

## Parashah #34

(Updated for 5.28.11)

B'midbar ~ במדבר ~ In The Desert

Torah: B'midbar/Numbers 1:1~4:20

Haftarah: Hoshea/Hosea 2:1-22 (1:10~2:20)

B'rit Hadashah: Luke 2:1-7; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:12-31

The wilderness experiences of the Israelites from Sinai to Canaan, the Promised Land, are recorded in *B'midbar*, which literally means *in the wilderness*. The English title, "Numbers", is derived from the initial chapters (specifically 1-4) which begin with a census of the entire (ay-daw) edah (עדה) assembly of (Ahm Yis-rah-ehl) *Am Yisra'el/People of Israel*. However, *B'midbar* (the fifth word of the opening verse) seems most appropriate since it actually entails all the events

described in the book, which took place over the thirty-nine years they were **led** by a cloud and a pillar of fire *in the wilderness*. (They did **NOT** wander!!!)

### OVERVIEW OF B'MIDBAR/NUMBERS

In spite of their faithlessness and complaints, the Israelites learn HaShem will fulfill their needs. In the wilderness, HaShem gives them . . .

- Leaders (B'midbar/Numbers 1:1 & 3)
- Food (B'midbar/Numbers 11:6-9)
- Meat (B'midbar/Numbers 11:31-33)
- Water (B'midbar/Numbers 20:8)
- Their Promised Land (B'midbar/Numbers 14:7-8)
- Furthermore, HaShem tells Moshe/Moses how to bless His people: "May Adonai bless you and keep you. May Adonai make His face shine on you and show you His favor. May Adonai lift up His countenance toward you and give you peace."  
(B'midbar/Numbers 6:24-26)

When the Israelites were eleven days from the Promised Land, "spies" were sent out and all but (Y'hoeh-shoo-ah) *Y'hoshua/Joshua* and (Kah-lehv) *Kalev/Caleb*, who trusted G~d, were afraid to go on. Others refused to enter, fearing the "giants within walled cities," and choose instead to wander in the wilderness for forty years. HaShem punishes them for their faithlessness, not allowing any of that generation, except Y'hoshua and Kalev, to enter (Keh-nah-ahn) *Kena'an / Canaan*. The hardships, complaints and wishes to return to Egypt continued. In his anger toward the Israelites, *Moshe/Moses* strikes a rock, which gushes water for the thirsty. HaShem shows Moshe the Promised Land but Moshe dies without ever entering it. Moshe defines the borders of Kena'an and selects Y'hoshua as his successor.

In this Parashah (portion), specifically, . . .

- We have the census of all the men twenty years old and over who are subject to military service in Israel.
- The (L' vee'eem) *L'vi'im/Levites* from one month old and over are counted.
- Additionally, there was the counting of a specific clan of descendants of Levi, those 30 to 50 years old, who would do the work in the tent of meeting.

## CHAPTER 1 ~ Dealing With Numbers

**Verse 2** tells us, “by their families, by their father’s households . . .” the people were counted. This census in the wilderness illustrates the family structure and relationship of the nation of Israel. All the children of Israel were one large family. The family relationships reveal the Bible’s patriarchal worldview. The breakdown of the nation into tribe, clan and household demonstrates the strong central position of fathers. The entire nation looked back to one common father. They were the descendants of *Ya’akov/Jacob*. That is why they were called “*B’nei Isre-el/children of Israel*”. Israel is another name for Ya’akov.

Each Israelite could trace his descent to one of the twelve sons of Ya’akov. This formed his or her tribal identity. Those descended from a common father were referred to as a tribe. The twelve sons of Ya’akov were fathers over the tribes. The tribes of Israel were further broken down into large extended families. The Hebrew word for *family* is (mish-pah-kah) *mishpachah* (משפחה). However, when used in the tribal sense, it does not refer to a nuclear family household; it refers to the large extended family of a common forefather within a tribe. A better English word is “clan”. A clan is like a sub-tribe – a tribe within a tribe. Every clan was composed of many households. The Hebrew word for *household* is (bayt ahv) *beit av* (בית אב) a term literally translated as *house of a father*. The father’s household was composed of himself, his wife, children and grandchildren.

The common denominator in all these family rankings is the central position of a father. In the biblical world, fatherhood was the essential ingredient for family and identity. Some would consider this chauvinistic; however, not from the perspective of the biblical woman. She regarded her father and husband as her prestige and her identity. They were the affirmation of her femininity. They provided her protection, sustenance and dignity. It’s a different way of thinking from what we have today, for sure!!!

