

Parsha Q&A



Parshas Bamidbar

For the week ending 2 Sivan 5757
6 & 7 June 1997

Parsha Questions

1. Why were the Jewish People counted so frequently?
2. What was the minimum age for drafting someone?
3. What documents did the people bring when they were counted?
4. What determined the color of the tribal flags?
5. How do we see that the Jews in the time of Moshe observed 'techum Shabbos' — the prohibition against traveling more than 2000 *amos* on Shabbos?
6. What was the signal for the camp to travel?
7. What was the sum total of the counting of the 12 tribes?
8. Why are Aharon's sons called "sons of Aaron and Moshe?"
9. Who was Nadav's oldest son?
10. Which two people from *Megillas Esther* does Rashi mention in this week's *Parsha*?
11. Why did the *Levi'im* receive 'ma'aser rishon'?
12. Why were the *Levi'im* chosen to serve in the *Ohel Mo'ed*?
13. Name the first descendant of Levi in history to be counted as an infant.
14. Who assisted Moshe in counting the *Levi'im*?
15. Why did so many people from the tribe of Reuven support Korach in his campaign against Moshe?
16. Why did so many people from the tribes of Yehuda, Yissachar, and Zevulun become great Torah scholars?
17. In verse 3:39, the Torah states that the total number of *Levi'im* was 22,000. The actual number of *Levi'im* was 22,300. Why does the Torah seem to ignore 300 *Levi'im*?
18. The firstborn males of the Jewish People were redeemed for five *shekelim*. Why five *shekelim*?
19. During what age-span is a man considered at his full strength?
20. As the camp was readying itself for travel, who was in charge of covering the vessels of the *Mishkan* in preparation for transport?

BONUS

Q:

"Take the Levites in place of every first-born amongst the Israelites.... And as for the redemption of the 273 first-born exceeding the amount of Levites... take five shekels per person... and give the money to Aharon and to his sons as redemption for those extra ones among them." (3:45-48)

The above verse commands that each firstborn be redeemed in one of two ways: He must either be redeemed by means of a *levi*, or he must give five *shekelim* to a *kohen*. Later (*Bamidbar 18:16*) the Torah commands that the firstborn throughout the generations redeem themselves in only one way: By giving five *shekelim* to a *kohen*. Why did the Torah allow the first generation of *levi'im* to redeem the firstborn Israelites, whereas later generations of *levi'im* are not able to do so?

I Did Not Know That!

Every tribe had its own flag, and each tribe's flag had a picture on it. Reuven's flag pictured a man and wild flowers (*dudaim*), Shimon's flag the city of Shechem, Levi's flag the breastplate of the *Kohen Gadol*, Yehuda's flag a lion, Yissachar's flag the sun and moon, Zevulun's a ship, Dan's a serpent, Naftali's a deer, Gad's an eagle, Asher's an olive tree, Efraim's an ox, Menashe's a *r'eim* (type of wild ox) and Binyamin's a wolf.

Midrash Rabba, Ibn Ezra

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Written and Compiled by Rabbi Reuven Subar
General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman

22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel ☎ 972-2-581-0315 fax: 972-2-581-2890
38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA ☎ 1-212-213-3100 fax: 1-212-213-8717
613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada ☎ 1-905-886-5730 fax: 1-905-886-6065

ohr@virtual.co.il
RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@Aol.com
Somayach@MSN.com

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Parshas **Bamidbar** — 2 Sivan 5757, 6 & 7 June 1997

Production Design: Lev Seltzer

Recommended Reading List

Ramban

- 1:3 Introduction to *Bamidbar*
The Draft Age
1:45 The Reason for Counting
2:2 The Organization of the Camp
3:14 The *Levi'im*
4:16 The Role of Elazar ben Aaron

Ibn Ezra

1:19 Organization of the Camp

Sforno

Introduction to *Bamidbar*

Answers to this Week's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

- 1:1 - They are very dear to Hashem.
- 1:3 - Twenty years old.
- 1:18 - They brought birth records proving their tribal lineage.
- 2:2 - Each tribe's flag was the color of that tribe's stone in the the *Kohen Gadol's* breastplate.
- 2:2 - Hashem commanded them to camp no more than 2000 *amos* from the *Ohel Mo'ed*. Had they camped farther, it would have been forbidden for them to go to the *Ohel Mo'ed* on Shabbos.
- 2:9 - The cloud over the *Ohel Mo'ed* departed and the *kohanim* sounded the trumpets.
- 2:32 - 603,550.
- 3:1 - Since Moshe taught them Torah, it's as if he gave birth to them.
- 3:4 - Nadav had no children.
- 3:7 - Bigsan and Seresh
- 3:8 - Since the *Levi'im* served in the *Mishkan* in place of everyone else, they received tithes as 'payment.'
- 3:12 - The *Levi'im* did not partake in the sin of the golden calf. They were chosen to replace the firstborn who sinned and were thereby disqualified.
- 3:15 - Levi's daughter Yocheved was born while the Jewish People were entering Egypt. She is counted as one of the 70 people who entered Egypt.
- 3:16 - Hashem.
- 3:29 - The tribe of Reuven was encamped near Korach, and were therefore influenced for the worse. This teaches that one should avoid living near the wicked.
- 3:38 - The tribes of Yehuda, Yissachar, and Zevulun were encamped near Moshe, and were therefore influenced for the good. This teaches that one should seek to live near the righteous.
- 3:39 - Each *Levi* served to redeem a first born of the Jewish People. Since 300 *Levi'im* were themselves first born, they themselves needed to be redeemed, and could therefore not redeem others.
- 3:46 - To atone for the sale of Yosef, Rachel's firstborn, who was sold by his brothers for five *shekelim* (20 pieces of silver.)
- 4:2 - Between the ages of 30 and 50 years old.
- 4:5 - The *kohanim*.

BONUS

A:

In that first generation, the firstborn were redeemed by transferring their holiness to the *levi'im*. Thereafter, that holiness was 'inherited' by the children of the *levi'im*. Since *levi'im* are 'born holy,' they are not available to redeem future firstborn.

(Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh)