

Candle Lighting

7:45

S"Z Kriat Shema

9:54

Sunset

8:04

Motzei  
Shabbat

8:43



Parshat HaShavuah

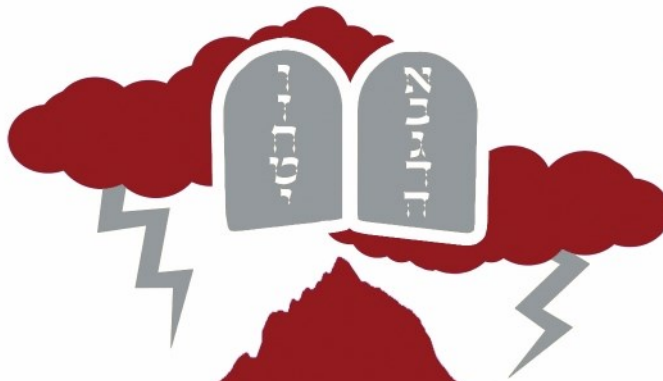
במדבר

BAMIDBAR

ה' סיון תשע"ה

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Ashreinu

חלקינו מה טוב

Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

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WHAT'S IN A NUMBER

RABBI BENJY HOROWITZ

Sefer Bamidbar is known as the "Book of Numbers". This appellation seems appropriate as there are four separate countings of the Jews in the beginning of this sefer. While many commentaries focus on the question of why the Jews are being counted now or why so many times,

some commentaries notice a perplexing outcome of the counting. Why is the tribe of Levi so much smaller than the other tribes?

Shevet Levi totaled 22,000 people, whereas the next smallest tribe, Menashe, totaled 32,200. The contrast is even greater when you consider two points. First of all Menashe as its own tribe began a generation later than Levi as this was the fulfillment of the promise to Yosef that his children, Ephraim and Menashe, would have an equal share among the other tribes.

One could have easily assumed that either Menashe or Ephraim would be the smallest. In truth the offspring of Yosef adds up to 72,700. The next smallest tribe that is from the same generation as Levi is the tribe of Binyamin which totaled 35,400. It is worth noting that as the youngest of all the brothers, it again makes sense that Binyamin would have a smaller number, which doesn't explain why Levi, the third oldest, would be so small.

Additionally, there is one more point to consider. While the count of the 12 tribes was from the ages of 20 and older, the count for the tribe of Levi was from one month and older. Knowing all these differences in the counting has led a number of commentaries to wonder what led to the small number for Shevet Levi.

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## BAMIDBAR AND SHAVUOT UNITE

**BAILEY FROHLICH ('16)**  
CURRENT EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

In this week's parsha, Parshat Bamidbar, Bnei Yisrael are instructed to divide into groups and arrange their camp in a specific order, with each tribe having its own place around the Mishkan. However, doesn't this seem a little counterintuitive? If Bnei Yisrael are all about *achdut*, unity, then how would creating strict divisions in the camp accomplish this goal? It seems that this camp arrangement has a large potential to lead to disunity, the antithesis of *achdut*.

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler offers an explanation, expounding upon the connection between order and unity. Although, if taken to an extreme, order and definite partitions can lead to divisive conflict as each group may view themselves as individuals and not as part of a whole, disorder, the lack of definite partitions in the camp, can be equally, if not more, detrimental.

Each member of Bnei Yisrael has unique talents, and, if placed in the right context, each person can express these talents and maximize his or her contribution to the nation at large. Each separate group has a specific role in the nation, a different way he serves God, and, through interacting with other groups, each contributes to *and* gains from one another. From this perspective, order in fact *preserves* unity and does not impede it.

A simple example are group-based projects, something the average high schooler encounters quite often. Whether it's a Navi or English project, each member of the group contributes his or her unique skills to various aspects of the project. By defining the role of each individual according to his or her skill set, the group will be more productive in accomplishing its goals.

Parshat Bamidbar often falls out near Shavuot, and this year, it is merely the day before! I propose that the reason for this juxtaposition is the same reason for the camp arrangement: unity. On Shavuot, we too realize that each individual has a unique purpose and works with others to achieve the common goal of serving Hashem. As Rashi says, Bnei Yisrael were unified "like one man with one heart" (Shmot 19:2) when they received the Torah. We must take the lessons of Bamidbar at heart and reaffirm our *achdut* each year before receiving the Torah on Shavuot.

Thank you, Bailey, for all of the hard work, time, and devotion that you have given to Ashreinu. Your ability to ensure that everything runs smoothly and gets done is truly remarkable. You are organized, efficient, and responsible. We wish you only success in all your future endeavors.

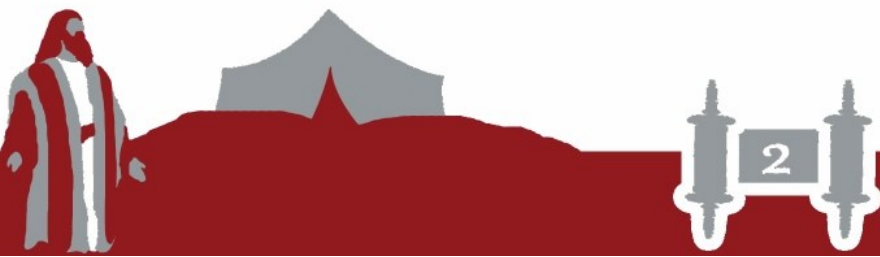
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## A JUXTAPOSITION

**LEOR LEVENSON ('16)**  
MONTHLY WRITER

This week's Parsha begins with Hashem's command to the Jewish people to conduct a census. The leaders of each tribe are recognized, and each tribe is counted specifically; however, Levi is counted separately from all the other tribes.

