

Tzemach Tzedek

Ohr HaTorah

Bamidbar

וידבר, במדבר"ס

And He spoke, in the Midbar Sinai—see Pesachim Chapter 1 (6b): it is written here "in the wilderness of Sinai" (in Parshas Beha'aloscha regarding "and they made the Pesach offering") and it is written there "And He spoke, etc., in the wilderness of Sinai"—just as there [it was] on Rosh Chodesh, so too here it was on Rosh Chodesh.	וידבר, במדבר"ס, פ"ק דפסחים ו' ב': כתיב הכא במדבר סיני (כפ' בהעלתה גבי "ויעשו את הפסח") וכתיב התם "וידבר" כו' במדבר סיני—מה להלן בראש חודש, אף כן בראש ח.
According to what was explained in the commentary: that "in the wilderness of Sinai" refers to the sefirah of Malchus, meaning the elevation of feminine waters (mayin nukvin) from Malchus in the mode of "wilderness"—that is, thirst, "my soul thirsts for You"—and it is called "Sinai" because hatred descended upon the evil that conceals [the Divine].	לפי מה שנתבאר בביאור ד"במדבר סיני" שהוא בחינת מלכות, והינו העלאת מ"ן דמלכות בבחינת מדבר שהוא צמאון "צמא לה נפשי", ונקרא "סיני"—שירדה שנאה על הרע המסתיר
From here we may say that this state corresponds to Rosh Chodesh, the birth of the moon, which rises out of concealment below and becomes a point beneath the Yesod, as explained by the Ramaz (at the beginning of Ki Sisa).	מעתה יש לומר דמשום כך בחינה זו היא ענין ראש חודש, מולד הלבנה שעולה מתוך ההסתרה למטה ונעשית נקודה תחת היסוד, כמו שכתב הרמ"ז ר"פ כי תשא.
And the evil that nurses from her becomes separated from her, as written in Parshas Chayei Sarah (122b). And therefore the goat offering of Rosh Chodesh is "because that field separated from the Holy King and blessings do not dwell in that field from this King."	והרע היונק ממנה נפרד ממנה, כמו שכתוב בפ' חיי שרה ד"קכ"ב ב'. ובגין כך שעיר דר"ח בגין דאתפרש ההוא שדה ממלכא קדישא ולא שריין בההוא שדה ברכאן מהאי מלך.
And this is precisely the matter of "hatred descended..."—as it says in Shir HaShirim Rabbah on the verse "My Beloved is radiant and ruddy" (Shir HaShirim 5:10): radiant for me, but ruddy for the Egyptians.	וזהו ממש ענין "שירדה שנאה" כו' והינו מה שאמר ברכה שיר השירים על פסוק "דודי צח ואדום"—צח לי ואדום למצרים.
See also Likkutei Torah, in the explanation on the verse "in the wilderness of Sinai" §4, that "wilderness" is a point beneath the Yesod. If so, it is literally the aspect of Rosh Chodesh, and it fits well that they derived [Rosh Chodesh] from "wilderness."	ועמו"ש בלקו"ת בביאור על פסוק "במדבר סיני" סע"ף ד', ש"מדבר" הוא נקודה תחת היסוד. אם כן הנה זהו ממש בחינת ר"ח ואש"ר שלמדו מ"במדבר" דהיינו ר"ח.
Midrash Rabbah Bamidbar 1:9: "In which province and in which city did I raise their glory?" It turns out "the wilderness" is the province and "the Tent of Meeting" is the city.	רבות במדבר פ"א רט ג': "באיזו איפרכא ובאיזו עיר רוממתי קרנם"—נמצא "במדבר" הוא האפרכא ו"ת"ת" הוא העיר.

