



SOUTH HEAD YOUTH PARASHA SHEET

PARASHAT BAMIDBAR



Hashem commands Moshe to take a census of the Jewish people. He wants him to count the total number of people in the Jewish nation. Hashem loves the Jewish people and by counting every single Jew He is showing us how important every single Jewish person is. But how is Moshe supposed to count the Jewish people. There were many Jewish people and there were no calculators, computers or accounting programs. So how was Moshe supposed to account for every single Jew in the census? Instead of counting every single person, Moshe told every single Jewish male between the ages of twenty and sixty to give a half shekel coin to the leader of their tribe. At the same time, all of these men were required to register their name and their family name. The only tribe that was not included in the census was the Tribe of Levi. This is because the Levites dedicated their lives to the service of Hashem in the Mishkan. Moshe and the tribe leaders then counted the shekels and the amount of shekels told them how many Jewish men were in each tribe and how many were in the whole Jewish nation. At the end of the census Moshe and the tribe leaders find that the total number of Jewish people is exactly the same as the number of Jewish people when the last census was taken! The last census took place before the building of the Mishkan and so this means that not one Jewish person died during the building of the Mishkan.



As you know, the Jewish nation is made up of twelve different tribes. When traveling in the desert, the Jewish people camped by tribe and when they finally conquered the land of Israel, each tribe received its own portion of land. When the Jews camped in the desert they camped in a set formation. First the Jewish camp was split into three main sections. The first section was the centre of the camp. This was the holiest part of the entire camp of Israel because it was the place in which the Mishkan was located. The centre of the camp was called the 'Camp of the Divine Presence'. Surrounding this section was the 'Camp of Levites'. Even though it's called 'Camp of Levites', only Moshe, Aharon and Aharon's sons were considered holy enough to live in such close proximity to the Mishkan. The rest of the Levites lived approximately 450 metres away from the 'Camp of the Divine Presence'. The third section, the 'Camp of Israel' was where the Jewish nation resided. However, within this section, the Jewish people were divided into a further four sections; north, south, east and west. The tribes of Dan, Asher and Naftali lived north of the Mishkan, Reuven, Gad and Shimon lived south of the Mishkan, east of the Mishkan was Yehudah, Yissachar and Zevulun and west of the Mishkan were the tribes of Ephraim, Binyamin and Menashe. When the Jewish people camped they camped in a square formation as set up in the paragraph above. However, when they traveled they formed a line with the tribe of Yehudah in the lead. The Mishkan remained in the centre and was carried by the Levites and the tribe of Dan traveled behind all the other tribes.

The reason why the Levites were not included in the census of the Jewish people, earned the privilege of being so close to the Mishkan and were able to work in the Mishkan, is because they were the only tribe that did not participate in the sin of the golden calf. Therefore they were given the honour of working in the Mishkan. Since they worked in the Mishkan, they did not require a portion of land, therefore they were not included in the census of the Jewish people. The Levites worked under the Kohanim in the Mishkan. The first Kohen Gadol was Aharon, Moshe's brother and the first Kohanim were two of Aharon's sons; Elazar and Itamar. All other Kohanim are direct descendants from Elazar and Itamar. Originally, the priesthood was supposed to go to the firstborn son in each family because Hashem had spared the firstborns in the plague of the firstborn in Egypt. Each firstborn was exchanged for a member of the tribe of Levi. There were 273 extra firstborns and so they were redeemed by paying five shekels to the Kohanim. Nowadays, when a firstborn child is born, the father pays five shekel to a Kohen and the son is thereby redeemed. We call this the Pidyan Haben ceremony. It takes place when the child is thirty days old.

Each tribe had its own flag and each flag was designed differently. For example the tribe of Reuven had flowers on its flag whilst the flag of Binyamin illustrated a picture of a wolf, Dan's flag had a snake while Naftali's flag was wine coloured with an image of a deer. The flag choice of each tribe was not random, each flag was chosen to suit the characteristics of the Jewish people within each tribe.

The Jewish people traveled very often whilst living in the desert. Hashem would send them a sign when it was time to travel. He would cause the cloud



above the flag of Yehudah to fold up. This would be immediately followed by the sounding of the shofar. As soon as the shofar was heard, the tribes of Yehudah, Yissachar and Zevulun took down their tents. Once they were done, the shofar was sounded again and the tribes of Reuven, Shimon and Gad packed up their belongings and readied themselves for departure. Then the shofar was sounded again and the tribes of Ephraim, Menashe and Binyamin knew that it was their turn to take down their tents. The shofar would then be blown one last time signaling the tribes of Dan, Asher and Naftali to ready themselves to depart. While each of these tribes were preparing for departure, the tribe of Levi was given the honour of covering up the vessels of the Mishkan. When the Jewish people were finally ready to leave Moshe would call out a special verse to Hashem. Hashem would then cause the cloud of glory to move and guide the Jewish people in the right direction. When it was time to stop and settle again in a new camp, Hashem would cause the cloud of glory to stop moving. It would then unfold itself and spread out above the flag of the Tribe of Yehudah.

There are many lessons that we can learn from this week's Parasha. One of the very important lessons is to always know that every single Jewish person counts! Hashem knew how many Jews were in the Jewish nation, nevertheless he commanded Moshe to take a census of the Jewish people because He loved the Jewish people. He loved every single individual and through counting each individual Jew. It was Hashem's way of showing how every single individual is important. The Jewish nation cannot be whole if it is even missing one Jewish soul. It is the same with a Sefer Torah. The Zohar teaches us that a Sefer Torah has 600 000 letters corresponding to the 600 000 Jewish people that were counted in the census in the desert. If even just one letter in the Torah is wiped out, cracked or even smudged, the Torah is considered to be not Kosher. The Torah may not be used until the letter is fixed. This shows us the importance of the unity of the Jewish people! As a sign of our unity, it is a Mitzvah for every Jewish person to buy a letter in a Torah scroll that is being written.

Every Jewish person must remember that s/he is special because s/he is connected with the One and Only Hashem. Every Jew is part of the one Jewish nation and every Jew has a mission to follow the one and only Torah in order to make the world a better place.

Mission: Buy a letter in a Sefer Torah.

PARASHA QUESTIONS:

1. What is the name of this week's Parasha?
The week's Parasha is called Parashat Bamidbar.
2. Which was the only tribe not included in the census?
The only tribe not included in the census was the tribe of Levi.
3. Why did Hashem command Moshe to count the Jewish people?
Hashem wanted to show the Jewish people how much He loves every single Jew. By counting every member of the nation He showed the Jewish people how important every single Jew is to Him.
4. Why was the flag of each tribe unique?
The flag of each tribe was unique as each flag represented the characteristics of the Jewish people within the tribe.
5. What was the sign for the Jewish people to travel?
Hashem would cause the cloud above the flag of Yehuda to fold up. This served as a sign for the Jewish people that it was time to pack up their belongings, take down their tents and travel to a new location.
6. How did the Jewish people know where to travel?
The Jewish people were guided by the cloud of glory which directed them in the right direction.
7. What did the Levites do while the other tribes packed up?
While the other tribes packed up, the tribe of Levi covered the vessels of the Mishkan and prepared them for being carried in the desert.
8. How many letters are there in the Torah and what do they correspond to?
There are 600 000 letters in the Torah. They correspond to the 600 000 Jewish people who lived in the desert.

**It was great seeing you in Shule!
We hope you enjoy reading this Parasha Sheet and quizzing your family! .
Shabbat Shalom from Brookie and the South Head Youth Crew**

