STAND UP AND BE COUNTED!
PARSHAS BAMIDBAR

Hashem commanded Moshe to take a census of the Jewish People by "counting the number of the names." The pasuk should have only said "counting the number" - the word of the names, appears to be extra. The Ramban (on pasuk 45) explains what Hashem meant by "counting the number of the names." Hashem was commanding Moshe to count every Jew with honor. It wouldn't be good enough for Moshe to pass each house and ask the head of the house for a total number of occupants in the house. Moshe was required to count each Jew personally and individually.

❖**The Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim, HaRav A. Henach Leibowitz zt"l** questioned this and derived a very important lesson for all of us:

The purpose of a census is to determine a <u>total</u> number of people. The most efficient way of accomplishing this is to ask each head-of- household how many are in his family. It would be very time-consuming, tiring, and inefficient to count every person individually - especially since there were three million Jews! Yet that is exactly what Hashem required Moshe to do. Why?

Hashem was teaching Moshe and the Jewish People the importance, value, and uniqueness of every individual. Every person is an important person and not just a number. Everyone must be treated with honor and respect. We must learn from Hashem's example to show love and concern for each person.

> *"The entire assembly were gathered together…and they established their genealogy according to their families, according to their fathers' household, by number of the names, from 20 years of age and up…"*
> *(Bamidbar 1:18)*

We often deal with groups of people- co-workers, family members, students in a class, or people in our communities. We must remember that each group is made-up of individual people, each of whom deserves our personal attention. Every individual is worthy of having the entire World exist for his/her sake (Talmud: Sanhedrin 37A). When we spend a few moments speaking with each person, or even just smiling and saying good morning, we make people feel good. We can even uplift a sad or discouraged person and help him through his day.

A Jewish lawyer who lived in Germany benefited from following this lesson. He regularly noticed and paid attention to an **individual** - the elevator operator of his office building. This lawyer was the only person to be friendly, show concern, and offer advice to this solitary, "unimportant" person. When the Nazis stormed the office building, looking for Jews, it was this elevator operator who saved the life of this Jew who had made him feel like a valued person.

Every individual counts! We should treat every person with courtesy and respect.