An interesting side note takes place in **B’midbar/Numbers 1:5-15** The first name on the list of leaders is (pronounced Ehl-lee-zoor) *Elizur*, which means *my G~d is the Protector* and the last name on the list is (Aye-nahn) *Enan*, which is synonymous with *eye*. According to the Sages, these names recall the verse *He protected them like the pupil of His eye*. (**D’varim / Deuteron-**

omy 32:10). This is said to be an allusion to the (Sheh-key-nah) *Shekinah/Cloud of Glory*, which surrounded the nation in the wilderness.

**B'midbar/Numbers 1:2** *take a census*, in Hebrew, (sah-voe eht roesh) *savo et rosh*, literally means, *lift up the head*. In the past, when a census was taken, it was based on the number of (sh'vah-teem) *sh'vatim/tribes* or *clans*. However, **B'midbar/Numbers 1:18** tells us the whole assembly was gathered to state their genealogies by families and clans, as well as their total numbers. This indicates the members of the *sh'vatim/tribes* were counted individually, as everyone passed in front of Moshe and Aharon to present proof of their tribal descent. This must have been an awesome experience to stand before those two leaders; the greatest prophet who ever lived (other than Yeshua) and Yehovah's holy servant, to identify themselves and to receive their blessing and guidance. The fact the people were counted as individuals proves the worth of every individual. This set the precedent for HaShem's undying love to see every one of His created subjects return to a loving relationship with Him through His unique and only Son.

“For G~d so loved the world that He gave His only and unique Son, so that everyone who trusts in Him may have eternal life instead of being utterly destroyed.” (**Yochanan/John 3:16**)

“For the passage quoted says that everyone who rests his trust on him will not be humiliated. This means there is no difference between Jew and non-Jew – Yehovah is the same for everyone, rich toward everyone who calls on Him, **since everyone who calls on the name of Yehovah will be delivered.**” (**Romans 10:11-13**) According to the Complete Jewish Bible this is a reference to **Joel 3:5** (In other translations it will most likely be **Joel 2:32**)

And in another place, “. . . for it is not His purpose that anyone should be destroyed, but that everyone should turn from his sins.” (**Bet Kefa/2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:9c**)

Therefore, we see HaShem is interested in each individual, not just whole tribes!

Before we move on, I want to share the meaning of some of the Hebrew names. I do not have them all but here is what I do have . . .

- |                |                  |               |                  |
|----------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| • Tzurishaddai | G~d is my rock   | • P'dahtzur   | Redeemed rock    |
| • N'tan'el     | Given of G~d     | • Avidan      | My father judged |
| • Eli'av       | My father, G~d   | • Ammishaddai | People of G~d    |
| • Eli'shama    | G~d is my reward |               |                  |

**ABOUT THE WILDERNESS:** The wilderness is usually seen as **a place of death**, primarily because of the lack of water. The lack of water combined with the constant heat makes the wilderness uninhabitable. Consequently, the absence of food and water, the blazing heat and the emptiness of the wilderness makes it a place of death. Many think it is a place to go and die. For instance . . .

- Hagar and Ishmael go into the wilderness and prepare to die there (**B' resheet/Genesis 21:14-15**).
- Several times in Torah, the people of Israel accuse Moshe of taking them into the wilderness to die; two, in particular are . . .
  - They “said to Moshe, “Was it because there weren’t enough graves in Egypt that you brought us out to die in the desert? Why have you done this to us, bringing us out of Egypt?” (**Sh’ mot/Exodus 14:11**)
  - “Why did you bring Adonai’s community into this desert? To die there, we and our livestock?” (**B’ midbar/Numbers 20:4**)
- When the Israelites refuse to enter the promised land, HaShem declared, “In this wilderness they shall be destroyed, and there they will die.” (**B’ midbar/Numbers 14:35**)
- And **Eli’yahu/Elijah**, “he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die.” (**M’ lakim Alef/1<sup>st</sup> Kings 19:4**)

On the other hand, as we will see, the wilderness can be a place of . . .

- Refuge
- Provision
- Revelation

The wilderness is also **a place of refuge**. Those seeking to escape find the wilderness can be a safe place where they can hide among the caves.

