

# Teachings of the Maharal

## How the Number of Mitzvot equals the Number of Bnei Yisrael

**Bamidbar 1:46** - And all those counted were 603,550 ...

**Drush al HaTorah 37a** - Just as the seven commandments given to Adam were the completion [sh'leimut] of mankind, given on the day of his creation, the 613 mitzvot are the completion of Israel. The 603, all the rest exclusive of the Ten Commandments, are the second portion of the Covenant, connected to them as is their number, for the gematria of Bnei Yisrael is the number 603, for the mitzvot are the spiritual aspect of the children of Israel. With the census count of 603 thousand (ELEF) plus, each mitzva representing 1000 Bnei Yisrael, tells us that when Israel became combined with their mitzvot with the receiving of the Torah, they were first called Israel as it is written, "My son, My firstborn, Israel" [Sh'mot 4:22]. ELEF bears another meaning, learning, for mitzvot require learning. If Israel would "cancel" the mitzvot, they too would be canceled, G-d forbid. Israel is different from the nations in that the true Torah was given to them, and through the Torah they were made the nation Israel, as it is written, "and you shall keep My covenant and be precious to Me, and you will be a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation [Sh'mot 19:5].

*Column prepared by Dr. Moshe Kuhr*