

someone knocked at the door, so he got up to get it, and there was the snail, the snail looked up at the guy and yelled, "What was that for?!?"

An applicant was filling out a job application.

When he came to the question, "Have you ever been arrested?" he wrote, "No."

The next question, intended for people who had answered in the affirmative to the previous question, was "Why?"

The applicant answered it anyway: "Never got caught."

ANNUAL SHAVUOT DINNER
Catered by Nussbaums
 Tuesday 30 May
Guest Speaker:
Mrs Elisheva Gilbert
 Adult R165 / Child (3-12) R135
Shul office or sydshul.co.za
 Bookings close Monday 29 May 12pm

SLEEPLESS IN SYDENHAM!
 SHAVUOT TIKUN LAYL - ALL NIGHT LEARNING

10:30pm
SIX DAYS IN '67
50 Years Since the Six Day War
 Sydenham's volunteers share their personal stories:
 Hilton Sawitzky, Mark Orelowitz, Ronnie Kotkis, Shlomo Muskanth, Geoff Sifrin
 With Insights and Intrigue by Rabbi Yossy Goldman

12:00am
Ladies and Gents
Minyan, Meitzitzah, Mikvah and more
 Rabbi Yehuda Stern

1:00am
Fire, Lights & Electricity
Fundamental Principles of Shabbos Observance
 Steven Fredman, Shtibl Lainer

2:00am
Judaism's Solution to Challenges of the Modern World
 Dovi Mendelow, Rabbinic Student

3:00am
Rabbi Akiva
The Perspective of a Ba'al Teshuva
 Rabbi Zevi Wineberg, Hamaor

ANNUAL SHAVUOT DINNER
 Tuesday Night 30 May
Guest Speaker:
Mrs Elisha Gilbert
 Head of Marketing at Sasfin
 GIBS certified Professional Business Coach
"The Gift of Being a Jew"
 Adults R165, Children (3-11) R135
 Online at www.sydshul.co.za or Shul office
 Bookings close on Monday 29 May 12pm

4:00am
Open Mic
By the People, for the People
 Refreshments throughout the night.
CHEESECAKE AND BLINTZES for those who stay into the early hours.

SYDENHAM-HIGHLANDS NORTH HEBREW CONGREGATION

Berrybright Kosher B&B is offering a **Shavuot Special** including accommodation and breakfast at R1500 per couple for both nights.
 Contact Barry 011 485 4907 or 072 412 2801

What's Nu?!
The Barmy Boy
Adam Sauer
 Mazal Tov to Grant Sauer & Glenda Sauer and grandmothers Barbara Schneider & Nan Sauer.

Calendar

- ◆ Shacharis 8:30 am; Shtibl 8:45 am
- ◆ Shul Brocha in the Seeff Hall in honour of Adam's Bar Mitzvah.
- ◆ **Monthly 'Social Shabbos'**
- ◆ Mincha: 4:50 pm
- ◆ Pirkei Avos: Chapter 6
- ◆ Shabbos ends: 5:58 pm
- ◆ Mincha from Sunday: 5:20 pm

SHAVUOS NIGHT - Tues 30 May

- ◆ Candlelighting: 5:06 pm (Blessings for Yom Tov & Shehecheyanu)
- ◆ Mincha: 5:20 pm
- ◆ Yom Tov Service: 6:00 pm

SPECIAL LADIES SHAVUOT SHIUR
 with Rebbetzin Estee Stern
"Secrets, Silence & Sensitivity"
The origins of King David
This Sunday 28 May 9am
 Sydenham Community Centre

SHAVUOT CHILDREN'S PROGRAM
 9:30am in the Big Shul
Bikkurim Parade & 10 Commandments
 Followed by:
'Milky Way' Waffle & Ice Cream Bar
 in the Elk Hall

- ◆ The **Scottish Leader Signature** whiskey at Shul is sponsored by **Distell** & available for purchase at **Norman Goodfellows**.
- ◆ **Nathan Fine** of I.deal Furnishers at Midway Mall, Bramley Gardens wishes all congregants a Good Shabbos. Call 011 887 5456/082 854 5706. **Furniture, Bedding & Appliances.**
- ◆ **Vehicles wanted. Any make, any condition. Best prices. Phone ARNOLD ORKIN 082 823 7826**
- ◆ Acknowledgements: Chabad.org, aish.com
- ◆ Please take Good Shabbos Sydenham home if you will only carry it within the Eiruv.

74 YEARS OF INSPIRATION

Good Shabbos
SYDENHAM!

