**[Lift Up Your Head! Parshat Bamidbar](https://www.torahofawakening.com/torah-of-awakening-teachings-408656/under-construction-come-back-soon)**

The message of Presence is: Don’t think so much. Think less, perceive more.

And yet, in more common circles of wisdom, we hear the message that we *should* think more, that mistakes can be avoided if we thoroughly *think things through*.

So, which is it?

שְׂא֗וּ אֶת־רֹאשׁ֙ כָּל־עֲדַ֣ת בְּנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָ֖ם לְבֵ֣ית אֲבֹתָ֑ם בְּמִסְפַּ֣ר שֵׁמ֔וֹת כָּל־זָכָ֖ר לְגֻלְגְּלֹתָֽם׃
*Take a census of the whole Israelite community by the families of their ancestral houses, listing the names, every male, head by head.*
(*Bamidbar*/Numbers 1:2)

On the surface, the *parshah* is talking about taking a census of the Israelite males who can be made ready for battle. But on a deeper metaphorical level, there is wisdom here for harmonizing the contradicting advice to *think more* and to *think less:*

שְׂא֗וּ אֶת־רֹאשׁ֙ – *S’u et rosh – lift the head…*

This phrase is an idiom for taking a census. But the deeper implication is that before going out to “do battle” with the challenges of life, we must “lift our head” – that is, elevate our perspective to see our situation as clearly as we can, which means transcending and getting free from whatever thoughts and feelings in which we might be entangled. This is*thinking less.* It is the practice of Presence and meditation. From this elevated place, we can than begin to act consciously and intentionally.

How?

כָּל־עֲדַ֣ת בְּנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל – *kol adat b’nei Yisrael – all the assembly of the Children of Israel…*

*Yisrael* means *sarita El,* “striving for the Divine.” It is the meaning of our collective identity, to “assemble” (*adat*) things so as to bring forth “Godliness” or “holiness.” So, the first thing we should do if we want to get clarity on the right path to take is to ask ourselves, “What is my purpose in doing such-and-such? What am I trying to accomplish?”

We can sometimes act automatically, without really considering what we are trying to do. This question cuts through that unconsciousness and brings us face to face with our power of decision. It doesn’t guarantee that we will succeed, but if we *don’t* ask this question, we are almost certain to fail.

Once we get clear on our *kavanah,* our intention, we might simply drop whatever we were considering doing if the intention isn’t good. But, if the intention is good, then we can move onto the next question.

לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָ֖ם – *l’mishp’khotam – by their families…*

“Family” consists of those close to us, those we for whom we are responsible, and those who are responsible for us. This hints at the next question: “How will this action affect people?”

“People” doesn’t necessarily mean *other* people; we also need to consider how things will affect ourselves. For example, we might consider looking at the news or social media. We might determine that our intention is good, that we are trying to be informed and connected to the world. But then we ask, “How will this affect people?”

To some extent, there may be no ill affect. But beyond that point, if news and social media create negativity and anxiety in ourselves, and we then project that negativity towards others, we need to be aware of that aspect in our decision process, which brings us to the final question:

בְּמִסְפַּ֣ר שֵׁמ֔וֹת כָּל־זָכָ֖ר לְגֻלְגְּלֹתָֽם – *b’mispar shemot, kol; zakhar l’gulg’lotam* – *by the number of names, every male, head by head…*

Once we “name” both what the purpose is and what the effect will be, we have to “number” it – we have to ask, “Is it worth it?”

In other words, if our intention is good but the consequences are dire, we need to ask which “counts” more; we need to evaluate and decide. Again, this is no guarantee that we will make the right choice, but if we don’t evaluate and decide, it is likely we will make the wrong choice. And if, after careful thinking the situation through, we do end up making the wrong choice, this too has goodness to it, because we will *learn* from it.

This two-part process of “lifting the head,” that is, the stripping away of thought in meditation, followed by the “numbering of names,” that is, careful evaluation of purpose and consequence, is represented in Kabbalah by the dual *sefirot* on the Tree of Life of*Hokhmah* (wisdom, awareness) and *Binah* (understanding, focused thought). Seen in this way, there is no contradiction in the advice to “think more” and “think less”; they are two parts of one process.

