

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

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BAMIDBAR

5th Sivan 5776

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 1, verses 1 - 19

- ✚ It was the 1st Iyar during the 2nd year after the exodus when Hashem instructs Moshe to take a census of Bnai Yisrael.
- ✚ With help from Aaron and a representative from each tribe, they count every male person over the age of twenty, and those who would be eligible to go to war if and when required to do so.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 1, verses 20 - 54

- ✚ The results of the Census are revealed, tribe by tribe, giving us a grand total of 603,550
- ✚ However this census does not include anyone from the tribe of Levi. This is because as it is their duty to be involved in dismantling, carrying and re-erecting the Mishkan (Tabernacle) whenever they travelled, none of them would be allowed to go into battle;

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 2, verses 1 - Chapter 2, verse 34

- ✚ Hashem advises Moshe and Aaron on how to set up camp around the Mishkan. The Levi'im will first encircle the Mishkan with their tents so they can guard and protect the Mishkan from all sides.
- ✚ On the eastern side of the Mishkan, the tribes of Yehuda, Yissachar and Zevulan will make camp. The tribes of Reuven, Shimon and Gad will settle in the south with the tribes of Ephraim, Menashe and Binyamin positioning themselves on the west side and the tribes of Dan, Asher and Naftali setting up home on the north side.

R'VI' - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 3, verses 1 - 13

- ✚ Hashem tells Moshe the Levi'im will be put in charge of serving and assisting the Kohanim in the Mishkan and the guarding all of its vessels.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 3, verses 14 - 39

- ✚ A census of the Levi'im is now taken consisting of all the males from one month of age and above adding up to 22,000 in all.
- ✚ There are three main families within the tribe of Levi, Gershon, who were put in charge of transporting the tapestries, curtains belonging to the Mishkan. The family of Kehat role was to transport all the holy vessels and Merari's family were the ones who had to carry all the beams, panels and sockets. .

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 3, verses 40 - 51

- ✚ Next Hashem asks Moshe to count every firstborn male belonging to Bnai Yisrael from one month old and above. The total came to 22,273.
- ✚ Hashem explains that all the Levi'im counted will replace the rights given to the firstborns. This is because all firstborns are now sanctified to Him as they were saved on the day that Hashem struck down all the firstborn Egyptians.
- ✚ Each firstborn will be redeemed with a Levite. The remaining 273 are to be redeemed by handing over five shekels to either Aaron or one of his sons.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 4, verses 1 - 20

- ✚ Finally Moshe is instructed by Hashem to take a census of the family of Kehat between the ages of thirty and Fifty as they would be the only ones eligible in transporting the Mishkan's Holy vessels.
- ✚ The last section deals with how the Mishkan should be dismantled and preparing all the sacred vessels before moving them to the next destination.

Haftorah – Hoshea, Chapter 2 verses 1 to 22

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ The Haftorah begins with the Navi (prophet). Hoshea speaking about the future redemption.
- ✚ Hosea first prophesies about the eventual reunification of the houses of Judah and Israel. During the Messianic Era, when these two perennial antagonists will make peace and appoint a single leader once more.
- ✚ Hosea then rebukes the Jewish people for their infidelity, abandoning their "husband," Hashem, and engaging in adulterous affairs with pagan deities. He describes the punishments they will suffer because of this unfaithfulness.
- ✚ Eventually, though, Hosea gives reassurances that Teshuva (repentance) will take place, and Hashem will accept them all back wholeheartedly.

GEMATRIA LINKED TO THE SEDRA:

- ✚ As the Kohanim and Levi'im both lived and worked around the Mishkan, they had to take great care to maintain their high level of Kedusha (Holinesses) at all times.
- ✚ We learn this from the numerical value of the words **למשכן סביב** Saviv La'Mishkan (Surrounding the Mishkan) which has the same Gematria to that of **קדש עם** Am Kadosh (A holy nation) of 514.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

When Hashem gave us the Ten Commandments on Shavuot, He intentionally changed the rules of nature. A miracle occurred, Hashem's voice as powerful as it is, never caused an echo. Normally soundwaves bounce back and forth off objects which they cannot penetrate, creating an echo until it's strength ebbs away into nothing. When Hashem spoke his voice did not weaken, nor bounce away from the world. Instead, it reverberated from one end of the world to the other, and the world absorbed it. Our Rabbi's derived from that moment on, Hashem's voice had changed the whole world, making it ready to receive his Kedusha (holiness). Ever since then, every positive mitzvot performed blends in within the fabric and nature of the world; adhering to the voice of Hashem which we all accepted at the time of Matan Torah. The same is true when learning Torah. We are not just studying laws and ideas. The Torah seeps into us like a sponge and absorbs into our innermost selves, changing the way we think and feel. In effect, The Torah learnt does not bounce back, away from us or fade into non-existence it remains strong within ourselves.

Alongside The Ten Commandments and the Shema most of the noteworthy passages in the entire Torah come from the Parsha of Va'etchanan. For example, *'And now, O Israel, give heed to the laws and rules that I am instructing you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land...You shall not add anything to what I command you or take anything away from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your G-d that I enjoin upon you. (Deuteronomy 4:1-2).*

Rashi suggests that this passage simply means what it says. You literally should not add or subtract. E.g. The Torah says that there are four species, the Lulav, Etrog, Hadassim, and Aravos that we must take on the festival of Sukkot. The Torah does not say to take five or three, so one should not literally add a fifth species or take away one of the four. The S'forno however understands these verses differently. He submits that the verse comes to tell us that "one should not think that once the cause or reason of a negative prohibition has been removed, then it is not sinful to diminish the Mitzvot." Meaning that it is not for us to determine cause or reason for obeying and following Hashem's commandments, rather we simply must follow them because they are written in the Torah.

At first, this approach seems to me that they do not speak to the modern reality of Judaism today. That is contemporary Jewish practice is not based on the words of the Torah entirely; but on the Rabbinic rulings too which seems to contradict these Pesukim both literally and figuratively by adding extra laws or clauses to the existing ones in order to safe-guard us or help improve our understanding of the Torah. However, I found a potentially simple way to resolve that issue. Later on in that same sedra, Moshe makes the following statement to the individuals who are standing on the doorstep of the Land of Israel: *The Lord our G-d made a covenant with us...It was not with our fathers that the Lord made this covenant, but with us, the living, every one of us who is here today (Deuteronomy 5:2-3).*

Moshe's words apply as much now as they did then. Each and every one of us has the opportunity and responsibility to make Judaism and our relationship with the Divine our own. Judaism is not something that exists in the past, but is perpetual. It must be something that lives and breathes in the present and continue to be in the future. The key to understanding this principle is to try to understand what it means to be a part of the living covenant of our 'Jewish Nation' and heritage. The essence of the idea is that we should not take our special relationship with Hashem for granted. The truth is that without these Rabbinic additions and subtractions with regard to our personal Jewish beliefs and conduct there would be the potential to create discord within our Jewish community as a whole causing unnecessary friction between us. Our challenge is to be purposeful with our Judaism so that we can feel as though, we are all living and upholding our part of the covenant described in the Torah, while embracing others in their quest to do the same.

