

Date: 26 Iyar 5786 (May 13, 2026)

Torah Portion: Bamidbar

Topic: The Hidden Muster

The Gospel of Matthew (24:29–36) records a vision of cosmic upheaval, hidden timing, and the ultimate gathering of the elect. The passage speaks of the darkening of the sun and moon, the shaking of the heavens, and the appearance of the “Son of Man” coming with power and great glory. Yet immediately after describing these terrifying signs, the text concludes with a profound statement of uncertainty: “But concerning that day and hour no one knows.” This tension between revelation and concealment lies at the heart of apocalyptic thought and Torah theology. The same pattern appears throughout the Torah: YHWH reveals enough to awaken repentance and faithfulness, but conceals enough to require humility, vigilance, and dependence upon Him.

The background for this teaching can be illuminated through the opening chapters of Sefer Bamidbar. In Numbers 1:1, YHWH commands Moshe to number and organize Yisrael in the wilderness. At first glance, this census appears administrative, but the classical commentators understand it as something far deeper. Rashi explains that YHWH counts Yisrael repeatedly because of divine love, just as a precious treasure is constantly recounted. The numbering is not merely statistical; it is relational. Each person stands individually before Heaven, yet also as part of the collective body of Yisrael. The wilderness camp thus becomes a prophetic image of ordered redemption.

This wilderness structure forms an important backdrop for Matthew 24. In Numbers, the tribes are arranged around the Mishkan according to banners and appointed positions. Every tribe has a place. Every family has a function. Even the Levites are divided into distinct responsibilities: the sons of Kehat carry the holiest vessels, the sons of Gershon transport coverings and curtains, and the sons of Merari bear the structural components of the sanctuary. Holiness requires order, boundaries, and readiness.

The warning in Numbers 4:20 is especially striking: the sons of Kehat must not gaze upon the holy objects uncovered “lest they die.” Holiness contains both nearness and concealment. Divine realities are not handled casually. This principle echoes throughout Matthew 24. The generation seeking signs often desires unrestricted visibility into divine mysteries, yet Heaven veils its timing. Just as the holy vessels were covered before transport, the final redemption remains partially concealed until its appointed moment.

The Zohar repeatedly teaches that concealment itself is part of revelation. In the language of the Zohar, the hidden light is not absent; it is veiled so that humanity may seek it through faithfulness and purification. Cosmic darkness, therefore, is not merely punishment. The darkening of the sun and moon in Matthew 24 symbolizes the collapse of worldly certainty. Human kingdoms, powers, and structures lose their apparent permanence. What seemed stable is shaken so that the eternal kingdom of YHWH alone remains.

This same dynamic appears in First Book of Samuel 20:18–42, in the covenantal relationship between David and Yonatan. Yonatan warns David that Saul seeks his death, and together they devise a hidden sign involving the new moon feast. Significantly, David’s absence from the royal table becomes the revelation itself. His empty seat exposes the intentions of Saul’s kingdom.

The connection to Matthew 24 is profound. In the commentators thought, the new moon represents concealment preceding renewal. The moon diminishes before it is restored. Likewise, redemption often emerges through hiddenness and apparent loss. David, the anointed king, is absent and rejected before he openly reigns. The messianic pattern is therefore one of concealment preceding revelation.

Shalom.