Here are the three questions again for use in deciding on a course of action:

1. What is the purpose of this action?
2. How will it affect beings?
3. Is it worth it?

Principio del formulario

Final del formulario

***More on Parshat Bamidbar...***

[**The Lazy Man – Parshat Bamidbar**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/torah-of-awakening-teachings-408656/the-lazy-man-parshat-bamidbar)
Yankel was too lazy to do physical exercise. But as he got older, he realized that he had better take care of his body, or he would soon be in trouble. So, he hired a personal trainer to teach him and motivate him to work out.

The personal trainer began by coming to his house every day. First, she taught him the exercises that would be best for him. But when it came to actually doing them, Yankel was so lazy, that the trainer would have to yell cheers and encouragements: “Come on Yankel you can do it!” she would shout. “That’s seven, just three more! Go! Go!” Over time, Yankel’s resistance dropped away more and more, and it became easier and easier for the trainer to motivate him.

After several weeks, the trainer didn’t have to do anything except come over to check and make sure Yankel was exercising. Yankel even shouted out his own motivational cheers: “I can do it! One! Two! Just seven more to go! Getting stronger! Three!”

Eventually, the trainer didn’t even come inside, but just listened at the door. She would hear Yankel yelling to himself: “Getting stronger and stronger! I can do it! Five! Six! Four more to go!” When she would hear him yelling through the door, she would leave, satisfied that he was doing it on his own.

But, when they finally had a meeting after several months to evaluate and adjust his exercise routine, she noticed that he didn’t look like he was exercising at all; he was almost as unfit as he had been before they began. “How strange! I hear you working out every day, but it seems like you haven’t been doing anything!”

“Oh, I haven’t been working out,” said Yankel.

“But I come by every day and hear you yelling and counting reps!” said the trainer.

“Yes – I figured if you heard me counting, you would think I was working out and leave me alone.”

When it comes to prayer, many folks are just like Yankel – perhaps going through the motions, saying the words, but nothing is really happening. It’s not that the words are irrelevant – the cheers and counting of reps can be a good *accompaniment*and even *encouragement*to exercise; but it’s no *substitute*for exercise.

Similarly, sacred words and rituals can be a wonderful *accompaniment* and even *expression*of prayer, but they’re not the prayer itself. As long as the words are helping you do the real inner activity of prayer, they are doing their job. But if they become a *substitute*for prayer, then we are missing the point.

It is understandable that the *form* of prayer – how many times per day, what texts to say on which day, and so on, could easily eclipse the real, inner reality of prayer, because *form is quantifiable.* We can easily talk about and define how to fulfill prayer in form.

But the inner reality of prayer is connection with the Timeless, with the Un-Countable; it’s more difficult to talk about and evaluate. There is a nice hint about these two sides of reality – form and The Formless, finite and Eternal, in the opening lines of the *parshah* and the *haftorah.* The *parshah* begins:

שְׂא֗וּ אֶת־רֹאשׁ֙ כָּל־עֲדַ֣ת בְּנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָ֖ם לְבֵ֣ית אֲבֹתָ֑ם בְּמִסְפַּ֣ר שֵׁמ֔וֹת כָּל־זָכָ֖ר לְגֻלְגְּלֹתָֽם׃
*Lift the head (take a head count) of the whole community of the children of Israel, by the families of the houses of their fathers, counting the names of every male, head by head.*

This is about quantifying the people, giving them a number, so as to know how many soldiers they have. On the other hand, the *haftora*from Hosea, chapter 2, begins:

וְֽ֠הָיָה מִסְפַּ֤ר בְּנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ כְּח֣וֹל הַיָּ֔ם אֲשֶׁ֥ר לֹֽא־יִמַּ֖ד וְלֹ֣א יִסָּפֵ֑ר וְֽ֠הָיָה בִּמְק֞וֹם אֲשֶׁר־יֵאָמֵ֤ר לָהֶם֙ לֹֽא־עַמִּ֣י אַתֶּ֔ם יֵאָמֵ֥ר לָהֶ֖ם בְּנֵ֥י אֵֽל־חָֽי׃
*The number of the children of Israel shall be like the sands of the sea, which cannot be measured or counted; and instead of being told, “You are Not-My-People,” they shall be called “Children of the Living God.”*

The text then leaves this uplifting vision and talks about how the Children of Israel have strayed and run after idols, the *“ba’alim.”* Israel is compared to a harlot, an unfaithful wife, running after other lovers. Why does she do this?

