

עץ חיים

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ETZ HAYIM

TORAH AND COMMENTARY

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY  
THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM



*Produced by* THE JEWISH PUBLICATION SOCIETY

Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary  
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*The Rabbinical Assembly  
3080 Broadway  
New York, NY 10027*

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Illustrations of the tabernacle and its furnishings by Joe Sikora.*

*Composition by VARDA Graphics, Skokie, Illinois  
Design by Adrienne Onderdonk Dudden  
Manufactured in the United States of America*

09 10 10 9 8

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

*Bible. O.T. Pentateuch. Hebrew. 2001.*

*Etz Hayim: Torah and commentary / senior editor, David L. Lieber; literary editor, Jules Harlow; sponsored by the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.*

*p. cm.*

*Text of the Pentateuch in Hebrew and English; commentary in English.*

*Includes the haftarat and commentary on them, p'shat and d'rash commentaries, comments on Conservative halakhic practice, topical essays, and other material.*

*Includes bibliographical references and index.*

*ISBN-10: 0-8276-0712-1 ISBN-13: 978-0-8276-0712-5*

*1. Bible. O.T. Pentateuch—Commentaries. 2. Haftarat—Commentaries. 3. Bible. O.T. Pentateuch—Theology. 4. Conservative Judaism—Customs and practices. I. Lieber, David L. II. Harlow, Jules. III. United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. IV. Rabbinical Assembly. V. Bible. O.T. Pentateuch. English. Jewish Publication Society, 2001. VI. Title.*

*BS1222 .L54 2001*

*222'.1077—dc21*

2001029757

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**1** On the first day of the second month, in the second year following the exodus from the land of Egypt, the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, saying:

א וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַר סִינַי בְּאֶהֱל מוֹעֵד בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי בַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִית לְצֵאתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר:

*The Generation of the Exodus: The Wilderness Camp (1:1–10:10)*

#### CENSUS IN THE WILDERNESS (1:1–54)

The march of the Israelites through the wilderness, from Mount Sinai to the Promised Land, will take them through hostile environments, both natural and human. To meet those dangers, the people must be organized into a military camp, which requires a census.

**1. first day** In ancient times, the first day of each month was a holiday that provided an op-

portunity to bring the people together for important announcements.

**wilderness** Hebrew: *midbar*; it does not mean “desert.” Although the scant rainfall in the Sinai cannot support agriculture, it can provide adequate pasturage for flocks.

**The LORD spoke . . . in the Tent of Meeting** As Moses had been permitted to ascend to the

This fourth book of the Torah is known as “Numbers” in English, because of the census recorded in the opening chapter. In some Rabbinic texts it is called “The Book of the Census” (*Seifer Ha-P’kudim*). Its proper Hebrew designation, from its first significant word, is *B’midbar* (In the Wilderness of), and it describes a people wandering through a spiritual as well as a geographic wilderness.

What must it have been like to experience the transition from the grand events of Sinai and the Sea of Reeds to the daily routine of the wilderness? The answer might lead us to the lesson that life is lived, not so much in the grand moments as in uncelebrated ordinary times. In Numbers, the focus of leadership passes from the prophet Moses to the priest Aaron, perhaps because the prophet issues great demands from the mountaintop, whereas the priest is involved with the people in the complexities and routines of daily life.

Throughout this book, the Israelites, who had experienced the Exodus, the crossing of the sea, and the revelation at Sinai, are described as a petulant, complaining people, constantly trying the patience of God and of Moses. In Hirsch’s words, *B’midbar* contrasts “the people of Israel as it actually is” to “the ideal to which it was summoned in *Va-yikra*.”

The generation of the wilderness dies off in the course of the 38 years covered by this book. At its conclusion, a new generation of Israelites who had never known slavery, a generation for whom the revelation at Sinai was tradition

rather than personal experience, stands poised to enter the Promised Land.

#### CHAPTER 1

This first *parashah* deals mainly with two subjects: the census of Israelite adult males in preparation for the battles to reach and conquer the Promised Land, and the physical arrangement of the various tribes as they marched and as they camped.

**1. in the Tent of Meeting** “The LORD transferred the divine Presence from Sinai to the tabernacle, from a sanctuary established by God to one fashioned by the people Israel. The tabernacle was a portable Mount Sinai, the heavens transplanted and brought down to earth” (B. Jacob). The Israelites never felt lost in the wilderness because they were able to focus on the tabernacle at the center of their encampment.

The Jewish calendar arranges for these opening chapters of the Book of Numbers (which begin with God speaking to the people in the wilderness of Sinai) to be read in most years on the *Shabbat* before the festival that celebrates the giving of the Torah, *Shavu-ot*. According to the Sages, this should remind us that the Torah was given in a wilderness, a place accessible to all, a site that belonged to no one people, and that it was given to a people with no real property and few possessions. “One should be as open as a wilderness to receive the Torah” (BT Ned. 55a). It is intimidating to open oneself to the demands of God, to a new and morally de-

<sup>2</sup>Take a census of the whole Israelite community by the clans of its ancestral houses, listing the names, every male, head by head. <sup>3</sup>You and Aaron shall record them by their groups, from the age of twenty years up, all those in Israel who are able to bear arms. <sup>4</sup>Associated with you shall be a man from each tribe, each one the head of his ancestral house.

<sup>5</sup>These are the names of the men who shall assist you:

From Reuben, Elizur son of Shedeur.

Presence of God atop the mountain, so might he enter the Tent of Meeting—a Mount Sinai on earth, so to speak. The Lord's voice came from within, from between the two cherubim facing each other atop the Ark.

**2.** The census described here follows the procedures of censuses in other ancient Near Eastern cultures. It even uses the same terminology. The census was indispensable for military conscription and for any government levy on persons or property. From 10:11, it is clear that the census was completed in less than 20 days.

**3. twenty years up** The age of conscription in ancient Israel. No upper limit is given here.

manding way of life. The Torah portrays the people Israel as periodically wishing they were back in the predictable, morally undemanding servitude of Egypt. Yet Israel's willingness to accept the Torah, to be "as open as a wilderness" to let the Torah's morality fill the moral vacuum in the lives of former slaves, was the essential first step in God's remaking the world. For the first time, God's world will contain a model people, guided by the Torah to live a God-oriented life.

The wilderness, untouched by human settlement, offered a contrast to Egypt, which was dominated by monuments fashioned by human hands. Thus it was a fitting stage for God's being proclaimed sovereign of the world. We may even see a parallel between the revelation at Sinai (when God imposed moral order in the midst of a wilderness) and the creation of the world (when God imposed natural order on chaos).

**2. Take a census** Literally, "lift the head." This prompted the comment, "Let the Israel-

שָׂאוּ אֶת־רֹאשׁ כָּל־עֵדַת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל <sup>2</sup>  
לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפָּר שְׁמוֹת  
כָּל־זָכָר לְגִלְגָּלְתָּם: <sup>3</sup> מִבֶּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה  
וּמֵעַלָּה כָּל־יָצֵא צָבָא בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל תִּפְקְדוּ  
אֹתָם לְצַבְּאֹתָם אֹתָהּ וְאֶהְרֹן: <sup>4</sup> וְאִתְּכֶם  
יִהְיוּ אִישׁ אִישׁ לְמִטָּה אִישׁ רֹאשׁ לְבֵית־  
אֲבֹתָיו הוּא:

וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר יַעֲמְדוּ  
אִתְּכֶם

לְרֹאוֹבֵן אֶלְיָצוּר בֶּן־שְׁדֵיאוּר:

*able to bear arms* The previous statement with no age limit is now qualified.

**5–15.** Tribal lists throughout the Bible may vary in the names and the order of the tribes, but they share in common the concern for preserving the number 12. These lists can be divided roughly into two groups: those that include the tribe of Levi and those that omit it. All the tribal lists in Numbers fall into the latter category, because the tribe of Levi was exempt from military conscription.

*These are the names* The census supervisors, mandatory according to verse 4, are named by God.

ites hold their heads high in pride as they contemplate who their ancestors were" (Menaḥem Naḥum of Chernobyl). Although the purpose of the census was purely functional, mustering the Israelites for battle, the Midrash uncovers another dimension to it, by comparing God to a person who had a store of precious jewels. From time to time, this individual would take out the jewels and count them to take pleasure in their beauty and to be reassured that they were all safely there (Num. R. 4:2). For Ramban, the census testifies to the miracle of Israel's survival and increase despite the efforts of Pharaoh and Amalek and the rigors of the wilderness journey. He points to the enduring lesson of Jewish history: We have not succumbed in spite of devastating losses and persecution. Levi Yitzḥak of Berdichev connects the final total of 603,550 Israelites (v. 46) to a tradition that there are 603,550 letters in the Torah. Just as the absence of one letter renders a Torah scroll unfit for use, the loss of even one Jew prevents Israel from fulfilling its divine mission.

<sup>6</sup>From Simeon, Shelumiel son of Zuri-shaddai.

<sup>7</sup>From Judah, Nahshon son of Amminadab.

<sup>8</sup>From Issachar, Nethanel son of Zuar.

<sup>9</sup>From Zebulun, Eliab son of Helon.

<sup>10</sup>From the sons of Joseph:

from Ephraim, Elishama son of Ammihud;

from Manasseh, Gamaliel son of Pedahzur.

<sup>11</sup>From Benjamin, Abidan son of Gideon.

<sup>12</sup>From Dan, Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai.

<sup>13</sup>From Asher, Pagiel son of Ochran.

<sup>14</sup>From Gad, Eliasaph son of Deuel.

<sup>15</sup>From Naphtali, Ahira son of Enan.

<sup>16</sup>Those are the elected of the assembly, the chieftains of their ancestral tribes: they are the heads of the contingents of Israel.

<sup>17</sup>So Moses and Aaron took those men, who were designated by name, <sup>18</sup>and on the first day of the second month they convoked the whole community, who were registered by the clans of their ancestral houses—the names of those aged twenty years and over being listed head by head. <sup>19</sup>As the LORD had commanded Moses, so he recorded them in the wilderness of Sinai.

<sup>20</sup>They totaled as follows:

The descendants of Reuben, Israel's first-born, the registration of the clans of their ancestral house, as listed by name, head by head, all males aged twenty years and over, all who were able to bear arms—<sup>21</sup>those enrolled from the tribe of Reuben: 46,500.

<sup>22</sup>Of the descendants of Simeon, the registration of the clans of their ancestral house, their enrollment as listed by name, head by head, all males aged twenty years and over, all who were able to bear arms—<sup>23</sup>those enrolled from the tribe of Simeon: 59,300.

