

# OHR NET

SHABBAT PARSHAT BAMIDBAR · 27 IYAR 5776 - JUN. 4, 2016 · VOL. 23 NO. 35

EDITOR'S NOTE: THIS WEEK BAMIDBAR IS READ IN ISRAEL AND BECHUKOTAI IS READ OUTSIDE OF ISRAEL

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### STAND UP AND BE COUNTED!

*“But you shall not count the tribe of Levi...” (1:49)*

**T**he Midrash comments: *“And the Levi'im will be to Me” — the Levi'im are Mine, for all those who come close to Me, to Me I will bring them close, and they brought themselves close to Me. (Bamidbar Rabbah)*

Sometimes it's not enough to just stay in the background and keep out of harm's way. Sometimes you have to stand up and be counted.

Sometimes a person sees a flagrant desecration of G-d's Name, when errant ideas are purveyed as “Judaism”, such as when “reformers would emasculate” and try to change the Law of the Torah or the spirit of the Torah. It's not enough just to ignore them and turn the other way. A Jew has to stand up and be counted.

The tribe of Levi was exalted amongst the Jewish People because they were not involved in the sin of the Golden Calf.

However, certainly there were many individuals who also refused to be drawn into idol worship. Why, then, weren't they rewarded in the same way as the tribe of Levi, to be appointed “over the Tabernacle of Testimony, over all its utensils and everything that belongs to it?” (1:50)

When Moshe came down from the mountain and saw the B'nei Yisrael cavorting around the Golden Calf, he shouted, “Who is for G-d — to me!” (Shemot 33:26). It was only the Tribe of Levi who answered the call as one man. It was only the Tribe of Levi who “brought themselves close” by standing together with Moshe.

Sometimes you have to stand up and be counted.

• Source: Based on the Chiddushei HaRim

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

**T**he Book of Bamidbar — “In the Desert” — begins with G-d commanding Moshe to take a census of all men over age twenty — old enough for service. The count reveals just over 600,000. The *levi'im* are counted separately later because their service will be unique. They will be responsible for transporting the *Mishkan* and its furnishings and assembling them when the nation encamps. The 12 Tribes of Israel, each with its banner, are arranged around the *Mishkan* in four sections: east, south, west and north. Since Levi is singled out, the tribe of Yosef is split into two tribes, Ephraim and Menashe, so there will be four groups of three. When the nation travels, they march in a formation similar to the way they camp. A formal transfer is made between the

first-born and the *levi'im*, whereby the *levi'im* take over the role the first-born would have had serving in the *Mishkan* if not for the sin of the golden calf. The transfer is made using all the 22,000 surveyed *levi'im* from one month old and up. Only *levi'im* between 30 and 50 will work in the *Mishkan*. The remaining first-born sons are redeemed with silver, similar to the way we redeem our first-born today. The sons of Levi are divided into three main families, Gershon, Kehat and Merari (besides the *kohanim* — the special division from Kehat's family). The family of Kehat carried the *menorah*, the table, the altar and the holy ark. Because of their utmost sanctity, the ark and the altar are covered only by Aharon and his sons, before the *levi'im* prepare them for travel.

## BAVA KAMA 2 - 8

## Introduction to Bava Kama

We now begin learning Masechet Bava Kama, the first Tractate of *Seder Nezikin* (“The Order, i.e., category, of Damages), which is the third of the six orders of the Mishna and the Oral Law (“Shas”). I’d like to share an oft-discussed question regarding the subject of damages.

In the Torah we are taught that a person who causes damages (a “mazik”) is obligated to pay for the damages he causes. However, there does not appear to be a specific verse in the Torah that states that there is a *prohibition* against causing damage. The question, therefore, is whether it is in fact prohibited (and one may perhaps aver that it *must* be, based on logical thinking). But is causing damage in fact prohibited, and, if so, is it a Torah transgression or a rabbinical one?

First of all, we see that it is certainly prohibited to damage another’s property, as we find in Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat 378): “Just as it is forbidden to steal from someone else, likewise it is forbidden to damage his property.” But what is the source and nature of this prohibition?

