- BEMIDBAR
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בְּמִדְבַּר
Bemidbar

HADAR
Children & Families
VOLUME 3 ISSUE 36

ב"ה אִיָּר - ב' סִיוָן תשפ"ד June 2 - 8, 2024

מָה בַּפָּרָשָׁה • In This Week's Parashah

- Benei Yisrael get organized for their journey through the מִדְבָּר (midbar, wilderness).
- Moshe takes a census. He gets help from one representative of each שֵׁבֶט (shevet, tribe). The total number in the count is 603,550.
- This number did not include the שֵׁבֶט (shevet, tribe) of Levi, who were counted separately. Shevet Levi, which included the כֹּהֲנִים (kohanim, priests), were responsible for the Mishkan and its כֵּלִים (keilim, vessels). When Benei Yisrael traveled, it was the לְוִיִּם (Levi'im) that took apart the Mishkan and carried it.
- When Benei Yisrael camped in the midbar, they followed a precise formation.
  - The Mishkan was in the center.
  - Shevet Levi camped closest to the Mishkan, all around it. The other twelve tribes were divided into four groups of three.
  - These four groups were arranged in a square, going around the Levi camp in all directions.
- Moshe counts the firstborns of Benei Yisrael. God explains that firstborns were originally dedicated for special work in the Mishkan, but that Shevet Levi should take their place.



מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

Bemidbar 2:2

Everyone in Benei Yisrael will camp by their flags according to the signs of their families.

במדבר ב:ב

אִישׁ עַל דִּגְלוֹ בְּאֹתֹת לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם
יַחֲנוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

Based on this pasuk, a midrash (Bemidbar Rabbah 2:7) suggests that each שֵׁבֶט (shevet, tribe) had a flag that was decorated with a picture or symbol that connected in a very specific way to that shevet. Many of them come from Yaakov's blessings to the shevatim in Parashat Vayehi. Others come from special moments in the lives or stories of those shevatim. Here are the flags, according to this midrash:



Reuven רְאוּבֵן
When Reuven gave the דּוּדָאִים (duda'im) plant to his mother, Leah, in Bereishit 30:14, it lead to the birth of Yissakhar.



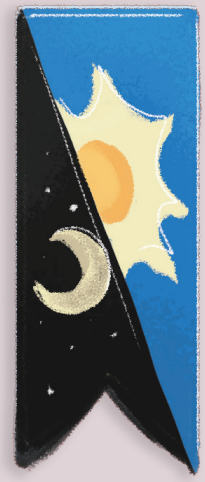
Shimon שִׁמְעוֹן
Shimon battled the town of Shekhem to save Dinah in Bereishit 34.



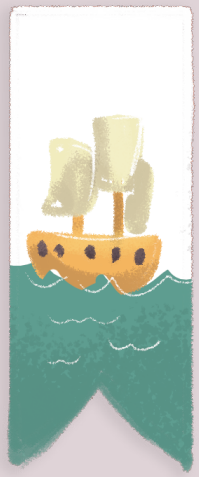
Levi לֵוִי
The אוּרִים וְתוּמִּים (Urim ve-Tummim) were worn by כֹּהֲנִים (kohanim, priests) from Shevet Levi (Shemot 28:30).



Yehudah יְהוּדָה
גּוּר אַרְיֵה יְהוּדָה
"Yehudah is a young lion" (Yaakov's blessing in Bereishit 49:9)



Yissakhar יִשָּׂשכָר
וּמִבְּנֵי יִשָּׂשכָר יוֹדְעֵי בִינָה לַעִתִּים
"The children of Yissakhar know the signs of the time" (Divrei Ha-Yamim Alef 12:33)



Zevulun זְבוּלוּן
זְבוּלֻן לְחוֹף יַמִּים יִשְׁכֹּן
"Zevulun shall dwell by the seashore" (Yaakov's blessing in Bereishit 49:13)