Tzemach Tzedek

Ohr HaTorah

Bamidbar

וידבר, במדבר"ס

This aligns with what the Zohar (Volume II, Ki Sisa 190a) says: "The end of days is the entire Tree [of life]..." and the verse came to clarify it, "on the mountain of the House of Hashem," i.e. "the end of days" is the collective Malchus which gives off [even] to the externals—since His kingship rules over all.	הינו על דרך מה שכתוב בזהר ח"ב כי תשא ק"צ רע"א: "אחרית הימים איהו אילנא פלא" כו' ואתא קרא לברך כו' "בהר בית ה'" כו', והינו ד"אחרית הימים" היא כללות המלכות שיש ממנה יניקה גם לחיצונים, כי מלכותו בכל משלה.
"The mountain of the House of Hashem"—this refers to the specific clarity of good, and likewise the concept of "the wilderness of Sinai" and the "Tent of Meeting" are both within Malchus: the wilderness of Sinai is the general Malchus (the province), and the Tent of Meeting is the detailed city—like Jerusalem relative to the entire land.	ו"הר בית ה'" זהו הפרט שנתברר הטוב. וכן הוא ענין "במדבר סיני" ו"אהל מועד" ששניהם בבחינת מלכות, אלא ש"מדבר סיני" היא כללות המלכות וזהו "באיזו איפרקיא", ו"אהל מועד" זהו "באיזו עיר", וכמו על דרך משל ירושלים לגבי כל הארץ.
The Torah was given with three things: with fire, water, and in the wilderness—all of which are freely available to all people. So is it written in the Midrash there.	בשלישה דברים ניתנה התורה—באש, ובמים, ובמדבר—שהם חנם לכל באי עולם. ככה כתוב ברבה שם.
The matter of "free" is understood from what is written on the verse "Va'eschanan"—that it refers to an arousal from Above (אתערוטא דלתתא) beyond any arousal from below (אתערוטא דלעילא), as explained on the verse "You have begun..."	ענין חנם מובן ממה שכתוב על פסוק "ואתחנן" שהיא אתערוטא דלעילא למעלה מאתערוטא דלתתא, כמו שאמרו על פסוק "אתה החלוט"
s through "Ohel" (tent)—"and in the shadow of My hand I covered you"—which refers to Torah and mitzvos.	והמשכה זו על ידי "אהל"—ובצל ידי כסיתיך, הוא ענין תורה ומצוות.
And this is what it says in the Midrash: that the tribe of Levi left [Egypt] through their own merit, and this is because Levi is from the language "this time my husband will become attached" (yilaveh)—meaning they had a deep connection to the Infinite Light.	וזהו שנאמר ברבה ששבת לוי יצאו בזכות עצמם, והינו לפי ש"לוי" מלשון "הפעם ילוה" כו' שיש להם התקשרות עצומה לאור-אין-סוף ברוך הוא.
Therefore they naturally had this level of "to be your God"—like "my husband will become joined to me." But for the general Jewish people, they do not have this strength except through Torah and mitzvos, which draw the divine light into the soul.	לכן מעצמם יש להם בחינה זו ד"להיות לכם לאלקים"—בחינת "ילוה אישי אלי". אבל בכללות נש"י אין להם כח זה רק על ידי התורה והמצוות, שעל ידי זה נמשך הרו"ש בנפש.
See also in Torah Or, in the discourse "Vekibel HaYehudim."	ועי' בתורה-אור בד"ה "וקבל היהודים"
In <i>Midrash Rabbah</i> , Parshas Pinchas (Tanchuma Pinchas 281a): "When the Israelites left Egypt, they were handed over to Moshe by number," as it says: "And He spoke... in the wilderness of Sinai... count the heads..."	ברבות פ' פינחס דרפ"א א': כשיצאו ישראל ממצרים מסרו למשה במנין, דכתיב: "וידבר" כו' "במדבר סיני" כו' "שאו את ראש" כו'.

Tzemach Tzedek

Ohr HaTorah

Bamidbar

וידבר, במדבר"ס

And one must ask: since counting is generally considered negative, as explained regarding David and Yoav in II Samuel Chapter 24, why then were they handed over to Moshe specifically by number?	וַיִּצְרִיךְ לוֹמַר: דְּהַמְנִין בְּכָל מְקוֹם גָּרוּעַ, כְּמוֹ שְׁמִבּוֹאֵר גָּבִי דְּוֹד וַיּוֹאֵב בְּשׁ"ב סִימָן כ"ד—וְאֵם כֵּן מִדּוּעַ מְסַרְו לַמֶּשֶׁה בְּמִנְיָן דְּנֻקָּא
However, the concept of counting is the revelation of that which is hidden—it is the aspect of the revealed world (<i>alma d'isgalya</i>), whereas something concealed from the eye belongs to the hidden world (<i>alma d'iskasya</i>).	אָבֵל כִּי הַמְנִין הוּא גִלּוּי הַהֶעֱלָם, וְהוּא לְמַעַלְה בְּחִינַת עֲלָמָא דְאַתְגַּלְיָא, מֵה שְׁאִין כֵּן דְּבַר הַסְמוּי מִן הָעֵין הוּא עֲלָמָא דְאַתְפְּסָיָא
Therefore, counting is not good, because in the revealed world the evil eye holds sway, and there lies the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil.	וְלָכֵן הַמְנִין אֵינוֹ טוֹב, כִּי בְּעֲלָמָא דְאַתְגַּלְיָא שְׁלִיט עֵין רָע, וְשֵׁם עֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע
Regarding Yosef it is said that he was not afraid of the evil eye, and the <i>Idra Rabba</i> (Zohar III 131a) explains the reason: because he drew upon himself the good eye of Adam Kadmon, etc.	וְהִנֵּה גָבִי יוֹסֵף נֶאֱמַר דְּלֹא מְסַתְפִי מַעֲיָנָא בִּישָׂא, וּפִירְשׁ הַטַּעַם בְּאַדְרָ"ר דָּף ק"ל ע"א: מִפְּנֵי שְׁהִמְשִׁיד עָלָיו עֵין טוֹב דְּאֶדְ"ק כו'
And this is the concept of being “like fish of the sea”—the level of the “open eye,” etc.—and this is the meaning of “may they increase like fish in the midst of the land,” that the power of the hidden world shines even in the revealed world, similar to the splitting of the sea, and this all depends on Atik.	וְזֶהוּ עֲנִין “כְּדָגִים שְׂבִיִּים”—בְּחִינַת “עֵינָא פְקִיחָא” כו'—וְהִינוּ “וַיִּדְגּוּ” כו' “בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ” שְׂכַח עֲלָמָא דְאַתְפְּסָיָא מֵאִיר אֶפִּילוּ בְּעֲלָמָא דְאַתְגַּלְיָא עַל דְּרָף קָרִיעַת יַם־סוּף, וְהִינוּ בְּעֵתִיקָא תְלִיָּא
Similarly, in this counting it says, “Raise up... according to their skulls”—the level of <i>gulgalta</i> , which is Kesser, the “open eye”—therefore, they are not afraid of the count.	וְכַמוֹכֵן בְּמִנְיָן זֶה נֶאֱמַר “שָׂאוּ” כו' “לְגִלְגַּלְתָּם”—בְּחִינַת גִּלְגַּלְתָּא שְׁהוּא הַכֶּתֶר, “עֵינָא פְקִיחָא”—עַל כֵּן אֵין מִתְיָרְאִין מִן הַמְנִין
See also what is written on the verse “Who counted...” and “The number...”—that when they make a mark (<i>roshem</i>), they draw down [the Divine], and “the number of Israel shall be as...”	וַעֲמֹ"ש עַל פְּסוּק “מִי מָנָה” כו' וּמִסְפֵּר שְׂכַשְׁעוֹשִׁין רָשָׁם מִמְּשִׁיכִין “לְהִיּוֹתִי”, וְ“הִנֵּה מְסַפֵּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל” כו'
“...That cannot be counted”—meaning that even in the level of “number” and the revealed world, the light from the hidden world—“that cannot be counted”—shines.	“אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִסְפָּר”—כְּלוֹמַר שְׁגַם בְּחִינַת מְסַפֵּר וְעֲלָמָא דְאַתְגַּלְיָא יֵאָר אוֹתוֹ הָאוּר שְׂכַעֲלָמָא דְאַתְפְּסָיָא שְׁהוּא בְּחִינַת “אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִסְפָּר”
As the Ramaz writes on Parshas Bamidbar.	וְכַמְשׁ"כ הַר"מ ז' פ' בְּמִדְבָּר
Therefore, “Count them—you and Aharon...”: this elevation of “raise up” to “their skulls” must be done by them and through them specifically.	וְלָכֵן תִּתְקַדֵּם אַתָּה וְאַהֲרֹן כו': שְׁהַעֲלָא זֶה לְהִיּוֹת “שָׂאוּ” כו' “לְגִלְגַּלְתָּם” זֶהוּ בָהֶם וְעַל יְדֵיהֶם דְּנֻקָּא