- Hagar ran into the wilderness to get away from Sarah (**B’ resheet/Genesis 16:6-7**).
- Moshe fled from Pharaoh into the wilderness of Midian (**Sh’ mot/Exodus 3:15**).
- David took shelter in the wilderness, repeatedly, to escape King **Sha’ul/Saul**.
- **Eli’yahu/Elijah** fled to the wilderness of Negev to escape **Yezevel/Jezebel** (**M’ lakim Alef/1<sup>st</sup> Kings 19:3-4**).
- Yeshua and His (tahl-me-deem) **talmidim/disciples** hid out in “the country near the wilderness.” (**Yochanan/John 11:54**)
- In Revelation 12, the woman representing Israel escaped from the dragon and “fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by Yehovah.” (**Revelation 12:6**)

Although the wilderness is a dry and waterless place, it is also **a place of provision**. Here one has to rely totally upon HaShem and here HaShem provides for His people.

- Hagar prepared to die of thirst in the wilderness but HaShem opened her eyes and she saw a well of water (**B’ resheet/Genesis 21:19**).
- In the wilderness HaShem provided shelter for the people of Israel with a cloud over them by day and a fire by night (**B’ midbar/Numbers 9:16**). He also provided manna and quail to eat and water from a rock.
- When **Eli’yahu/Elijah** fled into the wilderness, HaShem sent ravens with bread to feed him twice a day (**M’ lakim Alef/1<sup>st</sup> Kings 17:6**).

- And the woman in Revelation 12 fled into the wilderness “so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.” (**Revelation 12:6**)

The wilderness can be **a place of revelation** when we are stripped of our daily comforts and come face to face with our Creator.

- In the wilderness of Sinai, Moshe saw the burning bush and received revelation (**Sh'mot/Exodus 3**).
- Moshe took several forty-day fasts and wrote the Torah in the wilderness.
- **Eli'yahu/Elijah** fasted forty days and forty nights in the wilderness before arriving at Sinai to seek a word from HaShem (**M'lakim Alef/1<sup>st</sup> Kings 19:8**).
- **Yochanan/John** the Immerser came forth as a “voice of one crying in the wilderness.” (**Mattit'yahu/Matthew 3:3**)
- Yeshua, after His immersion was compelled to “go out into the wilderness.” (**Mark 1:12**)

These things happened as examples. The wilderness is not necessarily bad since it requires us to rely solely on HaShem. As we have seen, it can nurture our spiritual health! As time draws closer to the return of Yeshua, we can expect to have wilderness experiences. HaShem is not a respecter of persons and if Yeshua had a wilderness experience, guess what?, we, most likely, will too!!!

If you have not already started preparation for possible challenging times, let me encourage you to do so. Don't be like the five foolish virgins who were caught with no oil in their lamps. These things are told to us for our edification. (**1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:11**) It is up to us to **Shema . . . hear and obey**. Torah is not a storybook of fictional fables; it is an instruction book!!!!

## CHAPTER 2

In **B'midbar/Numbers 2**, we are told each tribe had its own flag, which bore its specific insignia. The colors of the flags were taken from the color of the stones on the High Priest's breastplate, which represented each tribe. In the Stone Edition of the Artscroll Chumash, I found the color of each tribe's banner as well as their insignia. They are as follows:

<u>TRIBE</u>	<u>BANNER COLOR</u>	<u>INSIGNIA</u>	<u>SCRIPTURE</u>
Reuben	Red	Mandrakes	Gen. 30:14-15
Simeon	Green	City of Shechem	Gen. 34:25
Levi	White, black, red	Urim & Tumim	Ex. 28:30
Judah	Sky blue	Lion	Gen. 49:9
Issachar	Blue-black	Sun & Moon	1 Chron 12:32
Zebulun	White	Ship	Gen 49:13

Dan	Sapphire	Serpent	Gen. 49:17
Gad	Gray	Soldiers	Gen 49:19
Naftali	Pale red	Doe	Gen 49:21
Asher	Flaming olive oil	Olive Tree	Gen. 49:20
Ephraim	Black	Ox	Deut 33:17*
Manasseh	Black	Re'em (Bullock)	Deut 33:17*
Benjamin	Mixture of all colors	Wolf	Gen. 49:27

\*Some commentaries show Ephraim & Manasseh as one (Yosef/Joseph)

Additionally, each section had a banner, which bore the colors of each of the tribes in that section. Have you ever wondered why some nations' flags are tri-colored? I have and I believe I understand where it came from!

