Coming Back as One(s)

Rabbi Schatz - Bamidbar 2023 - Seudah Shlishit

Bamidbar (Numbers) 1:1-2

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַּר סִינַי בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי בַּשָּׁנָה הַשֵּׁנִית לְצֵאתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר: שְׂאוּ אֶת־רֹאשׁ כָּל־עֲדַת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפַּר שֵׁמוֹת כָּל־זָכָר לְגֻלְגְּלֹתָם:

On the first day of the second month, in the second year following the exodus from the land of Egypt, Adonai spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, saying: Take a census of the **whole Israelite community** by the clans of its ancestral houses, listing the **names, every male, head by head**.

"In any census, count or roll-call there is a tendency to focus on the total - the crowd, the multitude, the mass. Here is a nation of sixty million people, or a company with one hundred thousand employees, or a sports crowd of sixty thousand. Any total tends to value the group or nation as a whole. The larger the total, the stronger the army, the more popular the team, and the more successful the company." (Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks z"l)[1]

רש"י על במדבר א׳:א׳:א׳

וידבר. במדבר סיני באחד לחדש וגו'. מִתּוֹךְ חִבָּתָן לְפָנָיו מוֹנֶה אוֹתָם כָּל שָׁעָה — כְּשֶׁיָּצְאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם מָנָאן, וּכְשֶׁנָּפְלוּ בָּעֵגֶל מָנָאן לֵידַע מִנְיַן הַנּוֹתָרִים, כְּשֶׁבָּא לְהַשְׁרוֹת שְׁכִינָתוֹ עֲלֵיהֶם מָנָאָם, בְּאֶחָד בְּנִיסָן הוּקַם הַמִּשְׁכָּן וּבְאֶחָד בְּאִיָּר מָנָאָם:

Rashi on Numbers 1:1:1

וידבר… במדבר סיני … באחד לחדש וגו׳ AND [THE LORD] SPOKE [UNTO MOSES] IN THE DESERT OF SINAI … ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE [SECOND] MONTH etc. — Because they were dear to God, God counts them every hour: when they went forth from Egypt God counted them (Exodus 12:37), when many of them fell in consequence of their having worshiped the golden calf God counted them to ascertain the number of those left (cf. Rashi Exodus 30:16); when God was about to make Her Shechinah dwell amongst them (i. e. when God commanded them to make a Tabernacle), God again counted them.

"A significance of one remarkable feature of Judaism: its principled insistence – like no other civilization before – on the dignity and integrity of the individual. We believe that every human being was created in the image and likeness of God. The Sages said that every life is like an entire universe. Maimonides wrote that each of us should see ourselves as if our next act could change the fate of the world. Every dissenting view is carefully recorded in the Mishnah, even if the law is otherwise. Every verse of the Torah is capable, said the Sages, of seventy interpretations. No voice, no view, is silenced. Judaism never allows us to lose our individuality in the mass." (RLJS z"l)

Berakhot (Babylonian Talmud) 58a

[1] https://mailchi.mp/rabbisacks/bamidbar-245284?e=11f1313978

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תָּנוּ רַבָּנַן: הָרוֹאֶה אוּכְלוּסֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, אוֹמֵר: ״בָּרוּךְ … חַכַם הָרָזִים״ — שֶׁאֵין דַּעְתָּם דּוֹמָה זֶה לָזֶה, וְאֵין פַּרְצוּפֵיהֶן דּוֹמִים זֶה לָזֶה. בֶּן זוֹמָא רָאָה אוּכְלוּסָא עַל גַּב מַעֲלָה בְּהַר הַבַּיִת, אָמַר: ״בָּרוּךְ … חַכַם הָרָזִים וּבָרוּךְ … שֶׁבָּרָא עַל אֵלּוּ לְשַׁמְּשֵׁנִי״.

The Sages taught in a *Tosefta*: **One who sees multitudes of Israel recites: Blessed…Who knows all secrets.** Why is this? He sees a whole nation **whose minds are unlike each other and whose faces are unlike each other,** and God Who knows all secrets, God, knows what is in each of their hearts. The Gemara relates: **Ben Zoma once saw a multitude [*okhlosa*] of Israel** while standing **on a stair on the Temple Mount.** He immediately **recited: Blessed…Who knows all secrets and Blessed…Who created all these to serve me.**

"God tells Moses to lift people's heads by showing that they each count; they matter as individuals. Indeed in Jewish law a *davar she-be-minyan*, something that is counted, sold individually rather than by weight, is never nullified even in a mixture of a thousand or a million others.[6] In Judaism, taking a census must always be done in such a way as to signal that we are valued as individuals. We each have unique gifts. There is a contribution only I can bring. To lift someone's head means to show them favour, to recognise them. It is a gesture of love." (RLJS z"l)

Bamidbar (Numbers) 6:24-26

יְבָרֶכְךָ ה' וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ׃
יָאֵר ה' | פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וִיחֻנֶּךָּ׃
יִשָּׂא ה' | פָּנָיו֙ אֵלֶ֔יךָ וְיָשֵׂ֥ם לְךָ֖ שָׁלֽוֹם׃

May Adonai bless you and keep you
May Adonai's face shine to you and show you grace!
May Adonai's face lift to you and grant you peace

"A Jewish leader has to respect individuals. They must "lift their heads." If you seek to lead, however small or large the group you lead, you must always communicate the value you place on everyone. [...]
It is hard to lead a nation of individuals, but this is the most challenging, empowering, inspiring leadership of all." (RLJS z"l)