

Torah Tidbits from Rabbi Larry Moldo

The portion this week begins with a commandment to pay a half-shekel during those times when the people were counted. This half-shekel served as "an atonement" for each person's nefesh.

Why?

Each person's nefesh (one of the words for soul) is a vibrant entity, hopefully engaged in continuous growth. Minimally it should be engaged in constant checking in with God. But, when we count something, we place it in a static position. There is a reasonable temptation to remember the person as they were at the moment we counted them. That implies that we also remember their nefesh in a particular way, which provides a negative feedback loop. Once the person has been replaced within the census by another countable item, the negative static nature of remembering that which was taken account of is switched to the money, and the people involved have room to grow again.

This week of Purim helps us realize this even further. Supposing that when we took account of a person they were in costume. How accurate would our recollection of their selves be?

We have to remember not to treat people as static objects. Some aspects of people remain the same, yet there are others which change with time and knowledge. Take the high road, and try not to confuse the unchangeable with the continually changing.

By the way, Wednesday night, 6:30 p.m. - Purim celebration!