Published by the
 Sydenham Highlands North
 Hebrew Congregation
 Johannesburg, South Africa

27 May 2017 Parshas Bamidbar 2 Sivan 5777

Wisdom From the Wilderness
 by: *Rabbi Yossy Goldman*

"Numbers" might be how we call the fourth of the Five Books of Moses, but in the Hebrew original it is known as Bemidbar, or, In the Wilderness. It is interesting to note that this parsha is always read before the festival of Shavuot, the season of the Giving of the Torah. What is the connection?

The Rabbis taught that it is not enough for G-d to *give* us the Torah; we have to be ready to *receive* the Torah. What makes us worthy recipients of this most precious and infinite gift from G-d? This is where the Wilderness idea comes in. A wilderness is a no-man's land. It is ownerless and barren. Just as a desert is empty and desolate, so does a student of Torah need to know that he is but an "empty vessel." Humility is a vital prerequisite if we are to successfully absorb divine wisdom. So long as we are full of ourselves and our preconceived notions we will not be able to assimilate and integrate Torah into our being. Even if are already somewhat accomplished in our Torah studies, we still need to remember as the Kotzker Rebbe put it, that "As much as you know, you are still an undeveloped desert."

Then there is the idea that an ownerless desert is there for anyone to stake his claim. No man or group of men has a monopoly on Torah. It belongs to each and every single Jew, not only the Rabbis or the Yeshiva students, or the religiously observant. As our children sing, *Torah Tzivah Lanu...* "The Torah that Moses commanded us is the heritage of the entire Congregation of Jacob." While

we acknowledge that there is much hard work ahead of us if we are to acquire the Torah and make it ours, we also know that with diligence and effort we can succeed. Indeed, some of our finest Torah scholars throughout the generations have hailed from the simple, ordinary folk - tailors, cobblers and the like.

Maimonides in his Laws of Torah Study (Chapter 3,1) states: "With three crowns was Israel adorned - the Crown of Torah, the Crown of the Priesthood and the Crown of Royalty. The Priesthood was the privilege of Aaron...Royalty was the privilege of King David...but the Crown of Torah is there ready and waiting for all of Israel...and it is the greatest crown of all." However, while it may be 'free for all,' we must surrender to it rather than attempt to adjust it to our own circumstances and lifestyles.

And then, like the empty, uninhabited wilderness, the Torah personality may well find himself alone and isolated. Most Rabbis will confirm that it can be very lonely at the top. We might express our strongly held values and beliefs only to discover that we stand alone and very much 'odd man out.' We might display the courage of our convictions and find ourselves, like Abraham, 'on the other side' of the whole world. Our principles may well prove unpopular; especially should they stand on toes or upset apple carts. No matter. Being true to G-d and His Torah means standing by it - no matter what - under any and every circumstance.

May the literal title of our parsha and all the many lessons it conveys serve as a fitting prelude for the beautiful festival of Shavuot and may we receive

the Torah with joy and earnestness so that this important Yom Tov will be meaningful and memorable.

Parsha Pointers

*Bamidbar: Artscroll Chumash pg 726;
Living Torah pg 655*

In the Sinai Desert, G-d says to conduct a census of the twelve tribes of Israel. Moses counts 603,550 men of draftable age (20 to 60 years); the tribe of Levi, numbering 22,300 males age one month and older, is counted separately. The Levites are to serve in the Sanctuary, replacing the firstborn, whose number they approximated, who were disqualified when they participated in the worshipping of the Golden Calf. The 273 firstborn who lacked a Levite to replace them had to pay a five-shekel “ransom” to redeem themselves.

When the people broke camp, the three Levite clans dismantled and transported the Sanctuary, and reassembled it at the center of the next encampment. They then erected their own tents around it: the Kohathites, who carried the Sanctuary’s vessels (the ark, menorah, etc.) in their specially designed coverings on their shoulders, camped to its south; the Gershonites, in charge of its tapestries and roof coverings, to its west; and the families of Merari, who transported its wall panels and pillars, to its north. Before the Sanctuary’s entranceway, to its east, were the tents of Moses, Aaron, and Aaron’s sons.

The Right Time for a Census

By Rabbi Zalman Posner

One of the early expressions of the dignity of the individual is in this week’s Torah reading. The greatness of giants is a commonplace: Adam, Noah, the Patriarchs, Moses—these are all noteworthy names. But the anonymous, the scores of thousands who were not leaders and chiefs, the masses—they too are endowed with worth by the simple theme of this week’s Torah reading, the census. Counting implies value, for worthless things are not counted, certainly

not as individual units but in the mass at best. The Torah counts Israel to the last man, because each one, insignificant though he may seem, is priceless.

We are quite prepared to accept this idea, that even the little man is not so little that he may be ignored. But the biblical commentator Rashi makes a noteworthy observation. He cites several occasions when Israel is counted, specifically the count following the Golden Calf and the count following the dedication of the Sanctuary. These examples are in striking contrast. One depicts Israel in the depths of idolatry, at its spiritual nadir; the other represents Israel in a moment of dedication (of self no less than Sanctuary) to G-d’s service.

