

### Don't Women Count?

Bamidbar begins with a census of the Jewish people.

... a head-count of every male according to the number of their names.  
From twenty years old and upwards, all who are fit to go out to the  
army in Israel, you shall count them by their legions ...—NUMBERS 1:1

The simple reason for this census was to count those who would be  
called upon to go to war.

On a deeper level, Rashi explains that G-d desired a census of the Jewish  
people because He treasures them.

#### 1. Rashi on BaMidbar 1:1<sup>2</sup>

**The Lord spoke ... in the Sinai Desert ... on the first of the month:**  
**Because they were dear to Him**, He counted them often. When they  
left Egypt, He counted them (Exod. 12:37); when [many] fell because  
[of the sin] of the golden calf, He counted them to know the number  
of the survivors (Exod. 32:28); when He came to cause His Divine Pres-  
ence to rest among them, He counted them. On the first of Nissan, the  
Mishkan was erected, and on the first of Iyar, He counted them.

The Chasidic masters explain that **the counting of the Jewish people  
demonstrated the value of every individual, how cherished each one is  
to G-d**. Each person was counted, irrespective of his level of observance, his  
skills, his degree of learnedness, or whether he was a man of means or im-  
poverished. Each individual was shown that he counted for no more and no  
less than **one**. **Irrespective of external trappings, G-d treasures his essen-  
tial value**. Moreover, by accentuating his independent identity, he was em-  
powered to respect his own individuality and remain true to himself.

#### 2. 2Corinthians 12:11

<sup>11</sup>I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have  
been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior to the "su-  
per-apostles," even though **I am nothing**.

##### a. 1Corinthians 3:5-9

<sup>5</sup>What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through  
whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his  
task. <sup>6</sup>I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been mak-  
ing it grow. <sup>7</sup>So **neither the one who plants nor the one who waters**

**is anything**, but only God, who makes things grow. <sup>8</sup>The one who  
plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and **they will each  
be rewarded according to their own labor**. <sup>9</sup>For we are co-workers  
**in God's service**; you are God's field, God's building.

- 1) If “the one who plants” and “the one who waters” is *nothing*,  
then why are “they ... each rewarded” for their “labor”?
- 2) Why are they referred to as “co-workers in God’s service”?
- 3) If no seed is “plant(ed)” or “water(ed)” how is it possible for God  
to facilitate “grow”?
- 4) Obviously without God’s involvement, no growth is possible re-  
gardless of how much seed is planted—but the statement is  
more about “not thinking of oneself more highly than one ought  
to think” (Rom 12:3) rather than “God is everything and I am  
nothing.”

- b. “Even though I am nothing” may be an ironical citation of his oppo-  
nent’s opinion of him or a serious disavowal of any personal merit  
that might have made him worthy of apostleship (cf. 1Cor 15:8-10).<sup>3</sup>

##### 1) 1Corinthians 15:9 (CJB)

<sup>9</sup>For **I am the least of all the emissaries**, unfit to be called an em-  
issary, because I persecuted the Messianic Community of God.

- a) Modesty, even shame (or guilt) associated with one’s past  
does not mean that one is “nothing” (or worthless).

##### b) John 3:16-17 (CJB)

<sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world that he gave his only and unique  
Son, so that everyone who trusts in him may have eternal life,  
instead of being utterly destroyed. <sup>17</sup>For **God did not send the  
Son into the world to judge (or condemn) the world**, but ra-  
ther so that through him, the world might be saved.

##### c. Proverbs 26:12

<sup>12</sup>Do you see a person wise in their own eyes? There is more hope  
for a fool than for them.