6 לְשִׁמְעוֹן שְׁלֹמִיאֵל בֶּן־צוּרִישַׁדָּי:

7 לְיְהוּדָה נַחֲשׁוֹן בֶּן־עַמִּינָדָב:

8 לְיִשָּׁשָׁר נְתַנְאֵל בֶּן־צוּעָר:

9 לְזְבוּלֹן אֱלִיאָב בֶּן־חֶלֶן:

10 לְבְנֵי יוֹסֵף

לְאֶפְרַיִם אֱלִישָׁמָע בֶּן־עַמִּיהוּד

לְמַנַּשֶׁה גַּמְלִיאֵל בֶּן־פְּדָהצוּר:

11 לְבְנֵימִן אַבִּידָן בֶּן־גִּדְעוֹנִי:

12 לְדָן אַחִיעֶזֶר בֶּן־עַמִּישַׁדָּי:

13 לְאַשֶׁר פַּגְעִיאֵל בֶּן־עֹכְרָן:

14 לְגָד אֱלִיסָפ בֶּן־דְּעוּאֵל:

15 לְנַפְתָּלִי אַחִירַע בֶּן־עֵינָן:

16 אֵלֶּה קְרִיאֵי קְרוּאֵי הָעֵדָה נְשִׂאֵי מִטּוֹת

אֲבוֹתָם רָאשֵׁי אֲלֵפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵם:

17 וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶת הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה

אֲשֶׁר נִקְּבוּ בְשֵׁמוֹת: 18 וְאֵת כָּל־הָעֵדָה

הַקְּהִילוּ בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי וַיִּתְּלְדוּ

עַל־מִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבוֹתָם בְּמִסְפָּר

שְׁמוֹת מִבְּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה

לְגַלְגָּלְתָּם: 19 כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה

וַיִּפְקְדֵם בְּמִדְבַר סִינַי: פ

20 וַיְהִיו בְּנֵי־רְאוּבֵן בְּכֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל תּוֹלְדֹתָם

לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבוֹתָם בְּמִסְפָּר שְׁמוֹת

לְגַלְגָּלְתָּם כָּל־זָכָר מִבְּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה

וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: 21 פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה

רְאוּבֵן שֵׁשָׁה וְאַרְבָּעִים אֶלֶף וַחֲמִשׁ

מֵאוֹת: פ 22 לְבְנֵי שִׁמְעוֹן תּוֹלְדֹתָם

לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבוֹתָם פְּקֻדֵיהֶם בְּמִסְפָּר

שְׁמוֹת לְגַלְגָּלְתָּם כָּל־זָכָר מִבְּן עֶשְׂרִים

שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: 23 פְּקֻדֵיהֶם

לְמִטָּה שִׁמְעוֹן תִּשְׁעָה וַחֲמִשָּׁים אֶלֶף

**18. and on the first day** The date of verse 1 is repeated to emphasize that the census was begun on the very day it was commanded.

**were registered** Hebrew: *va-yityaldu*; literally, “declared their lineage,” according to their

households and clans (Onk., Targ. Jon.).

**20. Israel's first-born** Reuben's title is given to account for the fact that he heads the list even though Judah is to lead the march (see 1 Chron. 5:1–2).

<sup>24</sup>Of the descendants of Gad, the registration of the clans of their ancestral house, as listed by name, aged twenty years and over, all who were able to bear arms—<sup>25</sup>those enrolled from the tribe of Gad: 45,650.

<sup>26</sup>Of the descendants of Judah, the registration of the clans of their ancestral house, as listed by name, aged twenty years and over, all who were able to bear arms—<sup>27</sup>those enrolled from the tribe of Judah: 74,600.

<sup>28</sup>Of the descendants of Issachar, the registration of the clans of their ancestral house, as listed by name, aged twenty years and over, all who were able to bear arms—<sup>29</sup>those enrolled from the tribe of Issachar: 54,400.

<sup>30</sup>Of the descendants of Zebulun, the registration of the clans of their ancestral house, as listed by name, aged twenty years and over, all who were able to bear arms—<sup>31</sup>those enrolled from the tribe of Zebulun: 57,400.

<sup>32</sup>Of the descendants of Joseph:

Of the descendants of Ephraim, the registration of the clans of their ancestral house, as listed by name, aged twenty years and over, all who were able to bear arms—<sup>33</sup>those enrolled from the tribe of Ephraim: 40,500.

<sup>34</sup>Of the descendants of Manasseh, the registration of the clans of their ancestral house, as listed by name, aged twenty years and over, all who were able to bear arms—<sup>35</sup>those enrolled from the tribe of Manasseh: 32,200.

<sup>36</sup>Of the descendants of Benjamin, the registration of the clans of their ancestral house, as listed by name, aged twenty years and over, all who were able to bear arms—<sup>37</sup>those enrolled from the tribe of Benjamin: 35,400.

<sup>38</sup>Of the descendants of Dan, the registration of the clans of their ancestral house, as listed by name, aged twenty years and over, all who were able to bear arms—<sup>39</sup>those enrolled from the tribe of Dan: 62,700.

וּשְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת: פ <sup>24</sup> לְבִנֵי גָד תּוֹלְדֹתָם לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת מִבְּנֵי עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: <sup>25</sup> פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה גַּד חֲמִשָּׁה וָאַרְבָּעִים אֶלֶף וְשֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת וְחֲמִשִּׁים: פ <sup>26</sup> לְבִנֵי יְהוּדָה תּוֹלְדֹתָם לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת מִבְּנֵי עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: <sup>27</sup> פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה יְהוּדָה אַרְבַּעַה וְשִׁבְעִים אֶלֶף וְשֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת: פ <sup>28</sup> לְבִנֵי יִשְׂשָׁכָר תּוֹלְדֹתָם לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת מִבְּנֵי עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: <sup>29</sup> פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה יִשְׂשָׁכָר אַרְבַּעַה וְחֲמִשִּׁים אֶלֶף וָאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת: פ <sup>30</sup> לְבִנֵי זְבוּלֹן תּוֹלְדֹתָם לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת מִבְּנֵי עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: <sup>31</sup> פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה זְבוּלֹן שִׁבְעָה וְחֲמִשִּׁים אֶלֶף וָאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת: פ <sup>32</sup> לְבִנֵי יוֹסֵף תּוֹלְדֹתָם לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת מִבְּנֵי עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: <sup>33</sup> פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה אֶפְרַיִם אַרְבָּעִים אֶלֶף וְחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת: פ <sup>34</sup> לְבִנֵי מְנַשֶּׁה תּוֹלְדֹתָם לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת מִבְּנֵי עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: <sup>35</sup> פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה מְנַשֶּׁה שְׁנַיִם וְשָׁלֹשִׁים אֶלֶף וּמֵאוֹתָיִם: פ <sup>36</sup> לְבִנֵי בְנִימֵן תּוֹלְדֹתָם לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת מִבְּנֵי עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: <sup>37</sup> פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה בְנִימֵן חֲמִשָּׁה וְשָׁלֹשִׁים אֶלֶף וָאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת: פ <sup>38</sup> לְבִנֵי דָן תּוֹלְדֹתָם לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת מִבְּנֵי עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: <sup>39</sup> פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה דָן שְׁנַיִם

<sup>40</sup>Of the descendants of Asher, the registration of the clans of their ancestral house, as listed by name, aged twenty years and over, all who were able to bear arms—<sup>41</sup>those enrolled from the tribe of Asher: 41,500.

<sup>42</sup>[Of] the descendants of Naphtali, the registration of the clans of their ancestral house as listed by name, aged twenty years and over, all who were able to bear arms—<sup>43</sup>those enrolled from the tribe of Naphtali: 53,400.

<sup>44</sup>Those are the enrollments recorded by Moses and Aaron and by the chieftains of Israel, who were twelve in number, one man to each ancestral house. <sup>45</sup>All the Israelites, aged twenty years and over, enrolled by ancestral houses, all those in Israel who were able to bear arms—<sup>46</sup>all who were enrolled came to 603,550.

<sup>47</sup>The Levites, however, were not recorded among them by their ancestral tribe. <sup>48</sup>For the LORD had spoken to Moses, saying: <sup>49</sup>Do not on any account enroll the tribe of Levi or take a census of them with the Israelites. <sup>50</sup>You shall put the Levites in charge of the Tabernacle of the Pact, all its furnishings, and everything that pertains to it: they shall carry the Tabernacle and all its furnishings, and they shall tend it; and they

וְשֵׁשׁ אֲלֶף וּשְׁבַע מֵאוֹת: פ <sup>40</sup> לְבִנֵי אֲשֶׁר תּוֹלְדֹתֵם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתְכֶם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמֹת מִבְּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: <sup>41</sup> פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה אֲשֶׁר אָחָד וְאַרְבָּעִים אֲלֶף וַחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת: פ <sup>42</sup> בְּנֵי נַפְתָּלִי תּוֹלְדֹתֵם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתְכֶם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמֹת מִבְּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: <sup>43</sup> פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה נַפְתָּלִי שְׁלֹשָׁה וַחֲמִשִּׁים אֲלֶף וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת: פ

<sup>44</sup> אֵלֶּה הַפְּקֻדִים אֲשֶׁר פָּקַד מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן וְנָשִׂיאיִ יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר אִישׁ אִישׁ-אָחָד לְבֵית-אֲבֹתָיו הָיוּ: <sup>45</sup> וַיְהִיו כֹּל-פְּקוּדֵי בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם מִבְּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל-יֵצֵא צָבָא בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: <sup>46</sup> וַיְהִיו כֹּל-הַפְּקֻדִים שֵׁשׁ-מֵאוֹת אֲלֶף וּשְׁלֹשֶׁת אֲלָפִים וַחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת וַחֲמִשִּׁים:

<sup>47</sup> וְהַלְוִיִּם לְמִטָּה אֲבֹתָם לֹא הִתְּפַקְדוּ בְּתוֹכָם: פ <sup>48</sup> וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵּאמֹר: <sup>49</sup> אַךְ אֶת-מִטָּה לְוִי לֹא תִפְקֹד וְאֶת-רֹאשָׁם לֹא תִשָּׂא בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: <sup>50</sup> וְאַתָּה הִפְקֹד אֶת-הַלְוִיִּם עַל-מִשְׁכַּן הָעֵדֻת וְעַל כָּל-כֵּלָיו וְעַל כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ הִמָּה יִשְׂאוּ אֶת-הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְאֶת-כָּל-כֵּלָיו וְהֵם יִשְׂרְתוּהוּ וְסָבִיב לְמִשְׁכַּן יַחֲנוּ:

**46. 603,550** This figure is identical to that obtained by an earlier census of Israelite men over 20, taken during the 1st year in the wilderness (Exod. 30:12–16, 38:26). Another census taken in the 40th year netted a total of 601,730 (Num. 26:51). These figures presuppose a population of more than 2 million supporting itself for 40 years in the Sinai peninsula. The numbers are impossibly large. Some say that they reflect King David's census (see 2 Sam. 24). Others suggest that "elef" here does not mean "1,000" but a military unit averaging 5 or 6 men. The number would then be "600 units [totaling] 3,550 men."

#### DUTIES OF THE LEVITES (vv. 47–54)

This summary of the Levites' encampment and guard duties for the sanctuary anticipates the details in chapters 3–4.

**48. had spoken** Hebrew: *va-y'dabber*, usually "spoke." But the order not to count the Levites must have been given before Moses took the census.

**50. You** Literally, "But you." The Levites are assigned to the tabernacle instead of serving in the regular militia.

**tend it** By guarding it.

shall camp around the Tabernacle. <sup>51</sup>When the Tabernacle is to set out, the Levites shall take it down, and when the Tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up; any outsider who encroaches shall be put to death. <sup>52</sup>The Israelites shall encamp troop by troop, each man with his division and each under his standard. <sup>53</sup>The Levites, however, shall camp around the Tabernacle of the Pact, that wrath may not strike the Israelite community; the Levites shall stand guard around the Tabernacle of the Pact.

<sup>54</sup>The Israelites did accordingly; just as the LORD had commanded Moses, so they did.

**2** The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: <sup>2</sup>The Israelites shall camp each with his standard, under the banners of their ancestral

51 וּבְנִסְעַת הַמִּשְׁכָּן יוֹרִידוּ אֹתוֹ הַלְוִיִּם וּבְחִנְתַּת הַמִּשְׁכָּן יָקִימוּ אֹתוֹ הַלְוִיִּם וְהָזָר הַקָּרֵב יוּמָת׃ 52 וְחָנוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ עַל־מַחֲנֵהוּ וְאִישׁ עַל־דִּגְלוֹ לְצַבְאָתוֹ׃ 53 וְהַלְוִיִּם יַחְנוּ סָבִיב לְמִשְׁכַּן הָעֵדֻת וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה קֶצֶף עַל־עֵדֻת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְשָׁמְרוּ הַלְוִיִּם אֶת־מִשְׁמַרְתּוֹ מִשְׁכַּן הָעֵדֻת׃

54 וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה בֶּן עָשׂוֹ׃ פ

**ב** וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר׃ <sup>2</sup> אִישׁ עַל־דִּגְלוֹ בְּאֹתוֹת לְבַיִת

**51. take it down** Dismantle it. **outsider** An unauthorized person, in this case any Israelite not in the tribe of Levi.

