

Good Shabbos Everyone. We begin the Book of Bamidbar this week with some amazing lessons for spiritual growth and happiness. The Sages tell us that Bamidbar is called Chumash HaPekudim - the "*Book of Numbers*," because one of the Book's main themes is the census of the people. (From: The Stone Edition Tanach, introduction to Bamidbar) In this week's parsha Bamidbar alone, there are four different listings of the numbers of the Children of Israel. (R'M.Weissman, The Midrash Says, p.11 citing Bamidbar Rabba, 1:4, 2:19) The Book of Bamidbar contains another detailed census in the Torah portion Pinchas. (26:1-51)(Ibid)

Why does Hashem count the Jews so many times? The Holy Rashi explains that Hashem counts the Jews out of His love for the Jewish Nation. Anything that a person is fond of, he will count often. As the Midrash quotes Hashem as saying "*Whenever the sum total of Bnai Yisroel is mentioned, I am happy, because it represents the number of soldiers in My army, who fulfill My will in the world.*"(Ibid, 2:19)

Bamidbar is therefore called the "*Book of Numbers*," to show Hashem's love for the Jewish people. (Ibid, citing Eysh Das, Bamidbar Rabba 2:10) As the Prophet Malachi tells us: "*I love you, says Hashem.*" (Kuntres Ahavas Yisroel, citing Malachi 1:2) We Jews are commanded to pattern our behavior after Hashem's behavior. Therefore, because Hashem loves and finds importance in every Jew, we too must love and find importance in every Jew. The following inspirational story shows the power of expressing our love for our fellow Jews.

Shaul Dovid Zimmerman was born in Europe to a very religious family about 100 years ago. As a young man he learned in some of Europe's finest yeshivas. Just after World War I, Reb Shaul Dovid moved to the United States. At the time, there was discrimination against religious Jews who kept Shabbos. Jews who were unwilling to work on Shabbos had to look for a new job every week, because they were fired on Friday afternoon.

Unfortunately, Reb Shaul Dovid was unable to stand the test and he too found himself working on Saturdays, in violation of the Holy Shabbos. Little by little, Reb Shaul Dovid lost all of his traditional Judaism.

Some years later, after World War II, Reb Shaul Dovid found himself a taxi driver in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, New York. It was spring time and the sky was overcast as Reb Shaul Dovid drove through the streets of Williamsburg in his taxi cab. Reb Shaul Dovid was suddenly flagged down by a man who appeared to be a Rabbi. The Rabbi was clutching a small package under his coat as he gave Reb Shaul Dovid the address of his destination. The address was only a few blocks away, a distance that a healthy person would normally be able to walk.

Reb Shaul Dovid was puzzled by the behavior of the Rabbi: holding a package under his coat and taking a cab for a few blocks. As the Rabbi was leaving the cab, Reb Shaul Dovid could no longer contain his curiosity. He asked the Rabbi what he was doing with the small package and why he took such a short ride. "*This*," explained the Rabbi holding the small package in his hand "*is flour I just received from the Satmar Rebbe. I am planning to bake matzahs. It is overcast outside and I am worried that it might rain. If this flour gets wet, I will not be able to use it for matzahs.*" Reb Shaul Dovid now understood the behavior of the Rabbi. Reb Shaul Dovid suddenly remembered his learning from yeshiva several years earlier. "*Actually*," said Reb Shaul Dovid "*I remember a discussion of that concept in [the Talmudic Tractate] Pesachim.*"

"*The Talmud?!?*" said the Rabbi, "*you know about the Talmud?*" The Rabbi was very surprised that the apparently non-religious taxi driver was familiar with the topic of baking matzahs.

The two struck up a conversation and found out that their lives had crossed paths in Europe several years ago. Reb Shaul Dovid had spent some time at the Pressburg, Czechoslovakia home of Reb Gavriel Neuschloss, the grandfather of the man now sitting in his cab Rabbi Moshe Neuschloss, of blessed memory. The men discussed the past for several minutes, before it was time for the two to part company. As Rabbi Neuschloss was leaving, Reb Shaul Dovid told him, "*You know, I have been considering coming back for a long time now. When I do come back, I will spend my first Shabbos with you Rabbi Neuschloss.*" Reb Shaul Dovid drove away very touched by Rabbi Neuschloss' warmth, yet for the time being, he continued to live a secular lifestyle. A couple months later, Reb Shaul Dovid was driving down the street when he noticed religious Jews filing out of a synagogue. It was a weekday; it was not Saturday. What were these religious men doing wearing their Shabbos finest? Reb Shaul Dovid stopped his cab and asked one of the men coming out of the synagogue: "*What's today?*" "*Today is Shavuos*," said the man leaving the synagogue. Shavuos! Today is Shavuos?!?

These words rang like an air raid siren in Reb Shaul Dovid's head. He had forgotten about the festival day Shavuos. He could not believe it. Where had his life taken him? He thought back to his conversation with Rabbi Neuschloss. Then, Reb Shaul Dovid parked his car on the street and walked home, vowing never to drive on Shabbos or Yom Tov again.

The next Shabbos, Reb Shaul Dovid spent with Rabbi Neuschloss. By observing Shabbos again, Reb Shaul Dovid re-kindled within himself the spark of his soul. Soon after, he returned his life to genuine Torah observance. Reb Shaul Dovid passed away in the early 1970's and was buried in the far corner of the cemetery in New Square, New York. To this day, many people ask why Reb Shaul Dovid's grave is so far away from the other graves. One of the reasons Reb Shaul Dovid had insisted that he be buried on the edge of the cemetery because of the shame he had felt for having violated Shabbos for so many years. We can never know the effect a kind word can have on a fellow Jew. We can see from this story how Reb Shaul Dovid's entire life changed because Reb Moshe Neuschloss was so warm and friendly. As we approach the Yom Tov of Shavuos, let us be inspired by this story to make all Jews feel important and loved. And let us remember that every Jew counts. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**