



Enhancing your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion



It's All in the Name

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Josh Haik ('24)

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In Parshat Bamidbar, Hashem commands Moshe to count the Jewish men of each tribe (other than Levi)

from that age of twenty and above. However the terminology utilized in this instruction is fascinating as it alternates between the words:

שָׂאוּ אֶת רֹאשׁוֹ and תִּפְקְדוּ אֹתָם and בְּמִסְפָּר שְׂמוֹת

Each of these words connote counting. Why are there three different terms used for this census? It seems that God's intent was for Moshe to count the men by elevating them (שָׂאוּ), making each man feel special, dignified, and respected. This objective seems counterintuitive to the process of a census, as counting by nature is un-individualistic and non-personal. The midrash tells us that it is for this reason that God exhorted Moshe to ensure that each man would pass before him and Aharon. Moshe and Aharon were instructed to take the time to focus and listen to each individual as each was given the opportunity to personally *tell* them his name.

מִסְפָּר, from the word *l'saper*, tells us that each man was afforded the time and attention of the leaders of Israel to tell his own story and express his own identity directly to Moshe and Aharon. In this manner, as the Sforno explains, each individual felt elevated, his importance raised in his own eyes and in the eyes of the congregation.

As implied in the third term תִּפְקְדוּ – a word used to imply designation with a purpose – the Torah is teaching us that each member of Klal Yisrael is a unique individual with his own name, his own story, and his own purpose in this world. Only after delineating the *shem*, the singular identity of each individual, could the individual join and be counted among the community of Israel. Only when each man recognizes that he counts, can he be counted amongst Bnei Yisrael. Only when each of our singular gifts and unique identity is honored can we then fulfill our designated purpose by contributing those gifts and dedicating ourselves to the whole of Klal Yisrael.

We are a school that strives to recognize each of our students – to see you, hear you, and love you. We strive to develop your individual gifts and

talents while encouraging and guiding you to contribute those talents to the betterment of Klal Yisrael.

The Ashreinu staff, under the guidance of Rabbi Hochman, has distinguished itself as individuals of dedication, perseverance, intelligence, and talent. You have demonstrated consistency and commitment as individuals and have joined together as a cohesive group to contribute your talents to the KYHS community. In so doing, you have elevated Torah learning and infused *kedusha* into our school. We thank you for all your hard work and for the gift of Ashreinu.

Coming Together

Michael Mitchell ('25)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Bamidbar, the Torah uses the words **בְּמִדְבַּר סִינַי** – “In the Sinai Desert” (Bamidbar 1:1). However, this is a confusing statement because Har Sinai is in the desert that the Jews have been sojourning for the last 40 years. Why does the Torah now decide to say **בְּמִדְבַּר סִינַי** and not just **סִינַי**?

The numerical value of **מִדְבַּר סִינַי** is 376. This is the same as the word “shalom.” When we arrived at Har Sinai, the Torah writes,

וַיֵּחַן יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶגֶד הַהָר

– “And Israel encamped there” (Shmot 19:2). Rashi writes that the word **וַיֵּחַן** is in singular form to teach us that the Jewish people were like “one person with one desire.” This shows us that having peace amongst one another (“shalom”) was a prerequisite to receiving the Torah at **מִדְבַּר סִינַי**. The gemara (Zevachim 116b) relates that when Hashem gave us the Torah, His voice was heard across the world, which frightened the kings of other nations. They gathered around the prophet Bilaam and asked him, “What is the meaning of this mighty roar? Perhaps there is another flood coming!” Bilaam explained that Hashem had a treasure that He had been safeguarding for 974 generations which He was now giving to His people. But why did all the other nations think another flood was coming? After seeing the unity of the Jewish people, the other nations went to Bilaam thinking that they

had unified because of fear. However, Bilaam explained to them, “What you are witnessing is *true* unity. Hashem is giving them the Torah, which will be their source of strength and which will unite them with common goals of study and observance.” This shows our dedication for the Torah and how, like at Har Sinai, we must come together again with *ahavat Yisrael*, which will ultimately bring Mashiach!

Consistent Traveler

Josh Haik ('24)

“... כַּאֲשֶׁר יֵחַנוּ כֵּן יִסְעוּ אִישׁ עַל יְדוֹ לְדַגְלֵיהֶם”

“As they encamp, so shall they journey; everyone in his place according to their banners” (Bamidbar 2:17).

In Parshat Bamidbar, the Torah describes Hashem's arrangement of the *shevatim's* camp in the desert: four groups of three tribes known as *degolim*. The Torah then explains that this arrangement must also be maintained while traveling in the desert: “...As they encamp, so shall they journey; everyone in his place” (Bamidbar 2:17).