**53. shall stand guard around the Tabernacle** Effective guard duty will prevent the outbreak of God's wrath.

THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE CAMP (2:1–34)

The men in the military are deployed to defend the camp when it is at rest.

ORDER OF THE TRIBES (vv. 1–31)

The tribes are ordered in military divisions

around the tabernacle, each under its chieftain.

**2. standard** Hebrew: *degel*; by extension, it refers to an army division or a tribal military unit.

**banners** Hebrew: *otot*. Each ancestral house had its own, displayed by smaller military units.

**52. encamp troop by troop** Many commentators note the details here of tribal encampments as a way of emphasizing the need for order and organization in achieving a spiritual life. Simḥah Zissel Ziv writes, "A person disorderly in behavior is also confused in thought, incapable of stable, consistent work."

**53. that wrath may not strike** The Israelites are warned repeatedly that the awesome holiness of God can be destructive (see the story of Nadab and Abihu in Lev. 10:1–2; also Num. 3:10 and elsewhere). God is like a fire, capable of warming and comforting, but capable of burning as well.

CHAPTER 2

The key to the physical deployment of the Israelites as they camped and as they marched

was the setting of the Ark at the center of the camp. Every individual Israelite was located in relation to the Ark and the tabernacle. The tabernacle was the first thing one saw on leaving home and the first thing one looked for on returning home. Gradually, this physical centrality must have led to the Ark's gaining a central place in the Israelite soul.

A tradition has it that the tribe of Judah, situated at the eastern edge of the camp, marched backward when the Israelites broke camp and traveled eastward, to avoid turning their backs on the Ark. Thus they found their path to the future by orienting themselves to their past.

**2. each with his standard** A person's identity consists of three elements: the self (the standard), the family (the ancestral banners), and the community (the Tent of Meeting).

house; they shall camp around the Tent of Meeting at a distance.

<sup>3</sup>Camped on the front, or east side: the standard of the division of Judah, troop by troop.

Chieftain of the Judites: Nahshon son of Amminadab. <sup>4</sup>His troop, as enrolled: 74,600.

<sup>5</sup>Camping next to it:

The tribe of Issachar.

Chieftain of the Issacharites: Nethanel son of Zuar. <sup>6</sup>His troop, as enrolled: 54,400.

<sup>7</sup>The tribe of Zebulun.

Chieftain of the Zebulunites: Eliab son of Helon. <sup>8</sup>His troop, as enrolled: 57,400.

<sup>9</sup>The total enrolled in the division of Judah: 186,400, for all troops. These shall march first.

<sup>10</sup>On the south: the standard of the division of Reuben, troop by troop.

Chieftain of the Reubenites: Elizur son of Shedeur. <sup>11</sup>His troop, as enrolled: 46,500.

<sup>12</sup>Camping next to it:

The tribe of Simeon.

Chieftain of the Simeonites: Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai.

<sup>13</sup>His troop, as enrolled: 59,300.

<sup>14</sup>And the tribe of Gad.

Chieftain of the Gadites: Eliasaph son of Reuel. <sup>15</sup>His troop, as enrolled: 45,650.

<sup>16</sup>The total enrolled in the division of Reuben: 151,450, for all troops. These shall march second.

אֲבֹתָם יִחַנוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִנֶּגֶד סָבִיב לְאֹהֶל-מוֹעֵד יִחַנוּ:

<sup>3</sup>וְהַחֲנִיּוֹם קִדְמָה מִזְרְחָה דָּגֵל מַחֲנֵה יְהוּדָה לְצַבְאֹתָם וְנָשִׂיא לְבְנֵי יְהוּדָה נֶחֱשׁוֹן בֶּן-עַמִּינָדָב: <sup>4</sup>וּצְבָאוֹ וּפְקֻדֵיהֶם אַרְבַּעַת וּשְׁבַעִים אֶלֶף וּשְׁשׁ מֵאוֹת:

<sup>5</sup>וְהַחֲנִיּוֹם עָלָיו מִטֵּה יִשָּׁשְׁכָר וְנָשִׂיא לְבְנֵי יִשָּׁשְׁכָר נְתַנְאֵל בֶּן-צוּעָר: <sup>6</sup>וּצְבָאוֹ וּפְקֻדָיו אַרְבַּעַת וּחֲמִשִּׁים אֶלֶף וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת: ס

<sup>7</sup>מִטֵּה זְבוּלֹן וְנָשִׂיא לְבְנֵי זְבוּלֹן אֱלִיאָב בֶּן-חֶלֶן: <sup>8</sup>וּצְבָאוֹ וּפְקֻדָיו שְׁבַעַת וּחֲמִשִּׁים אֶלֶף וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת:

<sup>9</sup>כָּל-הַפְּקֻדִים לְמַחֲנֵה יְהוּדָה מֵאֵת אֶלֶף וּשְׁמֹנִים אֶלֶף וּשְׁשַׁת-אַלְפִים וְאַרְבַּע-מֵאוֹת לְצַבְאֹתָם רֵאשֹׁנָה יִסְעוּ: ס

<sup>10</sup>דָּגֵל מַחֲנֵה רְאוּבֵן תִּימְנָה לְצַבְאֹתָם וְנָשִׂיא לְבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן אֱלִיצוּר בֶּן-שְׁדִיאֹר: <sup>11</sup>וּצְבָאוֹ וּפְקֻדָיו שֵׁשָׁה וְאַרְבַּעִים אֶלֶף וּחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת:

<sup>12</sup>וְהַחֲנֹם עָלָיו מִטֵּה שִׁמְעוֹן וְנָשִׂיא לְבְנֵי שִׁמְעוֹן שְׁלֹמִיאֵל בֶּן-צוּרִישָׁדַי: <sup>13</sup>וּצְבָאוֹ וּפְקֻדֵיהֶם תְּשַׁעַת וּחֲמִשִּׁים אֶלֶף וּשְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת: <sup>14</sup>וּמִטֵּה גָד וְנָשִׂיא לְבְנֵי גָד אֱלִיָּסָף בֶּן-רְעוּאֵל: <sup>15</sup>וּצְבָאוֹ וּפְקֻדֵיהֶם חֲמִשָּׁה וְאַרְבַּעִים אֶלֶף וּשְׁשׁ מֵאוֹת וּחֲמִשִּׁים:

<sup>16</sup>כָּל-הַפְּקֻדִים לְמַחֲנֵה רְאוּבֵן מֵאֵת אֶלֶף וְאַחַד וּחֲמִשִּׁים אֶלֶף וְאַרְבַּע-מֵאוֹת וּחֲמִשִּׁים לְצַבְאֹתָם וּשְׁנַיִם יִסְעוּ: ס

*at a distance* It was necessary to make room for the levitical encampment, which was set up between the sanctuary and the Israelite camp.

**3. Nahshon** His sister, Elisheba, was the wife of Aaron.

**4. His troop** Literally, "As for his troop, its enrollment was." The chieftain is always associated with his troop.

<sup>17</sup>Then, midway between the divisions, the Tent of Meeting, the division of the Levites, shall move. As they camp, so they shall march, each in position, by their standards.

<sup>18</sup>On the west: the standard of the division of Ephraim, troop by troop.

Chieftain of the Ephraimites: Elishama son of Ammihud. <sup>19</sup>His troop, as enrolled: 40,500.

<sup>20</sup>Next to it:

The tribe of Manasseh.

Chieftain of the Manassites: Gamaliel son of Pedahzur. <sup>21</sup>His troop, as enrolled: 32,200.

<sup>22</sup>And the tribe of Benjamin.

Chieftain of the Benjaminites: Abidan son of Gideon. <sup>23</sup>His troop, as enrolled: 35,400.

<sup>24</sup>The total enrolled in the division of Ephraim: 108,100 for all troops. These shall march third.

<sup>25</sup>On the north: the standard of the division of Dan, troop by troop.

Chieftain of the Danites: Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai. <sup>26</sup>His troop, as enrolled: 62,700.

<sup>27</sup>Camping next to it:

The tribe of Asher.

Chieftain of the Asherites: Pagiel son of Ocran. <sup>28</sup>His troop, as enrolled: 41,500.

<sup>29</sup>And the tribe of Naphtali.

Chieftain of the Naphtalites: Ahira son of

<sup>17</sup> וְנָסַע אֶהֱל־מוֹעֵד מִחֲנֵה הַלְוִיִּם בְּתוֹךְ  
הַמַּחֲנֶה כַּאֲשֶׁר יִחַנוּ בֵּן יִסְעוּ אִישׁ עַל־יָדוֹ  
לְדַגְלֵיהֶם: ס

<sup>18</sup> דָּגַל מַחֲנֵה אֶפְרַיִם לְצַבְאֹתָם יִמָּה  
וְנָשִׂיא לְבְנֵי אֶפְרַיִם אֲלִישָׁמַע בֶּן־  
עִמִּיהוּד: <sup>19</sup> וְצַבָּאוֹ וּפְקֻדֵיהֶם אַרְבַּעִים  
אֶלֶף וַחֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת:

<sup>20</sup> וְעָלָיו מִטָּה מְנַשֶּׁה וְנָשִׂיא לְבְנֵי מְנַשֶּׁה  
גַּמְלִיאֵל בֶּן־פְּדָהצֹר: <sup>21</sup> וְצַבָּאוֹ וּפְקֻדֵיהֶם  
שְׁנַיִם וּשְׁלֹשִׁים אֶלֶף וּמֵאוֹתָיִם: <sup>22</sup> וּמִטָּה  
בְּנִימֵן וְנָשִׂיא לְבְנֵי בְנִימֵן אַבִּידָן בֶּן־  
גִּדְעוֹנִי: <sup>23</sup> וְצַבָּאוֹ וּפְקֻדֵיהֶם חֲמִשָּׁה  
וּשְׁלֹשִׁים אֶלֶף וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת:

<sup>24</sup> כָּל־הַפְּקוּדִים לְמַחֲנֵה אֶפְרַיִם מֵאֵת  
אֶלֶף וּשְׁמֹנֶת־אֲלָפִים וּמֵאָה לְצַבְאֹתָם  
וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יִסְעוּ: ס

<sup>25</sup> דָּגַל מַחֲנֵה דָן צִפְנָה לְצַבְאֹתָם וְנָשִׂיא  
לְבְנֵי דָן אַחִיעֶזֶר בֶּן־עַמִּישַׁדַּי: <sup>26</sup> וְצַבָּאוֹ  
וּפְקֻדֵיהֶם שְׁנַיִם וּשְׁשִׁים אֶלֶף וּשְׁבַע  
מֵאוֹת:

<sup>27</sup> וְהַחֲנִים עָלָיו מִטָּה אֲשֶׁר וְנָשִׂיא לְבְנֵי  
אֲשֶׁר פַּגְעִיאֵל בֶּן־עֹכְרָן: <sup>28</sup> וְצַבָּאוֹ  
וּפְקֻדֵיהֶם אֶחָד וְאַרְבַּעִים אֶלֶף וַחֲמֵשׁ  
מֵאוֹת: <sup>29</sup> וּמִטָּה נַפְתָּלִי וְנָשִׂיא לְבְנֵי  
נַפְתָּלִי אַחִירַע בֶּן־עֵינָן: <sup>30</sup> וְצַבָּאוֹ

**17. midway between** That is, in the midst of (see 10:17). The tabernacle and its levitical guards were divided into two groups during the march. The dismantled structure was transported by the Gershonites and Merarites who marched between the first and second divisions, whereas everything else was carried by the Kohathites in the very center of the column, between the second and third divisions.

