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OHEL DAVID EASTERN SYNAGOGUE

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## Shabbat Bamidbar

Sat. 22 - 23 May 2020 - 29th of Iyyar, 5780

שבת - מחר חודש פ' במדבר - פרקי אבות - פרק ו'

כ"ט באייר תש"פ

Issue Number 953

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## Mevarchin Hahodesh

מברכין החודש

Rosh Hodesh Sivan on Sunday 24 May.

ראש חודש סיון ביום ראשון 24 מאי.

## THE SYNAGOGUE IS CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

### For further information please contact:

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**Shahrit Sunday to Friday on ZOOM at 07:30**

**Please call Ghassan to join the service**

Daf Hayomi with Rabbi Asher Sebbag on ZOOM

Sunday to Thursday at 18:00, Friday at 17:00

Please call Ghassan or David to join the Shiur

Shabbat Candles.	20:38
Latest Shema GRA.	08:57
Sunset.	20:58
Arbit Motzei Shabbat.	22:05
Next Friday: Candles. Shabbat. Shabbat & Shavuoth II Day	20:48

## Ethics of Our Fathers

**Bamidbar 5780** (Numbers 1:1-4:20)

May 23, 2020 | by [Rabbi Yitzchak Zweig](#)

**GOOD MORNING!** Many stories that have emerged in the last few months are prime examples of “people who missed the point.” I am reminded of the joke about the fellow who complained to an old college buddy: “Sadly I think my family are a bunch of racists. I recently started dating a black girl and decided to bring her home to meet the family. My kids wouldn’t even

talk to her and my wife told me to pack my bags and leave.”

**We have** all seen the media stories portraying Orthodox Jews as being tone deaf and insensitive to the concerns of local governments and either ignorantly or defiantly gathering for religious services or large funerals. Unfortunately, these issues have also torn the social fabric of many Jewish communities worldwide.

**While it’s true** that there have been some egregious violations and flouting of both communal standards and the lawful

guidelines put into place by local governments, the overwhelming majority of Orthodox Jews have been compliant. The well publicized instances of violators have primarily been the acts of an incredibly small percentage of misguided individuals. Still, these are the ones that get all the publicity. I often lamented to our beloved friend and mentor, Rabbi Kalman Packouz of blessed memory: “People should not judge Judaism by the Jews.”

**Rabbi Packouz** himself was a paragon of personal and professional behavior. He was innately connected to the Almighty and viewed himself as His representative in the world. If one of his donors sent an unusually large gift, one that didn't fit into their pattern of giving, the good rabbi would call and make sure they didn't make a mistake and send too much. I have many such examples that I myself experienced during the time we spent together. As I write this I reflect on the fact that today would have been his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday and I am once again reminded of how much we all lost through his untimely passing.

**He certainly internalized** the teachings of our sages that the Torah was given to man so that he could perfect himself and bring perfection to the world. He knew that those who hold themselves to the standard of following God's laws, as given in our Torah, also have to hold themselves accountable to a much higher standard of behavior as well. This is because they portray themselves as following the will and desire of the Almighty; they therefore have to be EXTRA careful in all their behavior. Whether it's fair or not, others will look at them and judge “Judaism by the Jews.”

**Similarly**, my father has always taught his students the importance of being sensitive to others. One of his oft-cited examples has been his general opposition to

forming a *minyan* (of ten men praying) on a plane (as is commonly seen on long transatlantic flights to Israel). He challenges his students to consider whether their desire to pray with a *minyan* at the back of a plane should come at the expense of inconveniencing the stewardesses who are serving or fellow passengers trying to access the restrooms. My father regularly refuses to participate in those gatherings unless he is certain there will be no disruptions to anyone else.

**Jewish law**, as codified in the 1500's by Rabbi Joseph Karo, has been organized under four broad categories. The proper application of personal ethics while we are doing our best to follow all the *mitzvos* in the Torah, fits into what my father likes to call the fifth column of Jewish law – that of “Common Sense.” Unfortunately, common sense sometimes simply isn't all that common.

**Of course**, this week's Torah reading is very relevant to this discussion.

*They gathered together the entire assembly [...] according to their families and their fathers' houses” (Numbers 1:18).*

**The commentaries** explain that every individual was required to bring proof of his lineage in order to establish the tribe to which he belonged. The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni Bamidbar* 1-684) further states that the other nations of the world also asked Hashem to give them the Torah as well, but Hashem refused to grant their request because they were unable to establish their own genealogy. Why is the establishment of genealogy a prerequisite to receiving the Torah?

**The reason** is because the ultimate goal of the Torah is the proper development and refinement of one's character; the Torah emphasizes the importance of maintaining moral and ethical standards.

Unfortunately, in today's society, we are constantly inundated by influences that run counter to this ideal.

**For example**, contemporary culture not only idolizes the notion of amassing great wealth, but it especially idealizes the concept of amassing wealth without working for it. This shift in values is evidenced by the great success of Ponzi schemes, get rich email scams (a Nigerian prince died with no heirs...), the investments in penny stocks "with insider information," etc.

