

# Parshat Bamidbar

written by Chaya Rivka Zwolinski

May 14, 2023



In Parshat Bamidbar the Torah teaches us about the encampment of the Jews in the *midbar*, the desert wilderness. Each person camped beside his tribal flag. Each of the twelve tribes was represented by a different flag, as well as a different colored stone on the breastplate of the Kohen Gadol.

Reb Noson explains that from this, we learn the importance of developing our individuality. We begin by looking for and finding the good point inside ourselves, and then we develop and build on that good point as an expression of our connection to Hashem.

Practically speaking, you can do this by developing your character traits, the ones you have a predilection for. You can also base this growth and development on the *mitzvot*. There may be one *mitzvah* that you are particularly drawn to.

You can develop that *mitzvah*, says Rebbe Nachman, to an extent where you excel in your focus and commitment to that particular *mitzvah*.<sup>\*</sup> It doesn't mean neglecting the other mitzvahs, it just means you are making that particular mitzvah your own. The "ownership" of that mitzvah is an expression of your unique name.

Also, each Jew corresponds to a letter in the Torah. A Torah scroll is not usable if even one letter is missing. Reb Nosson explains that only when we have *achdut*, togetherness, only when we encamp together and every single Jew is present, can the Torah be complete. That's why we read about the togetherness of the Jewish people in *Bamidbar*, right before Shavuot.

*Shavuot* is the *Yom Tov* on which we receive the Torah. In order for the Torah to be complete, we must love one another. We must look for each other's good points. This love must include the recognition that each of us is an individual. This love must allow others to express that individuality in their service to Hashem.\*\* We don't have to be clones. We don't have to all look alike, think alike or dress alike. We do have to respect that one person is different from another.

*May you have a day of individuality and achdut.*

<sup>\*</sup> You might love the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* or *kashrut* or *Shabbat* or any other mitzvah. Begin by learning the *halachot* associated with that particular mitzvah (or an aspect of that particular mitzvah.) That is the beginning of preparation for doing that mitzvah. As you do that *mitzvah* again and again, you begin to refine and enhance your practice of the *mitzvah*. Eventually that *mitzvah* becomes a significant part of who you are. And if you feel the desire, you can add on additional mitzvot to focus on too.

<sup>\*\*</sup> This refers to expressions of individuality that are aligned with Torah.

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