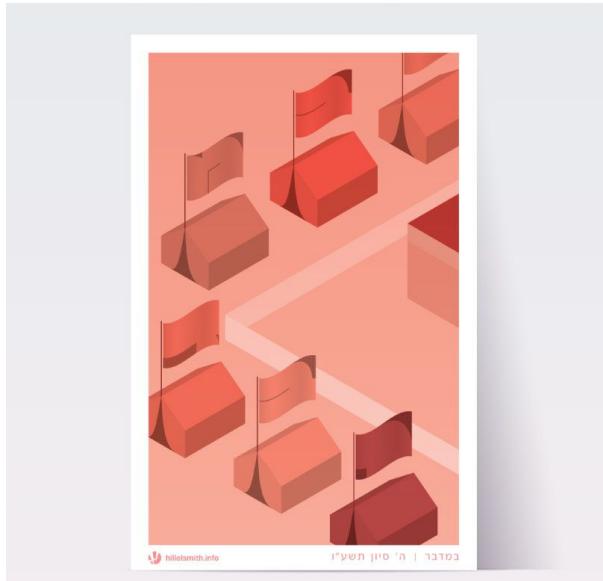
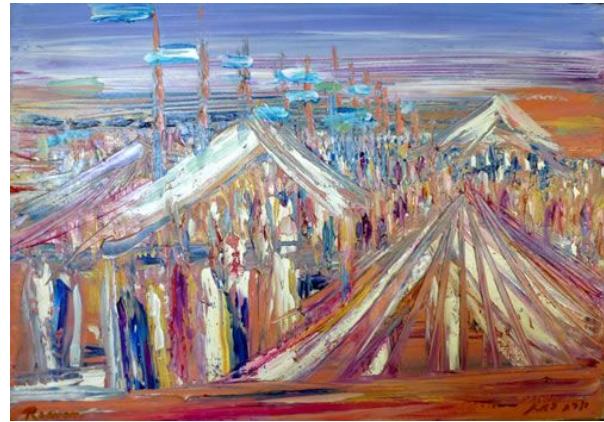


# פרשת במדבר

## Art: Two depictions of the encampment of the Israelites

Hillel Smith (Parsha Posters)	Yoram Ranaan (Reflections)
	

## **Yael Passy- Class of 2021**

### Parshat Bamidbar

- In the first aliyah, G-d commands Moshe to count all the men that are of military age and each tribes Nasi will help
- The second aliyah was the results of the general census, the total was 603,550. This didn't include the tribe of Levi as they were separate from the general congregation because of the holy tasks they were assigned.
- The third Aliyah talks about how they camped in the desert. The Mishkan was at the center of the encampment, surrounded by the: "Flag of Yehudah" it included Yehudah, Issachar, and Zevulun they were in the east. "Flag of Reuben" it included Reuven, Shimon, Gad they were to the south. "Flag of Ephraim" it included Ephraim, Menashe, Benyamin they were to the west. "Flag of Dan" included Dan, Asher, Naftali they were to the north.
- The fourth Aliyah describes why the leviim are doing the holy work of the Mishkan and it is because the firstborns sinned in the "sin of the golden calf"
- In the fifth aliyah, Hashem commands Moshe to count all Levi males from the age of one month and older, and the number of non-firstborn leviim is 22,000. Then the responsibilities and the camping locations for the families within the Levi tribe

- In the sixth aliyah, Hashem told Moshe to count the firstborns in order to transfer their holiness over to the levim and there were extras so they gave 5 shekels and were “redeemed”
- The seventh aliyah Hashem commanded Moshe to count the kehot family from the tribe of Levi in order to know how many were eligible to carry the Mishkan.

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

(Dean of Yeshiva of South Shore and he is a descendant of Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky )

<https://torah.org/torah-portion/drasha-5759-bamidbar/>

שאו את־ראש כל־עדה בני־ישראל למשפחתם לבית אבותם במספר שמות כל־זכר לגלגוליהם (במדבר א:ב )

*Take a census of the whole Israelite community by the clans of its ancestral houses, listing the names, every male, head by head.*

The question asked is why are we even counting? To further the question the Haftorah read along with this week says Bnei Yisrael are like the sand by the sea, which is not supposed to be counted, so again why are we counting? Rabbi Kamenetzky brings up a story of a reporter who worked at the Houston Chronicle, and his job is to write the bank clearings in the chronicle every day and he had this super meticulous boss, one day he mistyped and was off by ten cents. Keeping in mind that this was a multimillion-dollar figure the reporter was confused why everyone was so bent out of shape of 10 cents. It turns out that figure was how the mob decided how much to pay off the numbers racket in Houston. The moral of the story is no matter how insignificant a number maybe it is never meaningless. The same way we mourn each individual soul on Yom HaShoah even though we use a statistic to measure the tragedy, so too in the census of the Jewish people the numbers represent each individual person in Bnei Yisrael.

