



Sermon Tidbits

MAY 6, 2013

Parashat Bamidbar

The Nation's Army

All that are able to go forth to war in Israel (Numbers 1:3)

כל יצא צבא בישראל (במדבר א:ג)

The Torah relates that the purpose of counting the nation at this juncture was for purposes of building the first Jewish army. The establishment of the citizen army in the desert served as a crucial prerequisite for the building of the Jewish nation. Rabbi Simcha Raz (See *Shivim Panim L'Torah* Vol. IV p. 14) writes, "It is difficult to believe that this event occurred over three thousand years ago...at this point, after the Torah was given to the nation...the members of the nation recognize their essential task...to prepare itself to wage its wars, wars that will be fought not by chosen individuals or volunteers, but by the entire nation of Israel."

The Jewish nation's ancient military model—a model that relies on all its citizens—continues as the Israel Defense Forces rely on Israel's citizenry to defend the Jewish state's borders and be prepared for any situation.

The IDF is commonly seen as one of the most powerful armies in the world due to the fact that there is a required service. However, it is actually the *miluim* or the reserves that are the main force in the army. With yearly training and drills, the IDF's reserves remain prepared for any emergency action that threatens Israel's security. The IDF recently launched a large-scale surprise drill, calling up 2,000 reservists to northern Israel as a test of its ability to quickly engage Hezbollah in Lebanon, [The Jerusalem Post](#) reported. With the backdrop of growing tensions along Israel's border, the two-day drill, which involved live-fire exercises, was aimed at assessing the army's readiness and operational flexibility, a senior military source said. Over a 24-hour period, the IDF's Etgar Formation, a part of the Northern Command, began calling up the reservists without prior warning. After being called up, the reservists were told that their mission had changed, and that they had to deploy accordingly within 48 hours. The scenario at the heart of the drill involved a sudden escalation with Hezbollah, leading to ground maneuver inside Lebanon. "Reality forces us to prepare these abilities. The reserves understand this," a military source said. "The [drill's] scenario involves Lebanon, but it could also be Syria."

Moses depended on ordinary citizens to serve in the armed forces and protect the Jewish people. The IDF follows the Jewish nation's ancient military model, relying on its citizens to defend the Jewish state. ■

Accounting for Every Individual

According to the number of names (Numbers 1:18)

במספר שמות (במדבר א:יח)

How did Moses count more than 600,000 members of the Jewish nation? While Rashi (on 1:18) explains that each head of household presented documents to Moses proving the genealogy of the members of his household, the Midrash (*Bamidbar Rabbah*) notes that Moses was still required to count each person. "The Holy One said to [Moses]: 'count each and every individual with honor and stature; do not ask the head of household how many [are there] in your family...rather they must all pass before you with awe and respect and you must count them...'" Malbim (on 1:20) notes that it took Moses a full 20 days to count the nation.

Moses was told to personally account for every single individual of the nation. When American law enforcement officials must similarly account for every individual present they turn to Israeli video technology.

Israel's high-tech innovations are constantly leaving their marks on the world. After the recent terrorist bombing in Boston, U.S. security officials needed to quickly account for every individual who was present at the scene. Police and security officials investigating the attack turned immediately to the many video security cameras posted in the area, [Israel21c](#) reported. In the past, combing such vast amounts of material would have taken months or even years. Equipped with new video analytics technologies developed by Israel's BriefCam, it took them just a few days to identify and track Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, the two main suspects in the attack. According to [IsraelDefense](#), "The video Synopsis technology in question makes it possible to review many hours of video footage within a matter of minutes in real time or after an event, for the purpose of providing a precise intelligence picture. The technology developed by BriefCam allows for an hour of footage and more to be summarized into a one minute video duration." The Israeli company won the Best of Video Analytics Award at the New Product Showcase awards ceremony at Security Industry Association's 2013 ISC West convention just a few days before the Boston attack. BriefCam was instrumental in helping law enforcement officials quickly capture the two brothers behind the deadly Boston marathon attack. For more on Israeli high-tech developments, click [here](#).

Moses had time to count every member of the nation; security officials today often do not have that luxury. Israeli technology allows security teams to quickly account for everyone in order to investigate and protect the public. ■

An Eternal Connection

And the Levites shall pitch camp around... (Numbers 1:53)

והלויים יחנו סביב (במדבר א:נג)

Our parashah comprehensively describes the formation of the Jewish camp. The Torah notes the 11 tribes were structured around the tribe of Levi, and the tribe of Levi was built around the Tabernacle. Rabbi Yisrael Ariel points out that the encampment of Israel in the desert served as the blueprint for the future city of Jerusalem. The Tosefta (Kelim 1:12) explains: "Just as there were three 'camps' in the desert: the Camp of the Shechinah, the Levite Camp, and the Israelite Camp—so too was this the case in Jerusalem. From the gate of the city to the gate of the Temple Mount was the Camp of Israel; From the entrance to the Nikanor Gate was the Levite Camp, and from the Nikanor Gate inward was the Shechinah Camp."

The centrality of Jerusalem to the Jewish people is so strong that even in the desert we modeled our encampment on the city's presence. As we celebrate Yom Yerushalayim, we continue to recognize the important role Jerusalem plays in our lives.

The state of Israel recently celebrated the 46th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem—the city that has been the center of the Jewish world for 3,000 years and is referenced more than 850 times in the Hebrew Bible. From 1948 to 1967, Jordan denied Israeli Jews access to the Old City and the Western Wall. The liberation of Jerusalem in 1967 marked the first time in thousands of years that the entire city of Jerusalem, the holiest city in Judaism, was under Jewish sovereignty. Israel immediately abolished the restrictions on access to the city, allowing people from all faiths to worship at their holy places. The biblical kingdom of David (1000 BCE), followed by Solomon, was the Jewish people's first independent nation-state, with Jerusalem as its political and spiritual capital. Over the following three millennia, the Jewish nation of Israel was conquered by numerous foreign empires including the Persians, Greeks and Romans. Despite being persecuted by these invading foreign forces, many Jews continued the Jewish inhabitation of this ancient land, without pause. Those who fled under expulsion never lost faith in their desire to return to the land of their ancestors: their ancient capital of Jerusalem. For more on Jerusalem, click [here](#).

The Jewish connection to Jerusalem was even conveyed in the structure of the Israelite camp. The connection remains strong as we celebrate the 46th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem. ■

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