

In memory of all those brutally murdered in the war on Israel and the fallen soldiers of the IDF. Praying for the safe return of all the hostages.

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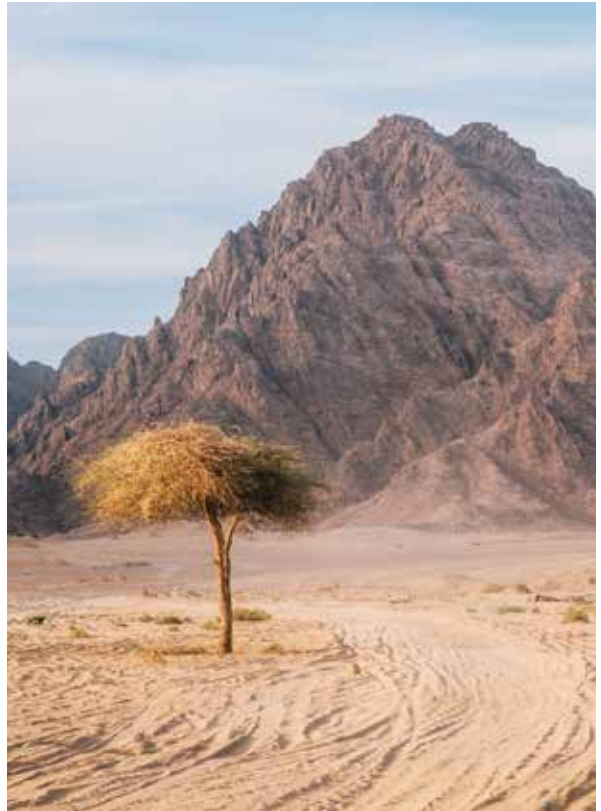
DAF HASHAVUA

בְּמִדְבָּר | BEMIDBAR

SHABBAT ENDS:

London 10.20pm
Birmingham 10.34pm
Bournemouth 10.28pm
Cardiff 10.41pm
Dublin 10.59pm
Edinburgh 11.21pm
Glasgow 11.29pm
Hull 10.53pm
Leeds 10.45pm
Liverpool 10.55pm
Manchester 10.52pm
Nottingham 10.47pm
Sheffield 10.53pm
Southend 10.15pm
Southport 11.03pm
Jerusalem 8.26pm

**Shavuot is on
Wednesday and Thursday**



SIDRA BREAKDOWN

בְּמִדְבָּר BEMIDBAR

1st Sidra in:

בְּמִדְבָּר BEMIDBAR

By Numbers:

159 VERSES
1,823 WORDS
7,393 LETTERS

Headlines:

FORMATION OF THE JEWISH CAMP IN THE DESERT

BEMIDBAR:

Artscroll p726
Hertz p568
Soncino p793

HAFTARAH:

Artscroll p1180
Hertz p582
Soncino p810

Sidra Summary

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – BEMIDBAR 1:1-19

On Rosh Chodesh of the second month after the Exodus from Egypt, God instructs Moshe and Aharon to take a census of men above the age of 20. (The Talmud adds that men above 60 were not counted). The leader of each tribe is to be present when his tribe is counted. The name of each leader is stated. The census is carried out as commanded.

2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 1:20-54

The Torah lists the results of the census. The tribe of Reuven numbers 46,500; Shimon 59,300; Gad 45,650; Yehuda 74,600; Yissachar 54,400; Zevulun 57,400; Ephraim 40,500; Menashe 32,200; Binyamin 35,400; Dan 62,700; Asher 41,500; Naftali 53,400. This comes to a total of 603,550 men. The tribe of Levi is not counted with the rest of the tribes. They are assigned to dismantle and transport the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) when the nation travels in the desert, as well as to guard the *Mishkan* when it is stationary.

3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 2:1-34

God tells Moshe and Aharon how to position the 12 tribes (other than Levi) around the *Mishkan*. They are to be organised into four groups of three tribes, each group led by one particular tribe. To the east of the *Mishkan* are the tribes of Yehuda, Yissachar and Zevulun, led by Yehuda. To the south are the tribes of Reuven, Shimon and Gad, led by Reuven. To the west are the tribes of Ephraim, Menashe and Binyamin, led by Ephraim. To the north are the tribes of Dan, Asher and Naftali, led by Dan.

