

Parsha Q&A



Parshas Bamidbar

For the week ending 5 -6 Sivan 5758
30 & 31 May 1998

Parsha Questions

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 os and a degel?
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 Aharon 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. 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 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 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?

Sherlox Holmes & The Mystery of the Missing Neighbor

"I will miss our neighbors dearly," said Watstein looking wistfully out the window. "No one trims shrubbery like Mr. Greenleaf. Maybe he'll leave me his hedge-trimmer as a memento."

"Yes," said world famous de-text-ive Sherlox Holmes, "one can certainly learn a great deal from one's neighbors. For instance, read this verse and Rashi's explanation."

Watstein read: "*And those who camped in front of the Mishkan eastward were ... Moshe and Aharon and his sons (Bamidbar 3:38).*" Rashi comments that because Moshe was in the east, he was near the tribes of Yehuda, Yissachar and Zevulun; due to their proximity to Moshe, the people of Yehuda, Yissachar and Zevulun became great Torah Scholars."

"Instructive, isn't it?" said Sherlox.

"But why does Rashi offer this seemingly extraneous information? The verse gives a very clear, simple description of the camp. Is there something wrong with the text as it stands?" asked Watstein.

"If you want to get to know a verse," said Sherlox with a wry grin, "You've got to look at its neighbors."

What did Sherlox mean?

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Answer:

Look at the verses (23,29,35) which describe how the other Levites are to camp," said Sherlock. "Each uses the expression *yachanu* — 'they will camp.' Concerning Moshe and Aharon, however, the text says *hachonim* — 'those who are camping.' The very fact that the text departs from its standard pattern warrants explanation."

"Furthermore," continued Sherlock, "the term *yachanu* is future tense. Thus, it simply tells Levites where to camp. *Hachonim*, on the other hand, is present tense. It not only tells where Moshe is to camp, but also narrates the fact that he *presently* camped there. Of what consequence is this extra information?"

"It had tremendous consequence! It helped his neighbors become great Torah Scholars!" said Watstein.

"Maybe Mr. Greenleaf will leave you his set of Talmud as a memento, Watstein."

Based on Gur Aryeh

I Did Not Know That!

When Yaakov blessed his sons at the end of his life, he hinted that the tribes of Reuven, Yehuda, Yosef and Dan would lead the four flag-camps. Anyone whom Yaakov addressed in the second person — "you" — became the head of a flag-camp. Reuven: "You are my firstborn"; Yehuda: "You, will your brothers acknowledge"; Yosef: "From the G-d of *your* father"; Dan: "For *your* salvation I long."

Ba'al Haturim 2:2

Recommended Reading List

Ramban

- 1:3 Introduction to Bamidbar
- 1:3 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 Aharon

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. 1:1 - They are very dear to Hashem.
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 Kohen Gadol's breastplate.
4. 2:2 - An os is a flag, i.e., a colored cloth that hangs from a flagpole. A degel is a flagpole.
5. 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.
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 - Bigsan and Seresh.
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 firstborn 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 - Hashem
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.

Parshas

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