



AFRAID OF NUMBERS

There is comfort offered in this week's Torah reading.

If surrounding nations intimidate Israel, says God, "do not be frightened because of them, for HaShem your God is in the midst of you" (D'varim 7:21).

It makes no difference even if "these other nations are larger and more numerous" (7:17). As S'forno says, Pharaoh and the Egyptians were more numerous, and God still delivered you from their hands.

Numbers as such will not defeat you. The main thing is your morale. Only if you lose faith in yourselves and in God will you risk being overcome.

Today's world is different, but the same. The State of Israel knows from experience that so much depends on morale and determination.

In the Diaspora, where the threats are not physical, despite the resurgence of antisemitism, numbers also need not be the main issue.

We are a tiny minority people, true, but places where Jewish life was and is strong could always manage to be

viable because of inner strength and belief in ourselves and our task.

That's why today we have not so much a mathematical but a mobilisation and morale problem.

Mathematically, of course, it would still be good to have more Jews.

We gain a few by conversion, but would gain more if Jewish parents had more children. Merely keeping our numbers as they are, means at least four children per family. Growing, even modestly, means more than four: it is not our responsibility to solve the population problems of Asia by having too few Jews in America or Australia.

We can and will survive even without increased numbers, but numbers would help.

Where once people spoke of 3 Rs, for Judaism today there have to be 3 Ms. Mathematics we have mentioned.

Next comes Mobilisation. If there is to be Judaism in the future, we all have to be the best possible kind of Jews we can.

This means that no Jew can hide behind the rabbi and say, "Rabbi, you be Jewish for me!" Nor can we leave it all to the synagogue or school.

We all need to advance daily in

Jewish knowledge, commitment and observance. We need to say, "No-one else can and will be Jewish for me!"

The third M is Morale. It was never easy to be a Jew - but Jewish is good! It's also enjoyable, it's beautiful and it's meaningful.

Judaism will continue so long as Jews like being Jewish.

Feel good as a Jew, even though it can be hard.

Help others to feel good too. If they have little knowledge about Judaism and little Jewish motivation, don't criticise them - share with them, inspire them. Their morale and yours is an unconquerable asset, regardless of our numbers.