4TH ALIYA (REVI'I) – 3:1-13

Aharon's sons are listed. God tells Moshe to bring the tribe of Levi to Aharon in order to assist him in his work as the *Kohen Gadol*.

The tribe of Levi is to take over the role that had been designated for the firstborn, who were sanctified on the night of the Exodus from Egypt, when the Egyptian firstborn were killed and they survived.

5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 3:14-39

God tells Moshe to count the men of the tribe of Levi, aged from one month upwards. The count is divided up into three main groups, according to the descendants of Levi's three sons, Gershon, Kehat and Merari. Each main group, whose constituent families are also listed, is given a different location in relation to the *Mishkan*. The overall number of Levi'im counted in the census is 22,000.

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 3:40-51

Moshe is told to count the male firstborn and to 'replace' them with the Levi'im. The firstborn number 22,273. The extra 273 firstborn (over and above the 22,000 Levi'im) are to give five shekels each in order to redeem their status.

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI'I) – 4:1-19

The specific role of each of the three main families is now detailed, one in this week's sidra, two in next week's sidra. The family of Kehat are to take down, transport and reassemble the holy Ark (*Aron*), the Table (*Shulchan*), the Menorah, the Golden Altar (*Mizbeach Ha'zahav*) and the vessels used together with these features of the *Mishkan*.

HAFTARAH (HOSHEA 2:1-22)

The start of the haftarah is linked to the sidra, with the Children of Israel compared to "the sand of the sea, which can neither be measured nor counted". The prophet Hoshea then goes on to liken the sinful Children of Israel to an unfaithful wife. However, they will eventually return to 'their husband' (God), who will take them back with kindness and mercy.

United Synagogue Daf Hashavua

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The
United
Synagogue

Counting by Numbers



**RABBI
DR JULIAN
SHINDLER**

Former Director,
Marriage Authorisation,
Office of the Chief Rabbi

The opening passage of Bemidbar, set early in the second year after the Exodus from Egypt, records the number of males in each tribe over the age of twenty. The total - 603,550 - accords with the census taken earlier, as reported in parashat Pekudei (Shemot 38:26) before the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) was constructed. Some commentators infer from this that no deaths occurred during the building of the *Mishkan*.

Although there are several mitzvot which involve counting, such as *Sefirat HaOmer*, the *Shemita* cycle (Sabbatical years), *Yovel* (Jubilee year) and a woman's counting of seven 'clear' days prior to immersion in a *mikveh*, counting the Jewish people seems to be problematic. The counting instructed in parashat Ki Tisa and recorded in Pekudei, was done indirectly, by means of an 'atonement offering' of a

half-shekel. Census-taking by this means ensured that individuals would not be stricken by plague (ibid. 30:12). The implication is that counting Jews is somehow bad for their health.

The Talmud (*Yoma 22b*) discusses this subject. It cites a verse from the Book of Shmuel (Samuel): "And Shaul (Saul) gathered the people together and counted them by sheep" (*Shmuel 1* 15:4). Each person brought a sheep which King Shaul then counted, electing to count the people by indirect means. The Talmudic sage R' Yitzchak derives from this passage the principle that it is forbidden to count the Jews, even for a mitzvah.

Two other Talmudic sages, R' Eliezer and R' Nachman bar Yitzchak, take this a stage further. They rule that taking a census of the Jewish people is Biblically prohibited, basing this on the first verse of today's Haftarah: "The number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor counted" (Hoshea 2:1). This ruling is codified by the Rambam (Maimonides 1138-1204).

Though this Biblical prohibition applies only to taking a census of the entire Jewish people, the Rabbis nevertheless discouraged counting Jews under any circumstances. Accordingly, there developed a widespread *minhag* (custom) not to count people when ascertaining whether there is a *minyan* (quorum of ten males) for prayers. Rabbi Chaim Falagi (Turkey, 19th century) permits 'silent counting' - in one's mind but not aloud.

There is a widely accepted alternative device to 'count' the *minyan* indirectly, substituting a verse containing ten words for numbers. Our custom is to use the following verse from Tehilim (Psalms 28:9): '*Hoshia et ameicha, u'varech at nachalatecha, u'rem v'nasem ad ha'olam*'.

Interestingly, it is recorded that in Rashi's shul, the custom was to use a different ten-word verse (Psalms 5:8): '*Va'ani b'rov chasdecha avoh veitecha, eshtachaveh el heichal kodshecha b'yiratecha*'.