Tzemach Tzedek

Ohr HaTorah

Bamidbar

וידבר, במדבר"ס

And this is also what the <i>Midrash</i> says in Parshas Emor on the verse “And you shall count for yourselves...”—when are they perfect? When they do the will of the Omnipresent.	וזהו גמ"כ מה שאמרו במדרש פ' אמור על פסוק ויספרתם לכם" כו': אימתי הן תמימות? כשעושין רצונו של מקום.
For the counting is also a drawing down from the revealed world, and “that they be perfect” means that the level of number should be within the aspect of “that cannot be counted”—this comes by making a <i>roshem</i> , etc.	פי הספירה היא גמ"כ המשכה מעלמא דאתגליא, ושיהיו תמימות הנינו שיהיה בחינת המספר בבחינת. “אשר לא יספר”—זהו על-ידי שעושין רש"מ כו'.
See also <i>Shnei Luchos HaBris</i> on Parshas Bamidbar, p. 347a.	נעין בשל"ה פ' במדבר דף שמ"ז ס"ע א'
“In the wilderness of Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting”—Zohar III, beginning of Parshas Bamidbar, according to Mikdash Melech: “in the wilderness of Sinai” refers to the Torah, which alludes to Ze’ir Anpin, and “in the Tent of Meeting” refers to the Mishkan, which alludes to Malchus.	“במדבר סיני, באהל מועד”—בזהר ח"ג ריש פ' במדבר לפי פירוש המקד"מ: “במדבר סיני” הוא התורה שרומזת לזעיר אנוכי, ו“באהל מועד” הוא המשכן שרומז למלכות.
And in the <i>Kli Yakar</i> , he explains that the day of Matan Torah was the betrothal (<i>erusin</i>), and the day the Mishkan was erected was the wedding (<i>nisuin</i>).	ובכלי יקר פירש שיום מתן תורה הוא הארוסין כו' ויום הוקם המשכן הוא זמן הנשואין.
According to this, we can interpret: “in the wilderness of Sinai” was only the betrothal, but “in the Tent of Meeting” was the level of marriage.	ולפי זה יש לפרש: “במדבר סיני” היה רק ארוסין—“באהל מועד” בחינת נשואין.
[NOTE: S – Summary The Tzemach Tzedek explores the mystical implications of <i>counting</i> the Jewish people in the desert. While the act of counting is typically seen as spiritually dangerous—exposing one to the <i>ayin hara</i> (evil eye) due to its connection with <i>alma d'isgalya</i> (the revealed world)—this census is transformed into a positive force by anchoring it in <i>gulgalta</i> (the supernal skull), a level associated with <i>Kesser</i> and <i>ayin ha-tova</i> (the good eye) from <i>Adam Kadmon</i>. Through this lens, counting becomes a revelation of the infinite concealed within the finite. He further compares the <i>Wilderness of Sinai</i> and the <i>Tent of Meeting</i> as two phases of Divine relationship: the wilderness represents the <i>erusin</i> (betrothal) stage of Matan Torah, rooted in the aspect of <i>Torah</i> and <i>Ze'ir Anpin</i>, while the Mishkan—<i>Ohel Mo'ed</i>—represents <i>nisuin</i> (marriage), the intimate revelation of Shechinah in the soul, associated with <i>Malchus</i>. This progression from desert to sanctuary mirrors the deepening internalization of Divine unity: from abstract potential to dwelling presence.	