Inscribed on the banners, from each of the four sections, were letters which spelled the names of the Patriarchs. Let's see . . . there are three Patriarchs but there are four camps. So how does that happen? Their names, in Hebrew, are . . .

- *Avram*, spelled *alef, vet, resh, mem*
- *Yitzchak* is spelled *yod, tzadi, chet, kuf*
- *Ya'akov* is spelled *yod, ayin, kuf, vet.*

The first of the four banners had an *alef, yod, and yod*. As you can see, those are the Hebrew letters which begin the names of Avram, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov.

The second had *vet, tzadi, and ayin*, which is the second letter in each of their names.

The third banner bore the letters *resh, chet, kuf* and

The fourth banner had a *mem, kuf, and vet*.

This may have been more information than you wanted but the purpose is to show, only through working together can we accomplish what our Abba, Father wants for us.

**HUMILITY ~ KNOWING OUR PLACE:** One of the more interesting aspects of this Torah portion, has to do with the placement of the tribes during their encampment and when moving from place to place.

First, the (mish-kahn) *Mishkan/Tabernacle* and the *L'vi'im/Levites* were in the middle of the camp. The *L'vi'im/Levites* had "charge over the tabernacle of testimony, its equipment and everything else connected with it", according to **B'midbar/Numbers 1:50**. Surrounding them, were the 12 Tribes, according to some, making a large square. There were three tribes in each of the four sides of the square ~ east, south, west and north.

Several years ago, Yehovah gave me a vision. I would like to submit this possible option, for your consideration. Let me see . . . how do I explain this without a chalkboard? Okay, on a blank piece of paper, draw a large triangle, then, overlay it with an upside down triangle. Does it look like a six-pointed star? Okay, at each point where the lines intersect, make a visible dot. How many dots do you have? There should be twelve. As we look at the drawing, we will notice there are three tribes in each of the four sections of the camp. There are some, who will tell you the camp in the wilderness was set up in the shape of a cross. If this were true, there would be gaping holes. This would leave the Tabernacle, in the center, and the camp in general, strategically very vulnerable!

Our Abba Father is concerned about detail. He took into consideration the “like interests” of each tribe in planning their placement. Did you notice He kept family groups together? For instance . . .

- in **B’midbar/Numbers 2:3-9**, the descendants of *Ya’akov/Jacob* and Leah were Judah, Issachar and Zebulon and . . .
- according to **B’midbar/Numbers 2:10-16** the tribes of *Re’uven/Reuben*, *Shim’on/Simeon* and Gad were together and their mother was Zilpah.
- Then the coupling of *Efrayim/Ephraim* with *M’nasheh/Manasseh* and *Bin-yamin/Benjamin* were the lineage of *Ya’akov/Jacob* and *Raquel/Rachel* (**B’midbar/Numbers 2:18-24**).
- Lastly, the tribes of Dan, Asher, and Naftali, who came from Bilhah (**B’midbar/Numbers 2:25-31**)

Apparently, the Holy One was putting tribes together in a way He felt they would be able to love one another. I am convinced HaShem is extremely interested in details. We must realize He has a role for each of us as we seek to honor, worship and praise Him.

In our Torah reading, we are not told of any reactions to each tribe’s placement. But given human nature, can you almost imagine the murmuring which could have taken place? “Well, how come Y’hudah gets to be in first place?” And, “why do we have to be last in line?” But HaShem leaves nothing, absolutely nothing, to chance. Years earlier, when *Ya’akov/Jacob* died, his 12 sons carried the coffin in a specific order and it is in this same order the tribes were arranged in the camp in the desert. This is how each would know their place. When we know “**where**” our place is, there is peace and tranquility. After describing who will travel first and who will travel last, the Torah says, “The people of Israel did everything Yehovah had ordered Moshe.” (**B’midbar/Numbers 1:34**)

*Y’hudah/Judah* was the leader of all the tribes and he led the **first formation**. It was assigned to the East, the direction the light comes to the world, both naturally and spiritually. *Yissakhar*

*/ Issachar* and *Z'vulun/Zebulun* accompanied Y'hudah. The Sages tell us Issachar is the Tribe of Torah and Zebulun, the Tribe of Wealth. The symbolism of the finest in leadership is coupled with the Sanctity of Torah study and those who support Torah scholars. The partnership of Issachar and Zebulun was great and the two are treated as equals (**B' midbar/Numbers 2:3-9**).