*“I will go after my lovers, for they will give me my bread and water, my wool and linin, my oil and my drink.”*

In other words, the Children of Israel aren’t satisfied; they want *more.* Rather than appreciate what is present, they run after that which is not present; they imagine they can achieve more gratification.

*Pursue her lovers as she will, she shall not overtake them; and seek them as she may, she shall never find them. Then she will say, “I will go and return to my First Husband, for then I fared better than now...”*

Eventually, Israel realizes that her obsession with *more,* (called “idolatry”) only causes her suffering, and so she comes home to appreciate the gifts she already had (called *teshuvah,*returning to the Divine).

The hint here is that, on a deep and practical level, “idolatry” really means fixating on that which is *not present;*it means elevating the images in our minds above the actual Reality right in front of us. The “idol” is that which is not present; the Divine *is* Presence.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with imagining what we need or want in the future; that’s the job of the mind. We have to count and quantify; we have to make maps of the world in order to navigate it. The point is not to elevate the map over the territory; the point is not to live in your mind, but to live in the Living Present. The maps of the mind are useful, but they are not alive; they are not the Real Thing.

This understanding of idols as dead concepts *about* reality substituting for Actual Living Reality is expressed in Psalm 15:

פֶּֽה־לָ֭הֶם וְלֹ֣א יְדַבֵּ֑רוּ
*They have mouths, but cannot speak…*

The true Divine, however, is That which speaks, as the *parshah* opens:

וַיְדַבֵּ֨ר יְהוָ֧ה אֶל־מֹשֶׁ֛ה בְּמִדְבַּ֥ר סִינַ֖י בְּאֹ֣הֶל מוֹעֵ֑ד
*The Divine spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting…*

The Hassidic rebbe, Rabbi Yisrael of Rizhyn, told that when he was learning with the great Maggid, Rabbi Dov Bear of Mezrich, all the disciples learned and memorized the master’s teachings except one: Reb Zushia. This is because when the Maggid would begin to expound a verse of Torah, so many of the verses began like this: *Vay’daber Hashem – and the Divine spoke…*

Whenever Reb Zushia would hear these words, he would go into a fit of seizures: *“Hashem spoke!!! Hashem spoke!!!”* he would scream, and they would have to take him out into the shed until the teaching was over.

“But,” rabbi Yisrael would add, “that’s okay, because even one word spoken in truth and received in truth is enough…”

Right now, and always, the Divine is speaking. The words aren’t necessarily conveying a conceptual message: *Even one word spoken in truth and received in truth is enough*.

Meaning, when we deeply connect with the truth of this moment, then Reality Itself can be received as “Divine Speech.” When we receive the Present in this way, it is deeply liberating, shaking us from the dead maps of the mind and into the Living Present. For some, realizing this may send you into convulsions like Reb Zushia, but not necessarily so.

A disciple asked Reb Pinkhas of Koretz, “Why is it that you are so calm and still when you *daven*(pray)*,*unlike so many other *tzadikim*who thrash about in ecstatic convulsions?*”*

Reb Pinkhas replied, “You know, the essence of prayer is *deveikut,*attachment to the Divine, and this involves the death of the separate self. There are two kinds of death: one kind is as difficult as pulling a rope through a mast, and the other is easy as removing an eyelash from a glass of milk. It is the second kind that I was granted…”

For some, ecstatic movement is the path; for some, stillness. The point is not the particular path, but rather that we use the mind properly, that we use the mind as a tool to navigate the world in time, but not let it get in the way of connecting with the Eternal. As the beginning of the *parshah*says: *S’u et rosh –*normally translated “take a census,” but literally: “lift up the head!”

In other words, elevate your mind by understanding its limitation; use the mind to go beyond the mind.

As we come to the end of the annual ritual of counting the 49 days of the Omer, may we use the quantifying mind wisely to express our praise, gratitude and ultimate unity with the Eternal within the world of time… *Good Shabbos!*

[**Parshat Bamidbar**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/parshat-bamidbar)

Once, Rabbi Shmelke and his brother came to their teacher, the Maggid of Metzritch, with a problem: "Our sages say that we should give praise and thanks to Hashem for all the misfortunes that befall us, as well as for the blessings. How can we understand this?"

"Go ask Reb Zushia," replied the Maggid, "he sits in the Beit Midrash, smoking his pipe."