**The reason** so many people are taken in by these con artists is not that people have become less intelligent; rather, it is that they have absorbed the message that hard work is not a prerequisite for making a living or even being wildly successful. The appeal of these schemes lies in their promise of massive profits without the need to invest any time or effort.

**Thanks to** the influences of modern society, people tend to hope so desperately for those promises to materialize that they become willing victims of the purveyors of any such hope.

**How can** a person develop an inner moral compass that will help him resist the temptation to search for shortcuts, or worse, to cheat and steal? In order to achieve this it is crucial to have the proper role models at home. The key to raising good and ethical children is being the ultimate example of an honest and moral person. A child who sees the values of hard work, integrity, compassion, gratitude, perseverance, and responsibility modeled at home will most likely build his life on those foundations as well.

**Thus**, Hashem told the nations of the world that since their genealogy was uncertain (they did not even know who their own fathers were) it was unlikely for them

as a society to have grown up with proper role models. Sadly, we have seen the same in our society. Children who come from unstable family units, homes with absentee fathers, etc. regularly repeat the same mistakes in their lives as adults. This is why those without family history and proper legacy were unworthy of receiving the Torah.

**This understanding** should serve as a source of a tremendous insight into the crucial significance of parental influence and teach us how we must deal with our own children. The key to raising good children is being an honest and moral person. External displays of religiosity are merely the trimmings; the essence of a person is measured by his moral compass.

**Unfortunately**, this is a fact that is sometimes lost even on members of the "religious" community. Many families have no issue breaking the spirit of the law as long as they aren't breaking the letter of the law. An example of this is buying something that you intend to use, but with the knowledge that after using it you will return it to the place of purchase for a full refund (growing up I knew someone who before each Super Bowl would buy the most expensive big screen T.V. and then after the game he would use the store's 7 day "no questions asked" return policy to return it). Another is amassing many tens of credit cards (sometimes hundreds) in order to receive all the incentives offered by each credit card issuer without ever intending to use the cards, which is why those incentives were there in the first place.

**In fact**, in many ways this type of behavior is more devastating to a child's moral development than growing up with parents who steals outright. Eventually a child might learn that stealing is wrong, but he will almost certainly never learn on his

own that breaking the spirit of the law is wrong.

**We should** all begin to consider what our family's core moral values are; those ideals that we want to see transmitted to future generations. We should then take steps to articulate and define these ideas into a "family mission statement." We should do this for our children and grandchildren and in this way ensure that those who follow us will live up to the traditions of our proud Jewish heritage and that they will transmit those essential beliefs to many succeeding generations to come.



## TORAH PORTION OF THE WEEK

**Bamidbar, Numbers 1:1 - 4:20**

**In the second year** of travel in the desert, Moshe and Aharon were commanded by the Almighty to count all male Israelites between 20 and 60. There

were 603,550 available for military service. The tribe of Levi was exempt because of their special duties as religious leaders. (It is probably from here that countries give divinity deferments to clergy and divinity students.)

**The twelve tribes** were directed regarding the formation (three tribes were on each side of the Portable Sanctuary) in which they were to camp and travel.

**The 22,300** Levites were commanded in the Sanctuary service. The family of Gershon was to transport the coverings of the Sanctuary. The family of Kehos carried the Ark, Table, Menorah, and Altars. The family of Merari transported the boards, pillars, bolts, and sockets.



In loving memory of  
Rabbi Kalman Packouz  
Kalman Moshe ben  
Reuven Avigdor  
1950-2019  
*Shabbat Shalom,*  
Rabbi Yitzchak Zweig

THE KEHILLA WISHES חיים ארוכים "LONG LIFE"  
TO THE FOLLOWING WHO HAVE YAHRZEIT

- |                                 |                              |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 01 Sivan Mr Ghassan Cohen       | 24 Sivan Mr Charles Daniel   |
| 01 Sivan Mr David AbayahouDayan | 24 Sivan Mr Yosef Daniel     |
| 02 Sivan Mr Yossi Tamman        | 24 Sivan Mrs Marcelle Daniel |
| 06 Sivan Mr Abraham S. Cohen    | 24 Sivan Mr Maurice Rashty   |
| 09 Sivan Mr Yossi Tamman        | 24 Sivan Mr Nissan Nissan    |
| 13 Sivan Mr Ronnie Rashty       | 24 Sivan Mrs Farah Sheldon   |
| 13 Sivan Mr Charles F. Silas    | 24 Sivan Mr Freddy Nissan    |
| 13 Sivan Mrs Judith Silas       | 24 Sivan Mr Salman Nissan    |
| 20 Sivan Mrs Annie Benjamin     | 29 Sivan Mr Frederick Spitz  |
| 21 Sivan Mr Solly Judah         |                              |

Quote of the Week

**Ethics is knowing what is right to do,  
not what you have the right to do.**