The **second formation** was led by *Re'uven/Reuben* who symbolized repentance. He was assigned to the South, which is the source of dew and rain, representing G~d's mercies and blessings. Reuben's companions are Gad symbolizing strength and *Shim'on/Simeon*, who needed atonement. It was good for Simeon to have strength and repentance on each side of him. We are told this group was second since repentance is second only to Torah (**B' midbar/Numbers 2:10-16**).

There is much speculation concerning the exact placement of the Tent of Meeting during the journey. Some believe it was between *Y'hudah/Judah* and *Re'uven/Reuben*, while others believe it continued to be in the middle and came after Re'uven and still others think parts of the structure came after Judah and the more sacred parts moved after Re'uven. The vital lesson to be learned here is Torah observance should not be restricted to the home, synagogue and every day activities. Rather, one should maintain observance even while traveling.

*Efrayim/Ephraim* led the **third formation**, which was to the West, the source of extreme weather, i.e. cold, hail, and heat. All three tribes, *Efrayim/Ephraim*, *M'nasheh/Manasseh* and *Binyamin/Benjamin*, possessed the strength to withstand harsh elements. Strength is a necessary companion to Torah (Y'hudah) and repentance (Re'uven) since both dedication to Torah study and repentance require strength of conviction and character (**B' midbar/Numbers 2:18-24**).

The **last formation**, to the North, was led by the tribe of **Dan** (**B' midbar/Numbers 2:25-31**). North is symbolic of darkness and in Hebrew, (*zah-foon*) *tzafun* means *hidden*. Dan is symbolic of darkness as well, probably because of the graven image (idolatry) set up in Dan, by King Jeroboam to keep his people from their Temple pilgrimages. Idolatry is considered the darkest of all moral conditions. Asher and Naftali accompanied Dan. Asher was famous for its olive oil, symbolizing illumination in the darkness. It is said this formation is described as **last** instead of fourth because it symbolizes idol worship and is the **last** in terms of worthiness.

Earlier in the year, one Torah teacher encouraged us to "live" each Parashah. So, thinking about the arrangement of the encampment, first thing one saw when leaving or returning home was the Tabernacle. (This is another reason, I believe, HaShem gave me the vision of the camp being laid out in the form of a (mah-gen dah-veed) Magen David. With straight-line encampments, it would be impossible for each tribe to see the Tabernacle from their tent.) With the Tabernacle in the center of the encampment, it seems the Tabernacle and the Ark would become the center of each soul. Granted, each of us sees HaShem from a different perspective, depending on where we are encamped in life. However, He should remain the focal point, our anchor and compass in bad times and good. Keeping our eyes and hearts focused on HaShem and His

Torah will help us regain our direction when we are “in the wilderness” of life. It would be wise for us to keep Him in the center of everything we do. He should be the first one we see in the morning and the last on our hearts and minds as we retire each day. Perhaps this is why those who are truly Torah Pursuant recite the Shema upon awakening and before falling asleep at night.

### CHAPTER 3

Moshe, at the direction of Adonai, assigned the tribe of Levi to *Aharon/Aaron* and his sons as assistants. They were to help the *Kohanim/Priests* carry out their duties. They were to be in charge of all the furnishings of the tent of meeting but they were **NOT** to perform any of the priestly duties (**verses 5-9**). Then in **verse 10**, there is a very stern admonishment: Should anyone try to involve himself at the *Mishkan/Tabernacle*, who is not a priest, he “is to be put to death”.

Just as there was specific tribal placement during encampment, the *L’vi’im/Levites* were placed around the *Mishkan/Tabernacle*. The names of the sons of (Leh-vee) *Levi/Levy* were (Gehr-shone) Gershon, (K’haht) *K’hat/Kohath* and (M’rah-ree) *M’rari/Merari*.

- **The Gershon clan numbered 7,500 males one month old and over** (**verses 21-26**).
  - This clan was to camp on the back or West side of the Tabernacle
  - They were to be in charge of the Tabernacle itself
  - The inner and outer coverings
  - The screen for the entrance of the tent of meeting
  - The curtains surrounding the tabernacle and the altar
  - All the fixtures and ropes for these items
  - And their maintenance
  
- **The K’hat clan numbered 8,600 males one month old and over** (**verses 27-32**).
  - This clan was to camp next to the Tabernacle on the South
  - They were in charge of the Holy Place
  - They were responsible for . . .
    - the ark,
    - the table,
    - the menorah,
    - the altars,
    - the utensils, and
    - the curtain
  - The maintenance of all these things.
  