They went and found Reb Zushia and put the question to him. Reb Zushia just laughed. "Ha! Surely you've come to the wrong man, for I have never experienced misfortune!"

"How can you say that?" replied Reb Shmelke, "for you have been impoverished for most of your life!"

"Let me tell you a story," said Reb Zushia. "Once there was a king who wished to test his subjects, so he arranged a massive festival in an outdoor park. He had hundreds of precious objects from the palace brought out on display, and sent this message throughout the kingdom: "Let everyone come and pick one object from among my treasures to take for themselves."

​People came from all over and wandered through the park, picking and choosing the treasures they wanted. Among them was an old beggar woman who made her way to the king and asked, "Your Highness, is it true I can choose anything in this park to take for my own?"

"Yes!" replied the king, "anything you want."

"Then," replied the old woman, "I choose you!"

"Ha, you have chosen wisely!" said the king. "You get me, and my whole kingdom!"

​The amazing news is, you're in that park right now. Ordinarily, we tend to focus on the different treasures – the fruits of our efforts that we desire. But just one small shift, and you have the whole kingdom, instantly.

What is that shift?

Dedicate your actions to the Divine. Dedicate your words to the Divine. Dedicate your thoughts to the Divine. Don't worry about the fruits; just do your best in service and love, and let the Divine give you what It gives you. Shift your motivation from the separate things and goals, to the One Thing, the One Goal. The One is always instantly available, but you have to shift into that frame; you have to elevate the way you think.

This week's reading begins with the instruction to take a census of the Israelites:

...שְׂא֗וּ אֶת־רֹאשׁ֙ כָּל־עֲדַ֣ת בְּנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל

*S'u et rosh  kol ada'at b'nei Yisrael – Lift the heads of the children of Israel...*

"Lift the heads" is an idiom that means to take a "head count" – that's the census.

*​Yisrael* means, *SARita im ELohim* – Strive for the Divine (Gen. 32.29).

So, if you want to reach the Divine, you must "lift your head".  You must elevate the way that you think. All your goals, responsibilities, tasks, your whole life situation – know that it's all a path to the Divine, if you but keep the Divine in mind, and dedicate everything to the Divine.

Pirkei Avot, 1:3, says:

אַל תִּהְיוּ כַעֲבָדִים הַמְשַׁמְּשִׁין אֶת הָרַב עַל מְנָת לְקַבֵּל פְּרָס, אֶלָּא הֱווּ כַעֲבָדִים הַמְשַׁמְּשִׁין אֶת הָרַב שֶׁלֹּא עַל מְנָת לְקַבֵּל פְּרָס

*Don't be like the servant who serves the master to receive a reward, be like the servant who serves the master not to receive a reward...*

In other words, shift your motivation to serve the One, and let go of separate, particular goals. This doesn't necessarily mean changing anything you're doing; it means changing your motivation, changing your frame.

 וִיהִי מוֹרָא שָׁמַיִם עֲלֵיכֶם

*and let the awe of heaven be upon you.*

"Heaven" means the space of your own awareness, within which your experience arises. Your awareness is the gateway to Heaven – it is always whole, complete, at peace. So when you declutter yourself from all separate aims, and instead aim at the One Thing that is ever-available, you can know yourself as the space of this moment, and Heaven can come together with Earth...

This Saturday night is Shavuot, the Festival of Revelation. May we all receive a new insight for bringing Heaven down to Earth, a new revelation on our paths...

[**​The Garbage Truck- Parshat Bamidbar**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/the-garbage-truck-parshat-bamidbar)

One morning, as I lay in bed around 6:30 am, I heard a rumbling sound from deep within whatever dream I was having.

“That sound… it means something… something important… what is that sound?”

The garbage truck!

I had forgotten to put the garbage out the night before, and the can was pretty full. I leapt out of bed, slid into some pants, darted downstairs and out the front door.

​I looked and saw- the garbage truck had already passed my house and was halfway down the street! I grabbed the can and ran after him, rolling it behind me.

When I caught up, I started to politely ask him if he would take it, but before even one word came from my lips he grabbed it from me violently, almost knocking me over and barked something like “GIMMEE IT!” …I think.

Wow- he had certainly drunk his coffee already. Maybe a little too much. But I was grateful that he took it at all!

So, what would make *you* get up in the morning so fast?

