

" A CENSUS THAT MAKES SENSE"

(or: "THE ARITHMETIC OF TORAH")

(or: "IT MUST ALL ADD UP")

(or: "THE IDIOM OF JEWISH PERSONALITY")

1. At recent R.A.Y.U. Convention, Herman Wouk compared English and Yiddish. Direct translation of Yiddish into English is fragmentary, lacks the charm, earthiness, immediacy and Jewishness of the whole Yiddish sentence though individual words and ideas are correctly translated.....This *sis* so both because of special character of Yiddish and also because it is rich in *idioms*, which can be translated word for word, but lack meaning as a whole. To take a minor example: ICH HAB IM LIB FUN DER VEITENS.... each word correctly translated, but meaning as a whole is more than component words.
2. It occurs to us that what holds true for language and words, holds true for personality and human beings. It is possible for a man to have all the individual qualities that go into making a fine person, and yet, as a whole, he can remain an unsavory character.
3. I believe that that is what RABBIS had in mind in their commentary on the central theme of today's special reading, Parshat Shekalim.....KI SISSA is method of census.... therefore one could not give more than $\frac{1}{2}$ -shekel even if he wanted to....but this was more than a clever method of accomplishing a census simultaneously with increasing the Temple's financial resources. It was a CENSUS WHICH MADE sense, it made sense in a very profound way. Our Rabbis (Mid.Rabba Shir Hash.) pointed out that from an analysis of the various parts of the Torah where a counting or census of populations and peoples is mentioned, a difference can be noted between the census of the Israelites and those of the heathen nations. UMO'S HA'OLAM YESH LAHEM MINYAN VE'EIN LAHEM SE'CHUM, YISRAEL YESH LAHEM MINYAN VE'YESH LAHEM SE'CHUM - when the Torah counts the heathens, it merely enumerates them according to their families, but does not offer a total sum whereas with Israel, gives individual counts and then a total sum of all Israelites or all Jews included in the census.
4. Why is this? Did Torah work on assumption that Jews aren't as good in arithmetic as non-Jews? Can't we add up a list and figure out final sum? Why does Torah mention total with Jews, not with idol worshippers?
5. What Totah meant to hint at is subtle yet deep. It is idea we mentioned before: the idea of totality which is personality, the Jewish idiom of personality. It is possible to have all individual qualities perfect and yet in the final analysis, they should not contribute to a beautiful character. In other words, what the Torah demands of a Jew is that all his qualities should ADD UP. They should be INTEGRATED in a complete, total, wholesome gestalt. A man can give TZEDAKAH, observe SHABBOS, desist from stealing, have all the individual characteristics that go into a good personality, but without really living IN Torah, these do not add up, and he remains empty. The true BEN YISRAEL is one of the complete and integrated Torah-personality, YESH LO MINYAN - he has the individual, enumerable qualities, VE'YESH LO SE'CHUM, and they add up to a complete, wholesome, integrated and well-rounded character.
they add up to something more than the component parts
6. Ramban: YESH NAVAL BI'RESHUS HA'TORAH - One can remain a rogue, dishonourable and corrupt, even while not violating the Torah. Certainly, meticulous observance of all the commandments without broader understanding of the great vistas of Torah, without being captured by Torah, means that they are there, these Mitzvos - but they don't add up. And when they don't add up, one remains a NAVAL even while in the domain of Torah.

7. I am so frequently asked - challenged is the better word - "Rabbi, how come so-and-so who is so observant - davens well and regularly, eats right food, even contributed worthy causes ... and yet he is such an unwholesome person, such an obnoxious fellow?" Of course it is a good question, and you all recognize it. And the answer is that this person, this NAVAL BI'RESHUS HA'TORAH, has never made an attempt to add up the individual elements of our religion, ^{so that sum includes that extra something} to integrate the individual MIDOS and MITZVOS so that he become a true BEN TORAH. A person of that sort, ^{can be counted, but not counted upon; he} can count - but can't add. He is deficient in the arithmetic of Torah.
8. I maintain that the same holds true, for instance, of the observance of Shabbos. You can comply with the letter of Sabbath Law and yet violate its spirit - although you cannot possibly abide by its spirit without observing the letter. You can desist from smoking, from riding, from sewing, from shopping, you can make Kiddush and eat Shabbos delicacies. Yet the Shabbos spirit can be violated - by keeping the instruments of ~~ee~~ entertainment and communication blaring constantly, by allowing a FEELING of weekdayishness to continue unabated, without realizing that Shabbos should be exploited for Torah and -as Isaiah makes clear - for sympathy with those less fortunate,; it can be made ~~and~~ mere enumeration of particular laws without adding up to true Shabbos if there is no attempt to forget - literally - business and other worries, and just be happy and cheerful with the family, if no attempt is made to offer another person a smile and a compliment and a friendly Gut Shabbos. There must be more than MINYAN. There must be SE'CHUM - an adding up of all that is done and not done, until it equals SHABBOS in the true, full beauty it was meant to be. SHABBOS, too, is an idiom - an idiom of Jewish life; and it must be lived as such.
9. (IF TIME) Our Rabbis of the Talmud made a very fine distinction between two types of pious people, between the TZADDIK (pious man) and the OVEID ELOKIM (servant of G-d). What is the difference? The TZADDIK, or inferior grade of religious personality, studies his portion of the Torah 100 times. The OVEID ELOKIM or higher kind of Torah personality, studies it 101 times. It sounds so extremely simple yet.... Doesn't mean that a "plugger" is more of a saint. What Rabbis meant is that TZADDIK, as good as he is, is merely 100 Mitzvos. The OVEID ELOKIM, on the other hand, has added them, integrated them, absorbed them into his personality, so that he has that extra ~~one~~ session of study - that is, that increment, that addition which means that he has added them all up and has achieved the Torah personality. For the Torah personality, the SE'CHUM, is always more than the MINYAN, more than the strict sum of the parts, it is the sum PLUS. A musical composition is technically the sum of all sounds. Actually, it is that - PLUS the feeling of wholeness, the gestalt of a beautiful composition. It is that extra something, which comes from being a true BEN TORAH, that makes ~~more~~ one more than a TZADDIK - which makes him an OVEID ELOKIM.
10. This, then, friends, is the Census That Makes Sense, the Arithmetic of Torah: in order to achieve the Idiom of Jewish Personality, ...it must all add up.