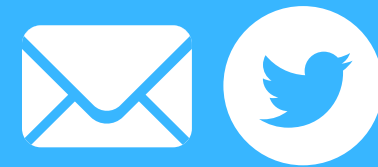


PARSHA PAGES



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BAMIDBAR - במדבר

WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS WEEK'S PARSHA?

On the first day of the second month, **Iyar**, in the second year after leaving Egypt, Hashem commands Moshe to perform a **census** of the Jewish people based on their families - specifically, men aged 20 and up who are able to fight in a war. Each tribe has one representative who will help Moshe with the census, and those are the chiefs of the tribe. The Torah records the census for each tribe: 46,500 in Reuven, 59,300 in Shimon, 45,650 in Gad, 74,600 in Yehuda, 54,400 in Issachar, 57,400 in Zevulun, 40,500 in Ephraim, 32,200 in Menashe, 35,400 in Benyamin, 62,700 in Dan, 41,500 in Asher, and 53,400 in Naftali, totalling 603,550 men who were eligible to be soldiers. The tribe of Levi was not counted in this census because their responsibility is to take care of the **Mishkan** rather than going to war. The tribes camped around the **Mishkan** in the same formation as they would use for war, and Levi camped in the middle, surrounding the Mishkan. The Torah then repeats the census with the chief of each tribe, and groups them into a formation: **Yehuda** led the tribes of Issachar and Zevulun from the eastern side, which was the front, **Reuven** led Shimon and Gad from the south, **Levi** traveled in the middle, **Ephraim** led Menashe and Binyamin from the west, and **Dan** led Asher and Naphtali on the north. The Jews camped according to this formation, as Hashem instructed. The Torah then tells us about **Aharon** and his sons, and Hashem tells Moshe to commands the Levis to work in the **Mishkan** and for **Aharon's** family to serve as the **Cohanim**, priests. Hashem tells Moshe that the Levis are taking the place of the first-borns, who were supposed to work in the **Mishkan**, because Hashem saved them in Egypt. Moshe takes a census of the Levis of every male over the age of one month and records the names of their families, as well as the responsibilities of each family in the Mishkan and their chief. The population of the males of Levi was 22,000. Moshe takes a census of the first-borns who were supposed to work in the Mishkan, which is 22,273. Hashem commands Moshe to redeem the 273 firstborns who do not have a corresponding Levi, by giving 5 shekels of silver per person from them to Aharon and his sons. Hashem commands Moshe to count the Levis between the age of 30 to 50 in the family of **Kehas**, who are responsible for the holiest objects in the **Mishkan** alongside the Cohanim. Hashem cautions Moshe to teach them how to do their jobs correctly, so they do not die.

THINK ABOUT IT:

The tribe of **Levi** was exempt from fighting in war because they worked in the **Mishkan**. Do you think that is fair? How can you explain their responsibilities as equivalent?



THE FIVE CENSUSES

Our Sages teach us that the Jews were counted **five** times in the Torah: when they went down to Egypt (Bereishis 46:27), when they left Egypt (Shemos 12:37), after the incident of the Golden Calf (Shemos 30:12), in this week's **Parsha**, and when dividing up the of the land of Israel for the tribes (Bamidbar 26). Each count has its own practical purpose, like counting for the army in this Parsha. **Rashi** (1040-1105, France) adds a deeper meaning to these many counts, that Hashem counts the Jews often out of His love for them, like someone who counts something that they love. There is a law against counting Jews unnecessary, and **Rabbeinu Bachya** (1255-1340, Spain & Israel) explains that it is because pointing out every individual divides the Jewish people instead of creating unity.

שָׂאוּ אֶת רֹאשׁ כָּל עֵדוּת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִשְׁפְּחוֹתֵם לְבֵית אֲבוֹתָם בְּמִסְפָּר שְׁמוֹת כָּל זָכָר לְגִלְגֻלְתָּם: (במדבר א:ב)

Take a census of the whole Jewish community by the clans of its ancestral families, listing the names, every male, head by head.

YOU COUNT!

DISCUSS:

Have you ever participated in a census? Why is a census important? Think about the other times in the Torah that the Jews are counted. What practical reasons can you think of for those counts?



SHAVUOS: THE HOLIDAY OF THE TORAH AND... CHEESECAKE?

This coming week celebrates the holiday of **Shavuos**, which commemorates the harvesting of the wheat in Israel, the bringing of the **bikkurim**, the first fruits, the giving of the **Torah** to the Jews on **Mount Sinai**, and day after the conclusion of counting the 49 days of the **Omer** sacrifice. There is a custom to **stay up all night learning Torah** on Shavuos, to show our excitement for this occasion. There is also a custom to eat **dairy**, and some say that this is because the numerical value of the word חלב, milk, is 40, for the number of days that Moshe spent learning the Torah from Hashem on Mount Sinai.

THINK

Why do we celebrate receiving the Torah? Why is the Torah so special? Imagine Judaism without the Torah. What would that look like? What does the Torah add to our experience of Judaism? What does it add to our tradition and community?



A SHORT IDEA:

In the Ethics of Our Fathers, Our Rabbis say that Moshe received the Torah from Mount Sinai, instead of at Mount Sinai. Elsewhere, we learn that Hashem chose Mount Sinai as the place where He would give the Torah because of its **humility**. This teaches us the importance of being humble when learning Torah, just like Moshe, whom the Torah says was the most humble man on earth.