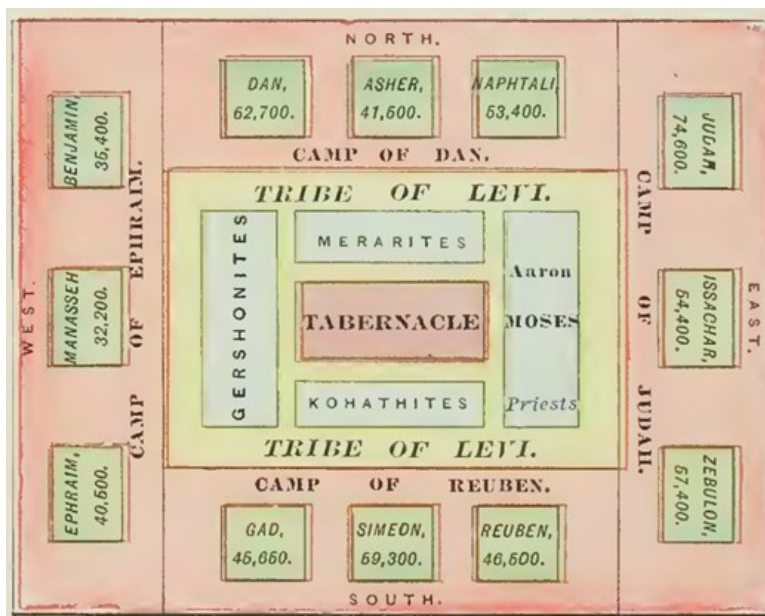


PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Bemidbar	8 June, 2019	5 Sivan 5779	Num 1:1-4:20	Hos 1:10-2:20	Matt 4:1-17

We begin this week from the Sefer Bemidbar. Bedmidbar is translated into English as “Numbers.” However, it actually means “In the desert.” Let’s do a quick review of previous Books. The Sefer B’resheet (Genesis) was a historical account of creation. The Sefer Shemot (Exodus) was about the exodus of Yisraelites. The Sefer Vayikra (Leviticus) was about the laws. And now, the Sefer Bedmidbar tells us how the Yisraelites lived in the desert for forty years. How they dressed, what they ate, whom did they talk to? What did they do all day? How did they move? If there were 500 or 1000 people, the chances are they all knew each other. But we are talking about 3 million or more people in the desert. It is obvious that the book cannot contain all remain 38 years. Instead, Moshe recorded one month of living in the desert to show us how they lived.



We all know Hashem is orderly and precise, and so is the moving of the Yisraelites. So, let’s start with the date. On the first day of the second month of the second year leaving Mitzrayim, Hashem commanded Moshe and Aharon to conduct census of the Yisraelites who are between 20 years to 60 years old to serve in the military. Chapter 1 ends with each tribe being counted by families, house of their father, and by their names with 603,550 people which excluded Levites per Hashem. He assigned them the responsibility to care for the Tent of Testimony, how they should set up their tents, so that it will not bring anger to the people. Also, a general command to set up their tents which we studied last year.

In Proverbs 27:10 says, “Better is a neighbor nearby than a brother far away.” In one of the morning prayers, we ask Hashem to save us from a group of people. And one of the people that we ask is to save us from a bad neighbor as we will learn about Korach and Miriam. When we look for houses to buy, we look the surrounding areas of the house, the neighbors, and the direction of the main door.

Thus, the direction Moshe was facing had the best location. He would see sun rise every morning along with Yahudah, Yissaskar, and Zebulun. Now, a question we should be asking is why these three tribes? The answer is the kings came from Yahudah, Yissaskar were the teachers of the Torah, Zebulun provide money for the Torah study to Yissaskar. So, they were considered as the elite.

On the southside, Korach was with Reuben, Simeon, and Gad. Which tribe stood with Korach when he rebelled against Moshe? The Tribe of Reuben. The Midrash says that because of their position, all the tribes in the south followed Korach. Meaning, if you are attached to somebody that is not good, then you will go toward that direction. So, a good neighbor is very important.

In Sefer ha-Ikkarim (Book of Righteous), written by Joseph Albo said that some animals, by their nature is a loner and they live by themselves. But if you put them together, they will fight, kill, or eat them, i.e.

snakes. There is another that can live by themselves. If you put these together, they will get along. For example, a dog can live alone by itself. Put a bunch of dogs together, they will live together. But he says, human beings are completely different. That we must have company. He says that we are to be with other people. If we take a person and place him in isolation for a period of time, he will go insane due to lack of communication.

