common task of the House of *Israel*. They are to give shape to this task, educate their children to it, and pass it down to the next generation.

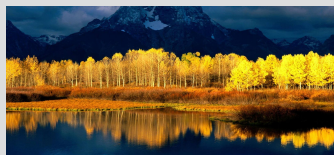
Consequently, the hundreds of thousands of members of the House of *Yisroel* do not approach the nation as an unorganized multitude, but as families organized by tribe. In the *Bamidbar* census, each man was announced by name, family, and tribe while personally contributing his *half-shekel* (either individually or as a group).

Only after his individual identity was acknowledged was he counted into the collective. Each one joining the whole while still bearing in mind his own unique set of skills and his own personality — one cohesive nation comprised of distinct, unique, and irreplaceable parts.



wonder WORLD

FOREVER TREES



Can a tree be a forest?

In his commentary on *Parashat Bamidbar*, Rabbi Hirsch refers to the tribes as branches sprouting from the same tree, and as unique individuals forming a single whole. While we usually view forests as collections of separate trees, science has discovered a 106-acre forest of 47,000 aspen trees that is actually a single organism. Known as Pando and located in Utah's Fishlake National Forest in the United States, it is the world's largest organism by mass, weighing approximately 13 million pounds (6 million kilograms). The entire forest shares a vast, interconnected root system, making it functionally one tree rather than a collection of separate trees. Though individual stems live for only about 100 years, this root system continually regenerates, making Pando virtually immortal.