One answer to this question is that the prohibition against damaging has a Torah source, and can be learned from the commandment to return another person’s lost object. The obligation to return a lost object includes a *positive* command to return the property to the owner, and also a *negative* command *not to ignore* a potential loss to the owner, but rather to make an effort to save the property. For example, our Sages teach, based on a verse, that if one sees water about to flood another’s field, he is obligated — by the mitzvah of returning lost property — to help save the field from flooding, and prevent a financial loss to the owner. (Bava Metzia 31)

Based on this teaching, we can say that if one has a mitzvah to prevent damage to another’s property, despite him not being the reason for the damage, all the more so he has a mitzvah that *he* must not cause any damage. (See Kehillas Yaakov, Bava Kama I, and the opinions cited there as to whether the prohibition is of Torah or rabbinical nature.)

*“A person is always responsible for his actions (i.e., damages caused), whether he’s awake or asleep.”*

We learn in this *mishna* that one needs to make a maximal effort not to cause damage with his body, not only when he is awake and is “in control”, but also when he is asleep and acting without any ill intent. From the straightforward reading of the *mishna* it seems that a person must pay for such damage under any circumstances.

Tosefot, however, citing the Jerusalem Talmud, states that a person is responsible for damage he causes to the property of another in his sleep only if the property was near him when he went to sleep. However, if another person placed property near the sleeper *after* he was already asleep, the sleeper who causes damage while asleep is not responsible. The reason, writes Tosefot, is that in this latter case the one who put the property there is considered as having caused the damage.

• Bava Kama 3b, 4a

לע"נ  
 הר"ה ר' דוד בן ר' אהרן זצ"ל  
 מרת לאה בת ר' שמואל ע"ה  
 חי"ד  
 ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

## PARSHA Q&A?

1. Why were the Jewish People counted so frequently?
2. What documents did the people bring when they were counted?
3. What determined the color of the tribal flags?
4. What is the difference between an “ot” and a “degel”?
5. How do we see that the Jews in the time of Moshe observed “*techum Shabbat*” - the prohibition against traveling more than 2,000 *amot* on *Shabbat*?
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 Aharon and Moshe”?
9. Who was Nadav’s oldest son?
10. Which two people from the Book of Esther does Rashi mention in this week’s Parsha?
11. Why did the *levi'im* receive *ma'aser rishon*?
12. Which groups of people were counted from the age of one month?
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 was 22,300. Why does the Torah seem to ignore 300 *levi'im*?
18. The first-born males of the Jewish People were redeemed for five *shekalim*. Why five *shekalim*?
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?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this week’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 1:1 - They are very dear to G-d.
2. 1:18 - They brought birth records proving their tribal lineage.
3. 2:2 - Each tribe’s flag was the color of that tribe’s stone in the breastplate of the *kohen gadol*.
4. 2:2 - An “ot” is a flag, i.e., a colored cloth that hangs from a flagpole. A *degel* is a flagpole.
5. 2:2 - G-d commanded them to camp no more than 2,000 *amot* from the *Ohel Mo'ed*. Had they camped farther, it would have been forbidden for them to go to the *Ohel Mo'ed* on *Shabbat*.
6. 2:9 - The cloud over the *Ohel Mo'ed* departed and the *kohanim* sounded the trumpets.
7. 2:32 - 603,550.
8. 3:1 - Since Moshe taught them Torah, it’s as if he gave birth to them.
9. 3:4 - Nadav had no children.
10. 3:7 - Bigtan and Teresh.
11. 3:8 - Since the *levi'im* served in the *Mishkan* in place of everyone else, they received tithes as “payment.”
12. 3:15, 40 - The *levi'im*, and the first-born of *B'nei Yisrael*.
13. 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.
14. 3:16 - G-d.
15. 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.
16. 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.
17. 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.
18. 3:46 - To atone for the sale of Yosef, Rachel’s firstborn, who was sold by his brothers for five *shekalim* (20 pieces of silver.)
19. 4:2 - Between the ages of 30 and 50.
20. 4:5 - The *kohanim*.

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

Love of the Land, written by Rav Mendel Weinbach, zt”l • Parsha Insights written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair  
General Editor and Talmud Tips: Rabbi Moshe Newman • Design: Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro

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# Abarbanel

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## ON THE PARSHA

BY RABBI PINCHAS KASNETT

### Bamidbar

#### The Second Census

In this week's Parsha the Torah details the census that was taken of all males from the age of twenty and up after their departure from Egypt. Abarbanel questions the need for this census since one year earlier the same population was counted through each individual's donation of a half-shekel towards the construction of the Tabernacle (Mishkan). Abarbanel is also puzzled by the fact that the count is exactly the same in both instances, an impossible result since there would have been a significant number of individuals who were nineteen years old at the time of the first census and would only be counted at the second census.