*the Tent of Meeting, the division of the Le-*

*vites* These two phrases should be understood as connected by “and.”

*As they camp, so shall they march* The Levites are broken into two units during the march, but the Israelite troops remain intact at all times.

**20. Next to it** That is, camping next to it, referring to the two tribes associated with a leader.

**25.** Dan was made head of this division because Dan was the firstborn of Jacob’s children from his concubines (see Gen. 30:1–13).

**17. As they camp, so they shall march** The verse is interpreted homiletically to teach that

one should be the same person at home as away from home, in private as in public.

Enan. <sup>30</sup>His troop, as enrolled: 53,400.

<sup>31</sup>The total enrolled in the division of Dan: 157,600. These shall march last, by their standards.

<sup>32</sup>Those are the enrollments of the Israelites by ancestral houses. The total enrolled in the divisions, for all troops: 603,550. <sup>33</sup>The Levites, however, were not recorded among the Israelites, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

<sup>34</sup>The Israelites did accordingly; just as the LORD had commanded Moses, so they camped by their standards, and so they marched, each with his clan according to his ancestral house.

וּפְקֻדֵיהֶם שְׁלֹשָׁה וַחֲמִשִּׁים אֶלֶף וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת:

<sup>31</sup>כָּל־הַפְּקֻדִים לְמַחֲנֵה דָן מֵאֵת אֶלֶף וְשִׁבְעָה וַחֲמִשִּׁים אֶלֶף וְשֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת לְאַחֲרָנָה יִסְעוּ לְדַגְלֵיהֶם: פ

<sup>32</sup>אֵלֶּה פְּקוּדֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם כָּל־פְּקוּדֵי הַמַּחֲנֵה לְצַבְאוֹתָם שֵׁשׁ־מֵאוֹת אֶלֶף וְשִׁלְשֵׁת אֲלָפִים וַחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת וַחֲמִשִּׁים: <sup>33</sup>וְהַלְוִיִּם לֹא הִתְּפַקְדוּ בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי־אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה: <sup>34</sup>וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה כִּן־חָנּוּ לְדַגְלֵיהֶם וְכֵן נָסְעוּ אִישׁ לְמִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ עַל־בֵּית אֲבֹתָיו:

**3** This is the line of Aaron and Moses at the time that the LORD spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai. <sup>2</sup>These were the names of Aaron's sons: Nadab, the first-born, and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar; <sup>3</sup>those were the names of Aaron's sons, the anointed priests who were ordained for priesthood. <sup>4</sup>But Nadab and Abihu died by the

**ג** וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת אֶהֱרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה בְּיוֹם דִּבְרַר רַבִּיעִי יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי: <sup>2</sup>וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי־אֶהֱרֹן הַבְּכוֹר | נָדָב וְאַבִּיהוּא אֶלְעָזָר וְאִיתָמָר: <sup>3</sup>אֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי אֶהֱרֹן הַכֹּהֲנִים הַמְּשֻׁחִים אֲשֶׁר־מָלְא יָדָם לְכַהֵן: <sup>4</sup>וַיָּמָת נָדָב וְאַבִּיהוּא לִפְנֵי יְהוָה בְּהַקְרָבָם

### THE FIRST CENSUS OF LEVITES (3:1–51)

The events in verses 1–13 take place at Mount Sinai, where the Levites are designated as the guards and porters of the tabernacle. Verses 14–51 relate what occurs in the wilderness of Sinai, where the Levites are counted and assigned their guard duties in transit.

#### AT MOUNT SINAI (vv. 1–13)

The priestly genealogy properly precedes that of the Levites and also serves to identify Aaron's sons under whom the Levites will serve.

#### THE PRIESTS (vv. 1–4)

1. Moses, whose encampment is alongside

that of Aaron, is counted with Aaron and not with the Levites. He is mentioned after Aaron because Aaron was the firstborn.

**Mount Sinai** As distinct from the wilderness of Sinai.

**2. These were the names** That is, when they were at Mount Sinai, for Nadab and Abihu died a while later (see Exod. 24:1; Lev. 10:1–2).

**3. anointed** The anointing of Aaron's sons as priests by the sprinkling of sanctified oil and blood is described in Exod. 29:21 and Lev. 8:30.

**ordained** Their anointing and ordination entitles them to the priesthood and to authority over the Levites.

**34.** It is noteworthy that there was no struggle for rank here, no argument over who went first or who camped where. They accepted God's word without rancor or jealousy (Sorotzkin).

#### CHAPTER 3

**4. Nadab and Abihu died by the will of the LORD** They died, literally, "before the LORD, in God's presence" (i.e., within the sanctuary)

will of the LORD, when they offered alien fire before the LORD in the wilderness of Sinai; and they left no sons. So it was Eleazar and Ithamar who served as priests in the lifetime of their father Aaron.

<sup>5</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>6</sup>Advance the tribe of Levi and place them in attendance upon Aaron the priest to serve him. <sup>7</sup>They shall perform duties for him and for the whole community before the Tent of Meeting, doing the work of the Tabernacle. <sup>8</sup>They shall take charge of all the furnishings of the Tent of Meeting—a duty on behalf of the Israelites—doing the work of the Tabernacle. <sup>9</sup>You shall assign the Levites to Aaron and to his sons: they are formally assigned to him from among the Israelites. <sup>10</sup>You shall make Aaron and his sons responsible for observing their priestly duties; and any outsider who encroaches shall be put to death.

<sup>11</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>12</sup>I hereby take the Levites from among the Israelites in place of all the first-born, the first issue of the

אֵשׁ זָרָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה בְּמִדְבָּר סִינַי וּבָנִים  
לֹא־הָיוּ לָהֶם וַיִּכְהֹן אֶלְעָזָר וְאִיתָמָר  
עַל־פְּנֵי אֶהֱרֹן אֲבִיהֶם: פ  
<sup>5</sup> וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: <sup>6</sup> הַקְרֵב  
אֶת־מִטֵּה לֵוִי וְהִעֲמַדְתָּ אֹתוֹ לִפְנֵי אֶהֱרֹן  
הַכֹּהֵן וְשָׂרְתוּ אִתּוֹ: <sup>7</sup> וְשָׁמְרוּ אֶת־  
מִשְׁמֶרְתּוֹ וְאֶת־מִשְׁמֶרֶת כָּל־הָעֵדוּת לִפְנֵי  
אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לְעַבֵּד אֶת־עַבְדַּת הַמִּשְׁכָּן:  
<sup>8</sup> וְשָׁמְרוּ אֶת־כָּל־כְּלֵי אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְאֶת־  
מִשְׁמֶרֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַבֵּד אֶת־עַבְדַּת  
הַמִּשְׁכָּן: <sup>9</sup> וְנָתַתָּה אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם לְאֶהֱרֹן  
וּלְבָנָיו נְתוּנִים נְתוּנִים הֵמָּה לֹא מֵאֵת  
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: <sup>10</sup> וְאֶת־אֶהֱרֹן וְאֶת־בָּנָיו  
תִּפְקֹד וְשָׁמְרוּ אֶת־כְּהֻנַּתְכֶם וְהָיָה הַקְרֵב  
יִוָּמַת: פ

<sup>11</sup> וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: <sup>12</sup> וְאֲנִי  
הִנֵּה לֹקְחָתִי אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם מִתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל תַּחַת כָּל־בְּכוֹר פֶּטֶר רֶחֶם מִבְּנֵי

#### SUBORDINATION OF THE LEVITES (vv. 5–13)

**7–8.** Guard duty was incumbent on the Levites when the camp was at rest (v. 7) and in transit (v. 8). Guard duty constituted half of their work; their labors of removal, the other half.

**duties** The term *mishmeret*, in connection with the tabernacle, means “guard duty.” The levitical cordon around the tabernacle guards it from incursion by the ordinary Israelite and protects the people from suffering what would be the consequent wrath of God.

**and for the whole community** By replacing the firstborn, as commanded in verses 11–13.

**before the Tent of Meeting** The Levites guarded outside the sacred area, whereas the priests were stationed within.

**8.** The Levites guarded the “furnishings of the Tent” while transporting them during the

march but had no access to them when they were set up in camp, where they were under the sole supervision of the priests.

**on behalf of the Israelites** By replacing their firstborn (see vv. 11–13).

**doing** Rather, “in doing” or “in addition to doing” or “while doing.” This phrase is also in verse 7 (about levitical guard duty when the camp was at rest); it may be a mistaken repetition by the copyist, a dittography.

**9. assigned** The root נתן implies dedication. By replacing the firstborn, the Levites are dedicated to the Lord.

**10. observing their priestly duties** That is, guarding their priesthood against encroachment.

**12. first issue of the womb** Replacement of the firstborn by the Levites indicates that the former once held some kind of sacred status. It was the firstborn of the mother who held that status,

as well as “in the lifetime of their father.” This prompted the comment of the Midrash that “God grieves for the death of the young as deeply as their parents do” (Num. R. 2:24). The Torah mentions the death of these two young

*kohanim* several times after it occurs (e.g., Lev. 16:1; Num. 26:61), as if to hint that God too was having difficulty accepting their tragic death.

**12. I hereby take the Levites** Just as the first fruits of the harvest belong to God, both

womb among the Israelites: the Levites shall be Mine. <sup>13</sup>For every first-born is Mine: at the time that I smote every first-born in the land of Egypt, I consecrated every first-born in Israel, man and beast, to Myself, to be Mine, the LORD's.

<sup>14</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying: <sup>15</sup>Record the Levites by ancestral house and by clan; record every male among them from the age of one month up. <sup>16</sup>So Moses recorded them at the command of the LORD, as he was bidden. <sup>17</sup>These were the sons of Levi by name: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. <sup>18</sup>These were the names of the sons of Gershon by clan: Libni and Shimei. <sup>19</sup>The sons of Kohath by clan: Amram and Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel. <sup>20</sup>The sons of Merari by clan: Mahli and Mushi.

These were the clans of the Levites within their ancestral houses:

<sup>21</sup>To Gershon belonged the clan of the Libnites and the clan of the Shimeites; those were the clans of the Gershonites. <sup>22</sup>The recorded entries of all their males from the age of one month up, as recorded, came to 7,500. <sup>23</sup>The clans of the Gershonites were to camp be-

יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיוּ לִי הַלְוִיִּם: <sup>13</sup> כִּי לִי כָּל־בְּכוֹר  
בְּיוֹם הַפְּתִי כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם  
הִקְדַּשְׁתִּי לִי כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאָדָם  
עַד־בְּהֵמָה לִי יִהְיוּ אֲנִי יְהוָה: <sup>ס</sup>

<sup>14</sup> וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַר סִינַי

לֵאמֹר: <sup>15</sup> פְּקֹד אֶת־בְּנֵי לְוִי לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם  
לְמִשְׁפַּחָתָם כָּל־זָכָר מִבֶּן־חֹדֶשׁ וּמַעְלָה  
תִּפְקְדֵם: <sup>16</sup> וַיִּפְקֹד אֹתָם מֹשֶׁה עַל־פִּי  
יְהוָה כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה: <sup>17</sup> וַיְהִי־וְאֵלֶּה בְנֵי־לְוִי  
בְשֵׁמֹתָם גֵּרְשׁוֹן וְקָהָת וּמְרָרִי: <sup>18</sup> וְאֵלֶּה  
שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי־גֵרְשׁוֹן לְמִשְׁפַּחָתָם לְבִנָּי  
וְשִׁמְעִי: <sup>19</sup> וּבְנֵי קָהָת לְמִשְׁפַּחָתָם עֲמָרָם  
וְיִצְחָר חֶבְרוֹן וְעֻזִּיאֵל: <sup>20</sup> וּבְנֵי מְרָרִי  
לְמִשְׁפַּחָתָם מַחְלִי וּמוּשִׁי

אֵלֶּה הֵם מִשְׁפַּחֹת הַלְוִי לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם:  
<sup>21</sup> לְגֵרְשׁוֹן מִשְׁפַּחַת הַלְּבִנִי וּמִשְׁפַּחַת  
הַשִּׁמְעִי אֵלֶּה הֵם מִשְׁפַּחֹת הַגֵּרְשֹׁנִי:  
<sup>22</sup> פְּקֻדֵיהֶם בְּמִסְפָּר כָּל־זָכָר מִבֶּן־חֹדֶשׁ  
וּמַעְלָה פְּקֻדֵיהֶם שִׁבְעַת אֲלָפִים וַחֲמִשׁ  
מֵאוֹת: <sup>23</sup> מִשְׁפַּחֹת הַגֵּרְשֹׁנִי אַחֲרֵי

whereas the firstborn of the father had the rights of inheritance (see Exod. 13:2).