The codes of Jewish law are somewhat paradoxical about getting up in the morning. On one hand, they say that you should leap out of bed to “do the Will of the Creator”- no laziness! Not a moment should be wasted- there is much to do! Get up with the “strength of a lion” and jump into the day.

On the other hand, before you get up, you should take a moment to receive the gift of your life, chanting- *“Modeh ani lifanekha-*I give thanks before you…”

Then should you leap into your day?

No, you should ritually wash your hands, with the *kavanah*(intention) to purify your heart so that you can serve with love in all your actions.

Okay now should get on with it, right?

No. First there are many blessings to be chanted, many prayers to pray. And even before all of that, they say you should take some moments in silence to tap your inner depths in preparation.

So which is it?

Should you leap out of bed and get to work, or take your time to connect with your inner depths?

But that’s the point- it's both.

If you spend all your time in meditation, the bliss of Being reveals Itself within your own awareness, but the world remains untouched. On the other hand, if your life is focused solely on the external, then you become lost in its dramas, disconnected from you inner Source, and the world suffers for it.

*But connect with the Eternal in order to bring it into the temporal- that’s the alchemy!*

This week’s reading hints at this spiritual rhythm. It begins with Hashem instructing Moses to take a census of all the soldiers who are ready for battle-

*“Vay’daber Hashem el Moshe b’midbar Sinai-*
*“Hashem spoke to Moses in the Sinai wilderness…*

*“Se’u et rosh kol adat-*
*“Take a census of the entire assembly…”*

Counting the soldiers is a metaphor for our external lives. Each day we should arouse ourselves like soldiers to do battle with our inner inertia and make every moment “count”.

But then a few verses later, it gives the other half of the equation:

*“Akh et hamateh Levi lo tifkod-*
*“But the tribe of Levi your shall not count…”*

The Levites weren’t soldiers, they were priests and musicians- caretakers of the *Mishkan*- the Sacred Space at the center of the camp. The soldiers went out to conquer the many, but the Levites connected to the One. And in the One, there’s nothing to count! There is only One!

The trick is for these two sides- the internal and the external- the many and the One- to be in balance. Ideally, you express your inward sacredness *through* the external wilderness of life. But this takes practice- it’s no small thing staying connected to the holiness of this moment while running after the garbage truck!

But fortunately, no matter how lost in the external we become, the present moment has not gone anywhere. It’s always here, open to our return, to our *t’shuvah.*

There’s a story of the Chofetz Chayim, that he once had a student who was sunk in crushingly oppressive poverty. The student would often implore his master to pray on his behalf, and promised that if his prayers were answered and he were to become wealthy, he would give abundant *tzeddaka-*abundant charity to those in need. The Chofetz Chayim would just listen compassionately and nod.

Years later, after the student had moved away to the city, he had indeed become exceedingly wealthy. The Chofetz Chayim went to visit him and asked-

“So, how are things?”

“Very well thank God,” said the former student, “I’ve been blessed with many riches.”

“And how has your *tzeddaka*been going?”

The rich former student turned red, embarrassed that he had forgotten his promise. In fact, as his riches grew more and more, his stinginess had grown as well.

“You know,” said the Chofetz Chayim, “The more successful you are in your external battles, the stronger your *yetzer hara-*your lust for the external- also becomes.”

In that moment, his delusion was broken, and he returned fully to the inner path that his heart had abandoned. He dedicated his wealth to service and became a fountain of relief for many who suffered in poverty.

On this *Shabbat Bamidbar,* the Sabbath of the Wilderness, may we reconnect with this holy intention: to neither become lost in the drama and grasping of the external wilderness, nor abandon this world that is so in need of healing. Rather, let us connect frequently and deeply with the truth of this moment, bringing its love and wisdom into the story of our lives as it unfolds in time- for this brief time we inhabit these bodies, on this earth.

[**Guard and Remember- Parshat Bamidbar**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/guard-and-remember-parshat-bamidbar)

A question I often hear goes like this:

“When I am meditating or chanting, I feel so deeply connected and I have no problem being my highest self. But, when stressful things in life push my buttons, all of that is out the window.

***"How do I maintain my spiritual connection in those moments?”***

This is a question that often comes up after you have had some success with your practice. Before that success, sure, you will still have been looking for a spiritual connection, realization, experience or whatever.

But then, at the very moment when you think you've discovered and connected with what you've been searching for. . . *Oy!*. . . The problem is even deeper:

***How do I keep the connection?***

The simple answer, of course, is practice. You have to practice keeping that connection in different life situations.  Only then will you get better and better at it.

