

From the desk of Rabbi Baumann



Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Bamidbar 5780

When something is taken away from a person, such as health or *Parnassa*, R'L, it may be the first time that 'thing' is appreciated properly. When someone is blessed with something in abundance, no matter how great and priceless a treasure it is, human nature is to get over the initial euphoria in short order, and then take it for granted.

“Do we properly, deep down, appreciate what Hashem has blessed us with and how important our family is?”

This has been so pointedly and perhaps painfully demonstrated these past few months in regards to our own families. We hold them to be the most important facet of our life, and we would sacrifice anything for their well-being and safety. Nevertheless, somehow, someway when we are restricted to close quarters with our beloved ones, what comes to our hearts and minds is the difficulties, the tensions, the disruption. Why isn't our reaction directed to the great joy we should feel at being able to lavish great amounts of attention and love on them? Is this some litmus test demonstrating that we lack sufficient appreciation for what we have? Does our value system need a tune-up? Do we properly, deep down, appreciate what *Hashem* has blessed us with and how important our family is?

The census of 2448 (not 2020!) described in this week's *Parsha*, contains an important message about the centrality of family and its foundational benefit for the Jewish People. The *Pasuk* says (*Bamidbar 1:2*) *Take a census of the entire Assembly of the Children of Israel according to their families, according to their fathers' household..... Rav Zalman Sorotzkin zt'l in Ozna'im LaTorah* points out a number of reasons for this counting of the Jewish people. The 2nd reason he presents is that the focus on the family unit (*according to their families*) serves to refute the claims of the nations of the world that *Klal Yisrael's* glory should have been designated for them. In fact, only *Klal Yisrael* is worthy, because they have an intact family unit. They know who their mother is, they know who their father is. It is this regard for *Yichus*, for family identity, that grants us the privilege.

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Rav Shamshon Rephael Hirsch zt'l, in his commentary on the *Chumash*, highlights another outstanding feature of the Jewish family. We do not count individuals as separate entities. We count each person as a member of a family. The families are then grouped into tribes and the entire nation is comprised of twelve tribes. The terms we use for the Jewish People - *Bais Yisrael* -the *House of Israel* and *Bnei Yisrael*, the *Children of Israel* illustrate that our entire nation is referred to as one household, and the children of one man.

In *Rav Hirsch's* stirring words: *“Even when the descendants of the one Jew Israel had grown to six hundred thousand men (at least two million people) they were still all members of the “one house”, sons of “one man”, stamped in spirit and heart with the same stamp, bearing one mission, one destiny as their heritage through the ages.”*

Understanding how foundational the family is to the eternity and purpose of the Jewish People is something that needs to be developed. Rabbi David Orlofsky once challenged a group of sincere, mature, marriageable-age *Yeshiva Bochurim* to explain why they should get married. As he retells it, not one was able to articulate the actual purpose. That actual purpose is to build a Jewish family unit, a Jewish home.

“Family is the place where Jewish souls are planted, nurtured and grown to perfection.”

Our family is more than a collection of individuals tied by matrimonial vows and DNA. It is the essential building block of the Jewish nation. Family is the place where Jewish souls are planted, nurtured and grown to perfection. It is a unique entity, that because of its pure origins, nobility of purpose and deep investment by all its members can propel children and adults to great heights, thereby fulfilling the enormous potential that lies within each soul.

Pointing out how great the family unit is not a novel idea. Rather, as the *Mesillas Yesharim* points out, those things that are so obvious tend to be overlooked and underappreciated. They need to be focused upon, despite or because of their lack of novelty. What is needed is to focus on this self-evident truth, that our family is beyond the most priceless treasure. If we can think about that often we will be able to appreciate the great blessing of our family so much more.

As we approach the great *Yom Tov of Shavuos*, we recognize that the ultimate gift – the gift of Torah, was bestowed upon us because we, the Jewish People were united. That unity begins with the family, and our family's unity begins with our truly appreciating what Hashem has blessed us with.

Best wishes for a family-wonderful *Shabbos*, and inspiring *Yom Tov*,

Rabbi Kalman Baumann