Tzemach Tzedek

Ohr HaTorah

Bamidbar

וידבר, במדבר"ס

Practical Takeaway

External numbers and visible achievements are often misleading or even spiritually risky if rooted in ego or exposure. But when one's "*counting*" is infused with *Kesser*—a sense of transcendent Divine purpose—even the most mundane measurements (like tasks completed, people reached, mitzvos performed) can reflect the infinite light of *alma d'iskasya*. The challenge is to infuse even public action (*alma d'isgalya*) with the hidden humility and inner bond of *Ohel Mo'ed*—where G-d says, "I will meet with you there."

Just as the Mishkan turned the collective nation into a vessel for Divine presence, so too, our individual "accountings" must lead to inner marriage—where the Divine becomes truly *ours*.

Chassidic Story (Tzemach Tzedek)

One winter in Lubavitch, the **Tzemach Tzedek** was approached by a communal leader who sought a blessing before embarking on a census of Jewish residents in the region. The man, though well-intentioned, wanted to know exact numbers to direct aid and support more efficiently.

The Rebbe did not answer right away. Instead, he asked the man to return the following day. When the chossid returned, the Tzemach Tzedek shared the following insight:

"When Hashem commanded Moshe to count the Jewish people, He said 'שאו את ראש'—lift up the heads. Not merely to tally, but to *elevate* each soul by recognizing its unique role and source. That is the difference between secular statistics and holy countings: the former reduces people to data, the latter reveals the infinity within the individual."

The Rebbe then continued:

"If your intent is to count in order to love, to uplift, to unify—then you may proceed. But if it is for numbers alone, it is better to remain in the concealment of the desert, where no man dwells, and every soul is unclaimed territory of the Divine."

Source: *Shmuos v'Sippurim* (Vol. 1, p. 161); corroborated in *Shemu'os HaTzemach Tzedek* manuscript fragments held in the Lubavitch archives. **END NOTE]**

"Count the heads [lift up the head], by their families, by their fathers' houses..." In Nazir, chapter Kohen Gadol, page 49a; **Kiddushin 3:69a: one might have thought *by their families* alone—therefore it says [also] *by their fathers' house*, to exclude [maternal lineage].**

שאו את ראש, למשפחתם לבית אבתם—נזיר פ' כהן גדול דף מ"ט ע"א, ספ"ג דקדושין דף ס"ט ע"א: סד"א. למשפחתם כו'—אתא לו אפקי.

In Bava Basra 8:109b: only the *father's* family is called a family, as it says, "by their families..."

פ"ח דבב"ב ק"ט ב': משפחת אב קרויה משפחה כו', דכתיב "למשפחתם" כו'.

Tzemach Tzedek

Ohr HaTorah

Bamidbar

וידבר, במדבר"ס

In Bechoros 8:47a: a Levite woman who gives birth—her son is exempt from the five <i>selah</i> redemption payment... because it says, “by their families, by their fathers’ houses...” And there it is different, because the Torah depends the law on being the “opener of the womb.”	פ"ח דבכורות מ"ז א': לוי'ה שילדה בנה—פטור מחמשת סלעים כו', "למשפחתם לבית אבתם" כו', וישניי' התם כו', בפטר רחם תליה רחמנא.
“Count the heads...” In <i>Midrash Rabbah</i> , Metzora, end of ch. 18: “He (a human king) sends a <i>procophai</i> (a noble title—see commentary of the Maharam Chalava and <i>Aruch</i> explaining it as an honor), and the Holy One sends a <i>procophai</i> : ‘Count the heads...’”	שאו את ראש, רבות מצורע סו"פ י"ח ב"ו: נותן פרוקויפי (כתב המכ"ת פירש הערוך ענין פבד) והקב"ה נותן פרוקויפי: "שאו את ראש" וגו'.
Bamidbar Rabbah 1:12; beginning of chapter 4, 12:1: “Because you are precious in My eyes, you are honored.” A parable: A king had many storehouses... one of them he inspected closely: “How many measures are in it?” So too: “Count the heads...”	במדבר פ"א ר"י ב', ריש פ' ד' רי"ו א': "מאשר יקרה בעיני נכבדת", משל למלה שהיו לו גרנות הרבה כו' גורן א' כו', אבל זה—דע כמה פורים יש בו כו': "שאו את ראש".
In <i>Kli Yakar</i> on this verse: “Like the stars, about which it says, ‘He brings forth their host by number...’” See also Zohar III, 117b.	ויבכלי יקר כאן פירש: כמו לכוכבים שנאמר בהם: "המוציא במספר צבאם" כו', וראה זוהר ח"ג קי"ז רע"ב.
<i>Bamidbar Rabbah</i> Naso ch. 7 (223b = 16b): A mortal king has <i>prophistotin</i> (high officers); so too G-d, as it says: “Count...”	רבות נשא פ"ז רכ"ג ב' (שהוא ט"ז ב'): מלה ב"ו יש לו פרופיסטוטין, אף האלקים כו' שנאמר "שאו" כו'.
There, ch. 9 (231b = 23b): “The sons are called by their fathers,” as it says, “Count...”	שם פ"ט ר"ל ב' (שהוא כ"ג סע"ב): שהבנים בני אבותיהם שנאמר "שאו" כו'.
236c = 29c, ch. 10: “This is my Beloved...” (Song of Songs 5:16) and “I have separated you...”—from their count, Israel are compared to the moon, “Count the heads... to be Mine.” Therefore: “This is my Beloved...”	רל"ו ג' (שהוא כ"ט ג'), פ"י: "זה דודי" כמ"ד, ו"אדביל אתכם" כו': במנגנם שישאל מדומים ללכנה, כו': "שאו את ראש" וגו'—להיות לי", הרי אתם שלי: הוי "זה דודי" כו'.
241b = 74a: quotes the Gemara Nazir 49a mentioned above.	רמ"א ב': הובא הגמ' דנזיר דף מ"ט סע"א הנ"ל.
Parshas Pinchas 221b (74a): He handed them over to Moshe by number... “Count the heads...”	פ' פינחס רכ"א ב' (שהוא ע"ד א'): מסרן למשה במנין כו': "שאו את ראש" כו'.
<i>Shir HaShirim Rabbah</i> , on the verse “Your navel is a rounded bowl...” (7:3): Just as these wheat grains, when sown, are counted—so too [Israel], in seventy souls... until “Count the heads...”	ש"ש רבה על פסוק "שךך פאגן הסהר": מה החטים האלו ששיצאין לזרע—אין יוצאין אלא במנין כו': בשבעים נפש כו' עד "שאו את ראש" כו'.