Rabbi Osher Weiss (a leading halachic authority living in Jerusalem) suggests that this verse may have been selected because a person is anyway encouraged to recite this upon arrival at the synagogue each day for *Shacharit* (see the Authorised Daily Prayer Book p.4).

Whether taken as symbolic or real, counting people by this indirect means teaches us to respect and value the dignity of each individual member of the Jewish people.



In loving memory of Harav Yitzchak Yoel ben Shlomo Halevi z"l

The Final Countdown



**RABBI
NATAN
FAGELMAN**

Allerton Hebrew
Congregation

When you hear about the Omer (the seven weeks between Pesach and Shavuot), you probably think of restrictions. No live music, no weddings, delayed Bar and Bat Mitzvah parties and overgrown beards. This is because some of this period became a time of mourning, remembering the great plague that wiped out the twenty-four thousand students of Rabbi Akiva, decimating the Torah-learning community of the post-Temple period.

However, the concept of counting each day of the Omer period until Shavuot is a Torah directive which clearly had nothing to do with this time of mourning – the event had not happened yet! So, what is the point of counting and how can we still use the final days of this mitzvah for its intended purpose?

Shavuot is referred to by a number of names. One of them used by the Talmudic Rabbis is 'Atzeret' (*Mishna Bikkurim 1:3*), which literally means the end or stopping of something; in this case, we finish (or stop) counting the Omer.

Ramban (Nachmanides, 1194-1270) takes this idea further, explaining that Shavuot is called 'Atzeret' because it is the conclusion of a unique period that started on Pesach, in the same way as Shemini Atzeret (same word) concludes the festival of Succot.

"He commanded us to observe the Festival of Matzot for seven days... and He counted forty-nine days after it... and He sanctified the eighth day [i.e. the day



immediately after the seven weeks] like the eighth day of the Festival [of Succot] (Vayikra 23:36)".

Thus, the forty-nine days of the Omer are like the *Chol HaMo'ed* (Intermediate Days) of the Succot festival, which link the first day of Succot with Shemini Atzeret. The Omer is intended to link the festival of Pesach with Shavuot, connecting the miracles of the Exodus with the Giving of the Torah. The days of the Omer are a "countdown"

(technically, a count up!) to Shavuot.

Why is this counting necessary?

An early commentary from the thirteenth century known as *Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 306)*, writes that "because the Torah is the essence of the Jewish people... we are commanded to count... in order to demonstrate our great desire for it".

The Omer is therefore not only about the restrictions that came from an historical event. The days of the Omer are a time of preparation, introspection and self-improvement, so we are fit and ready to receive the Torah.

The Rabbis describe the giving of the Torah as a wedding between God and the Jewish people (*Mishna Ta'anit 4:8*). If you were getting married in seven weeks, how busy you would you be! People spend many months planning a wedding; menus, dress fittings and guest lists are a time-consuming endeavour. We need to be spiritually prepared to receive the Torah on Shavuot. We still have some time to connect to God through learning and prayer. We can show our excitement by preparing special meals and inviting guests, and we can show we care by presenting our best selves in shul on Shavuot to hear the Ten Commandments.

Torah, Inclusion and Transforming Communities



RIVKA STEINBERG

Lead Advocate for Additional Needs, in Partnership with Gesher School and United Synagogue

Since I began working for the United Synagogue, I have frequently encountered confusion around the relevance of my role as Lead Advocate for Additional Needs. Surely we already have designated spaces and provision for children and people with disability in the community? I am equally bemused at the question because my role in advocating for disability inclusion is very much not about separate spaces but a focus on integration. I believe that inclusion is a cornerstone philosophy on which we can build stronger Jewish communities and that we will transform our communities by including those marginalised groups.

The Revelation at Mount Sinai was a foundational moment in Jewish history, laying the groundwork for Jewish identity and the establishment of *halacha* - Jewish laws and spiritual guidance. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l emphasised the profound idea that all Jewish souls - past, present and future - were there during the giving of the Torah.

He described it as a collective experience, transcending time and space, where the entire Jewish people, spanning generations, stood united in their acceptance of the covenant with God. This underscores our belief that every single Jewish individual is connected through this covenant, reinforcing a sense of shared responsibility, purpose and destiny

“ . . . we must strive to ensure Judaism is accessible to all and everyone should have the opportunity to engage with Torah teachings and traditions in ways meaningful to them. This requires removal of physical, social and cognitive barriers that hinder participation. . . ”

amongst the Jewish people.