This is an important lesson to learn because nowadays during this COVID-19 crisis numbers of deaths and cases are being thrown around, and I think especially with the people dying we need to remember that they aren't just another head in the statistic they are an individual part who was important in their own way.

## Coral Yeudai- Class of 2021

### Parshat Bamidbar

Parshat Bamidbar starts off in the Sinai Desert with Hashem commanding Moshe to gather Bnei Yisrael and count all the people within twelve tribes. From each tribe, all males above the age of twenty up to sixty were to draft in the army, making it over six hundred thousand. This did not include those from the tribe of Levi, as they had a separate task to be in charge of the Mishkan, and the work around it. Then each tribe, as per Hashem's request, encamped in their own area with their flag around the Tent of Meeting, and were all counted, except for those of the tribe of Levi. They should be replacing the firstborns, who participated in the worshipping of the golden calf, but those who could not find a replacement had to pay to redeem themselves. The Parsha continues to discuss the Levis job with the Mishkan, in which they would transport it and put it back up throughout their journey depending on where they

encamp, while the Cohens would carry the vessels, such as the menorah, ark, etc. The formation of the designated areas of the tribes was also kept while traveling, with their own prince, color, flag, etc.

I chose a non-original Dvar Torah from Chabad.org, “Leading a Nation of Individuals”, by **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**, who discusses the census of Bnei Yisrael by Hashem in Parshat Bamidbar. Rabbi Sacks focuses on the question, “Does counting have anything to do with leadership?”. Rashi says that it is a sign of love, but on the other hand the Torah indicates a census is a sign of a risk, something does not make sense. Rabbi Sacks tells us the answer lies in the phrase “Se’uet Rosh”, “lift your head”, instead of Hashem using any other simpler verb to suggest counting. The thing is in a census there is a tendency to focus on the crowd, in this case the nation as a whole. Counting has always been a devaluing concept when it comes to literally counting human beings, making us seem easily replaceable. Being an individual in a whole crowd does not really mean anything, as if you are anonymous, losing all sense of personal responsibility, because you are just part of that one crowd. However, in Judaism there is a significant idea that every single Jew is in the image of Hashem, none of us are ever silenced, we are never allowed to lose our sense of individuality. The Talmud discussed that we are all different, and Hashem is the only one who can enter our minds. So even in a huge crowd Hashem relates to us as individuals, not just members of a crowd. Therefore, Rabbi Sacks concludes that that is why Hashem told Bnei Yisrael to lift their heads. Hashem is trying to tell Moshe they are in danger, and each person part of the nation should not feel insignificant. So the answer to Rabbi Sacks original question is yes, the counting does go back to leadership. Us Jews are small, yet we still achieve great things. Even in a big crowd, we must always lift our heads up, because we matter.