*Continued page 3*





*Levenson Continued*

This census is immediately followed with the commands for a specific structure in the Jewish camp: Levi'im camp around the Mishkan in order to guard it and perform their duties within it, and the rest of the tribes camp in four groups of three tribes, each around the tribe of Levi. These two juxtaposed topics seem to be creating a distinction between the tribe of Levi and the other tribes. Why is Hashem seemingly promoting a split between the tribes?

Rabbi Dovid Green answers that these commandments do not promote conflict; rather, they encourage unity and respect from one tribe to another. He explains that having an organized system for the encampment of the Jews positively affects them in many ways. For example, if someone needs to find the leader of the tribe of Reuven, it will be easy to find him amidst a camp of 600,000 men because the location of the tribe remains constant.

Furthermore, this structure in the Jewish camp promotes the unique qualities of each individual tribe in his service of God. The separate spheres, says Rabbi Green, encourage the specialization of certain jobs among the tribes. Each group, equidistant from the Mishkan, contributes its own unique talent to the overall goal of the Jews— service of Hashem.

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## **HOLD YOUR HEAD UP HIGH**

**LANA ROSENTHAL ('17)**

**INCOMING EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

This week's parsha, Parshat Bamidbar, begins by recounting a census of Bnei Yisrael. When Hashem commands Moshe to count the people, He says, "se'uh et rosh", "lift the head" of Bnei Yisrael. This is a peculiar phrase — what does it have to do with counting Bnei Yisrael?

The Ramban explains in the name of Rashi that "lift the head" means to literally lift Bnei Yisrael's heads off of their bodies, as if they were being killed. He suggests that Rashi gives this seemingly outrageous answer to show that the Torah, with the words "lift the head", is foreshadowing the deaths of those being counted, as they will be punished with death after *Chet HaMiraglim*.

The Rambam further supports Rashi's interpretation of these words by pointing out that the Leviim are counted separately, and Hashem does not command Moshe, "se'uh et rosh" when counting the leviim. According to the Ramban, based off of Rashi's commentary, this phrase is not mentioned in regard to the counting of the leviim because the leviim do not participate in *Chet HaMiraglim* and are therefore not killed.

The Ramban, however, goes on to provide a contradiction to Rashi's interpretation. He points out that there is yet another census towards the end of Bamidbar in which the pasuk does not include the phrase "se'uh et rosh", even though the people are no less fated to die than they were in the first census in Bamidbar. I'd like to suggest that instead of alluding to death, "lift the head" refers to Hashem's love for and recognition of Bnei Yisrael. When a person is acknowledged, he stands a little bit straighter with his head held higher. Hashem was showing Bnei Yisrael that He acknowledged them and cared for them before He took them on the long journey through the desert.



*Rabbi Horowitz continued*

The Ramban suggests that the Jews grew in response to the harsh decrees upon them from the Mitzriyim, but because Shevet Levi was not part of the decree to be slaves, they also did not have the blessing of growing exponentially. The Abarbanel suggests that Hashem specifically increased the rest of the tribes because they needed to have a large army to conquer and maintain the land of Israel. Since Shevet Levi was not part of the army, they did not need the blessing to grow so large.

The Ohr Hachaim suggests that when Pharaoh decreed to kill the baby boys, it was Amram who divorced his wife so that they would not have children and all of Levi followed Amram's lead. After Miriam convinced Amram to remarry Yocheved, the rest of Shevet Levi remained divorced, consequently their number was significantly less.

Rav Elchanan Wasserman has a very interesting reason for why Levi was so small. We know that Shevet Levi was designated for a special role in the service of Hashem. They were tasked with caring for the Mishkan and Beit Hamikdash, as well as educating the Jewish people. As such, they spent their day working in the holy, and he says that anything that is connected to something holy is rarer.

What makes Yom Kippur special is that it occurs only once a year. Even Shabbat happens only once a week. So too, the size of Shevet Levi needs to be smaller than the rest of the tribes so that we can appreciate its significant role.

In a similar vein, as we approach the holiday of Shavuot, we come together once a year as a reminder of the importance of having been privileged to receive the Torah and our appreciation for everything the Torah stands for.

*Levenson continued*

Rabbi Green brings the analogy of a group of people who are building a tower. Within this one project, individual people must contribute different things in order for the project to succeed. If the building did not have electricity or plumbing, or if it lacked a strong framework to remain standing, the mission would not be accomplished. In the workers' attempt to create the building, certain people must create the layout of the building, certain people must build a framework, and certain people have to equip the building with plumbing and electricity. These groups, like the different groups in the Jewish camp, work together despite their varying locations and talents to achieve an ultimate goal. The outward disunity among the tribes actually helps establish a more structured, cohesive, and unified service of Hashem.

This lesson is still applicable in the lives of Jews today. No matter how scattered we are in our exile, no matter how many obstacles and problems lie ahead, we must remain a cohesive unit in our service of God. Disunity causes the failure of the "project." In order to fulfill our goal, we must put aside our differences and stand as one. With this unity, we will overcome the baseless hatred that was our downfall 2,000 years ago and will merit the coming of Mashiach.

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