Perhaps Rashi means to indicate that the worth of man is intrinsic, that his soul has an innate purity beyond sullyng. We cannot establish standards for “worthy” people and proceed to deny to the deficient the prerogatives of all men. Each individual is unique and priceless, and not only at moments of consecration, but even when fallible and fallen, is worthy of being counted as one of Israel.

Jerusalem: 50 Years of Reunification

By Rabbi Benjamin Blech

Hard to believe that it was 50 years ago that Jews and Jerusalem were at long last reunited. It took God all of six days to create the world; it took modern-day Israel the same brief length of time to liberate the holiest city in the world from the hands of those who never understood or accepted its true sanctity.

The Six-Day War was by all accounts a contemporary miracle. Israel’s enemies made clear their intent. It was not land that they wanted as much as Jewish lives. The Arabs assured the world they would finish the task Hitler started. The Holocaust was the unspeakable genocide of six million. The Arab leaders who surrounded the tiny Jewish homeland boasted that this time what remained of

Sydenham Shul 24 Main Street, Rouxville, 2192.

Telephone: 640-5021, Fax: 485-2810

E-mail: sydshul@sydshul.co.za

Website: www.sydshul.co.za

www.facebook.com/sydenhamshul

the Jews after the Nazi concentration camps and crematoria would at last be totally destroyed.

Military analysts are still stunned when they study what actually happened. Generals at West Point have been quoted as saying that Israel’s victory can simply not be understood from the perspective of strategy in historic warfare. One officer, who understandably chose not to be quoted by name, simply said, “There is no way we can teach the reason behind Israel’s success because Israel was clearly aided primarily by God – and we are not permitted to teach God at West Point.”

Fifty years have not dimmed the memories of the miracles of that glorious moment in history. It was as a result of the Six-Day War that we recaptured the site on which King Solomon built the First Temple and on which, after a brief period of exile, we returned and dedicated the Second Temple as well.

And 50 years after 1967 we need to especially take note of the biblical significance of the number 50 with regard to the land of Israel. The message of the 50th year reminds everyone of one major truth: it is not we who own the land; “the land is Mine,” God tells us in the Torah (Lev. 25:23).

When the 12 tribes first came to Israel the land was divided among them. Everyone shared equally in the economic benefit of landownership. But no one was permitted to view possession of land as permanent. Jews might work the land, harvest its produce and enjoy its fruits. They could even purchase more land or sell off what they owned if they so desired. But in the 50th year, the Jubilee year, all land returned to its original owners. The Jubilee year was a recurring reminder that God alone, as the creator of heaven and earth, was the true titleholder of all the land on which we live and all the places we call home.

Every Jewish child who begins his study of the Torah with the verse which teaches us that “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” is familiar with the famous comment of Rashi, the most famous rabbinic commentator on the Bible. Why does the Torah, as a book of law, begin with this extra-legal information? So that if anyone ever questions our claim to the land of Israel we will be able to respond that God, as Creator and Master of the universe, can

transfer His ownership to whomsoever He pleases – and it is God who has apportioned His land to His people, the children of Israel.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the first Ashkenazi chief Rabbi of Palestine, made an astounding prediction some years before the establishment of the state of Israel. Reflecting on the biblical number associated with the Jews who left Egypt, Rabbi Kook suggested that when the population of Jews in Palestine would similarly reach the total of 600,000 it would be a wondrous sign for the beginning of our national redemption.

Amazingly enough, it was only in 1948 that Jews for the first time equaled the biblical number – the very year in which the world witnessed the contemporary miracle of the establishment of the state of Israel!

There is another number which in modern times carries significance comparable to 600,000. It is tenfold that number – and bears with it the memory of tragedy beyond parallel. Six million were the victims of the Holocaust, the number of those who were barbarically murdered by a regime which plotted a “final solution” for the Jews.

That is why it is so important to mark another milestone of modern-day Israel – a milestone we may now celebrate on the occasion of our 50-year celebration of Yom Yerushalayim. The population of Jews in Israel today at last exceeds that number so starkly identified with tragedy. There are now more than six million Jews who make Israel their home. In the Jubilee year of Jerusalem’s reunification more than six million Jewish souls in Israel joyfully proclaim the reality of the biblical message of the 50th year: the land belongs to God and our generation has become witness to the divine decision to reunite us with Jerusalem.

Live & Laugh

David was reading the sports section in the newspaper and he heard a knock at the door, so he got up to get it, and when he opened the door, all he saw was a snail, so he picked it up and threw it as far as he could.

Three years later David sat down on his leather recliner to read his daily newspaper, and