**the Levites shall be Mine** That is, to serve Me.

**13.** God spared Israel's firstborn and thereby acquired them (see Exod. 13:15).

IN THE WILDERNESS OF SINAI (vv. 14–51)

These verses concern the first census of Levites and the assignment of guard duty for the tabernacle furnishings while in transit.

**15. one month up** The census of Levites be-

gins at the age of one month, the age at which redemption of the firstborn is required.

**16. at the command of** Rather: according to the oracle of. The two censuses of Levites in chapters 3 and 4, in contrast to the Israelite census in chapter 1, are taken by God. Moses is merely to record the totals and the work assignments.

**23. camp** Wherever the three levitical clans camped (south, west, and north, respectively), they presumably performed their guard duty for the tabernacle.

as a gesture of gratitude and as an expression of confidence that more fruit will be coming, the firstborn child "belongs to God."

**15. from the age of one month** For purposes of military readiness, Israelites were counted

only from the age of 20. Spiritual training, however, must begin virtually at birth. A second census in chapter 4 will ascertain the number of adult Levites available for transporting the various parts of the tabernacle.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

**3:13. For every first-born is Mine** The ceremony of redeeming a firstborn son (*Pidyon ha-Ben*) is based on the Torah's assertion here that all firstborn belong to God (see Exod. 13:2) but should be redeemed because the Levites serve in their place. See Comment on Num. 18:15. It is through this ceremony of grateful acknowledgement that parents can claim the child for themselves.

hind the Tabernacle, to the west.<sup>24</sup>The chieftain of the ancestral house of the Gershonites was Eliasaph son of Lael.<sup>25</sup>The duties of the Gershonites in the Tent of Meeting comprised: the Tabernacle, the tent, its covering, and the screen for the entrance of the Tent of Meeting;<sup>26</sup>the hangings of the enclosure, the screen for the entrance of the enclosure which surrounds the Tabernacle, the cords thereof, and the altar—all the service connected with these.

<sup>27</sup>To Kohath belonged the clan of the Amramites, the clan of the Izharites, the clan of the Hebronites, and the clan of the Uzzielites; those were the clans of the Kohathites.<sup>28</sup>All the listed males from the age of one month up came to 8,600, attending to the duties of the sanctuary.<sup>29</sup>The clans of the Kohathites were to camp along the south side of the Tabernacle.<sup>30</sup>The chieftain of the ancestral house of the Kohathite clans was Elizaphan son of Uzziel.<sup>31</sup>Their duties comprised: the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, and the sacred utensils that were used with them, and the screen—all the service connected with these.<sup>32</sup>The head chieftain of the Levites

הַמִּשְׁכָּן יִחַנוּ יָמָּה: <sup>24</sup> וְנָשִׂיא בֵּית־אָב לְגֵרְשֹׁנֵי אֱלִיסָפ בֶּן־לְאֵל: <sup>25</sup> וּמִשְׁמֶרֶת בְּנֵי־גֵרְשֹׁן בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְהָאֹהֶל מִכִּסֵּהוּ וּמִסֹּף פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד: <sup>26</sup> וְקַלְעֵי הַחֲצֵר וְאֶת־מִסְכַּף פֶּתַח הַחֲצֵר אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְעַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב וְאֵת מִיתְרָיו לְכֹל עֲבֹדָתוֹ:

<sup>27</sup> וּלְקַהַת מִשְׁפַּחַת הָעֵמֶרְמִי וּמִשְׁפַּחַת הַיִּזְחָרִי וּמִשְׁפַּחַת הַחֲבֵרֹנִי וּמִשְׁפַּחַת הָעִזִּיאֵלִי אֵלֶּה הֵם מִשְׁפַּחַת הַקְּהָתִי: <sup>28</sup> בְּמִסְפָּר כָּל־זָכָר מִבֶּן־חֹדֶשׁ וּמַעֲלָה שְׁמֹנֶת אֲלָפִים וְשֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת שְׁמָרֵי מִשְׁמֶרֶת הַקֹּדֶשׁ: <sup>29</sup> מִשְׁפָּחוֹת בְּנֵי־קַהַת יִחַנוּ עַל יָרֵךְ הַמִּשְׁכָּן תִּימָנָה: <sup>30</sup> וְנָשִׂיא בֵּית־אָב לְמִשְׁפַּחַת הַקְּהָתִי אֱלִיצָפָן בֶּן־עִזִּיאֵל: <sup>31</sup> וּמִשְׁמֶרֶתָם הָאָרֶן וְהַשֻּׁלְחָן וְהַמִּנְרָה וְהַמִּזְבֵּחַת וְכֻלֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁרְתוּ בָּהֶם וְהַמִּסְכָּף וְכֹל עֲבֹדָתוֹ: <sup>32</sup> וְנָשִׂיא נְשִׂיאֵי הַלְוִי אֱלֵעָזָר בֶּן־אֶהֱרֹן הַכֹּהֵן פְּקֻדַת שְׁמָרֵי מִשְׁמֶרֶת הַקֹּדֶשׁ:

**24. ancestral house** Here, the larger unit of the clans making up the Gershonites, Kohathites, and Merarites.

**25. duties** That is, guard duty. The tabernacle furnishings placed in the custody of the Gershonites and Merarites are clearly delineated. The former are to guard the fabrics; the latter, the planks and posts.

**Tabernacle** The innermost tent covering composed of 10 finely twisted linen and woolen cloths with a design of cherubim worked into them.

**tent** A second covering made up of 11 cloths of goat's hair.

**its covering** The outermost covering made of tanned ram skins and yellow-orange skins.

**screen** The entrance to the tent was of lesser sanctity than the inner curtains, because the

screen could be seen by anyone in the tabernacle court, whereas the inner curtains could not be seen from the outside.

**27. Amramites** To which the descendants of Moses would belong.

**28. attending to the duties of the sanctuary** It was the responsibility of the Kohathites to transport and to guard the most sacred objects, as itemized in verse 31.

**29. south side** Starting with the east, which is the most prestigious position (see v. 38), the position next in importance, rotating to the right (clockwise), is the south. The Kohathites merited this because it was their honored task to carry the most sacred objects. Note the proximity of Kohath to the tribe of Reuben (see 2:10), which possibly accounts for their collaboration in chapter 16.

<sup>32</sup> Although Eleazar was chief officer, he was given a great deal of physical labor (4:16). "There is no special privilege in the palace

of the king" (JT Shab. 10:3); there is no room for an "honorary" position in the service of God.

was Eleazar son of Aaron the priest, in charge of those attending to the duties of the sanctuary.

<sup>33</sup>To Merari belonged the clan of the Mahlites and the clan of the Mushites; those were the clans of Merari. <sup>34</sup>The recorded entries of all their males from the age of one month up came to 6,200. <sup>35</sup>The chieftain of the ancestral house of the clans of Merari was Zuriel son of Abihail. They were to camp along the north side of the Tabernacle. <sup>36</sup>The assigned duties of the Merarites comprised: the planks of the Tabernacle, its bars, posts, and sockets, and all its furnishings—all the service connected with these; <sup>37</sup>also the posts around the enclosure and their sockets, pegs, and cords.

<sup>38</sup>Those who were to camp before the Tabernacle, in front—before the Tent of Meeting, on the east—were Moses and Aaron and his sons, attending to the duties of the sanctuary, as a duty on behalf of the Israelites; and any outsider who encroached was to be put to death. <sup>39</sup>All the Levites who were recorded, whom at the LORD's command Moses and Aaron recorded by their clans, all the males from the age of one month up, came to 22,000.

<sup>40</sup>The LORD said to Moses: Record every first-born male of the Israelite people from the age of one month up, and make a list of their names; <sup>41</sup>and take the Levites for Me, the LORD, in place of every first-born among the Israelite

<sup>33</sup> לְמֵרָרִי מִשְׁפַּחַת הַמַּחֲלִי וּמִשְׁפַּחַת  
הַמוֹשִׁי אֵלֶּה הֵם מִשְׁפַּחֹת מְרָרִי:  
<sup>34</sup> וּפְקֻדֵיהֶם בְּמִסְפָּר כָּל־זָכָר מִבֶּן־חֹדֶשׁ  
וּמַעֲלָה שֵׁשֶׁת אֲלָפִים וּמֵאָתָּיִם: <sup>35</sup> וַנְּשִׂיא  
בֵּית־אָב לְמִשְׁפַּחֹת מְרָרִי צוּרִיאֵל בֶּן־  
אֲבִיחַיִל עַל יָרֵךְ הַמִּשְׁפָּן יַחֲנוּ צִפְנָה:  
<sup>36</sup> וּפְקֻדַת מִשְׁמֶרֶת בְּנֵי מְרָרִי קִרְשֵׁי  
הַמִּשְׁפָּן וּבְרִיחָיו וְעַמֻּדָיו וְאֲדָנָיו וְכָל־כֵּלָיו  
וְכָל עֲבֹדָתוֹ: <sup>37</sup> וְעַמֻּדֵי הַחֲצָר סָבִיב  
וְאֲדָנֵיהֶם וּיְתֻלָּתָם וּמִיתְרֵיהֶם:

<sup>38</sup> וְהַחֲנִים לִפְנֵי הַמִּשְׁפָּן קִדְמָה לִפְנֵי  
אֹהֶל־מוֹעֵד | מִזְרְחָה מִשֶּׁה | וְאֶהֱרֹן וּבְנָיו  
שֹׁמְרִים מִשְׁמֶרֶת הַמִּקְדָּשׁ לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת בְּנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהִזְרָה הַקָּרֵב יוֹמֵת: <sup>39</sup> כָּל־פְּקוּדֵי  
הַלְוִיִּם אֲשֶׁר פָּקֵד מִשֶּׁה וְאֶהֱרֹן \* עַל־פִּי  
יְהוָה לְמִשְׁפַּחֹתָם כָּל־זָכָר מִבֶּן־חֹדֶשׁ  
וּמַעֲלָה שָׁנַיִם וְעֶשְׂרִים אָלֶף: ס

<sup>40</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה פָּקֵד כָּל־בְּכוֹר  
שָׁנִי לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִבֶּן־חֹדֶשׁ וּמַעֲלָה וְשִׂא  
אֶת מִסְפָּר שְׁמֹתָם: <sup>41</sup> וְלָקַחְתָּ אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם  
לִי אֲנִי יְהוָה תַּחַת כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

v. 39. נקוד על ו' א' ה' ר' ו'

**32. attending to the duties** That is, performing the guard duty.

**38. to camp** Because the priests had no watch posts outside the sacred area, their encampment in the east was also the place of their watch. This is to be expected, for the entrance to the tabernacle was in the east, which made that zone most vulnerable to encroachment.