- d. The concept of original sin was first alluded to in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-century by  
Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons ... Other church fathers such as Augustine  
also developed the doctrine ... Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose and Am-  
brosiaster considered that **humanity shares in Adam's sin**, transmit-  
ted by human generation. Augustine’s formulation of original sin was  
popular among Protestant reformers, such as Martin Luther and John  
Calvin, **who equated original sin with concupiscence (ardent desire,  
especially sexual desire), affirming that it persisted even after bap-**

1 Chana Weisberg, *Shabbat deLights, Vayikra/Bamidbar/Devarim*, (Chabad.org),  
pp. 89-92.

2 [https://www.chabad.org/parshah/torahreading\\_cdo/aid/2492773/showrashi/  
true/jewish/Bamidbar-Torah-Reading.htm](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/torahreading_cdo/aid/2492773/showrashi/true/jewish/Bamidbar-Torah-Reading.htm)

3 Frank E. Gaebelin, Gen. Ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 10*,  
(Zondervan Publishing House), p. 398.

**tism and completely destroyed freedom.** Within Roman Catholicism, the Jansenist movement, which the Church then declared heretical, also maintained that **original sin destroyed freedom of will.**

1) But see Ezekiel 18:20; Hebrews 11

2) **Total depravity (also called absolute inability, radical corruption, or total corruption) is a theological doctrine derived from the Augustinian concept of original sin.** It is the teaching that, as a consequence of the Fall of Man, **every person born into the world is enslaved to the service of sin** and, apart from the efficacious or prevenient grace of God, **is utterly unable to choose to follow God, refrain from evil, or accept the gift of salvation as it is offered.**

It is advocated to various degrees by many Protestant confessions of faith and catechisms, including those of Lutheranism, Arminianism, and Calvinism.

e. Proverbs 6:12-14 (CJB)

<sup>12</sup>A **scoundrel** (i.e., a villain, crook, "rat," cheat), a vicious man, lives by crooked speech, <sup>13</sup>winking his eyes, shuffling his feet, pointing with his fingers. <sup>14</sup>**With deceit in his heart, he is always plotting evil** and sowing discord.

JPS—base person ...

KJV—naughty person ...

LXX—foolish man ...

NAS, NKJ, RSV, YLT—worthless person ...

NIV—troublemaker ...

NJB, TNK—scoundrel ...

Why then was a large segment of the Jewish people entirely excluded? Only the males were counted, and only those from twenty and upwards. **Are some perhaps more equal than others? Was the contribution of the entire female population, or the elders, not cherished by G-d?**

The Kabbalists explain that **the masculine force in creation is outward-bound, while the feminine is inward-bound.** The masculine spiritual service is to forge into the outside, foreign territory, to wage war against the negativity of our world. The feminine spiritual role, by contrast, is to protect, nurture, discover, and reveal the holiness implicit in creation.

We are **in a male mode** when we impose a higher truth upon our world and ourselves. When we seek to nurture the divine power in what already is and become sensitized to the potential of our inner essence, we are using **our feminine dynamic.**

The counting of the Jewish people began from the age of twenty and upwards, those who were mature enough physically, emotionally, and spiritually to go out to wage war. What is "going out to war" in the spiritual sense?

***Our task as human beings is to create a world that is a home for our Creator, compatible to His standards and morals, a holy world.***

We can accomplish this through two modalities.

On the one hand, we bring more G-dliness into our world by fighting against the darkness and evil around us. We vanquish the earthly negativity by aggressively assaulting it-through physical might, by literally waging war against the tyranny of cruel regimes or through ideological battles against immoral ideals.

The other modality is to strengthen, cultivate, and nurture the positive already inherent in G-d's creation. This mode is not waging a war or imposing an order, but rather uncovering and nurturing the positive and G-dly aspects within our world, and thereby increasing and spreading holiness.

While the first mode means putting ourselves in a position of danger by exposing us to the outside elements, the second involves protecting and guarding the precious inner elements of G-dliness within our lives.

**Both of these approaches are necessary, and each role is integral to the Creator's plan.** There are times when we must wage an external battle, and there are times when we must safeguard our internal treasures.

While the protection-and-discovery mode requires delicate skills and spiritual sensitivity, waging an external battle involves definite risk and exposure. To battle against outside forces, you must have adequate training, **but also a strong sense of identity and a real appreciation for your uniqueness and worth as an individual.**

3. *Our task as human beings is to create a world that is a home for our Creator, compatible to His standards and morals, a holy world.*

a. The Midrash [Gen. Rabah] offers yet a third (insight re: Creation).

Implied in our opening biblical verse is a principle as to how we ought to live our lives. 'In the beginning God created heaven and earth.' In this sentence, 'created' is the verb; the world reveals to us the creative function of the divine. And **since one of the guiding principles in the Torah is that we walk in His ways, our first meeting with God tells us that, just as He created, so must we create, just as He stood at the abyss of darkness and made light, so must we—created in His image—remove all pockets of darkness, chaos and void, bringing light, order and significance.** In effect, the first verse of Genesis is also the first commandment, a

command ordained by God to all human beings created in His image: the human task in this world is to create, or rather to re-create a world, to make it a more perfect world, by virtue of the 'image of God' within each of us. The Midrash sees the human being in general, and the Jew in particular, as a creative force. Our creative energies—religious, ethical, scientific and artistic—must work in harmony with the Almighty to perfect a not yet perfect world, **to bring us back to the peace and harmony of Eden.**<sup>4</sup>

b. Exodus 29:44-46

<sup>44</sup>"So I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. <sup>45</sup>**Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God.** <sup>46</sup>They will know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of Egypt **so that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.**

1) Deuteronomy 4:5-8

<sup>5</sup>See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the LORD my God commanded me ... <sup>6</sup>**Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations**, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." <sup>7</sup>What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? <sup>8</sup>And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?

c. Isaiah 58:6-8 (cf. Mat 25:31-46)

<sup>6</sup>"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: **to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?** <sup>7</sup>Is it not **to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?** <sup>8</sup>Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.

1) Proverbs 19:17

Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward them for what they have done.

2) Proverbs 22:9

<sup>9</sup>The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor.

3) Psalms 41:1

For the director of music. A psalm of David. Blessed are those who have regard for the weak; the LORD delivers them in times of trouble.

d. Matthew 10:5-8

<sup>5</sup>These twelve Yeshua sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. <sup>6</sup>Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. <sup>7</sup>As you go, proclaim this message: **'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'** <sup>8</sup>**Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.**

e. Acts 3:1-10

<sup>1</sup>One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. <sup>2</sup>Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. <sup>3</sup>When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. <sup>4</sup>Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" <sup>5</sup>So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. <sup>6</sup>Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of (the Messiah, Yeshua of) Nazareth, walk." <sup>7</sup>Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, **and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong.** <sup>8</sup>He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. <sup>9</sup>When all the people saw him walking and praising God, <sup>10</sup>they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and **they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.**

The census in this Torah portion was for those individuals who were given the task of "going out" and "waging war."

The men fighting on the outside needed this infusion. When on the attack, fighting in alien environments against foreign values that constantly attempt to erode his ideals and vision, this reminder is essential to keep the warrior focused and on track, instead of swallowed up by the surrounding norms.

Perhaps this is the reason for why only the men able to go to war were counted. The counting provided extra empowerment to those who would be exposed and vulnerable in waging battle against the negative forces of creation.

<sup>4</sup> [https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0229/0080/1614/files/look\\_inside\\_-\\_torah\\_lights\\_bereshit.pdf?v=9375527014956455729](https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0229/0080/1614/files/look_inside_-_torah_lights_bereshit.pdf?v=9375527014956455729)

On the other hand, **the self-worth of the women (and the elders) would be validated through their critical and steadfast role of safeguarding our inner treasures.**

4. 1Corinthians 12:12-13 (CJB)

<sup>12</sup>For just as **the body is one but has many parts**; and all the parts of the body, though many, constitute one body; so it is with the Messiah. <sup>13</sup>For it was by one Spirit that we were all immersed into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free; and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

a. Men's "roles" and woman's "roles" may be different—but the one is not superior (or inferior) to the other—their relative "roles" are both essential to accomplishing God's purpose.

b. 1Corinthians 12:4-7

<sup>4</sup>There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. <sup>5</sup>There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

<sup>6</sup>There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. <sup>7</sup>Now **to each one** (*NOT "to each man"*) the manifestation of the Spirit **is given for the common good.**