

Parsha Plug: Parshat Bamidbar

Bamidbar 3:11-13, 40-51	במדבר ג:יא-יג, מ-נא
<p>11 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying. 12 As for Me I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel in place of all firstborns among the children of Israel who have opened the womb, and the Levites shall be Mine. 13 For all the firstborns are Mine; since the day I smote all the firstborns in the land of Egypt, I sanctified for Myself all the firstborns of Israel, both man and beast they shall become Mine, I am the Lord...40 The Lord said to Moses: Count every firstborn male aged one month and upward of the children of Israel, and take the number of their names. 41 And you shall take the Levites for Me I am the Lord instead of all firstborns among the children of Israel. And [take] the Levites' animals instead of all the firstborn animals of the children of Israel. 42 So Moses counted every firstborn of Israel, as the Lord had commanded him. 43 The firstborn males aged one month and upward, according to the number of names, was twenty two thousand, two hundred and seventy three. 44 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 45 Take the Levites instead of all the firstborns among the children of Israel and the Levites' animals instead of their animals, and the Levites shall be Mine I am the Lord. 46 As for the two hundred and seventy three of the children of Israel who required redemption, who are in excess of the Levites, 47 you shall take five shekels per head, according to the holy shekel, by which the shekel is twenty gerahs. 48 You shall give the money to Aaron and his sons, in redemption for the firstborns who are in excess of them. 49 So Moses took the redemption money for those in excess of those redeemed by the Levites. 50 He took the money from the firstborn of the children of Israel; one thousand, three hundred and sixty five of the holy shekels. 51 Then Moses gave the money of those redeemed to Aaron and his sons, in accordance with the word of the Lord, as the Lord had commanded Moses.</p>	<p>יֵא וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: יֵב וְאֵנִי הִנֵּה לְקַחְתִּי אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם מִתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תַּחַת כָּל־בְּכוֹר פֶּטֶר רֶחֶם מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיוּ לִי הַלְוִיִּם: יֵג כִּי לִי כָל־בְּכוֹר בְּיוֹם הַפְּתִי כָל־בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם הַקְּדַשְׁתִּי לִי כָל־בְּכוֹר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאָדָם עַד־בְּהֵמָה לִי יִהְיוּ אֲנִי ה'...מ וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה פְּקֹד כָּל־בְּכוֹר זָכָר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִבְּרִיחַ דָּשׁ וּמֵעֵלָה וְשֵׂא אֶת מִסְפָּר שְׁמֹתָם: מֵא וּלְקַחְתָּ אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם לִי אֲנִי ה' תַּחַת כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֵת בְּהֵמַת הַלְוִיִּם תַּחַת כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּבִהֵמַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: מֵב וַיִּפְקֹד מֹשֶׁה פְּאֶשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֹתוֹ אֶת־כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: מֵג וַיְהִי כָל־בְּכוֹר זָכָר בְּמִסְפָּר שְׁמֹת מִבְּרִיחַ דָּשׁ וּמֵעֵלָה לְפִקְדֵיהֶם שְׁנַיִם וְעֶשְׂרִים אֶלֶף שְׁלֹשָׁה וּשְׁבַעִים וּמֵאָתַיִם: מֵד וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: מֵה קַח אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם תַּחַת כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֵת־בְּהֵמַת הַלְוִיִּם תַּחַת בְּהֵמַתָּם וְהָיוּ־לִי הַלְוִיִּם אֲנִי ה': מו וְאֵת פְּדוּיֵי הַשְּׁלֵשָׁה וְהַשְּׁבַעִים וְהַמֵּאָתַיִם הָעֵדֻפִים עַל־הַלְוִיִּם מִבְּכוֹר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: מז וּלְקַחְתָּ חֲמִשָּׁת חֲמִשָּׁת שְׁקָלִים לְגִלְגָל לַת בִּשְׁקָל הַקֹּדֶשׁ תִּקַּח עֶשְׂרִים גֵּרָה הַשְּׁקָל: מח וְנִתְּתָה הַכֶּסֶף לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו פְּדוּיֵי הָעֵדֻפִים בָּהֶם: מט וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת כֶּסֶף הַפְּדוּיִם מֵאֵת הָעֵדֻפִים עַל פְּדוּיֵי הַלְוִיִּם: נ אֵת בְּכוֹר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לָקַח אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף חֲמִשָּׁה וּשְׁשִׁים וּשְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת וְאַלְף בִּשְׁקָל הַקֹּדֶשׁ: נא וַיִּתֵּן מֹשֶׁה אֶת־כֶּסֶף הַפְּדוּיִם לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו עַל־פִּי ה' פְּאֶשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת־מֹשֶׁה:</p>

Masechet Sanhedrin 17a	מסכת סנהדרין יז.
<p>Regarding the verse about the redemption of the firstborn by the Levites, “You shall take five shekels per head,” it can be explained that Moshe said: “How shall I do this for the Jews? If I say to one of the firstborns: ‘Give me money for your redemption and you may leave, as you are among the 273 extra firstborns’, he will say to me, ‘A Levite already redeemed me’”. What did he do? He brought 22,000 slips, and he wrote on them ‘Ben Levi’ and on 273 additional ones he wrote ‘Five shekels’. He mixed them up and placed them in a box. He said to them, “Draw</p>	<p>כיוצא בדבר אתה אומר (במדבר ג, מז) ולקחת חמשת חמשת שקלים לגולגולת אמר משה כיצד אעשה להן לישראל אם אומר לו תן לי פדיונך וצא יאמר לי כבר פדאני בן לוי מה עשה הביא עשרים ושנים אלפים פיתקין וכתב עליהן בן לוי ועל שלשה ושבועים ומאתים כתב עליהן חמשה שקלים בללן ונתנן בקלפי</p>