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Dan דָּן
יְהִי דָן נָחָשׁ
"Dan shall be a serpent by the road" (Yaakov's blessing in Bereishit 49:17)

Naftali נַפְתָּלִי
נַפְתָּלִי אַיָּלָה שְׁלֻחָה
"Naftali is a doe let loose" (Yaakov's blessing in Bereishit 49:21)





Gad גָּד
גָּד גְּדוּד יְגוּדֶנּוּ
"Gad will exist in a גְּדוּד (gedud, troop)" (Yaakov's blessing in Bereishit 49:19)



Asher אָשֵׁר
מֵאָשֵׁר שְׁמֵנָה לַחְמוֹ
"Asher's bread shall be oily" (Yaakov's blessing in Bereishit 49:20)



Yosef יוֹסֵף
Yosef's two children were born in מִצְרַיִם (Mitzrayim, Egypt). The names he gave them—Menasheh and Efrayim—connect to that experience (Bereishit 41:51-52.)



Binyamin בִּנְיָמִין
בִּנְיָמִין זְאֵב יִטְרָף
"Binyamin is a devouring wolf" (Yaakov's blessing in Bereishit 49:27)



Menasheh מְנַשֶּׁה
וְקַרְנֵי רְאֵם קַרְנָיו
"He has horns like a wild re'em" (Moshe's blessing for Yosef—Menasheh's father—in Devarim 33:17)



Efrayim אֶפְרַיִם
בְּכוֹר שׁוֹרוֹ
"A bull's firstborn" (Moshe's blessing for Yosef—Efrayim's father—in Devarim 33:17)

Look it up!
In Bereishit 48:5 Yaakov makes Menasheh and Efrayim into additional shevatim.

מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

The journey in the מִדְבָּר (midbar, wilderness) begins and ends with a census, a count of all the people in Benei Yisrael.

Counting the people takes up over 100 pesukim in Sefer Bemidbar! Why is counting the people so important?

במדבר רבה ד:ב

מָשָׁל לְאָדָם שֶׁהָיָה לוֹ פִּרְגְמָטוֹטִין שֶׁל אֲבָנִים, שֶׁל זְכוּכִית, וְהָיָה מוֹצִיאָן לַשּׁוּק וְלֹא הָיָה מַבְחִין בַּמִּנְיָן, שֶׁלֹּא הָיָה מוֹצִיאָן בְּמִנְיָן, וְנִכְנָס לְהַנִּיחָן וְלֹא הָיָה מַנִּיחָן בְּמִנְיָן, שֶׁלֹּא הָיָה מַשְׁגִּיחַ עֲלֵיהֶם שֶׁהָיוּ שֶׁל זְכוּכִית.

וְהָיָה לוֹ פִּרְגְמָטִיס אַחַת שֶׁל מַרְגָּלִיּוֹת נָאוֹת וְהָיָה נוֹטְלָהּ וּמוֹצִיאָהּ בְּמִנְיָן וּמַנִּיחָהּ בְּמִנְיָן.

Bemidbar Rabbah 4:2

It's like a merchant who had a business selling glass stones. He would bring his merchandise to the market and he wouldn't be careful about counting them, so he wouldn't count them as he brought them out. When he took them back home, he wouldn't count them as he stored them; he wouldn't check on them because they were glass.

But he also owned one set of beautiful pearls—and he would count it while he took it out and count it while he put it back.

- Why does the merchant not count glass? Why does the merchant count pearls? What does this suggest about how God thinks about Benei Yisrael?
- How does this story explain why there are two censuses that take up 100+ pesukim?
- What do you do to look after your favorite possessions?



שְׁאֵלוֹת הַשָּׁבוּעַ • Parashah Scavenger Hunt

aliyot:
1) Bemidbar 1:1 to 1:19
2) 1:20 to 1:54
3) 2:1 to 2:34
4) 3:1 to 3:13
5) 3:14 to 3:39
6) 3:40 to 3:51
7) 4:1 to 4:20

haftarah: Hoshea 2:1-22

The answers to the first seven questions can be found in the matching numbered aliyah in the Torah reading. The answers to questions 8 and 9 are harder and can come from anywhere in the parashah. The answer to question 10 is in this week's haftarah.

