

Count the heads of the whole of the congregation of Bnei Yisrael. (1:2)

When it was necessary to conduct a census, the vehicle of counting was the contribution of a half – *shekel* coin to be used for the construction and maintenance of the *Mishkan*. The people elevated their status by contributing to charity. Hence, we understand the word “*seu*”, “raise up/elevate the heads”. The counting also served as a means to elevate the people. **Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl**, supplements this idea with a profound thought. By using a contribution as the symbol of counting, the Torah is telling them that a Jew is ‘counted’ as belonging to the congregation of *Klal Yisrael* only when he contributes something. Regardless of whether he makes a material or spiritual donation, he must give of himself. That is how he expresses his desire to be counted.

Horav Hirsch focuses on the significance of the individual as a member of *Klal Yisrael*. At the end of the previous *Sefer, chumash Vayikra*, the *Torah* addresses the concept of *Nidrei Hekdesh*: One who feels the need to express his personal relationship to the Sanctuary vows to undertake a symbolic consecration of his own person. Alternatively, he consecrates a portion of his possessions to benefit the *Mishkan*. *Sefer Bamidbar* follows closely with the census, in which each individual is counted as an important member of the congregation, upon whose conscious devotion and faithfulness to duty rests the national mission of our people.

As *Sefer Vayikra* ends with the laws of *Maaser behemah*, the animal tithe, in which each animal passed beneath the shepherds’ crook to be counted individually, similarly, each Jew is counted as an individual. Although every tenth sheep is *Maaser*, consecrated, when it comes to the Jewish census, every Jew is holy. Every Jew has his mission, both personal and collective. He must rise to the occasion and be counted, as he is elevated through his contribution to the *Klal*.