**on behalf of the Israelites** By replacing their firstborn.

REPLACING THE ISRAELITE FIRSTBORN

(vv. 40–51)

The number of Israelite firstborn exceeds that of the Levites by 273. The latter, chosen by lot, are redeemed by the payment of 5 shekels per person to the priests. This procedure became the standard for the redemption of all Israelite firstborn.

**40. one month up** An infant younger than 30 days was not considered a viable person, presumably because of the high rate of infant mortality.

<sup>39</sup> The Levites were by far the smallest of the tribes. This was fitting, because they owned no large tracts of land and had to be sup-

ported by the gifts and tithes of their fellow Israelites. Their small numbers reduced the burden of support imposed on their neighbors.

people, and the cattle of the Levites in place of every first-born among the cattle of the Israelites. <sup>42</sup>So Moses recorded all the first-born among the Israelites, as the LORD had commanded him. <sup>43</sup>All the first-born males as listed by name, recorded from the age of one month up, came to 22,273.

<sup>44</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>45</sup>Take the Levites in place of all the first-born among the Israelite people, and the cattle of the Levites in place of their cattle; and the Levites shall be Mine, the LORD's. <sup>46</sup>And as the redemption price of the 273 Israelite first-born over and above the number of the Levites, <sup>47</sup>take five shekels per head—take this by the sanctuary weight, twenty *gerahs* to the shekel—<sup>48</sup>and give the money to Aaron and his sons as the redemption price for those who are in excess. <sup>49</sup>So Moses took the redemption money from those over and above the ones redeemed by the Levites; <sup>50</sup>he took the money from the first-born of the Israelites, 1,365 sanctuary shekels. <sup>51</sup>And Moses gave the redemption money to Aaron and his sons at the LORD's bidding, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

**4** The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:

<sup>2</sup>Take a [separate] census of the Kohathites among the Levites, by the clans of their ancestral house, <sup>3</sup>from the age of thirty years up to the

**41. every first-born among the cattle of the Israelites** The firstborn of pure animals automatically belonged to the Lord. They must be sacrificed on the altar and may not be redeemed (according to Lev. 27:26 and Num. 18:15,17). Therefore the Sages concluded that any Israelite animal that was redeemed must have been impure, ineligible for the altar (BT Bek. 4b).

וְאֵת בְּהֵמַת הַלְוִיִּם תַּחַת כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּבֵהֶמַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: <sup>42</sup>וַיִּפְקֹד מֹשֶׁה כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֹתוֹ אֶת־כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּבִנְי יִשְׂרָאֵל: <sup>43</sup>וַיְהִי כָל־בְּכוֹר זָכָר בְּמִסְפָּר שְׁמוֹת מִבֶּן־חֹדֶשׁ וּמַעְלָה לַפְּקֻדֵיהֶם שָׁנִים וְעֶשְׂרִים אֶלֶף שְׁלֹשָׁה וּשְׁבַעִים וּמֵאָתַיִם: פ

<sup>44</sup>וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: <sup>45</sup>קַח אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם תַּחַת כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּבִנְי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־בְּהֵמַת הַלְוִיִּם תַּחַת בְּהֵמַתָּם וְהִיוּ לִי הַלְוִיִּם אֲנִי יְהוָה: <sup>46</sup>וְאֵת פְּדוּיֵי הַשְּׁלֹשָׁה וְהַשְּׁבַעִים וְהַמֵּאָתַיִם הָעֵדֻפִים עַל־הַלְוִיִּם מִבְּכוֹר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: <sup>47</sup>וְלָקַחְתָּ חֲמִשָּׁת חֲמִשָּׁת שֶׁקֶלִים לַגִּלְגָּלֶת בַּשֶּׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ תִּקַּח עֶשְׂרִים גֵּרָה הַשֶּׁקֶל: <sup>48</sup>וְנָתַתָּה הַכֶּסֶף לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו פְּדוּיֵי הָעֵדֻפִים בָּהֶם: <sup>49</sup>וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת כֶּסֶף הַפְּדוּיִם מֵאֵת הָעֵדֻפִים עַל פְּדוּיֵי הַלְוִיִּם: <sup>50</sup>מֵאֵת בְּכוֹר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לָקַח אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף חֲמִשָּׁה וּשְׁשִׁים וּשְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת וְאַלֶּף בַּשֶּׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ: <sup>51</sup>וַיִּתֵּן מֹשֶׁה אֶת־כֶּסֶף הַפְּדוּיִם לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו עַל־פִּי יְהוָה כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה: פ

**ד** וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר:

<sup>2</sup>נִשְׂא אֶת־רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי קֹהַת מִתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי לֵוִי לְמִשְׁפַּחָתָם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם: <sup>3</sup>מִבֶּן שְׁלֹשִׁים

v. 51. חסר ו

**45. their cattle** That is, the cattle of the Israelite firstborn. Just as the firstborn Israelites must be redeemed, so must their cattle. The cattle of the Levites release the animals of the firstborn from their sacred status.

**47. shekel** See Comment to Gen. 23:9.

**by the sanctuary weight** See Comment to Exod. 30:13.

age of fifty, all who are subject to service, to perform tasks for the Tent of Meeting. <sup>4</sup>This is the responsibility of the Kohathites in the Tent of Meeting: the most sacred objects.

<sup>5</sup>At the breaking of camp, Aaron and his sons shall go in and take down the screening curtain and cover the Ark of the Pact with it. <sup>6</sup>They shall lay a covering of dolphin skin over it and spread a cloth of pure blue on top; and they shall put its poles in place.

<sup>7</sup>Over the table of display they shall spread a blue cloth; they shall place upon it the bowls, the ladles, the jars, and the libation jugs; and the regular bread shall rest upon it. <sup>8</sup>They shall spread over these a crimson cloth which they shall cover with a covering of dolphin skin; and they shall put the poles in place.

שָׁנָה וּמַעֲלָה וְעַד בְּנֵי־חֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה כָּל־בָּאֵל לְצַבָּא לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלֶאכָה בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד: וְזֹאת עֲבֹדַת בְּנֵי־קֹהַת בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד קֹדֶשׁ הַקְּדוֹשִׁים:

וּבָא אֶהְרֵן וּבָנָיו בְּנֹסַע הַמַּחֲנֶה וְהוֹרְדוּ אֶת פְּרֻכַת הַמָּסָךְ וְכִסּוּ־בָהּ אֶת אֲרֹן הָעֵדוּת: וְנָתְנוּ עָלָיו כֶּסוּי עוֹר תַּחֲשׁ וּפָרְשׁוּ בְּגַד־כְּלִיל תְּכֵלֶת מִלְּמַעְלָה וּשְׂמוּ בְּדָיו:

וְעַל שֻׁלְחַן הַפָּנִים יִפְרְשׁוּ בְּגַד תְּכֵלֶת וְנָתְנוּ עָלָיו אֶת־הַקְּעָרֹת וְאֶת־הַכַּפֹּת וְאֶת־הַמְּנַקִּיֹת וְאֶת קְשׁוֹת הַנֶּסֶךְ וְלֶחֶם הַתָּמִיד עָלָיו יִהְיֶה: וּפָרְשׁוּ עֲלֵיהֶם בְּגַד תּוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי וְכִסּוּ אֹתוֹ בְּמַכְסֵה עוֹר תַּחֲשׁ וּשְׂמוּ אֶת־בְּדָיו:

#### THE SECOND CENSUS OF LEVITES (4:1–49)

A second census of the Levites between the ages of 30 and 50 is taken to determine the size of the work force necessary to transport the sanctuary during the wilderness march.

##### REMOVAL DUTIES OF THE KOHATHITES (vv. 1–20)

The Kohathites are listed first, even though Kohath is not the firstborn, because the work of the Kohathites involved greater responsibility: They transported the most sacred objects, and their work was more hazardous because they risked their lives (see vv. 15–20).

**4.** The specific job of the Kohathites is the portering of the most sacred objects by shoulder. Only the priests, who were sacred, were qualified to handle the Ark and the other sacred objects. The Kohathites had no sacred status; hence their touching and even seeing the uncovered objects could be fatal. Thus Aaron and his sons had to cover the objects before the Kohathites could enter the sacred area to attend to their transport.

**5. screening curtain** It separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the sanctuary.

**Ark** The most sacred of the objects is covered first.

**6. cloth** Hebrew: *beqed*; literally, “garment.” In the Hebrew Bible, “*beqed*” usually covers only human beings, yet here all the sacred objects are initially covered by a *beqed*. They are treated with the same respect as human beings. Indeed, they are treated like royalty—dressed in regal garb of violet or purple.

**put its poles in place** The Ark, the display table, and the altars were fitted with rings into which poles were inserted for carrying, whereas the lampstand, some utensils, and probably the laver were set into carrying frames.

**7. table of display** The full term is the “table of display bread”; every *Shabbat*, 12 loaves of bread arranged in two rows were displayed on it before God in the sanctuary.

**regular bread** The 12 loaves of bread regularly changed every *Shabbat*.

#### CHAPTER 4

**3.** A Levite male, in the prime of his life, during the years from 30 to 50, would be given responsibility for the arduous tasks of main-

taining the tabernacle (and later the Temple). After age 50, his new tasks would require more wisdom and less physical strength: singing the Psalms, opening and closing the gates, and acting as mentor to younger Levites.

<sup>9</sup>Then they shall take a blue cloth and cover the lampstand for lighting, with its lamps, its tongs, and its fire pans, as well as all the oil vessels that are used in its service. <sup>10</sup>They shall put it and all its furnishings into a covering of dolphin skin, which they shall then place on a carrying frame.

<sup>11</sup>Next they shall spread a blue cloth over the altar of gold and cover it with a covering of dolphin skin; and they shall put its poles in place. <sup>12</sup>They shall take all the service vessels with which the service in the sanctuary is performed, put them into a blue cloth and cover them with a covering of dolphin skin, which they shall then place on a carrying frame. <sup>13</sup>They shall remove the ashes from the [copper] altar and spread a purple cloth over it. <sup>14</sup>Upon it they shall place all the vessels that are used in its service: the fire pans, the flesh hooks, the scrapers, and the basins—all the vessels of the altar—and over it they shall spread a covering of dolphin skin; and they shall put its poles in place.

