

"I think the problems that we're going to face in the new century are far beyond the Wisdom of Solomon, let alone me. But I think the right place to start is to say - fair is fair. This is who we are. These are our numbers."-Mr. Willis of Ohio, *The West Wing*

For a people who are commanded to *not* count themselves, we sure do count ourselves a lot. For example, we each contribute a half shekel in the Exodus so that we know how many Israelites there are and in this week's portion a census of the Children of Israel takes place as well. While told not to dwell on our numbers, there is something to be said about knowing how many people we are, but perhaps more importantly, who those people are. Once the people were counted, we knew how many people would be able to go to battle as we entered into the land of Israel. We'd know how much territory each tribe would need due to its size. But we also know that there were those who weren't counted, the women, children, and elderly, whose lives were devalued at that time. Knowing who counts and who doesn't, knowing how many people there are and their skills sets the foundation for our eventual arrival in the land of Israel.

Over the last two weeks, people all across Canada received their censuses and eagerly anticipated either the short or long form counting that our country does every ten years. Participation in the census is essential as Canadians and as Jews to assure that we are counted, valued, and that resources are attributed appropriately. Thank you to all those who filled out your censuses with integrity and enthusiasm. There is much work to be done, but we can start by saying, "this is who we are. These are our numbers."