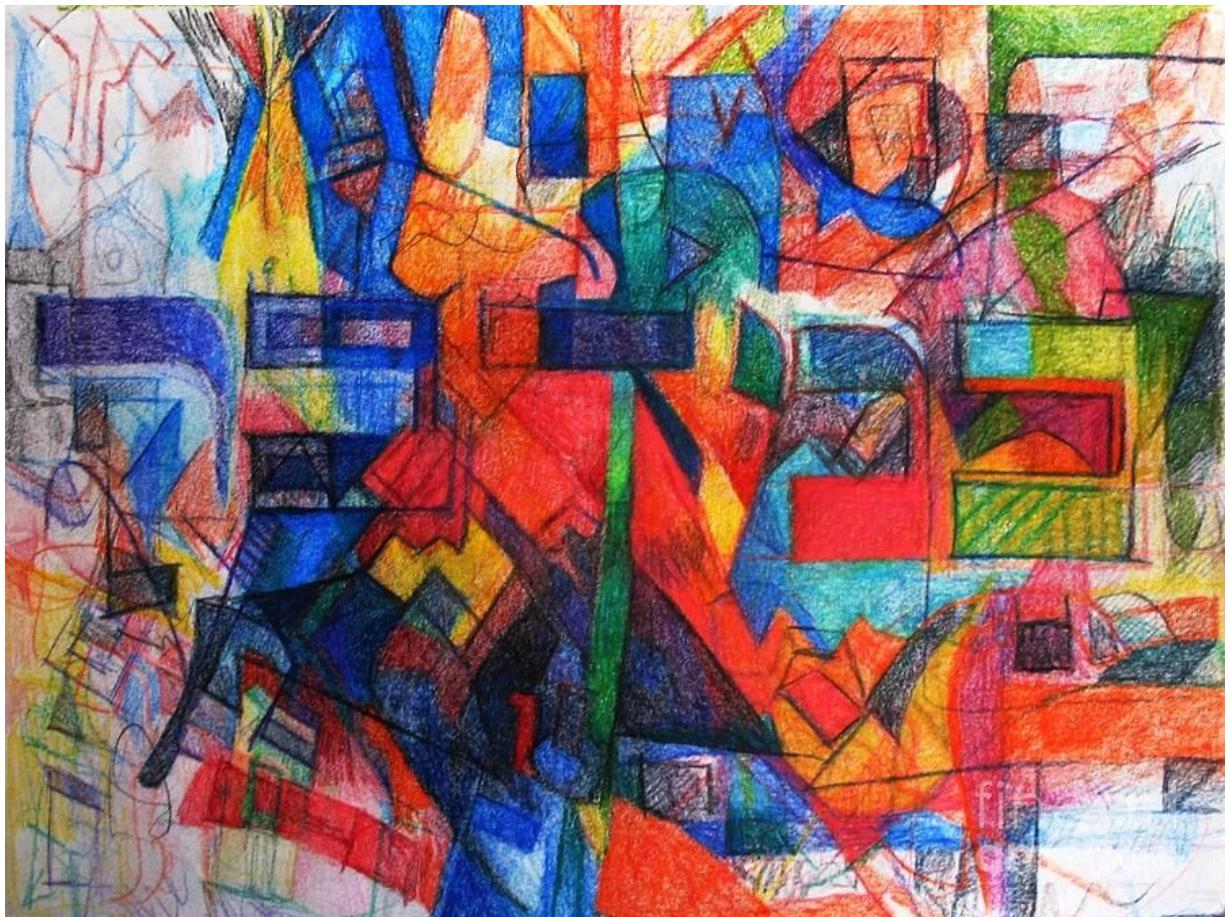
Personally, I thought this modern commentary was very intriguing and incorporated a beautiful message to it. A census may seem negative and deeming, but there is a positive way to look at, a gesture of love and recognition from Hashem. We all possess our unique gifts from Hashem, and differing attributes that make us special. It is important to note that through this Parsha we can see that just because everyday we might feel we are just one from a whole incredible nation, we are a nation of individuals, making it even more empowering. All of us have our strengths to stick out of the crowd, because we matter

## Natanya Ruben- Class of 2021

### Summary:

Moshe counts all the males that are over 20 and assign the tribes their positions in the camp as well as travel order. It also says the leaders of each tribe as well as how many males there were in each one. To separate the tribe of Levi, they explained Aharon’s lineage and he then counted them based on three groups: Gershon, Kehat, and Merarri. Moshe then counts all the first born. At the end of the parsha, Moshe gives special instructions to the family of Kahat