- **The M’rari clan numbered 6,200 males one month old and over** (**verses 33-37**).
  - This clan camped next to the Tabernacle on the North side
  - Their responsibility was for the frames of the tabernacle, including its . . .
    - Crossbars
    - Posts
    - Sockets and fittings

- the posts of the surrounding courtyard with their sockets, pegs and ropes
- The maintenance of all these things.

Only *Moshe/Moses*, *Aharon/Aaron* and his sons were allowed to camp to the East, in front of the Tabernacle. Only these were in charge of the Holy Place and carried out their responsibility on behalf of *B'nei Yishra'el/Children of Israel*. As previously stated, anyone else who involved himself was to be put to death (**verse 38**).

The total number of *L'vi'im/Levites*, one month old and over, counted by Moshe and Aharon was 22,000 (**verse 39**). (My calculator shows 22,300. ☺ I don't know why or understand the discrepancy.)

## CHAPTER 4

In this chapter, we have yet another census. This time from the clan of K'hat, who has 8,600 members from one month old and over. However, this time the census is for “all those from thirty to fifty years old” (**verse 3**).

Torah Teacher, Mark Ensign from Amarillo, TX shared some interesting information concerning the stages of man's development found in the Mishnah, Division Nezikin, Tractate Avot 5:21. Judah ben Tema used to say,

- At five years of age one is ready for the study of the Scripture;
- At ten years of age one is fit for the study of the Mishnah;
- At the age of thirteen for the fulfillment of the commandments (Bar Mitzvah)
- At the age of fifteen for the study of the Talmud;
- At the age of eighteen for marriage;
- At the age of twenty for pursuing (as in the army or a vocation);
- **At the age of thirty for entering into one's full vigor:**
- **At the age of forty for understanding;**
- **At the age of fifty for counsel;**
- At the age of sixty, one attains old age;
- At the age of seventy for the hoary head;
- At the age of eighty for special strength;
- At the age of ninety for bending beneath the weight of old age;
- At the age of a hundred, one is as though he were already dead and had passed away and ceased from the world.

Given the information from **verse 3** and then the above list, it all makes sense! During the ages of 30-50, men were in their prime and were physically able to render the taxing demands of transporting the most holy things.

Then add the scripture **Luke 3:23**, “When He began His ministry Yeshua Himself was about **thirty** years of age” and we find another example of the importance of knowing Hebrew culture and tradition. It definitely affects the things we were taught from the Brit Hadashah if we know the background.

Detailed instructions follow in **verses 4-14**. Aharon and his sons are to cover all of the pieces of the Tabernacle furniture. HaShem directs the color of cloth and the specific animal hide to use. Everything was to be covered before the appointed tribe of K’hat could transport the Tabernacle furniture. Additionally, Aharon and his sons were to assign each one a task. However, the descendants of K’hat were not to go in and look at the holy things being covered because they would die.

In many synagogues the inscription over the holy ark reads, “Know before whom you stand!” Every day and in every moment, in a place of prayer or a common place, it is compelling for us to remember the One before whom we stand.

In **verses 16-20** we learn the L’vi’im couldn’t enter the Tabernacle, to transport the furnishings, until the holy furnishings had all been prepared and covered. Then the other Levite families took down the Tabernacle, its curtains, posts and planks and loaded them in wagons. The elaborate care in handling the elements of the Tabernacle reflects a heightened level of reverence, wonder and amazement in the reality of HaShem’s presence. When in the presence of the King, the servants of the King conduct themselves with the utmost decorum. The careful dismantling and carrying of the Tabernacle teaches us reverence for Yehovah and His holy things.

Reverence for the Holy One of Israel has been discarded in many modern versions of our faith. Reverence, awe and wonder have been replaced with ecstatic, emotionally charged entertainment called “worship”. Assembly has become a casual affair. It has become a social event rather than an encounter with the Divine. What is perceived as easy access to Him through Messiah has diminished the holiness of the Almighty. This should not be! Of course, this is not true of everyone. However, the Master’s gift should increase our respect, reverence and sense of holy fear for The Father, not diminish it!