If we think about this for a second, it doesn't really make sense. Imagine a camp trip where everyone is taken on a retreat. The campers are first separated by bunk and each counselor takes attendance. Once they begin traveling to their campsite, the campers all begin to mix and hang out with their friends from different bunks. But when they reach their destination, they are once again separated by bunk for attendance to be taken and make sure nobody is missing. When we compare the two cases, it seems like it would make more sense for Bnei Yisrael to do the same as our hypothetical campers: travel all mixed together and separate into the arranged formation once the destination is reached. Why instead is the Torah so insistent on showing that the *shevatim* maintained their formation throughout their travels and encampment?

The answer is hidden behind the simple understanding of the *pasuk*. The Mikra Meforash explains that there are some people who see va-

cation not just as a break from work but also an opportunity to “loosen up” their level of Torah observance practiced at home, allowing themselves to go places and do things that they would normally be embarrassed to do at home. Hashem understands this mentality and therefore warns us: “As you encamp (at home), so shall you journey,” meaning our standards should be no less while traveling than they are at home. Good Shabbos!

Spiritual Journey

Rachel Clarke ('24)

This week, we are starting a new sefer with Parshat Bamidbar. Bamidbar discusses Bnei Yisrael's traveling through the desert where they would learn to fulfill Hashem's commandments and end up in Eretz Yisrael. Initially they were only supposed to travel for three days, but they ended up traveling for 40 years because the *cheit hameraglim* demonstrated that they were not spiritually ready to enter their homeland. At the start of Bnei Yisrael's journey, they encamp at Har Sinai to receive the Torah. We all know the story of Matan Torah, but why did Hashem want to give us the Torah on Har Sinai of all places?

The pasuk states,

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַר סִינַי...

“And Hashem spoke to Moshe in the wilderness of Sinai” (Bamidbar 1:1).

This raises the question: why was the Torah given in the wilderness, which is not only ownerless and desolate, but also “a dry and weary land without water” (Tehillim 63:2) – a place without clothing, food, and water?

The Jewish people left Egypt and went to a wilderness, an uncultivated land, for the purpose of receiving the Torah. This was a time of spiritual growth for them because the Jews had to learn to rely on Hashem for their sustenance and protection. Bnei Yisrael had to trust that Hashem would give the nutrients from the *mun* that would sustain them on their travels.

This isolation allowed Bnei Yisrael to focus on

their relationship with Hashem and develop a deep sense of trust without distractions from the other nations, which helped them on their journey in the long run.

Torah is compared to nutrients for the soul, and the Jewish People's survival was based on their faith and connection with Hashem. Therefore the Torah needed to be given in the desert as these miracles would not be able to provide such symbolism if given in a land with everything. In many ways, the journey through the desert is a metaphor for our own spiritual journeys. We all face challenges and obstacles, but we must learn to trust in Hashem and His plan for us. By disconnecting from the distractions of the world, we are able to focus and build up our relationship with Hashem. May we all be blessed with the strength and faith to navigate our own journeys through the desert of life.

Divide and Conquer

Meirav Horowitz ('25)

This week's parsha begins with the counting of Bnei Yisrael. Once this was completed, the Jews were told to camp in specific places (following a specific order). Each tribe, except Levi, would have their own designated section around the Mishkan, forming a circle around it. The Leviim would camp as close to the Mishkan as they could get, forming an inner circle around it, so that they could do all their jobs in the quickest and best way possible.

Why would Hashem want the nation divided? Wouldn't being physically separated make them emotionally and spiritually separated? Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler says that there are many reasons why we place things into an order. The first is that having things in order makes people feel safe and secure. Another reason Rav Dessler gives is that order makes everything more efficient. You always know where things are and everything runs smoother when people are where they are supposed to be.

If we also look at this question from a less practical but more spiritual standpoint, we can really see how separating Bnei Yisrael also brought

them together. When someone is with the people they are most comfortable with, they feel free to express their individuality and their true potential shines through. Then each “community” becomes a support group for this person, cultivating their talents with love and joy. Since every tribe has become such a community, they can begin to interact with each other and help support one another. Now everyone can focus their personal skills on serving the center of their world, God. We see in this case that by separating and creating order, everyone comes closer together, knowing their roles and purpose in society. Every tribe works differently with their own strengths and weaknesses, but in the end they are all working towards the same goal – serving Hashem.

So, what can we learn from Bnei Yisrael being separated from each other? Well, we can learn that we are all working towards serving Hashem, each of us with our own talents, and if we can recognize that at the end of the day and start supporting each other, we will be unstoppable in our service of Hashem.

Good Shabbos!



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