<p>your slips". Everyone whose hand drew up a slip that said, 'Ben Levi', he said to him, "A Levite already redeemed you". Everyone whose hand drew up a slip that said 'Five shekels', he said to him "Pay your redemption money and you may leave."</p>	<p>אמר להן טלו פיתקיכם מי שעלה בידו בן לוי אמר לו כבר פדאך בן לוי מי שעלה בידו חמשת שקלים אמר לו תן פדיונך וצא.</p>
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<p>Rashi on Bamidbar 3:12</p>	<p>רש"י על במדבר ג:יב</p>
<p>From among the children of Israel: I gained My right to them through the Israelite firstborns, taking them [the Levites] in their place. For at first the service was performed by the firstborns, but when they sinned with the golden calf, they became disqualified. The Levites, who had not committed idolatry, were chosen in their stead.</p>	<p>מתוך בני ישראל: על ידי הבכורות זכיתי בהם ולקחתים תמורתם, לפי שהיתה העבודה בבכורות, וכשחטאו בעגל נפסלו, והלויים שלא עבדו עבודה זרה נבחרו תחתיהם:</p>

<p>Seforno on Bamidbar 3:13</p>	<p>ספורנו במדבר ג:יג</p>
<p>[After makat bechorot] I saved the firstborn of Israel and made them holy to Me. This means that they were prohibited from doing ordinary labor just like the laws regarding an animal that is designated as holy to God may not be sheared or worked with. Therefore in order for them to be permitted in such things, they require a redemption, again just like the laws regarding any object or animal that is transformed to become ordinary [no longer holy], as it says, "All of the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem" (Shemot 13:13).</p>	<p>ואני הצלתים במה שהקדשתים לי בענין שיהיו אסורים להתעסק בעבודת הדיוט כמשפט כל הקדש שהוא אסור בגיזה ועבודה ולמען יהיו מותרים בזה הצרכים פדיון, כמשפט כל הקדש היוצא לחולין כאמרו כל בכור בניך תפדה (שמות יג, יג).</p>

<p>Bereshit Rabbah 84:18</p>	<p>בראשית רבה פד:יח</p>
<p>God said, "You sold Rachel's son for twenty silver pieces, which are five selaim. Thus, each and every one of you separates the value of five selaim for the redemption of the firstborn, according to the Tyrian maneh."</p>	<p>אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא אתם מכרתם בנה של רחל בעשרים כסף מעות שהן חמש סלעים, לפיכך יהיה כל אחד ואחד מפריש ערך בנו חמש סלעים במנה צורי.</p>

<p>Likutei Halachot Yoreh Deah Hilchot Pidyon Bechor 3:6</p>	<p>לקוטי הלכות יורה דעה הלכות פדיון בכור ג:ו</p>
<p>Regarding the redeeming of the soul that we do for sufferings and judgements that God forbid come upon a person, we say that they all come from the aspect of 'lo c'seder' (that which is disorganized or haphazard)...Through the giving of money to a wise and truly righteous person [who embodies 'c'seder' because he is fully in alignment with God], that which is 'lo c'seder' can return to 'c'seder' and the judgements will be sweetened and nullified because all will be 'c'seder'. Because of Adam Harishon's sin all has become 'lo c'seder' and thus the order of the firstborn got</p>	<p>וזה בחינת פדיון בכסף שעושים על כל מיני יסורין ודינים שבאין על האדם חס ושלום. כי כל היסורין והדינים חס ושלום הם נמשכין מבחינת שלא כסדר כנ"ל...ועל-כן על-ידי שנותנין הממון להחכם והצדיק האמת על-ידי זה נחזר שלא כסדר ונעשה הכל כסדר ונמתקין ונתבטלין כל הדינים שהם בחינת שלא כסדר כי נעשה הכל כסדר כנ"ל. ומחמת שעל-ידי חטא אדם הראשון נעשה הכל שלא כסדר כנ"ל על-כן נתבלבל הסדר של</p>

mixed up, which is why Esav came out before Yaakov as he wanted to take his blessing from him.

הבכורה ויצא עשו קדם יעקב ורצה לקח הבכורה
לעצמו...

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *The Binding of Isaac (Vayera 5775)*

[In Akeidat Yitzchak, t]his passage is the key to understanding the message from heaven telling Abraham to stop: “Now I know that you fear God, *because you have not withheld from Me your son, your only son*” (the statement appears twice, in Gen. 22: 12 and 16). The test was not whether Abraham would sacrifice his son but whether he would *give him over* to God. The same principle recurs in the book of Exodus. First, Moses’ survival is semi-miraculous since he was born at a time when Pharaoh had decreed that every male Israelite child should be killed. Secondly, during the tenth plague, when every firstborn Egyptian child died, the Israelite firstborn were miraculously saved. “Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites *belongs to Me*, whether human or animal.” The firstborn were originally designated to serve God as priests, but lost this role after the sin of the golden calf. Nonetheless, a memory of this original role still persists in the ceremony of *pidyon ha-ben*, redemption of a firstborn son. What God was doing when he asked Abraham to offer up his son was not requesting a child sacrifice but something quite different. He wanted Abraham to *renounce ownership* of his son. He wanted to establish as a non-negotiable principle of Jewish law that *children are not the property of their parents...As long as parents believed they owned their children, the concept of the individual could not yet be born*. The fundamental unit was the family. The Torah represents the birth of the individual as the central figure in the moral life. Because children – all children – belong to God, parenthood is not ownership but guardianship.