

**Parshah Bamidbar
in a Nutshell**
(Numbers 1:1–4:20)

In the Sinai Desert, G-d says to conduct a census of the twelve tribes of Israel. Moses counts 603,550 men of draftable age (20 to 60 years); the tribe of Levi, numbering 22,300 males age one month and older, is counted separately. The Levites are to serve in the Sanctuary. They replace the firstborn, whose number they approximated, since they were disqualified when they participated in the worshipping of the Golden Calf. The 273 firstborn who lacked a Levite to replace them had to pay a five-shekel "ransom" to redeem themselves.

When the people broke camp, the three Levite clans dismantled and transported the Sanctuary, and reassembled it at the center of the next encampment. They then erected their own tents around it: the Kohathites, who carried the Sanctuary's vessels (the Ark, menorah, etc.) in their specially designed coverings on their shoulders, camped to its south; the Gershonites, in charge of its tapestries and roof coverings, to its west; and the families of Merari, who transported its wall panels and pillars, to its north. Before the Sanctuary's entranceway, to its east, were the tents of Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's sons.

Beyond the Levite circle, the twelve tribes camped in four groups of three tribes each. To the east were Judah (pop. 74,600), Issachar (54,400) and Zebulun (57,400); to the south, Reuben (46,500), Simeon (59,300) and Gad (45,650); to the west, Ephraim (40,500), Manasseh (32,200) and Benjamin (35,400); and to the north, Dan (62,700), Asher (41,500) and Naphtali (53,400).

Upon recommendation of the Dept of Health, local hospitals, and the Rabbinical Council, the shul will be closed until further notice.

Charity

In late 1827 an epidemic broke out near the city of Lubavitch. The inhabitants turned to Rabbi Menachem Mendel, later known as the Tzemach Tzedek.

In addition to quoting a story in the Zohar about reading the portion of the ketoret during an epidemic, the Tzemach Tzedek suggested that, in light of the verse in Proverbs "And charity will save from death," they should add in charity. However, he stressed that, as is explained in Tanya, it is preferable to give charity many times throughout the day (especially before prayer) in smaller denominations than just giving one large sum, even if it equals the same amount. Ideally, the total sum of each day should be a multiple of 18.

This formation was kept also while traveling. Each tribe had its own nassi (prince or leader), and its own flag with its tribal color and emblem. ❖

Halachic Zmanim

Shabbos, May 23

Daylight Savings Time

Earliest Tallis 4:23 AM
Latest Morning Shema 9:10 AM
Earliest Mincha (Gedola).. 1:31 PM
Plag Hamincha 6:47 PM
Earliest Evening Shema 8:48 PM

Anshei Lubavitch Congregation

Rabbi Levi and Leah Neubort

Adult education:

Rabbi Avrohom and Rivky Bergstein

Youth Outreach:

Rabbi Eli and Ruty Steinhauser

**Shul Temporarily Closed
"Shabbos Schedule"
Please daven at Home**

Erev Shabbos – May 22 / Iyar 28

Candle Lighting 7:56 pm

Shabbos Day – May 23 / Iyar 29

Shabbos Ends..... 9:04 pm

**Latest morning Shema is now 9:10 AM. Be sure to recite the Shema before that time).*

Weekday Schedule (not on a holiday):

**Shul Temporarily Closed
Please daven at home.**

Eruv website:

www.fairlawneruv.com

Eruv Hotline: 201-254-9190.

Incense Portion

Exodus 30:22–38

Although we unfortunately no longer have the Temple, the Kabbalists say that by reading the portion in the Torah that discusses the incense, it is as if one actually brought it. Thus, although many have the custom to recite this portion daily, one should take extra care to learn and recite it at the time of an epidemic.

Chassidic Masters

“The 603,550th Jew”

*Based on the teachings of
the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Courtesy of MeaningfulLife.com*

In Hebrew, it's called Bamidbar (“In the Desert”) and also Sefer HaPekudim (“The Book of the Countings”); in the English-speaking world, this is the biblical section known as “Numbers.” And yes, there are many, many numbers in the fourth of the Torah's five books.

In its opening chapters we learn that one year after the Exodus, there were 603,550 adult Israelite males between the ages of 20 and 60, of whom 22,273 were firstborn; a separate census counted 22,300 Levites aged one month and older (7,500 Gershonites, 8,600 Kohathites, and 6,200 in the Merari clan). We are also given the figure for each of the twelve tribes, from Judah's 74,600 to Manasseh's 32,200. Then the Torah tallies the number in each of the four “camps” into which the twelve tribes were divided: Judah's camp, which also included the tribes of Issachar and Zebulun, totaled 186,400; the three tribes in Reuben's camp totaled 151,450; Ephraim's camp included 108,100; and 157,600 pitched their tents in the camp of Dan.