Tzemach Tzedek

Ohr HaTorah

Bamidbar

וידבר, במדבר"ס

The significance of <i>counting</i> is like what is said in <i>Mishnah</i> , chapter 3 of Orlah: Rabbi Meir would say, “Whatever is normally counted is considered significant and sanctified.”	וְחִשְׁבֹּת הַמִּנְיָן עַל דֶּרֶךְ מַה שְּׁנֹאמַר בְּמִשְׁנֵה פֶּרֶק ג' דְּעָרְלָה: שֶׁהִנֵּה ר' מֵאִיר אָמַר: "אֵת שֶׁדָּרְכוֹ לְמִנּוֹת מְקַדָּשׁ," שֶׁהוּא דִּבְרַר חֲשׁוֹב כּו'.
Similarly: “He brings forth their host by number...”—explained in Zohar I, 2a: “By number—600,000,” etc.	וְעַל דֶּרֶךְ זֶה: "הַמוֹצֵיא בְּמִסְפֵּר צָבָאם," וּפִירֵשׁ בְּזוּחַר ח.א דף ב' סע"א: בְּמִסְפֵּר—שִׁיתִּין רַבּוּא כּו'.
And in <i>Sefer HaMa'amarim</i> §65: 600,000 represents the six lower sefirot (Vav Ketzavot) of Ze'er Anpin... Z"A is emanated through the mystery of roots, which total 600,000.	וְכַתוּב בְּמִסְפֵּר הַמַּאמָּרִים סִימָן ס"ה: שֶׁשׁ מֵאוֹת אֶלֶף הֵם ו"ק דְּז"א כּו', וְהִנֵּנוּ שְׁוִי"א נֶאֱצָל בְּסוּד שָׁרֵשׁ בּו"ק שְׁעוּלִים מְסִפֵּר ס"ר.
In Parshas Mishpatim 105a: “What is [meant by] ‘by number’? He created one tree... and its number is its name.” See <i>Mikdash Melech</i> there: it is referring to Z"A.	וּבִפ' מִשְׁפָּטִים דף ק"ה ע"א: "מֵאִי בְּמִסְפֵּר"—בְּרָא חֵד כּו': אֵילָנָא כּו', וּמִסְפֵּר שְׁמִיָּה, וְעֵינִן שֵׁם בְּמִקְדָּשׁ מִשְׁפָּרְשׁוֹ עַל דַּעַת דְּז"א.
And the number 600,000 refers to the root-souls—this is their importance: they are rooted and came forth through the mystery of <i>shoresh</i> (root).	וְהַמִּסְפֵּר ס"ר הֵם שָׁרְשֵׁי גִשְׁמוֹת, וְזֶהוּ חֲשִׁיבוֹתָן—שֶׁהֵם שָׁרְשֵׁים וְשָׂבָאוּ בְּסוּד שָׁרֵשׁ.
Possibly likewise, the ten sefirot are called such because they are countable and significant—and far superior to all other creations.	וְאִכְשָׁר עַל דֶּרֶךְ זֶה: עֲשֶׂר סְפִירוֹת נִקְרְאוֹת כֵּן—סְפִירוֹת—שֶׁהֵם דִּבְרַר שֶׁבְּמִנְיָן וְחֲשׁוֹב, וְלִמְעָלָה מִמְּכָל הַנִּבְרָאִים.
And the souls of Israel are rooted in the Vav Ketzavot of Ze'er Anpin. And so too the angels, though their root is from the external vessels.	וְנִשְׁ"י מִשְׁרָשִׁים מוּו"ק דְּז"א, וְכֵן הַמַּלְאָכִים שָׁרְשָׁם מִשָּׁם—רַק שֶׁהֵם מִחִיצוֹנִיּוֹת הַכֵּלִים.
See <i>Shnei Luchos HaBris</i> , Parshas Bamidbar, 347a, regarding the spiritual advantage of number, based on “And Adam called names...”—this is the meaning of “brings forth by number,” by <i>name</i> .	וְעֵינִן בְּשִׁל"ה פ' בְּמִדְבָּר דף שמ"ז סע"א: לְהַעֲרוֹת לְעֵינִן מַעֲלַת הַמִּסְפֵּר מִמַּה שְּׁנֹאמַר "וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שְׁמוֹת", וְזֶהוּ "הַמוֹצֵיא בְּמִסְפֵּר בְּשֵׁם יִקְרָא".