This invites each and every one of us to personally engage with the teachings and values of the Torah, each with our unique role in perpetuating the legacy of Sinai.

One crucial aspect of the construction of the *Mishkan*, the Tabernacle, was the inclusivity of the construction process itself – every single member of Israel, regardless of background and ability, had a role to play. This highlights again the value of each person's contribution. No one was excluded.

Similarly in our communities, we must strive to ensure Judaism is accessible to all and everyone should have the opportunity to engage with Torah teachings and traditions in ways meaningful to them. This requires removal of physical, social and cognitive barriers that hinder participation, person-centred teaching methods to support diverse learning needs, and fostering an atmosphere of acceptance and belonging for those with differing abilities.

The Torah is not a just a book of laws or teachings. It is our blueprint for living a meaningful life. It also serves as a bridge, spanning the differences between us, as we are all bound by a shared commitment to God and His mitzvot. We each bring our own contribution that not only transforms us as individuals but also creates more compassionate and supportive communities, where everyone benefits from an environment that is accepting and inclusive.

Breaking the Law to Preserve the Law

Tannaim and their Cities: Part 38 | Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi ("Rebbi")

This series of articles takes a closer look at the Tannaim (Sages of the Mishnaic era) mentioned in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 32b) and the locations which served as their Torah centres.



**DAVID
FREI**

US Director of External
and Legal Services and
Registrar of the London
Beth Din

Are there times when a law can be broken in order to preserve the Law?

In our previous article, we explained why Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi decided it was necessary to edit the corpus of Oral Law which had developed over the previous 1400 years. We did not deal with the question as to his authority to do so. What was the problem?

The Talmud (*Gittin 60a,b*) discusses the reading of the *haftarah* in the synagogue from a scroll which does not contain the whole book of the prophet from which the *haftarah* was taken. It also discusses the custom of two early *Amoraim* (the teachers of the Oral Law between 220 CE and 500 CE), Rabbi Yochanan and his brother-in-law, Resh Lakish, who would study books of *Aggadica* (non-*Halachic*) teachings on Shabbat.

These practices offended two rules. The first rule is that the Written Law (*Tanach*) may not be recited by heart and may not be read aloud from an incomplete book. Reading the *haftarah* from a mere extract of one of the prophets

offended the first maxim.

The second rule was that the Oral Law had to be transmitted by word of mouth and could not be reduced to writing. The production of books of *Aggadica* literature offended this precept.

Regarding this second rule, it should be stressed that it was common practice from ancient times that when a student learnt a novel point from his mentor, he could record this in a secret note for recall when necessary. Rashi (1040-1105) refers to this practice in his commentary to *Shabbat 6b*. These notes were known as "hidden *megillot*", specifically because they could be retained as an aide-memoire but could not be copied and distributed to others or read aloud in public. Therefore, the Talmud in *Gittin* asks how Rabbi Yochanan and Resh Lakish could

"... if the prohibition of reducing the Oral Law to writing was maintained, the teachings contained therein would be forgotten and people would be ignorant of its rules."

have possessed books of *Aggadica* teachings.

The response of the Talmud is to quote a sentence in *Tehillim* (Psalms) 119:126 and give it an original interpretation, far from its literal meaning.

The words literally mean, 'It is a time to act for God for they have violated your teaching.' The Rabbis read this to say that at times one must act on behalf of God by breaking His Torah. The logic was that, if by refusing to allow the production of special scrolls for each *haftarah* and instead insisting on the whole of the book of the prophet of that *haftarah* to be written, communities which could not afford this luxury would end up not reading the *haftarah* at all. Similarly, if the books of *Aggadica* were not permitted, their teachings would simply be forgotten.

The Italian tosafist, Yeshaya of Trani (c. 1180 - c. 1250), in his commentary on *Gittin 60*, suggests that Rabbi Yehuda's licence to produce the *Mishna* as we know it was based on the very same proposition; if the prohibition of reducing the Oral Law to writing was maintained, the teachings contained therein would be forgotten and people would be ignorant of its rules. Therefore, in this case of emergency, this rule had to be waived.

THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT BEMIDBAR

7-8 JUNE | 2 SIVAN

Finding Purpose in Counting



**NATANA
SABEL**

Tribe
Madricha

Right at the start of Parashat Bemidbar, Moshe (Moses) is commanded by God to take a census of the Jewish people according to their tribes. He is told to “take a total count of the entire community of the Children of Israel according to their families, according to their fathers’ house, counting the names of all males twenty years old and upward” (Bemidbar 1:2-3).

Immediately after this, the people are arranged into four camps around the *Mishkan* (portable Sanctuary) and each camp

received their own flag.

It may be asked what the point of God commanding Moshe to count the people was, especially since we’d already been counted earlier on in the Torah. Not only this, but more importantly, since God is omniscient, surely He already knows the number of Jews without the need for physical intervention by Moshe.

Through the counting, we are reminded that we are incredibly precious to God and how each individual in this world has a unique part to play in His plan. We were created with a special purpose that only we can fulfil and each of us has a unique spark within us. This serves as a great motivation for us and we should strive to remember it.

Each person in this physical

world is different, whether that be in personality or appearance. This is also true in the spiritual world; no two souls are the same, showing that our purpose lies within us and is something only we can fulfil. Our names were used when Moshe counted us and they were used as identifiers. In today’s world, someone may think that names are meaningless and hold no purpose except to serve as placeholders. But we have names for a reason – to define us, to give us purpose and to imbue us with a sense of identity and pride.

As we count the final nights of the Omer, we must remember that we all have a purpose in this world to fulfil and that God cares deeply about every individual and that there is nothing more powerful than us coming together as a nation.

Parasha Word Search

The words can go in any direction.
The words can also share letters as they cross over each other.

FLAG
TORAH
MOSHE
NUMBERS
CENSUS
NAME
MISHKAN

B	B	O	O	K	C	H	G	M	E
F	Q	M	L	A	A	A	T	H	Z
X	P	D	P	H	L	R	S	Q	E
N	N	Z	C	F	A	O	R	Q	Q
K	N	A	M	E	M	T	E	O	K
M	Y	C	K	U	N	Q	B	B	P
E	J	H	V	H	U	S	M	D	C
W	F	D	U	C	S	S	U	P	G
E	S	K	A	N	W	I	N	S	P
Y	V	H	S	T	M	N	M	K	X



THE TRIBE SCRIBE

BEMIDBAR: MORE OR LESS?

The city of **Minsk** in **Belarus** was getting very crowded, so a few families decided to venture out and start a new community. The families settled in the small village of **Plotzk**.

HOORAY! WE HAVE A **MINYAN**! BUT ONLY JUST! AMONGST US THERE ARE EXACTLY **10 JEWISH MEN** OVER 13.

WE NEED 10 OR MORE MEN OVER **BAR MITZVAH** AGE TO BE ABLE TO SAY CERTAIN PRAYERS!

Every day, they came together to pray. The daily **minyan** was very important to them.

OY! LOOK OUTSIDE! IT'S RAINING CATS AND DOGS! AH WELL, I'D BETTER WRAP UP - THERE WON'T BE A **MINYAN** WITHOUT ME.

I'M A **SHMATTE!** I'M NOT FEELING GREAT TODAY, BUT I THINK I'LL GO ANYWAY - THEY NEED ME!

HAVE YOU HEARD THE NEWS? A NEW **JEWISH** FAMILY HAS MOVED TO **PLOTZK**. NOW WE HAVE AN **11TH MEMBER** OF OUR **MINYAN**!

WHAT HAPPENED THE NEXT MORNING? NO-ONE TURNED UP TO **DAVENING** (PRAYERS)! SUDDENLY, EVERYONE FELT A LITTLE LESS OBLIGATED AND A LITTLE LESS RESPONSIBLE.

AFTER ALL, THERE IS NOW AN EXTRA PERSON TO JOIN THE PRAYERS - THEY CAN MANAGE WITHOUT ME.

THIS WEEK'S **PARASHA** OF **BEMIDBAR** BEGINS WITH A CENSUS COUNTING THE **JEWISH** PEOPLE. A CENSUS REMINDS US OF THE VALUE OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL. EVEN WHERE THERE IS A LARGE GROUP, EVERY MEMBER IS SIGNIFICANT. CAN YOU THINK OF OPPORTUNITIES IN YOUR DAILY LIFE WHERE **YOU** CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE?



tribe
www.tribeuk.com

Tribe is the Young People's Department of the United Synagogue: Creating a future for our community through engaging, educating and inspiring the next generation.