Good luck!

1. On what date does the book of Bemidbar begin?
2. Which of the שְׁבָטִים (shevatim, tribes) was the smallest?



3. Which tribes camped on the northern side?
4. Who receives someone else's role?
5. What was the name of the נָשִׂיא (nasi, chief) of the family of Merari?
6. How many extra firstborns were there?
7. What color cloth went on top of the main מִזְבֵּחַ (mizbei'ah, altar)?
8. Which chief shares his first name with a famous rabbi from the Mishnah?
9. When you try to add up the three families that made up the tribe of Levi, there is an addition problem. What is it?
10. **From the haftarah:** What's the connection to tefillin?



* Look for the answers on page 8!

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הַפְטָרָה • Haftarah

Parashat Bemidbar focuses on counting Benei Yisrael. The theme of counting also comes up in our haftarah, where the נָבִיא (navi, prophet) Hoshea suggests that this kind of counting will eventually become impossible!

Hoshea 2:1

The number of Benei Yisrael will be like the sands of the sea, which cannot be measured or counted.
Instead of being told, "you are not My people," they will be called children of the living God.

הושע ב:א

וְהָיָה מִסְפַּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּחוֹל הַיָּם
אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִמַּד וְלֹא יִסָּפֵר
וְהָיָה בִּמְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יֵאָמֵר לָהֶם
לֹא עַמִּי אַתֶּם
יֵאָמֵר לָהֶם בְּנֵי אֵ-ל חָי:

Another parashah-haftarah connection has to do with the מִדְבָּר (midbar, wilderness). Hoshea talks about how, even after Benei Yisrael betray God by worshiping idols, nevertheless God and Benei Yisrael will come back together with love. And what will be the location where they make up?

Hoshea 2:16

Therefore, I (God) will speak kindly to her (Benei Yisrael).
I will lead her through the midbar,
And speak to her heart.

הושע ב:טז

לָכֵן הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי מְפַתֶּיהָ
וְהוֹלַכְתִּיהָ הַמִּדְבָּר
וְדִבַּרְתִּי עַל לִבָּהּ:

- As you read Parashat Bemidbar, can you see evidence that the midbar is a place for God and Benei Yisrael to grow close?

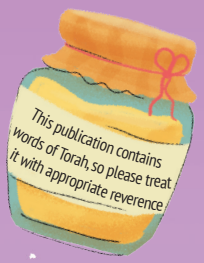
In the coming months, as we read the rest of Sefer Bemidbar, see if you can find more examples of the midbar being a place of connection for God and Benei Yisrael!



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דִּקְדּוּק • Grammar



English has all sorts of silent letters you have to watch out for—like in the word "knight," 3 of the 6 letters aren't pronounced at all!

Did you know that there are silent letters in Hebrew too? This happens often when the letter ה (hei) is at the end of a word, like in בַּשָּׁנָה (ba-shanah, in the year) at the beginning of this week's parashah.

There are also times we don't pronounce a letter in the middle of a Hebrew word. Here are two examples from our parashah (and they both appear in the next two parshiyot as well):

1. **יִשָּׂשכָר** See how the second letter ש (sin) has no dots on it? That's because, in our tradition of how to read this word, it's a silent letter! This name is pronounced Yissakhar, with no second s or sh sound. There are other traditions that say the word should be read יִשָּׂשְׂכָר (pronounced Yissaskhar). And there are some traditions that use both forms at different points in the Torah! But if you write the second letter sin without any dots, it means you don't pronounce it.

2. **פְּדָהצוּר** The ה (hei) in the middle of this word also has no dots, and that means you skip it, saying Pedatzur.

Can you find any other silent Hebrew letters?



דַּקָּה שֶׁל דִּיוּן • One-Minute Debate



Debate: Count your cutlery before you put it away.