Regarding the first question, he answers that at this point the nation would soon be entering the Land of Israel, which would have to be conquered militarily. Just as a king would take a careful census of his available troops before embarking on a military campaign, the Torah specifically states that Moshe counted "...from twenty years of age and up, everyone who goes out to the legion in Israel...". The command to conduct the census was specifically given to Moshe alone, as he would be functioning like a king at the head of his army. This is indicated by the end of the above-mentioned verse which states, "...you shall count them according to their legions."

The Torah then goes on to designate a leader for each of the tribes, since they would have to know how many men would be under their command, as they would have to assume, as the Ramban emphasizes, that they could not rely on miracles, such as one man chasing a thousand of the enemy.

Additionally, since there would be a division of the Land amongst the tribes, each leader had to know the population of his tribe in comparison to the others. Since this census was part of an upcoming military campaign which would ultimately result in the division of the Land, the mixed multitude of Egyptians that accompanied the Jews into the desert were excluded from the census, since they would have no inheritance in the Land. Even though Abarbanel does not elaborate, perhaps we can assume as well that their questionable loyalty and commitment would preclude them from military service as well.

In answer to the second question, Abarbanel points out that the Torah makes it clear that the Levites were not part of the second census. At this point the Tabernacle had been completed and it was the Levites' role to be involved in all the activities centered in the Tabernacle, including taking it down, transporting it and re-erecting it. Since the Levites would be excused from military service and would not have a specific portion in the Land of Israel, there was no need to count them in the second census. The first census, however, took place before the Levites were specifically designated for service in the Tabernacle, and since they also contributed a half-shekel to the Tabernacle they were counted along with all the other tribes. Thus, even though thousands of just-turned-twenty young men were added to the number of the second census, we have to subtract the approximately 22,000 Levites who were not counted in the second census.

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## IT'S ALL FOR THE BEST

**From: Mordechai**

*Dear Rabbi,  
I have trouble accepting the idea that everything comes from G-d, and that even the bad things that happen in life are for the best. Would you please elaborate on this idea for me and how one can actually integrate this idea into his life? Because, to be honest, I think it's a nice idea, but only a guise to help weak people cope with a harsh reality.*

Dear Mordechai,

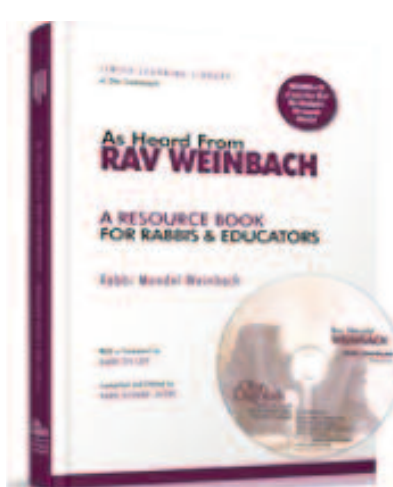
Judaism undoubtedly teaches that everything, whether we perceive it as good or bad, comes from G-d and is for the best — “Everything that G-d does, He does for the good” (Berachot 60b).

This teaching was made in reference to Rabbi Akiva who once came to a certain town where he was denied hospitality for the night. Remarking that all is from G-d and for the best, he slept outdoors on the outskirts of town. He had with him a candle, a rooster and a mule. A strong wind came and blew out the candle, a cat came and ate the rooster, and a lion came that devoured the mule — to all of which the Rabbi remarked, “It’s for the best.” In the morning he saw that the town had been ransacked, and that he too would

have been harmed if the candle, rooster or mule would have revealed his whereabouts. He thus confirmed, “All that G-d does, He does for the best”.

We can all attest to events in our lives where something seemingly awful happened to us, sometimes regarding things so significant that we can’t imagine how and why it happened, and how we can possibly overcome, rebound or move on afterward. Yet often, after time, sometimes after much time, we come to see how that event actually opened opportunities and brought about outcomes which were much better than what we thought was good and that we lost. This may be in relationships, academics, business and more.