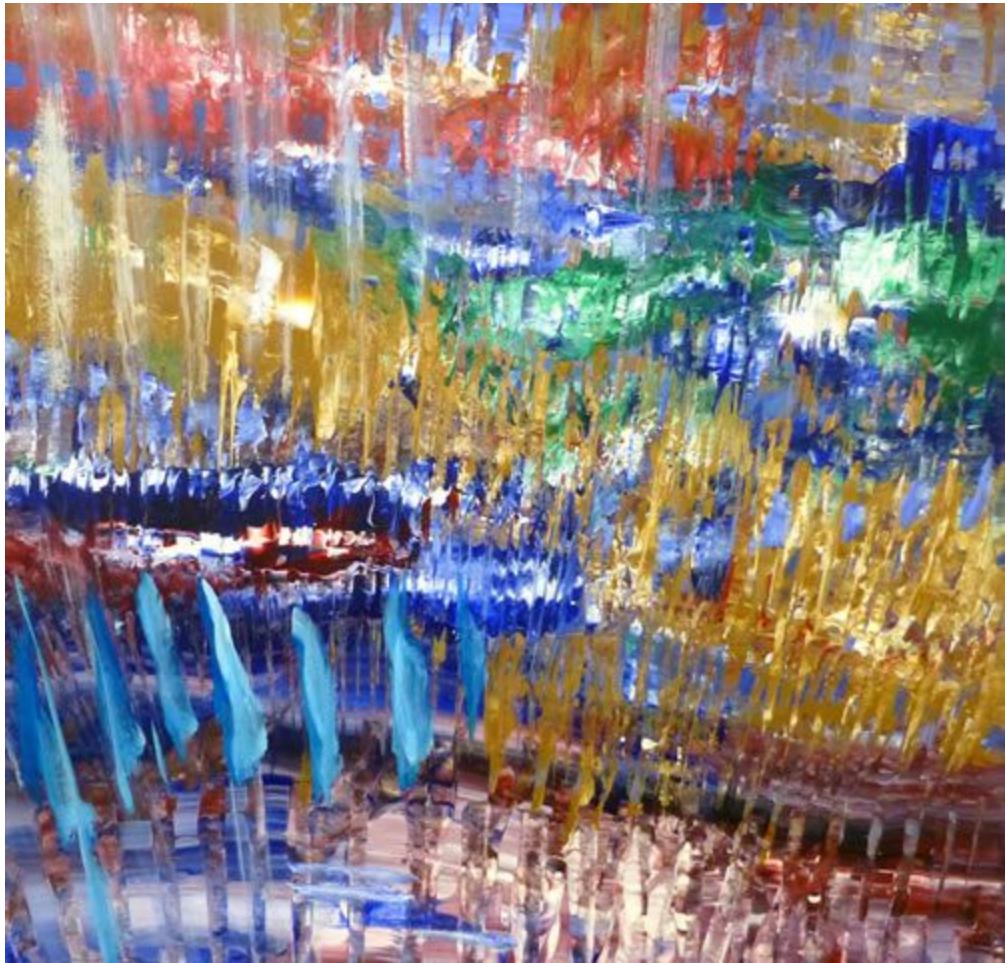
in which they must do the transporting of the vessels of the mishkan but Aharon's family did the preparing of them.



**Parshat Bamidbar by David Baruch Wolk:**

Wolk writes that letters are the closest image we have of creation but pictures of this world are the furthest extent from His emanation. To show the truth of this world, we can not fully capture it with pictures, which he says “ the failures in such are disastrous” because the images are detached from the true source. He compares it to Avodah Zara because the image we give something is not the full truth of it. With idols and other forms of avodah zara, an image is created for a false god, but in reality, it’s just a meaningless idol. He writes that the only way we can truly connect with Hashem is through letters because a picture can be lost in translation.

*David Baruch Wolk was born and raised in America. He has won several awards and scholarships from schools such as Yale and Queens College for his artwork. His artwork is mostly as he focuses all his energies upon developing his artistic response to the contemporary world. He is now a scribe for high quality tefillin parchment.*



### **The 12 Tribes Travel with their Flags by Yoram Raanan <3:**

The quote that is used for the image of the painting is “*G-d spoke to Moses and Aaron saying: The children of Israel shall encamp each man by his division with the flag staffs of their fathers' house; some distance from the Tent of Meeting they shall encamp.*” While traveling in the desert, each tribe had their own unique colored flag. In this image the paint strokes are supposed to symbolize each tribe's flag. Although this glorious painting is abstract it is clear what is supposed to be depicted and it was so elegantly done. The blue throughout the painting is supposed to represent a midrashic stream that flowed between the tribes to separate them but also providing a means of interactions between them as well.

*Yoram Raanan lives in Israel but studied in America at Philadelphia's University of the Arts. He moved to Jerusalem in 1977 where he opened his first studio. His artwork is inspired by the beauty and heritage of Israel as well as the bible, hence his amazing artwork displayed in museums and galleries worldwide.*

**Summary:**

- In the desert, Hashem tells Moshe to count the nation.
- Then they talk about the roles of the Leviim--they are able to serve in the Beit Hamikdash and they replace the “firstborns” who sinned with the Golden Calf.
- The 273 firstborn who lacked a Levi to replace them had to pay a five-shekel “ransom” to redeem themselves.
- When the Jews left the place they were staying and moved camp, the Leviim took apart the Beit Hamikdash piece by piece and transported it to the new spot where they would then set it up again.
- They kept a special formation, where each tribe had their place, and they traveled like that the entire time.
- Each tribe had their own “prince” and their own flag.

**dvar torah: Gidon Herschander**

<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/everyone-counts-a-dvar-torah-on-parshat-bamidbar/>

*Gidon Herschander made aliyah in August 2015 and currently lives in Jerusalem Israel. He loves Torah, living in Israel, engaging and posting via social media, and blogging about Aliyah, Life In Israel, Torah, Being young and a variety of other topics.*

**Everyone counts:**

In the beginning of the parsha, Hashem commands Moshe to take a census of all the Jewish people. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks poses a question: Why does Hashem want to count the number of Jews? Furthermore, he points out that if counting devalues the importance of each individual (which is a big principle in Judaism), then why would he count them in the first place?

He answers this by saying that Hashem, despite wanting them to be counted, still places an insane amount of importance and uniqueness for each person. When Hashem commands Moshe to count them he tells him to do it while lifting up their heads. This would give each person the confidence they need in order to be a contributing member of society by utilizing their unique talents. The message here is that we, just like our ancestors, must remember that each and every one of us has something special and unique to offer in society.

## Jacob Kupferman- Class of 2023

### Bamidbar

#### Summary

- The people of Bnei Yisroel are counted from the ages 20-60 and the total number is 603,550; The Levi tribe is also counted and is 22,300 males.
- Bnei Yisroel breaks camp and the tribe of Levi carries all of the parts of the Mishkan. The parts are divided up into the sub tribes of Levi as follows
  - The Gershonites are tasked with carrying the tapestries and coverings
  - The people of Merari carry the walls and pillars
  - The people of Kehat carried the special sanctuary vessels with special coverings
- In the new camp the tribes set up as follows
  - The Mishkan is in the center
  - To the north of the mishkan was the tribe of Merari
  - To the South of the Mishkan was the tribe of Kehat
  - To the West was Gershonites
  - To the east was Aaron and Moses and their families
  - Farther out east were the tribes Yehuda Issachar and Zevulun
  - Farther out West were the tribes Ephraim Menashe and Benjamin
  - Farther out North were the tribes Dan Asher and Naftali
  - Farther out South were the tribes Reuven Shimon and Gad
- The tribes also travelled in this formation and each tribe had its own unique flag and a prince. Commentary

In Parshat Bamidbar, When G-d tells Moses to count the people, the wording used in this command is very strange. The words used are "*lift the head of everyone*

*in Bnei Yisroel".* This phrase sounds strange but Rabbi Lord (Sir Mr. Dr. Prof. Capt. Lt. Col.) Jonathan Sacks has an answer to this . Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks was born March 8, 1948 (and is still living) <sup>1</sup>in London and received his Semicha at Etz Chaim Yeshiva in London, He was also the chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth. In response to the phrase above, Rabbi Sacks says that most large censuses tend to devalue the individual; for example, If a soldier dies in battle you could think that he will just be replaced, if you were thinking about the total. He says that this phrase is meant to uplift

### **Nissim Ruben- Class of 2023**

The parsha of bamidbar is pretty simple and straightforward, at least as far as i understood it, it talks about how many people are in each tribe, and where everyone is camping, and things along those lines

Although we all know counting is just enthralling, I want to focus on the name of the parsha, bamidbar. Mrs. Gelman helped me to find a very interesting article about the name of the parsha by a man named Yoram Dahan who I couldn't find much information about. My personal favorite part of the article was near the beginning, and it is about the gematria of the name of the parsha, if you do the gematria, it equals 248 which is the same as the gematria for “בצلم אלהם” – in the image of HaShem and “Bederech HaTov” – in the righteous path. The number 248 is significant, because it is the amount of positive mitzvot in the torah, so because all of this connects there has to be something to learn from it, and that thing is, if you keep the mitzvot of hashem and go on a righteous path, than you can succeed, even in the desert like bnei yisroel.