



Left, IDF back packed Torah ark, and right, Israeli soldier Carrying a sefer torah in operation protective edge.

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For such a small nation as we are, it seems odd that there are so many types of Jews—Ashkenazim, Sefardim, Chassidim, and so on. Even within these groups, there are many divisions, as there are numerous types of Chassidim, various Sefardim (Syrians, Yemenites, etc.), and so on. What is the reason for this?

One reason is that it is for us to pick and choose what we need for our avodas Hashem. Thus, we may see someone who looks like a Litvak but enjoys the vibrancy of chassidus, learning their sefarim, davening with them, and the like.

Each Jew is a letter in the Sefer Torah, as there were 600,000 root souls at Sinai and 600,000 letters in the Torah. Indeed, יש ששים ישראל, there are 600,000 letters in the Torah (Pri Tzadik, Rosh Chodesh Elul, 1). ישן (Devarim 32:15. See R' Gershom in Eruchin 33a.), another name we are called by, is an acronym of יש ששים רבוא נשמות, there are 600,000 souls.

Incidentally, let us mention an interesting occurrence at Har Sinai. The Arugas Habosem (Yisro, 20:15, s.v. וירא העם) tells us about a very interesting occurrence that took place at Har Sinai. We know that every Jew corresponds to a letter in the Sefer Torah, as there were 600,000 Jews and 600,000 letters in the Torah. At Matan Torah, every Jew recognized his own letter as well as the letter of his counterparts. He also knew the formation—which letters came first and which later on. So the one who knew that his letter was the נ of בראשית, for example, stood next to the

Jew who was the ר of בראשית. In this way they displayed the Torah in human form! This is how we can grasp וירא העם וינעו ויעמדו מרחק, the people saw, trembled, and stood from afar (Shemos 20:15). וירא העם—they saw their own letter as well as those of their friends, and also the arrangement of the Torah. וינעו, they moved around (as in נע ונד—Breishis 4:12) to form the sequence of words properly. ויעמדו מרחק—although far from the top, they stood in a way exactly corresponding to the arrangement of the text on the mountain.

With the idea we mentioned, we can answer many questions that come up. There are gedolim whose level we can't even think of reaching, as they are so exalted. From where do these gedolim get their power? R' Moshe Wolfson posits that it comes because their personal letter is from Hashem's name YKVK. Those who live in a certain community have their letters in the same section of the Torah. Those from the same family are in that family because their letters are from the same word in the Torah. R' Yehonasan Eibshitz (Ahavas Yehonasan, Emor, s.v. ואל) teaches that the souls of relatives are like a single נ that is placed between two pots and lights up both of them. When one's relative dies, his own light is also extinguished a little and therefore he himself is טמא, ritually impure (see also Tiferes Yehonasan, Emor, s.v. כי אם לשאר).

At times, we may see a charismatic kiruv professional unable to influence another about religion. This doesn't

mean that you also won't be successful in influencing this person, since it may be that your letter in the Sefer Torah is closer to his than that of the kiruv professional's. Thus your neshama may be more connected to his, thereby giving you the ability to influence him.

Examining others, we see that some are more zoned into a specific mitzva, such as Shabbos. They live and breathe Shabbos. This is because their letter is in the word שבת.

So one's spiritual personality depends on where his letter is in the Torah. Just as there are different parts to an army—soldiers, sailors, marines, and the like, so too there are many parts to Hashem's army. Each person has his purpose. Just as there is no extra letter in the Sefer Torah, likewise there is no extra Jew. They are all necessary, similar to a radio in which all the wires are needed.

The pasuk says ודגלו עלי אהבה (Shir Hashirim 2:4), which means that each tribe had its דגל, flag, banner. The same applies to us Jews, as we each belong to a דגל. That is to say, Sefardim, Ashkenazim, and so forth. Yet even with all these differences, we are all under one umbrella—Klal Yisrael—just as the tribes were with their different flags (The story is told of a Reform Jew who asked a rabbi why he kept his distance—there should be unity among Jews, as we are all in the same army. The response: each army has its deserters.). This is what Hashem wants and desires—ודגלו עלי. This is followed by the word אהבה, since Hashem loves that we are different and at the same time united.

#### Rabbi Yehoshua Alt

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