

## **"And they gathered the entire nation on the first of the second month... according to the number of names." (1:18)**

Moshe is enjoined to take a census of *Bnei Yisrael* by counting the "number of names." Ramban explains that the concept of counting the "number of names" is specifically emphasized in order to preserve the honor and dignity of each individual Jew. It would have been easier for each head of household to provide the number of children in his family. This would have denied the individual, however, his opportunity to pass before Moshe to receive his due honor. The census has a practical purpose, to count a nation's population. The most efficient method is to gather together the data provided by each group leader and calculate it into one cumulative total. For Moshe personally to count each individual is not only impractical, but also extremely laborious.

Hashem chose this latter strenuous method in order to teach us an important lesson concerning interpersonal relationships. We must always be cognizant of the unique value of each individual. No person should ever be viewed merely as a number. Even when we deal with a large group, we should be aware that every group consists of individuals, each with his own emotions and sensitivities. *Chazal* teach us that Hashem has created the entire world for the sake of each individual person. Consequently, Hashem views each individual to be worthy of His boundless *chesed*. The notion of Hashem's overwhelming love for each of His children should serve as the prime motivating factor for seeking to emulate this attribute.