<sup>15</sup>When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sacred objects and all the furnishings of the sacred objects at the breaking of camp, only then shall the Kohathites come and lift them, so that they do not come in contact with the sacred objects and die. These things in

<sup>9</sup> וְלָקְחוּ | בַּגָּד תְּכֵלֶת וְכִסּוּ אֶת־מִנְרֹת  
הַמֵּאוֹר וְאֶת־נִרְתִּיָּהּ וְאֶת־מִלְקָחֶיהָ וְאֶת־  
מִחְתֵּתֶיהָ וְאֶת כָּל־כְּלֵי שְׂמֹנֶה אֲשֶׁר  
יִשְׁרְתוּ־לָהּ בָּהֶם: <sup>10</sup> וְנָתְנוּ אֹתָהּ וְאֶת־  
כָּל־כְּלֵיהָ אֶל־מַכְסֵה עוֹר תַּחֲשׁ וְנָתְנוּ  
עַל־הַמוֹט:

<sup>11</sup> וְעַל | מִזְבֵּחַ הַזָּהָב יִפְרֹשׁוּ בַּגָּד תְּכֵלֶת  
וְכִסּוּ אֹתוֹ בְּמַכְסֵה עוֹר תַּחֲשׁ וְשָׂמוּ  
אֶת־בַּדָּיו: <sup>12</sup> וְלָקְחוּ אֶת־כָּל־כְּלֵי הַשְּׂרָת  
אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁרְתוּ־בָם בְּקֹדֶשׁ וְנָתְנוּ אֶל־בַּגָּד  
תְּכֵלֶת וְכִסּוּ אוֹתָם בְּמַכְסֵה עוֹר תַּחֲשׁ  
וְנָתְנוּ עַל־הַמוֹט: <sup>13</sup> וְדָשְׁנוּ אֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ  
וּפְרֹשׁוּ עָלָיו בַּגָּד אַרְגָּמָן: <sup>14</sup> וְנָתְנוּ עָלָיו  
אֶת־כָּל־כְּלָיו אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁרְתוּ עָלָיו בָּהֶם  
אֶת־הַמִּחְתֹּת אֶת־הַמְזֻלְגֹת וְאֶת־הַיָּעִים  
וְאֶת־הַמְזֻרְקֹת כָּל כְּלֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וּפְרֹשׁוּ  
עָלָיו כְּסוּי עוֹר תַּחֲשׁ וְשָׂמוּ בַּדָּיו:

<sup>15</sup> וְכִלָּה אֶהְרֹן וּבָנָיו לְכַסֹּת אֶת־הַקֹּדֶשׁ  
וְאֶת־כָּל־כְּלֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ בְּנֹסַע הַמַּחֲנֶה  
וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן יָבֹאוּ בְנֵי־קֹהֵת לִשְׂאת וְלֹא־

**9. lampstand** Hebrew: *m'norah*; see Exod. 25:31–40.

**lamps** The lamps and the lampstand are separate objects.

**fire pans** For removing the ashes from the lamps.

**10. carrying frame** The *m'norah* and its utensils, which could not be suspended on poles like the Ark and table, required the construction of a special carrying frame.

**11. altar of gold** Also known as the altar of incense, it was carried on poles.

**12. service vessels** Whatever additional vessels are used inside the tent, especially with the incense altar, which is too small to hold any utensils.

**13. altar** The text turns to the bronze sac-

rificial altar of the courtyard, because all the sacred objects inside the sanctuary have been covered.

**purple cloth** Actually, red-purple. In distinction to the objects of the sanctuary whose covering was made of violet or blue-purple, the outer altar was wrapped in red-purple, a mark of the decreasing degree of holiness in moving from the shrine out into the courtyard.

**15. Aaron and his sons have finished** This concludes the priestly assignment that began in verse 5 with “Aaron and his sons shall go in.”

**come** That is, go in.

**contact . . . and die** The Kohathites' contact with the covered objects can be as fatal as seeing them uncovered. Their removal labor is appropriately termed “skilled labor” (v. 3).

the Tent of Meeting shall be the portorage of the Kohathites.

<sup>16</sup>Responsibility shall rest with Eleazar son of Aaron the priest for the lighting oil, the aromatic incense, the regular grain offering, and the anointing oil—responsibility for the whole Tabernacle and for everything consecrated that is in it or in its vessels.

<sup>17</sup>The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: <sup>18</sup>Do not let the group of Kohathite clans be cut off from the Levites. <sup>19</sup>Do this with them, that they may live and not die when they approach the most sacred objects: let Aaron and his sons go in and assign each of them to his duties and to his portorage. <sup>20</sup>But let not [the Kohathites] go inside and witness the dismantling of the sanctuary, lest they die.

**portorage** The dismantling and reassembling of the sacred objects is performed by the priests; the Kohathites are responsible only as porters.

**16.** Eleazar the priest, who personally is in charge of the sacred ingredients used with the objects carried by the Kohathites, must scrupulously supervise their portorage by reliable Kohathites. In addition, he supervises the Gershonite and Merarite clans, as well as his own clan, and is the chief of the Levites' labor battalions.

**regular grain offering** This probably refers to the private daily offering of the anointed priest.

**18.cutoff** The penalty of being “cut off” (*karet*) is inflicted only by God. Because the Kohathites face divine wrath for any mishap with the sacred objects, this term is quite appropriate here.

**20.** There were special restrictions on the Levites who would handle the most sacred articles. Abravanel understood this verse to express concern lest the clans of Kohath become so fascinated by staring at the sacred objects that they would fall into a mystic trance, un-

יָגֵעוּ אֶל-הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּמְתוּ אֱלֹהֵי מִשְׁאֵה בְנֵי-קָהַת בְּאֵהֶל מוֹעֵד:

<sup>16</sup>וּפְקֻדֹת אֲלֶעָזָר אֶבְיָהוֹן הַכֹּהֵן שֶׁמֶן הַמֵּאֹר וְקִטְרֹת הַסַּמִּים וּמִנְחַת הַתָּמִיד וְשֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה פְּקֻדֹת כָּל-הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ בְּקֹדֶשׁ וּבְכִלָּיו: ס

<sup>17</sup>וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: <sup>18</sup>אַל-תִּכְרְיֵתוּ אֶת-שִׁבְטֵי מִשְׁפַּחַת הַקָּהָתִי מִתּוֹךְ הַלְוִיִּם: <sup>19</sup>וְזָאת אֲעֲשֶׂה לָהֶם וְחִיּוּ וְלֹא יָמָתוּ בְּגִשְׁתֶּם אֶת-קֹדֶשׁ הַקֹּדְשִׁים אַהֲרֹן וּבָנָיו יָבִיאוּ וְשָׂמוּ אוֹתָם: אִישׁ אִישׁ עַל-עֲבֹדָתוֹ וְאֶל-מִשְׁאֵוֹ: <sup>20</sup>וְלֹא-יָבִיאוּ לְרְאוֹת כְּבָלַע אֶת-הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּמְתוּ: פ

**from the Levites** Only the Kohathites, who carry the sacred objects, are in mortal danger, not the Gershonites or Merarites.

**19. approach** Literally, “have access, handle,” implying direct contact. Except for the Ark, there is no prohibition against approaching the sacred objects, only against encroaching on them.

**to his duties and to his portorage** Better: “to his portorage work.” The Kohathites have no duties in the sanctuary removal except the transport of sacred objects.

**20. inside** Into the tent.

**witness the dismantling of the sanctuary** Literally, “look at the sacred objects even for a moment.” Even the chance viewing of exposed objects inside the sanctuary could prove fatal.

able to do their work. Hirsch offers an opposite view; for him, the Torah's concern is that the Kohathites might become too accustomed to the routine of seeing the sacred objects packed and unpacked: “lest they die” spiritually, losing their capacity to see the tabernacle as holy.

# הַפְּטָרָה לַמַּחַר חֹדֶשׁ

## HAFTARAH FOR SHABBAT AND EREV ROSH HODESH

1 SAMUEL 20:18–42

(Recite on Shabbat if the next day is Rosh Hodesh. However, on Shabbat Hanukkah, recite the haftarah for that occasion instead. On the 3rd Shabbat after Tish-ah b'Av, recite the third Haftarah of Consolation instead, which begins on page 1085. With parashat Sh'kalim or parashat ha-Hodesh, recite the haftarah for those passages instead.)

This *haftarah* is part of the long cycle of narratives depicting David's rise in national esteem and his corresponding decline in King Saul's favor (ca. 1000 B.C.E.). Saul's jealousy over David's fame as a soldier played a key role, driving the king mad with rage. Earlier, after defeating the Philistines, Saul had returned home with his troops only to hear women singing: "Saul has slain his thousands; David, his tens of thousands" (1 Sam. 18:7). The next day, gripped by an "evil spirit," Saul threw a spear at David "thinking to pin [him] to the wall. But David eluded him twice" (18:10–11).

As the Philistine wars continued, "David was more successful than all the other officers of Saul. His reputation soared" (18:30). In reaction, Saul urged his courtiers to kill his perceived rival. David escaped through the intervention of Saul's son Jonathan (19:1–6). Nevertheless, after David led another round of military successes, another "evil spirit" overtook Saul. Once more he "tried to pin David to the wall with his spear" (19:8–10). Again David escaped. Obsessed, Saul sent messengers to guard David's house, with orders to strike him dead in the morning. But again Saul was thwarted, as Michal (his daughter and David's wife) warned David of the plot and hid his escape (19:11–16). Doubly foiled by his own children, Saul himself set out in hot pursuit of David, accompanied by a band of messengers. David fled to Jonathan and, begging him to explain Saul's rage, enlisted Jonathan's help in a plan to test

Saul's true intent. This is the narrative background to the *haftarah*.

The *haftarah* unfolds in three parts: the plan, an event at the royal court, and an event in the field. All elements of the opening part recur in the second and third parts: the absence of David at court during the new moon, the ruse of the arrows in the field, and the covenantal commitment between David and Jonathan.

The story contrasts the established kingship at court with the bond of friendship in the field. Jonathan tries to mediate, because he is both the trusted son of the king and the beloved friend of the hero. His mediation, however, is not symmetrical. For he betrays his father's confidence out of loyalty to David—as King Saul comes to realize during the new moon feast. Jonathan's fate is sealed when he tries to annul Saul's decree that David die. At this point the king takes up his spear against his son.

### RELATION OF THE HAFTARAH TO THE CALENDAR

This *haftarah* was chosen to be recited on the *Shabbat* that immediately precedes the New Moon (the first day of the Hebrew month), because this scriptural reading contains the very words *mahar hodesh* (Tomorrow will be the new moon) that now designate the day. Moreover, although the Torah designates only the types of sacrificial rites to be performed on the new moon (Num. 10:10, 28:11–15), this *haftarah* indicates that there were also popular gatherings and communal meals on that day. We read that the king sat down to "partake of the meal" (*lehem*, 1 Sam. 20:24), and that David went to his home town of Bethlehem to participate there in the "family feast" (*zevah mishpaha*; v. 29). On the basis of

these references, the custom of having a festive meal on the new moon developed, a practice later codified in the *Shulhan Arukh* (O.H. 419:1). From the *haftarah* we also learn that people in a state of ritual impurity could not participate in this communal meal (v. 26).

A further dimension of *Rosh Hodesh* has been incorporated into the synagogue service. The *Musaf Amidah* for the day opens with the statement, “The beginnings of months did You assign for Your people as a time of atonement throughout the generations.” Thus atonement for sin became linked to the renewal and restoration of the moon. The kabbalists (medieval Jewish mystics) found great spiritual meaning in the moon’s waxing and waning; and by the 16th century, it was customary to observe the day before the new moon as a time for taking stock, fasting, and repentance. That day came to be known as the Minor Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur Katan*).

For the kabbalists, the waning of the moon symbolized the exile of the divine Presence (*Sh’khinah*) and the weakening of the powers of holiness during Israel’s exile. The waxing of the moon stood for the renewal of holiness and divine restoration. A new moon was thus a symbol of redemption and hope. Similarly, in the *haftarah*, the bond between David and Jonathan was emblematic of the renewal of human community through love and devotion. Indeed, for the ancient rabbis, this relationship was paradigmatic of a “wholly disinterested love” (a love with no conditions attached), capable of withstanding adverse circumstances (M Avot 5:16). Fundamental to David and Jonathan’s love and commitment was the divine Presence that unifies them (see 1 Sam. 20:23,42). It was this commitment to a transcendent reality that allowed Jonathan to rise beyond self-interest in his loyalty to David.