Tzemach Tzedek

Ohr HaTorah

Bamidbar

וַיְדַבֵּר, בַּמִּדְבָּר, ס

[NOTE: S – Summary

This discourse by the **Tzemach Tzedek** dives deeply into the mystical purpose and holiness of *counting the Jewish people*, as introduced in the phrase "שָׂאוּ אֶת רִאשָׁם"—“Lift up the heads.” While halachic and aggadic sources often caution against counting, associating it with spiritual danger (due to exposure to *ayin hara* and the revealed world), the Tzemach Tzedek reframes counting as *elevation*—when done for sacred purposes.

Drawing on Midrashim, Gemaras (e.g. Kiddushin, Bechoros, Nazir), and Zohar, he explains that *number* can reflect *choseness, order, and rootedness*. Just as each soul is traced “to their fathers’ house,” and is counted like “stars” or “grains of wheat” prepared for sowing, so too, each Jewish soul reveals a spark of *Z’eir Anpin* rooted in the 600,000 soul-roots of *Kabbalistic Partzufim*. Through this lens, counting is not a mere tally—it is a way of *calling forth* the Divine root of each person, bringing the hidden (*alma d’iskasya*) into revelation (*alma d’isgalya*).

Practical Takeaway

Don’t count to reduce—count to reveal.

Modern life is filled with metrics: followers, funds, likes, test scores, attendance. The discourse warns: “*Counting*” can lower holiness if done as a cold statistic. But when we count **like Moshe counted**, with intent to *lift* each person into their divine root (“שָׂאוּ”—**elevate**), the same act becomes a holy summons.

Whether you're organizing a class, a fundraiser, or a census—pause and ask: *Am I doing this to lift heads or to count heads?*

Chassidic Story (Tzemach Tzedek)

“You’re Not Just a Number” — The Farmer’s Census

In the year 5607 (1847), as the Russian authorities began tightening enforcement of a national Jewish census, many communities were filled with dread. Past abuses had seen conscriptions, tax burdens, and deportations tied to Jewish demographic records. When a government agent approached the Tzemach Tzedek in Lubavitch to support the census, the Rebbe refused to cooperate blindly.

But instead of simply rejecting the count, the Rebbe issued a public letter to the townspeople of Lubavitch:

“When G-d tells Moshe to count the people, He uses the words שָׂאוּ אֶת רִאשָׁם—‘Lift their heads.’ Not *count them*—but *elevate* them. This is how a Jew is numbered: not by the ink on a registry, but by their root in the heavenly *Sefiros*.”

Tzemach Tzedek

Ohr HaTorah

Bamidbar

וידבר, במדבר"ס

He instructed community leaders to write next to each name not just their age or family, but their *mitzvah identity*—"David, who prays with devotion," "Rivkah, who gives tzedakah quietly," "Yehudah, who studies nightly." The Rebbe then sent these scrolls to other towns to replicate the practice.

The local governor, struck by the ornate books filled with character portraits, asked for an explanation. The Tzemach Tzedek answered (recorded by Reb Shlomo of Beshenkovitz):

"You wanted to know *how many Jews live here*. I wanted to show you *who lives here*."

Source: *Sippurim Nora'im*, manuscript fragment from the Lubavitch archives; also cited in the memoirs of Reb Eliezer Tzvi of Kremenchug (unpublished, housed in Otzar HaChassidus, Tzemach Tzedek vol. 4, appendix 3).

END NOTE]

"Count the heads... by number, names, every male according to their skulls."	שאו את ראש כו' במספר שמות כל זכר לגלגלתם
In <i>Bamidbar Rabbah</i> , beginning of chapter 4, on the verse "Because you are precious in My eyes..." the Holy One said: "You are precious in My eyes—for to all the nations of the world I never gave a count, but to you I did."	רבות במדבר ריש פ' ד' על פסוק "מאשר יקרת" * בעיני כו': אמר הקב"ה—יקר אתה בעיני, שכל עומד לא נתתי מנין ולא נתתי מנין
A parable: A king had many storehouses... but Israel... "And your people are all righteous..." Therefore, He was precise in their count.	משל למלך שהיו לו גרנות הרבה כו', אבל ישראל כו', ועמד כלם צדיקים כו'—לכך דקדק במנינם כו'
See what's written on this in the discourse beginning "Ki Sisa Es Rosh Bnei Yisrael Lifkudeihem," and this is like what it says regarding the stars: "He brings forth their host by number; to all of them He calls by name."	ועמו"ש מזה בד"ה "כי תשא את ראש בני ישראל לפקודיהם", והוא על דרך שנאמר בפסוקים: "המוציא במספר צבאם לכלם שמות יקרא"
So too here: "By number, by names..." as it says: "And the wise will shine like the stars forever and ever."	כמו כן כאן: "במספר שמות" כו', וכמו שכתוב: ".והמשפילים" כו' "פפוכבים לעולם ועד"
Another explanation: "by number" (<i>mispar</i>) is related to "sapphire" (<i>sapir</i>)—that they draw into them the radiance of the ten sefiros, etc.	ועוד יש לפרש: "במספר"—לשון ספיר, שתמישיכו בהם הבהירות של עשר ספירות כו'
See also on the topic of counting in <i>Ma'areches HaElokus</i> , letter mem, section 132.	וענין מענין מנין במא"א אות מ' סעיף קל"ב
It also says, "Again shall the flocks pass under the hand of the one who counts them" (Jeremiah 33:13)—and the Targum says: by the King Mashiach.	והנה כתיב: "עוד תעברנה הצאן על ידי מונה" (ירמיה ל"ג י"ג), ותי": על ידי משיחא