Twenty-six chapters and 39 years later, we're still in the Book of Numbers, and in the midst of another census. Again, we get the total figure (now 601,730) and the numbers for each tribe. We notice that Simeon has been tragically decimated (22,200, down from

59,300), while Manasseh's ranks have swelled to 52,700 (a gain of 20,500). But most of all we notice how G-d's passion for counting His people has not waned.

For, as G-d says to Moses, we're not just counting people. We're “raising their heads.”

When a census is taken, the count will include scholars and boors, professionals and vagabonds, philanthropists and misers, saints and criminals. Yet each counts for no more and no less than one in the total number. The count reflects only the one quality they all share equally: the fact that each is an individual human being.

So, is a headcount an expression of the lowest common denominator in a collection of individuals? The answer depends on how one views the essence of humanity. If man is basically neutral or worse—if we all begin with zero, and make of ourselves what we are—than what unites us as individuals is indeed the least of our qualities. G-d, however, has a different perspective on the “huddled masses” of man.

As G-d sees it, the soul of man is a spark of His own fire—a spark with the potential to reflect the infinite goodness and perfection of its source. Human life is the endeavor to realize what is implicit in this spark. Indeed, a person may lead a full, accomplished and righteous life, and barely scratch the surface of the infinitude of his or her soul. Another person may blunder for a lifetime in darkness and iniquity, and then, in a moment of self-

discovery, fan their divine spark into roaring flame.

So when G-d instructs that we be counted, it is an expression of our highest common denominator. On the divine census sheet, our differences are transcended to reveal the simple fact of our being—a fact which expresses what is best in us, and from which stems all that is good in us.

G-d counts us not to know our number (which He obviously knows), or even to get in touch with the quintessence of our souls (which He obviously is). He counts us to accentuate our soul of souls, to give expression to its essence and to make it more accessible to our material-bound lives.

Therein lies the deeper significance of the idiom “raise the heads” in G-d's instruction to Moses to count the people of Israel. When G-d counts us, He is stimulating the highest and loftiest part of our being, the spark of divinity which lies at the core of our soul. ❖

“It would be desirable that you establish the custom of reciting Tehillim — at least a few chapters —in shul during the weekdays as well. Convey to the congregants the words that my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, related: that reciting Tehillim protects [a person] from many undesirable matters and draws down abundant good for the needs of every single individual.”

-- Lubavitcher Rebbe
16 Iyar, 5711

From Our Sages

G-d spoke to Moses in the desert of Sinai (Numbers 1:1)

The Torah was given to the people of Israel in the ownerless desert. For if it were given in the Land of Israel, the residents of the Land of Israel would say, "It is ours"; and if it were given in some other place, the residents of that place would say, "It is ours." Therefore it was given in the wilderness, so that anyone who wishes to acquire it may acquire it.

-- (Mechilta d'Rashbi)

Why was the Torah given in the desert? To teach us that if a person does not surrender himself to it like the desert, he cannot merit the words of Torah. And to teach us that just as the desert is endless, so is the Torah without end.

-- (Pesikta d'Rav Kahana)

It is customary that on the Shabbat before a wedding, the bridegroom is called to the Torah. Shavuot, the festival which coincides with the anniversary of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, represents the marriage of G-d and Israel; this is why the Torah portion of Bamidbar ("in the desert") is usually read on the Shabbat before Shavuot.

-- (Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch)

NOTE: Actual Haftorah will be "Machar Chodesh". Haftarah for Bamidbar in a Nutshell

Hosea 2:1-22

This week's haftorah begins with the words, "The number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea [shore], which can be neither measured nor counted." An appropriate reading for the first Torah reading of the Book of Numbers.

Hosea first prophesies about the eventual reunification of the houses of Judah and Israel. During the Messianic Era, these two perennial antagonists will make peace and appoint a single leader. Hosea then rebukes the Jewish people for their infidelity, abandoning their "husband," G-d, and engaging in adulterous affairs with pagan deities. He describes the punishments they will suffer because of this unfaithfulness.

Eventually, though, Hosea reassures the Jews that they will repent, and G-d will accept them back wholeheartedly. The haftorah concludes with the moving words: "And I will betroth you to Me forever, and I will betroth you to Me with righteousness and with justice and with loving-kindness and with mercy." ❖

From all of us at Anshei-Lubavitch, we hope and pray for the safety and health of you and your loved ones. May the Almighty protect us all and send complete healing to those who need healing. And may our world very soon find the ultimate cure to all diseases with the coming of Moshiach, sooner than we can imagine.

Marya and Ora Friedman would like to thank our wonderful Fair Lawn community for their outpouring of love and support during the illness of our beloved husband and father, Michael Friedman, A"H, and during the Shiva. Thank you to everyone who prepared meals for us and helped with grocery shopping.