**20** <sup>18</sup>Jonathan said to him, “Tomorrow will be the new moon; and you will be missed when your seat remains vacant. <sup>19</sup>So the day after tomorrow, go down all the way to the place where you hid the other time, and stay close to the Ezel stone. <sup>20</sup>Now I will shoot three arrows to one side of it, as though I were shooting at a mark, <sup>21</sup>and I will order the boy to go and find the arrows. If I call to the boy, ‘Hey! the arrows are on this side of you,’ be reassured and come, for you are safe and there is no danger—as the LORD lives! <sup>22</sup>But if, instead, I call to the lad, ‘Hey! the arrows are beyond you,’ then leave, for the LORD has sent you away. <sup>23</sup>As for the promise we made to each other, may the LORD be [witness] between you and me forever.”

<sup>24</sup>David hid in the field. The new moon came, and the king sat down to partake of the meal.

**כ** <sup>18</sup>וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ יְהוֹנָתָן מָחָר חֹדֶשׁ  
וְנִפְקְדָתָ כִּי יִפְקֹד מוֹשְׁבֶךָ: <sup>19</sup>וְשִׁלַּשְׁתָּ  
תֵּרֵד מֵאֵד וּבֹאֲתָ אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-  
נִסְתַּרְתָּ שָׁם בְּיוֹם הַמַּעֲשֵׂה וַיִּשְׁבֶּתָ אֶצֶל  
הָאֲבֵן הָאֵזֶל: <sup>20</sup>וְאָנֹכִי שִׁלַּשְׁתַּ הַחֲצִיִּים צַדָּה  
אוֹרֵה לְשַׁלַּח-לִי לְמִטְרָה: <sup>21</sup>וְהִנֵּה אֲשַׁלַּח  
אֶת-הַנְּעָר לָךְ מֵצֵא אֶת-הַחֲצִיִּים אִם-  
אָמַר אִמֵּר לְנָעַר הִנֵּה הַחֲצִיִּים | מִמֶּנִּי  
וְהִנֵּה קָחֲנוּ | וּבֹאֵה כִּי-שָׁלוֹם לָךְ וְאִין  
דָּבָר חַי-יְהוָה: <sup>22</sup>וְאִם-כֹּפֵה אָמַר לְעֹלָם  
הִנֵּה הַחֲצִיִּים מִמֶּנִּי וְהִלָּאֵה לָךְ כִּי שִׁלַּחְךָ  
יְהוָה: <sup>23</sup>וְהִדְבַר אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְנוּ אָנֹכִי וְאַתָּה  
הִנֵּה יְהוָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ עַד-עוֹלָם: **ס**  
<sup>24</sup>וַיִּסְתַּר דָּוִד בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיְהִי הַחֹדֶשׁ וַיֵּשֶׁב  
הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל אֶל-הַלֶּחֶם לֶאֱכֹל: <sup>25</sup>וַיֵּשֶׁב

**1 Samuel 20:19. the other time** Literally, “on the day of the incident.” This presumably refers to the time when Jonathan interceded with Saul for David’s life (19:2–4).

**Ezel stone** A landmark apparently used as a signpost for travelers. See Comment to 1 Sam. 20:41.

<sup>25</sup>When the king took his usual place on the seat by the wall, Jonathan rose and Abner sat down at Saul's side; but David's place remained vacant. <sup>26</sup>That day, however, Saul said nothing. "It's accidental," he thought. "He must be impure and not yet purified."<sup>27</sup>But on the day after the new moon, the second day, David's place was vacant again. So Saul said to his son Jonathan, "Why didn't the son of Jesse come to the meal yesterday or today?"<sup>28</sup>Jonathan answered Saul, "David begged leave of me to go to Bethlehem. <sup>29</sup>He said, 'Please let me go, for we are going to have a family feast in our town and my brother has summoned me to it. Do me a favor, let me slip away to see my kinsmen.' That is why he has not come to the king's table."

<sup>30</sup>Saul flew into a rage against Jonathan. "You son of a perverse, rebellious woman!" he shouted. "I know that you side with the son of Jesse—to your shame, and to the shame of your mother's nakedness!"<sup>31</sup>For as long as the son of Jesse lives on earth, neither you nor your kingship will be secure. Now then, have him brought to me, for he is marked for death."<sup>32</sup>But Jonathan spoke up and said to his father, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?"<sup>33</sup>At that, Saul threw his spear at him to strike him down; and Jonathan realized that his father was determined to do away with David. <sup>34</sup>Jonathan rose from the table in a rage. He ate no food on the second day of the new moon, because he was grieved about David, and because his father had humiliated him.

<sup>35</sup>In the morning, Jonathan went out into the open for the meeting with David, accompanied

הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־מוֹשְׁבּוֹ כַּפֶּעַם | בַּפֶּעַם אֶל־  
מוֹשֵׁב הַקִּיר וַיִּקָּם יְהוֹנָתָן וַיֵּשֶׁב אַבְנֵר  
מֵצֵד שָׁאוּל וַיִּפְקֹד מְקוֹם דָּוִד: <sup>26</sup> וְלֹא־  
דִּבֶּר שָׁאוּל מֵאוֹמֶה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כִּי אָמַר  
מִקְרָה הוּא בְלִתי טְהוֹר הוּא כִּי־לֹא  
טְהוֹר: <sup>27</sup> וַיְהִי מִמַּחֲרַת הַחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי  
וַיִּפְקֹד מְקוֹם דָּוִד <sup>28</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁאוּל אֶל־  
יְהוֹנָתָן בְּנֹו מַדּוּעַ לֹא־בָא בְּיָשִׁי גַם־  
תָּמוּל גַּם־הַיּוֹם אֶל־הַלֶּחֶם: <sup>29</sup> וַיַּעַן  
יְהוֹנָתָן אֶת־שָׁאוּל נִשְׂאֵל נִשְׂאֵל דָּוִד  
מֵעַמְדֵי עַד־בֵּית לָחֶם: <sup>30</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁלַחֲנִי  
נָא כִּי זָבַח מִשְׁפָּחָה לָנוּ בְעִיר וְהוּא  
צֹהֵה־לִי אֲהִי וְעֵתָה אִם־מִצָּאתִי חֵן  
בְּעֵינֶיךָ אִמְלֹטָה נָא וְאַרְאֶה אֶת־אָחִי  
עַל־כֵּן לֹא־בָא אֶל־שְׁלַחַן הַמֶּלֶךְ: <sup>31</sup> וַיִּחַר־אַף שָׁאוּל בִּיהוֹנָתָן וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ  
בְּיָנֵעוֹת הַמַּרְדּוֹת הַלֹּוא יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־בַחַר  
אַתָּה לְבֶן־יִשְׁי לְבַשְׁתָּךְ וּלְבַשְׁתַּ עֲרוֹת  
אָמְרָ: <sup>32</sup> כִּי כָל־הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר בְּיָשִׁי חִי  
עַל־הָאָדָמָה לֹא תִבּוֹן אַתָּה וּמַלְכוּתְךָ  
וְעֵתָה שְׁלַח וְקַח אֹתוֹ אֵלַי כִּי בְּיָמֹת  
הוּא: <sup>33</sup> וַיַּעַן יְהוֹנָתָן אֶת־שָׁאוּל  
אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו לָמָּה יוֹמַת מִדָּה עָשָׂה:  
וַיִּטֵּל שָׁאוּל אֶת־הַחֲנִית עָלָיו לְהַכָּתוֹ  
וַיִּדַע יְהוֹנָתָן כִּי־כָלָה הָיָא מֵעַם אָבִיו  
לְהַמִּית אֶת־דָּוִד: <sup>34</sup> וַיִּקָּם יְהוֹנָתָן  
מֵעַם הַשְּׁלַחַן בַּחֲרִי־אַף וְלֹא־אָכַל בַּיּוֹם־  
הַחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי לָחֶם כִּי נִעְצַב אֶל־דָּוִד כִּי  
הִכְלָמוּ אָבִיו: <sup>35</sup> וַיְהִי בַבֶּקֶר וַיֵּצֵא יְהוֹנָתָן הַשְּׂדֵה לְמוֹעֵד

**26. It's accidental** Hebrew: *mikreh hu*. The next sentence, "He must be impure and not yet purified," suggests that *mikreh* (literally, "accident") is here used in the technical sense of an "accidental" seminal emission, which puts one in a state of ritual impurity (see Deut. 23:11). This is also Rashi's understanding (see BT Pes. 3a).

**30.** Saul's harsh criticism of Jonathan, and the subsequent gesture of aggression against him, served as the basis for Rabbinic and medieval discussions about the limits of reproof. According to ancient traditions preserved in the Talmud (BT Ar. 16b), the Sages variously placed the limit at cursing, rebuking, shouting, or smiting.

by a young boy.<sup>36</sup> He said to the boy, “Run ahead and find the arrows that I shoot.” And as the boy ran, he shot the arrows past him.<sup>37</sup> When the boy came to the place where the arrows shot by Jonathan had fallen, Jonathan called out to the boy, “Hey, the arrows are beyond you!”<sup>38</sup> And Jonathan called after the boy, “Quick, hurry up. Don’t stop!” So Jonathan’s boy gathered the arrows and came back to his master.—<sup>39</sup> The boy suspected nothing; only Jonathan and David knew the arrangement.—<sup>40</sup> Jonathan handed the gear to his boy and told him, “Take these back to the town.”<sup>41</sup> When the boy got there, David emerged from his concealment at the Negeb. He flung himself face down on the ground and bowed low three times. They kissed each other and wept together; David wept the longer.

<sup>42</sup>Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace! For we two have sworn to each other in the name of the LORD: ‘May the LORD be [witness] between you and me, and between your offspring and mine, forever!’”

**41. emerged from his concealment at the Negeb** This rendition is interpretative; literally, “rose up from beside the Negeb.” Possibly, the

דָּוִד וַיִּנְעַר קֶטֶן עִמּוֹ: <sup>36</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר לְנַעֲרוֹ רֵץ מֵצֵא נָא אֶת־הַחֲצִים אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מוֹרֵה הַנֶּעַר רֵץ וְהוּא־יִרְהֶה הַחֲצִי לְהַעֲבֵרוֹ: <sup>37</sup> וַיָּבֵא הַנֶּעַר עַד־מְקוֹם הַחֲצִי אֲשֶׁר יָרָה יְהוֹנָתָן וַיִּקְרָא יְהוֹנָתָן אַחֲרֵי הַנֶּעַר וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלוֹא הַחֲצִי מִמֶּךָ וְהִלָּאֵה: <sup>38</sup> וַיִּקְרָא יְהוֹנָתָן אַחֲרֵי הַנֶּעַר מְהֵרָה חוּשָׁה אֶל־תַּעֲמֹד וַיִּלְקֹט נֶעַר יְהוֹנָתָן אֶת־הַחֲצִי הַחֲצִים וַיָּבֵא אֶל־אֲדֹנָיו: <sup>39</sup> וְהַנֶּעַר לֹא יָדַע מֵאוֹמֶה אֶף יְהוֹנָתָן וְדָוִד יָדָעוּ אֶת־הַדָּבָר: <sup>40</sup> וַיִּתֵּן יְהוֹנָתָן אֶת־כְּלָיו אֶל־הַנֶּעַר אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ לָךְ הֵבִיא הָעִיר: <sup>41</sup> הַנֶּעַר בָּא וְדָוִד קָם מֵאֶצֶל הַנֶּגֶב וַיִּפֹּל לְאֶפְרוֹ אַרְצָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים וַיִּשְׁקּוּ | אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ וַיִּבְכּוּ אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ עַד־דָּוִד הַגָּדִיל: <sup>42</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹנָתָן לְדָוִד לָךְ לְשָׁלוֹם אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְנוּ שְׁנֵינוּ אֲנִיחָנוּ בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה לֵאמֹר יְהוָה יִהְיֶה | בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ וּבֵין זֵרְעֵי וּבֵין זֵרְעֶךָ עַד־עוֹלָם: פ

phrase is best understood as “arose from his place of concealment near the Ezel stone in the Negeb” (cf. v. 19).