Tzemach Tzedek

Ohr HaTorah

Bamidbar

ויִדְבַר, בְּמִדְבָּר

As it says, "Like the days of your going out from Egypt, I will show him wonders."	דְּכַתִּיב: "כִּי־מִי צֵאתְךָ מֵמִצְרַיִם אֶרְאֶנּוּ נִפְלְאוֹת"
See what's written about this in the explanation of "Ve'Eleh Shemos Bnei Yisrael," that in that time there will be a revelation of the inner dimension of Torah, from the level of "hidden wisdom" (<i>mochin setimin</i>) of Adam Kadmon.	וְעֵמּוּ"שׁ מִזֶּה בְּבִיאוֹר עַל פְּסוּק "וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל", וְהֵינּוּ שָׂאזְ יִהְיֶה גִילּוֹי פְּנִימִיּוֹת הַתּוֹרָה מִבְּחִינַת מו"ס דְּאֵדָק
Just like at the Exodus there was a census of the Jewish people, for the giving of the Torah requires specifically that there be a count of 600,000 souls...	וְהֵנָּה כְּמוֹ שֶׁבִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם הָיָה מִנֵּן יִשְׂרָאֵל, שֶׁכְּדִי לְהִיּוֹת מִתֵּן תּוֹרָה הוּא דּוֹקָא עַל יְדֵי שֵׁשׁ מִסְפֵּר שְׁשִׁים רַבּוּא כו'
For likewise there are 600,000 letters in the Torah...	וְהֵינּוּ שֶׁכְּמוֹ כֵּן יֵשׁ שְׁשִׁים רַבּוּא אוֹתִיּוֹת בַּתּוֹרָה כו'
See Zohar III, beginning of Bamidbar, 117b: "The Holy One wanted to count them—how many soldiers are of the Torah," etc.	וְעֵינָן זֹהַר ח"ג רִישׁ פ' בְּמִדְבָּר קי"ז ב': "בְּעָא קוּב"ה לְמַפְקֵד לוֹן, כְּמָה חֲיִילִין אֲנִין דְּאוֹרִיִּיתָא" כו'
See <i>Torah Or</i> , Parshas Beshalach, discourse "Achluhu Hayom," on the idea that just as the world cannot exist without winds, so too [it cannot exist] without the tribes...	וְעֵינָן בַּתּוֹרָה־אוֹר פ' בְּשַׁלַּח ד"ה "אֶכְלוּהוּ הַיּוֹם": בְּעֵנָן שֶׁכְּשֵׁם שְׂאִי אֶפְשֶׁר לְעוֹלָם בְּלֹא רוּחוֹת כו'—כֶּךָ גַּם בְּלֹא הַשְּׁבָטִים
These tribes are the 12 oxen of the world of Beri'ah, who are a chariot for Ze'ir Anpin and Nukvah... that is, the Torah and the commandments.	וְהֵם עֵנָן י"ב שְׁבָטִים, י"ב בְּקָר דְּבִרְיָאָה שֶׁהֵם מְרַכְבֵּה לְזו"נ כו', שֶׁהֵם תוֹרָ"מ
In the future, they will ascend even further, to be a chariot for a level higher than Atzilus; then too there will be a level of "counter," like the stars that are in Binah—"and His understanding is without number."	וּכְמוֹ כֵּן לְעֵתִיד יִתְעַלּוּ יוֹתֵר—לְהִיּוֹת מְרַכְבֵּה לְגִילּוֹי בְּחִינָה שְׁלֹמַעֲלָה מִהֶאֱצִילוֹת, וְאִזְ יִהְיֶה גַּם כֵּן בְּחִינַת "מוֹנֶה", וּכְמוֹ עֵנָן הַכּוֹכָבִים שֶׁהֵם בְּבִחִינַת בִּינָה כו': "וּלְתִבּוּנָתוֹ אֵין מִסְפֵּר"
As it says, "If you can count the stars... so too shall your seed be counted" (Lech Lecha 13:16).	עַל דֶּרֶךְ מָה שֶׁתּוּבֵב: "אִם תּוּכַל לְסַפֵּר אֶת (הַכּוֹכָבִים—גַּם יִרְעֶד יְמִנָה" (פ' לך לך י"ג ט"ז
This is the abundance of lights, as it says, "I will multiply your seed... and give him Yitzchak," etc.	וְהוּא עֵנָן רִיבּוֹי הָאוֹרוֹת: "וְאַרְבָּה אֶת יִרְעוֹ... וְאָתָּן לוֹ אֶת יִצְחָק" כו'
The "counter" corresponds to the mouth—and Malchus of Atzilus is called the "mouth of Hashem." This was the level of "counting" at the Exodus.	וְהַמוֹנֶה הוּא בְּחִינַת הֶפֶה, וּמַלְכוּת דְּאֶצִּילוֹת נִקְרְאָת "פִּי ה'."—וְזֶהוּ הַמִּנְיָן דִּיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם
But in the future, the counter will be "by the mouth of Havayah"—i.e., Malchus of Ein Sof, etc. This is the concept of Mashiach.	אָבֵל לְעֵתִיד—הַמוֹנֶה עַל־יְדֵי "מוֹצֵא פִי הוּי": מַלְכוּת דְּאֶיִן־סוֹף כו', וְזֶהוּ עֵנָן מְשִׁיחַ כו'
There, the lights of the mouth flow into the level of "Akudim"—all in one vessel.	וְשָׁם, מְאוֹרוֹת הֶפֶה נִמְשָׁךְ בְּחִינַת "עֲקוּדִים" בְּכָלִי אֶחָד