This alone should remind us that our perception is limited, and thus we may not know what’s really good for us, or may not recognize what’s better when it comes. As a result, on the one hand we should try our best to identify what seems best for us and to attempt to accomplish it, but on the other hand realize that not everything we want or think is good for us is actually best, or the best for us at that time. This doesn’t mean that one must easily give up his aspirations in the face of adversity, but it does keep one resilient and open to realizing one’s potential and finding happiness and fulfillment.



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## HOLDING TEFILLIN DURING PRAYER

“One should not hold Tefillin in his hand while praying the Shemoneh Esrei; nor should he hold Holy Scrolls, a plate or the like with contents; nor a knife, bread or money, since in all of these cases the holder will be worried that he might drop the object, thereby causing one’s concentration to be disturbed.” (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 96:1)

Even if one does hold one of the above-mentioned items, he does not need to pray the Shemoneh Esrei again unless he is certain that it is the reason he did not have proper *kavanah* (understanding the meaning of the words) for the first blessing of the Shemoneh Esrei. (Mishneh Berurah)

The above comments of the Mishneh Berurah require clarification. To what type of person does the above ruling apply? If it is someone who generally has difficulty with proper *kavana* (intention for what he says), how can he be sure that his lack of *kavana* this time was because he was holding onto one of the above items? Perhaps he would have had the same problem even if not holding the item.

Accordingly, it would seem that the Mishneh Berurah is referring to a person who doesn’t normally have difficulty with *kavana* when praying the Shemoneh Esrei. Since he

always (or almost always) prays, at least the first blessing, with *kavana*, he can be certain that the reason for his lack of *kavana* this time was a result of his holding the item in his hand.

The above analysis brings us to another difficulty. In Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 101:1 the Rema writes, based on the Tur, that today we do not repeat the recital of the Shemoneh Esrei for lack of *kavana* during the first blessing, since it is likely that the lack of *kavana* will happen yet again.

What type of person is the Rema referring to? If he is referring to all people (both those that have difficulty with *kavana* and those that don’t have difficulty, then how can the case of the Mishneh Berurah ever come up? In any instance the worshiper would not repeat the Shemoneh Esrei, since nowadays we do not pray again. From the above it seems that according to the Mishneh Berurah the words of the Rema apply only to one who has difficulty with *kavana*, for only in such a case will it be likely that it will happen again. This is why the Mishneh Berurah rules that one who is certain that his lack of *kavana* in the first blessing was solely because of the object in his hand must pray again.

## LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

### ZION GATE — THE BIG KEY

When Rabbi Mordechai Weingarten heard a knock at the door of his home in the courtyard of the Ohr HaChaim Synagogue in the Old City of Jerusalem, he could hardly have imagined who was seeking entry.

As the last official *muchtar*, district head, of the Old



City, he was the liaison between the British Mandate officials and the Jews. As the British evacuated the Walled City, a British officer had come to present the rabbi with an old, rusty foot-long key to Zion gate as a gift from England to the Jewish People.

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## RABBI YEHUDA SAMET

*Mashgiach Ruchani for Ohr Somayach*

**Y**eshivat Ohr Somayach is celebrating its 44th anniversary this year with a Gala Celebration on June 7th. The Rabbeinu Meir Simcha Legacy Award will be presented to Rabbi and Rebbetzin Samet for their dedication to Yeshivat Ohr Somayach. There can be nothing more fitting to give back to Rabbi Samet, someone who has never asked for or expected it, than a simple “thank you”.

Rabbi Yehuda Samet grew up in Far Rockaway, New York. In 1967, shortly after the Six Day War, he and his wife Yehudis moved to Israel, and after a few years he started teaching and developing as a *mashgiach ruchani* for *ba’alei teshuva*

at Hartman’s yeshiva. In 1973 he joined the staff at Yeshivat Ohr Somayach, where he has been ever since.

He describes his job as *mashgiach* as “being there for the boys when other *rabbeim* aren’t around.” That means being in the yeshiva in the later part of the afternoon through late evening, on Friday afternoons and during *chol hamo’ed* and *bein hazmanim*. Of his position he says, “The excitement never wears out. With every new *talmid* there’s a new challenge. As for retirement, Rabbi Samet says, “As long as they let me, I’ll stay at my job.”

*We hope he stays forever.*



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