How to play:

- Here are some arguments to get you started, but try to come up with your own. Then debate someone!
- For a true one-minute debate, give each side 30 seconds to make its best case.



Agree!

- If a fork accidentally landed in the garbage, it's good to find out right away.
- Counting is a good way to keep track of anything precious that you own.



Disagree!

- Are you accusing your guests of stealing your cutlery? That seems like an unnecessary level of suspicion.
- Counting is a sign of love. But do you really love your silverware?!

חֲסִידוּת • Hasidut

Hasidut is spiritual Torah from the students of the Baal Shem Tov.

Why is Benei Yisrael divided into different שְׁבָטִים (shevatim, tribes), each with its own דֶּגֶל (degel, flag)? What can we learn from that?

R. Shalom Noah Berezovsky (100 years ago)

The flags of Israel teach us about the unique purpose every Jew has. Every Jew has their own mission to fulfill for God, which is why they were sent down to this world.... The flags show us the greatness of God's love for Israel... for every Jew is a small world all on their own. This connects to the pasuk earlier in our parashah that says to count Benei Yisrael, "according to their families, their numbers, and their names" (Bemidbar 1:2)—which hints to us that every Jew has a name and number for them alone, and a purpose and destiny that's unique to them.

נתיבות שלום, במדבר

מוֹרֶה עִנְיַן הַדְּגָלִים שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל הַתַּפְקִיד הַמְיֻחָד שֶׁל יְהוּדִי עֲלֵי אֲדָמוֹת, שֶׁלְּכָל יְהוּדִי נוֹעֲדָה שְׁלִיחוּת מְסֻיֶּמֶת לְמַלֵּא אֶת רְצוֹן ה' שֶׁלְּמַעֲנָהּ יָרַד לָעוֹלָם.... וְזֶה הַבְּטוּי שֶׁל גֹּדֶל אַהֲבַת ה' לְיִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁנִּתְגַּלָּה בַּדְּגָלִים... שֶׁכָּל יְהוּדִי עוֹלָם קָטָן בִּפְנֵי עַצְמוֹ, כְּמוֹ שֶׁבֵּאַרְנוּ בְּמַאֲמַר הַכָּתוּב "לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפַּר שֵׁמוֹת" —שֶׁמְּרֻמָּז כִּי לְכָל יְהוּדִי יֵשׁ שֵׁם וּמִסְפָּר בִּפְנֵי עַצְמוֹ וְתַפְקִיד וְיִעוּד מְיֻחָדִים שֶׁלִּשְׁמָם יָרַד לָעוֹלָם.

The shevatim had different flags from each other because they're unique! And just like each shevet is different from every other, each person is also unique and different from every other. That's because, like every shevet, every person has a special purpose on this earth.

- What do you think your special purpose might be? What can you, and no one else, accomplish in this world? (If you don't know, don't worry. It can take a lifetime to figure this out!)
- You can see pictures of the degalim for the different shevatim on pages 2 and 3 (according to a midrash). If you were designing a degel to represent your purpose and destiny, what would you put on it?



Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. The first day of the second month (in the second year since the people left Egypt) (1:1)
2. Menasheh—32,200 (1:35)
3. Dan, Asher, and Naftali (2:25-29)
4. The tribe of Levi receives the role that was originally for firstborns (3:12)
5. Tzuriel ben Avihayil (3:35)
6. 273 more firstborns than Levi'im (3:46)
7. אַרְגָּמָן (argaman, purple) (4:13)
8. Gamliel ben Pedatzur, the chief of Menasheh, shares a first name with Rabban Gamliel (1:10, 2:20)
9. The family of Gershon has 7,500 (3:22), the family of Kehat has 8,600 (3:28), and the family of Merari has 6,200 (3:34). That adds up to 22,300. But the Torah tells us (in 3:39) that the total Levi count was 22,000!
10. The final two pesukim of the haftarah are said when putting on tefillin (Hoshea 2:21-22