But I bet that answer doesn't feel so helpful to hear, right?  After all, you know that when you find yourself in a stressful or triggering situation, two things sneak up and derail you:

1) You don’t care anymore about your spiritual connection, because you are triggered! You go into in a fight-or-flight mode. You just want to get out of there or lash out.

2) Even if you do care to practice in such a moment, you probably can’t remember to practice because you are triggered! Your emotions have taken over and blocked your memory of what's most essential, and how to get back to it!

I guess you can see why, if you are going to actually be able to practice in those triggering situations, you'll first need a foolproof strategy for working through the two problems above.

And . . . Here is exactly that!

First of all, you need to ***remember to practice* *(zakhor)***, and second of all, you need to ***be* *motivated to practice* *(shamor)***.

There are many ways to approach this, but let’s explore one.

First, how do you *remember?*

A great way to remember is to use what I call the “Fringe Technique”. You may know the traditional practice to wear fringes, called *tzitizt,* on a four-cornered garment, or *tallit*.

The purpose of the *tzitzit*is exactly what we are talking about- they are a physical reminder on your body to dedicate your actions to the Divine and to avoid getting caught in distractions that take you away from that intention.

Another purpose of the *tzitzit*is to remind you to do the *mitzvot,*the particular spiritual practices of Judaism, throughout your day.

This brings us to the second problem- how do you remain motivated?

Let’s take a particular *mitzvah*and see how this can work:

There is a daily *mitzvah*to chant the words, *“Ve’ahavtah et Hashem Elohekha…*You shall love Existence, your inner Divinity, with all your heart, all your soul and all your might.”

These words are an expression of commitment. For the sake of clarity, let’s rephrase it to express this commitment more explicitly. You might say, “I commit to serving the Divine in everything I do.”

If you say this commitment every day (or use the traditional words, but understand them and mean them as a commitment), then you are adding tremendous power to your intention to practice in difficult moments.

Why?

Because even when you don’t care about spirituality in a moment of being triggered, *you have made a commitment*and you can rely on that commitment*.*You don’t have to care; you just have to honor your commitment. The actual saying out loud of a commitment will give tremendous power to your intention, even in the most difficult moments.

But now you still have to *remember* your commitment. That’s where the “fringe” comes in. You need to have some kind of reminder that works for you all day long, so that your chances of remembering in those difficult moments are increased thousand-fold.

Your reminder could actually be *tzitzit.*Of course, just wearing tzitzit is not enough; you have to train yourself to be reminded of your intention by them. For example, make it a practice to say your commitment over and over again, every time you look down and see them.

But, any reminder will work, as long as you empower it as a reminder. For example, you could set your smart phone to give you reminders throughout the day. Or, you could wear something else like a piece of jewelry to remind you.

Whatever you use, the key is to *verbally say your intention out loud every day,* and then have something to *remind you* *throughout the day.* Using this “Fringe Technique” is so powerful, you can transform your entire life in any direction you choose, simply by programming yourself with the intentions you choose.

This week’s reading begins, *“Vayidaber Hashem el Moshe b’midbar Sinai-*Hashem spoke to Moses in the Sinai wilderness… *se’u et rosh kol adat-*take a census of the entire assembly… according to their head count…”

Moses is instructed to count the Israelites who are ready to out go to battle.

The wilderness, the *midbar,*is the arena in which we live. Like the wild of nature, life itself is not totally predictable. It throws us curve balls. We need to be like soldiers if we are to make each moment *count*by bringing our spiritual commitments to every situation.

But later it says, *“V’hal’viyim lo hotpakdu-*the Levites were not counted…”

The Levites weren’t soldiers. They were in charge of the sanctuary- the sacred space at the center of the camp where the Divine rested. They represent the people’s connection to the One. In the One, there is nothing to count! There is only One!

And this is the paradox-

To bring liberating intention to each moment, you need strategies that work in time. You need to be like a soldier. But, the Reality you safeguard through those strategies is Itself beyond time. It is the space of Presence that does not change; it is Being Itself- it is not born and does not die. When you stay connected to That, the storms of life cannot shake you. You sit within the eye of the hurricane, the holy of holies.

May we bring forth our potential for unity and love through the power of our commitment to this moment, and may the world swiftly be transformed by it-

Good Shabbos!