Thus, “YHWH spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness of Sinai...take a census of all the congregation of the children of Yisrael, by their clans...” (Num. 1:1-2) The Midrash says that “when Yisrael saw the angels carrying the Holy Chariot by Mount Sinai, they desired flags for each tribe.”¹ When Hashem created the world, it was for the purpose of creating man. However, man was created on the last day after all other creations. If man was created initially, he would have been like an angel who cannot change its status, lacking the ability to choose. Therefore, Hashem created the world first and dropped down below to allow him to have a free will.

As the soul of man was hewn from beneath the Throne of Glory, we must serve his Creator by returning back to the original source by rectifying himself through *teshuvah* (repentance) and good deeds. Because we were given a free-choice that can rise to higher levels than the angels. We can strive to change this world and our roles through our free will. Thus we are dynamic, whereas the angels are static.

It is very difficult for us to reach or return to the Throne of Glory. Abraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov reached the Throne of Glory through their deeds because they observed the Torah even though they were not commanded to do so. The generations of “who were commanded to observe” are harder to merit this level. Thus, we must continue to refine ourselves every day. For the past 49 days, we counted the Omer and learned the mystical meaning of Sefirot by itself and in combination.

“On the first day of the second month” – a person has two renewals: one on the day of his birth, and the other when he has repented and becomes like a new creation. So, “second” (*sheni*) alludes to this second renewal, when he was reborn through repentance and atonement.

Now, a person might say, “How can I be happy when I have sinned so much in the past?” The Torah says, “Even so, repent with joy and happiness and encourage yourself saying, ‘I am reborn today as a newborn child and I will not sin again.’” This is called “*chiddush* (חידוש, renewal) which shares the same root as the word for “*chodesh*” (חדש, month). Since a person is born like a brand new being after repenting, it is thus said, “on the first of the second month.”

We have learned that when Hashem took out the Children of Egypt from Mitzrayim, they had 49 levels of impurity. Every time we repent, we are leaving one impurity behind and enters a level of kedusha (holiness). So, the “second year” in Sefer Yetzira, the world is referred to as a “year.” For a second time, in this world there can be an exodus from Mitzryaim because when he does *teshuvah*, it is considered like another exodus.²

The Yisraelites realized the difficulty to rectify themselves until they reached the original level. When they saw the Chariot and the angels, they understood that the angels would be fulfilling the missions, they desired to have flags so that they would become the vehicle for Hashem’s mission instead. Therefore, the word

¹ Midrash Rabbah Bamidbar 2:3

² Noam Elimelech, p. 213-214

“count” (סָפַּר, se·u) can also mean ‘raise’. So the verse is saying: Uplift and raise them back to the higher dimensions to the original source.

In Chapter 1:53, the Torah says, “And the stranger who comes near is put to death.” In Hebrew, וְהַזָּר הַקָּרֵב, וְיָמָת, *ve-haz-zar hak-ka-rev, yu-mat.*” Who is the stranger? If a person who is foreign to the service of the Levites and he does that service, he is liable to death. If a person wants to do the role of Levites and he wants to be close and he comes close, but Hashem says, “No. That is not your function. It’s not your calling.”

When we are trying to come closer and closer to Hashem, we have to recognize what our closeness means and how to become close. It is not just to try and assume that we think are close. In reality, that is not even close. If we try to be close in a way that is not fitting and not proper for us that is not our calling, then it is the opposite of life. However, this verse gives us the power to recognize what is our true way to come close to Hashem.

The Torah teaches us how to behave. When the Torah was given, Hashem chose Mount Sinai as it was the lowest mountain of all.³ This is the implication of “in the Sinai Desert”, that we should be as lowly as Har Sinai was lowly. However, we must be careful not to fall into depression and despair as a result of being exceedingly modest and lowly as it can be an obstacle to properly serving Hashem. Thus, the Torah warns us to always be happy since the Shekinah does not dwell on those who are sad. This is what מוֹעֵד *be-o-hel mo-ed*, “In the Tent of Appointment”) It implies that we should enter the place of joy and happiness, for *mo-ed* can also mean “festival,” a time of rejoicing.⁴

R’ Abba opened, “And Elohim created the man in His image, in the image of Elohim He created him.” (Gen. 1:27) When Hashem created the human being, He made him in the image of those above and below: he [man] was composed of all, and his light shone from one end of the world to the other, and all feared him.⁵ Vayikra Rabbah 14:1, in the name of Rabbi Yishma’el son of Nahman said that when Adam was created, he was unformed mass and he extended from one end of the world to the other. In 11:7, in the name of R’ Yehudah son of R’ Simon said, “With the light created by the *Kadosh Baruch Hu* on the first day, a person could gaze and see from one end of the world to the other.” That was how Moshe was able to see the Promised Land before his death.

³ BT, Megillah 29a

⁴ Noam Elimelech, p. 213

⁵ Zohar 3:117a