

Light Insight

Kvelling

“And these are the names of the children of Israel...”
(Exodus 1:1)

Imagine a grandmother sitting with a stack of photos of her grandchildren. She takes out the pictures after breakfast and leafs through them, reciting the names of each of her beloved treasures one by one.

After lunch she has a nap, and then she takes out her photos

again and recites their names over again.

And last thing at night, out come the pictures for a last time, kissing them and calling each of them by name.

The name of the book of Exodus in Hebrew is “*Shmos*” — Names. It starts with a list of the names of the children of Jacob.

Even though the Torah had already detailed the names of Jacob’s children in their lifetimes, the Torah lists their names again after their passing to show how dear they are to G-d.

Something that is dear and highly-prized is repeated and re-examined many times.

Like the photos of a doting granny.

The children of Israel are likened to the stars: Just as G-d counts the stars and calls them by name, so too he counts the children of Israel.

Since we are compared to the stars, we should emulate the stars. Just as the purpose of the stars is to radiate light to the darkest and most distant corners of the universe, so too it is the job of the Jewish People to radiate light to the four corners of the world.

Response Line

Joyce Belford wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,
I am wondering if you could tell me what the significance and meaning of the different numbers are, such as five, twelve, eight, nine...etc. Actually, I am wondering about the numbers from 1-12.*

Dear Joyce Belford,

The answer to your question is found at the end of the Passover Haggada in the song “*Echad Mi Yodea*.” There, each number is related to a concept; each concept is the

main principle symbolized by its co-related number. In short:

1. The Unity of G-d
2. The covenant between G-d and the Jewish People.
3. The merit of our Patriarchs: Abraham Isaac and Jacob.
4. The merit of our Matriarchs: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.
5. The Written Torah, expressed in the Five Books of Moses.
6. The Oral Torah, expressed in the Six Orders of the Mishna.
7. The Creation of the physical existence in seven days.
8. The spiritual sphere — symbolized by circumcision on the eighth day.

9. Reproduction and fruitfulness — represented by the nine months of pregnancy.

10. The Ten Commandments — an elaboration on the covenant between us and G-d. Ten generally symbolizes completeness, the unification of disparate parts.

11. The heavenly bodies. As 10 represents completeness, 11 represents infinity, represented by the seemingly infinite universe. Eleven is also associated with the number of planets in our solar system, including the sun and moon.

12. The Jewish People delineated into 12 tribes; the 12 tribes also parallel the 12 months and the 12 signs of the zodiac.

13. The 13 Divine Attributes of Divine Mercy.

The Other SIDE of the Story

GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

It Just Didn't Gel

My husband was convinced I was making a mistake sending money to someone I knew nothing about, in expectation of receiving merchandise in the mail. But I was desperate. I had been suffering with a skin irritation which creams and lotions hardly alleviated and the pain was getting unbearable. Then one day I saw an item in the newspaper describing an imported gel made of aloe vera which could possibly give me relief. I called Mr. H. whose cellular phone number was listed in the paper. He sounded quite sympathetic, even offering to give me the name and

number of an alternative medicine practitioner who had helped him. He said the gel could make me feel better.

I sent my check and two days later received his call thanking me for my order. I was informed the package would arrive within several days. I waited impatiently, but when two weeks had elapsed with no sign of the item, I decided to call Mr. H.

An answering machine told me to leave a message, which I did. Mr. H. did not return my call. I called several times after that only to be told that his answering device was full and couldn't accept any more messages.

My husband was now giving me the "I told you so" routine. I didn't know what to make of all this and began to think that perhaps he was correct. My husband suggested contacting a government agency dealing

with fraudulent mail practices. I was undecided as to my next course of action.

About four weeks after placing my order, I received a call from Mr. H. He was very upset and apologetic and told me my package had just been returned to him by the post office. Apparently some postal clerk couldn't read my address which had been written in English. (We were to receive the package in Israel.) Mr. H. promised to remail the package immediately. When I asked why he hadn't returned my call, he told me he had changed cellular phone numbers and never got my message. This time he gave me his new number, and his home number as well.

The item arrived several days later (now with my address written in Hebrew). Soon thereafter, I received another call from Mr. H. asking whether the gel had arrived and whether it had helped me. He turned out to be a *mentch* after all!

LOVE of the LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel

Beit Shean

"If the Garden of Eden is in the Land of Israel then its gate is at Beit Shean."

This is the Talmudic tribute to the special sweetness of the fruits of this area which

lies about 120 meters below sea level.

It was to the walls of Beit Shean that the

Philistines fastened the corpses of King Saul and his sons after vanquishing the Israelite army. When the men of Yavesh Gilead — whose honor had been saved by King Saul when the Ammonites had surrounded the city and demanded the right to blind the

right eye of every one of its citizens as the price of peace — heard of this, they marched all night in order to remove the bodies and bury them.

Modern Beit Shean was founded soon after the establishment of the State of Israel near a small Arab town called Bissan, a corruption of the city's Biblical name, and rapidly expanded to become a major development town which absorbed many immigrants from North Africa.