Everyone agrees we should fear Adonai and respect holiness. However, in real terms, what does this mean? How is it translated into our daily lives? Fear of HaShem and reverence for His sanctity can too easily be relegated to abstraction. In Hebraic roots tradition, respect for the sacred is taken seriously even in the seemingly mundane things of life. Sacred books are handled differently than other books. A book in which HaShem’s name is printed is handled reverently. It is not left face down, under a pile of other books, or lying on the floor. When it is dropped, it is immediately picked up and reverently kissed. In the synagogue, when the Torah scroll is removed from the ark, everyone turns to face toward the word of Yehovah. We need to recapture a sense of proper reverence for the things of the Almighty. We are His army. He commands us to take up order and rank as He leads us to the Promise of the Ages. He is the Adonai of Hosts and we are His hosts!

At the beginning of our Torah portion, we saw, through the letters on each sections' banner, we are to work together. No one person, nor any one tribe, can accomplish the Father's will alone. It takes everyone working together. This is true unity. All working together, pursuing Torah, accomplishes **HIS** will. (His will is delineated in Torah!)

**B'midbar ~ במדבר ~ In The Desert**  
**Haftarah: Hoshea/Hosea 2:1-22 (1:10 ~ 2:20)**

The opening words of this Haftarah compare the future numbers of the nation to the sand of the sea. This is a comparison to the counting of the Israelites in the Torah portion.

One of the most forgiving lovers in all of literature is *Hoshea/Hosea*, who loved his wife, Gomer, even though she was an unworthy woman. This book, like (Sheer Ha-Sheer-reem) *Shir HaShirim/Song of Songs*, uses marriage as a symbol to describe the relationship between HaShem and the House of Israel. Both Hoshea and HaShem love the unfaithful with such a deep and steadfast love, nothing Gomer or the Israelites do can alienate them. Hoshea is a prophet of grace or unmerited favor. HaShem's love is a gift, unable to be deserved. Through his forgiveness of his own wife, Hoshea learns of HaShem's willingness to forgive and restore Israel.

*B'nei Isra'el/Children of Israel* was the smallest of the nations. Ten of its original tribes have been scattered through out the world. However, the Almighty knows every one of their descendants wherever they may be. The remaining tribes, known as the Jews, have repeatedly been battered throughout history. Rabbinical commentary has this to say about this passage of Scripture:

The Talmud (Pesachim 87a) gives the background of this prophecy. G~d told Hoshea Yisrael had sinned, to which the prophet replied, "All the world is Yours. [If they are unworthy] exchange them for another nation." G~d responded by commanding Hoshea to marry a harlot and have children with her, even though he knew she was unfaithful. Chapter 1 of Hoshea relates he had three children from this marriage and, at G~d's command, named them as follows: The first was a son named . . .

- *Yezreel/Jezreel*, *G~d of powerful mercy will plant*, which means G~d will gather in the exiled Children of Yisrael and plant them in their land. Then they had a daughter named . . .
- *Lo-ruhamah*, *Object of No Mercy*, for G~d was resolved no longer to be merciful with the unrepentant Yisraelis. Finally, another son born, was named . . .
- *Lo-ammi*, *Not My People*, for the Yisraelis had forfeited their claim to chosenness.

After the three children were born, the Almighty ordered Hoshea to send his family away. Hoshea pleaded he could not part with the children! Yehovah then said: “Your wife is a harlot whose children may not even be yours but the products of adultery, yet you say you cannot abandon them. Yisrael is the offspring of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov – how dare you say I should exchange it for another nation!”

These are mighty powerful words written by the rabbis of old. This prophecy lets us know even though the Israelites would go after the gods of other nations and become like them, HaShem promised He would still love them. They are His children and one day He will return them to *HaAretz/The Land* and they will become His people once again and one King will be over them all. That day is soon coming and the King will be Yeshua HaMashiach.

In scripture, prophecies concerning the still unfulfilled return of the descendants of the Northern Kingdom will refer to the “House of Israel” as opposed to the “House of Judah” already in The Land.

### B'midbar ~ במדבר ~ In The Desert

#### B'rit Hadashah: Luke 2:1-7; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:12-31

Luke 2:1-7 “This registration, the first of its kind, took place when Quirinius was governing in Syria.” **Verse 2** parallels our Torah portion and was a census of the Israelites. Remember the time of year this took place. It was actually the beginning of *Sukkot/Feast of Tabernacles*. The *Children of Israel/B'nei Isra'el* were to go to Jerusalem. This was one of the seven *moedim/appointed times* of HaShem. They were to come to the place where He put His name, The Temple. The Roman Emperor certainly chose an excellent time to decide to “register” everyone!