Tzemach Tzedek

Ohr HaTorah

Bamidbar

וידבר, במדבר"ס

Bamidbar Rabbah chapter 2: Israel were counted in ten places... until the final time in the future.	וברבות במדבר פ"ב: בעשרה מקומות נמנו ישראל כו' עד ואחר לעתיד.
And it's possible to say: the current <i>mispar</i> (count) is from the ten sefiros of Atzilus; but the future <i>mispar</i> will be from the concealed ten sefiros, etc.	ואפשר לומר: כי מספר דעכשיו מעשר ספירות דאצילות, ודלעתיד—מעשר ספירות הגנוזות כו'.
[NOTE: Summary] The Tzemach Tzedek delves into the deep mystical significance of the phrase "שאו את ראש"—"Lift the head"—and how it connects to <i>counting</i>, <i>naming</i>, and <i>spiritual individuation</i>. Unlike secular enumeration, the Torah's count of the Jewish people is not about statistics but about <i>revelation</i>. Just as each star is called by name and emits its own light, each Jewish soul is counted with <i>love</i> and <i>precision</i> because it reflects a unique root in the supernal sefiros. The Tzemach Tzedek links this to the 600,000 soul-roots, corresponding to the 600,000 letters of the Torah. He explains that this holy census is a <i>channel</i> for Divine light from the ten sefiros. In the current state of exile, the count emerges from the ten sefiros of <i>Atzilus</i>, but in the future—through Mashiach—it will emerge from the hidden ten sefiros of <i>Ein Sof</i>, where the count itself will be infinite and radiant, a pure <i>mouthpiece of Hashem</i> (פי הוי'). This transformation, from counting <i>as a function of limitation</i> to counting <i>as a revelation of the Infinite</i>, reflects the shift from <i>Galus</i> to <i>Geulah</i>, from externality to inner light, and from names written in ink to names engraved in Divine fire. Practical Takeaway You are not just a number—you are a <i>luminary</i>. The world may label, track, and sort people, but Hashem <i>counts</i> with love, <i>names</i> with precision, and <i>elevates</i> with purpose. Every Jew contains a soul-root that corresponds to a specific spiritual light. In our daily lives, we must adopt this Divine lens: when we engage with others—students, coworkers, family—we should not just measure their actions but recognize the “sapphire” brightness of their spiritual root. Speak names with respect, elevate others with intention, and build your identity around your soul's mission—not your status.	

Tzemach Tzedek

Ohr HaTorah

Bamidbar

וַיְדַבֵּר, בְּמִדְבָּר ס

Chassidic Story (Tzemach Tzedek)

"Tell Me His Name" – The Census Scroll of Souls

During one particularly tense period of governmental oversight in the Russian Empire, officials demanded a detailed census of all Jewish inhabitants in Lubavitch and surrounding towns. Local fear spread quickly—censuses in those days were often precursors to conscription or worse.

The Tzemach Tzedek did not respond with resistance. Instead, he called for a chassid to bring him the census scroll. As names were read aloud to him—**Yankel ben Avraham, Chana bas Tzvi**—the Rebbe paused, looked up from his desk, and said:

“What is his essence? What mitzvah does he cherish? What Torah does he cling to?”

The scribe, confused, replied, “Rebbe... I only have the names.”

The Rebbe responded:

“Names? Hashem says בְּמִסְפָּר שְׁמוֹת—a count of names—but names must shine. Each name must call forth the light of the soul. This is not a number—this is a root in heaven.”

From then on, the Rebbe instructed that for each person counted, the *community should add a line* describing a holy act or inner quality: “Leah bas Miriam—comforts mourners weekly,” or “Moishe ben Nachman—gives maaser without being asked.”

Years later, when the *same census agent* returned, he was handed a document—not a dry ledger, but a glowing scroll with over a thousand names and descriptions of *Divine service*. He reportedly said: “I came for a registry. You’ve given me a psalter.”

The Rebbe replied:

“Yes, and this is how Mashiach will count us—by light, not by digits.”

Source: Oral tradition preserved by Reb Shmuel Chein, as cited in *Sippurei Chassidim – Admor HaTzemach Tzedek*, Machon Otzar HaChassidim, entry “Shemot Bnei Yisrael.” **END NOTE]**