Two other things to remember with regard to “there was no room at the inn” (**verse 6**).

1. Since everyone was going to Jerusalem for Sukkot all of the “Motel 6s”, “Motel 8s”, and “Holiday Inns”, etc would naturally have been full. There was no mastermind plot to make *Yosef/Joseph* and *Miryam/Mary* “street people”.
2. For that matter, *Beit Lechem/Bethlehem* (House of Bread), was a small, poor village and most likely would not have had an inn. Most homes, at that time, kept the animals downstairs (ground level), while the upper part of the house consisted of a work-room where the children slept with a separate bedroom for the parents. In a pinch, the downstairs space for animals would have afforded guests some privacy.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:12-31 These verses, written by *Rav Sha'ul/Rabbi Paul*, parallel two areas from our Torah portion.

- In chapter two of our Torah portion, we learned each tribe had its specific place to camp and its specific place when they were on the move.
- In chapter three, we learned only certain ones were to help *Aharon/Aaron* and his sons. The *L'vi'im/Levites* were to assist Aharon and his sons, the *Kohanim/Priests*, carry out their duties but they were **not** to perform any of the priestly duties.

Mike Clayton, **Joined To HaShem Ministries**, ([www.joinedtohashem.org](http://www.joinedtohashem.org)) has an excellent teaching concerning Paul and his ministry to the Gentiles. According to Brother Mike, Paul probably did not realize the difficulty of the task which lay ahead of him. Paul was raised as a Hebrew; he understood Hebrew life, its customs and its traditions. He knew how to communicate with others who had been raised in the same way. Now he was being sent to people who had never sat through even one class on Torah. For that matter, they didn't have a clue when it came to the history of the Hebrews. These non-Jews were being adopted into a family they knew nothing about and Paul had to teach them. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians (above), *Sha'ul/Paul* is talking to the "former Gentiles" about how to function within HaShem's family. He uses the metaphor of working together as a body just as the human body works to accomplish a task. He was telling these people G~d had placed each of them in a specific place for a specific reason. Each one was to accept the task given and carry it out to the best of his/her ability. One was not to look down on another who had been given a job that did not seem glamorous; they were not to place anyone on a pedestal. Each function of the body must work together.

If *Sha'ul/Saul/Paul* had been speaking to Hebrews, he would not have needed to go into such detail. He would simply have reminded them of the twelve tribes in the wilderness and the functions of each. Each tribe had its place in the camp and each had a different personality and function. If the Corinthians had been Hebrews who had come to faith in Yeshua, Sha'ul could have simply said to them, "Remember our ancestors in the wilderness, how they camped and how they worked together. You all do the same."

Brother Mike goes on to tell us scripture is written in metaphors and shadows, which spoke to a specific audience. To forget this principle can lead us into error. If we understand this and apply it, we can find an abundance of truth. For instance, when Paul gave correction concerning Torah, he was NOT speaking to 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians who have, for the most part, twisted scripture to say the Torah has passed away. He was speaking to a Hebrew audience who had twisted Torah into legalistic observance. He was bringing correction by telling the people to get the horse in front of the cart, not behind it!!!!

As believers in Yeshua, we are all part of the Body of the Messiah. Each of us has a place determined by HaShem. We all have appropriate ministries empowered by the (Roo-ahk Ha Koe-desh) *Ruach HaKodesh/Holy Spirit*. Each of us should appreciate, not envy, others' ministries and gifts. The purpose of the gifts should not be self-promoting but build the whole body in love. The whole purpose is to show, as I have said before, only through working together can we accomplish what our Abba, Father wants for us.

**The corresponding Psalm for this Torah portion is: Psalm 122**

**Next week's lesson: Parashah #35**

**Naso ~ נשא ~ Take**

**Torah: B'midbar/Numbers 4:21~7:89**

**Haftarah: Shof'tim/Judges 13:2-25**

**B'rit Hadashah: Yochanan/John 7:53~8:11; Acts 21:17-32**

**Who fills his mind with Torah clears it of fear and folly.**

*Rabbi Chanina Sgan HaKohanim*

**The giving of Torah happened at one specific time, but the receiving of Torah happens all the time, in every generation.**

*Meir Alter, the Gerer Rebbe*

**Organize yourselves into classes for the study of Torah, since it can best be acquired in association with others.**

*Talmud: Berkot 63b*

*Shavuah tov (have a good week)!!!*