

# Torah Weekly

ת"ב

May 29-June 4, 2022  
28 Iyar – 5 Sivan, 5782

Torah Reading:  
Bamidbar: Numbers 1:1 – 4:20  
Haftarah:  
Hosea 2:1-22

## PARSHAT BAMIDBAR

### Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

### Family Programs

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

### Grape Juice & Matzah

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

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No One Alone,  
No One Forgotten.

## The Two Journeys

The preparations for any given event give us an idea as to the substance of the anticipated event. The woman in a bridal boutique purchasing a white wedding gown is preparing for her wedding day, and the person in a camping site collecting dry wood and arranging it in a pile is getting ready to make a bonfire. It's a pretty fair assumption that the wedding gown isn't intended for wearing at a bonfire, and the wood isn't being stacked in a pyramid in anticipation of a wedding reception. The same applies with preparations for spiritual and religious events. A month of introspection and repentance is certainly the suitable preparation for the High Holidays, when G-d examines our deeds and renders a judgment regarding the new year. And scouring the house in search of *chametz* is a sure sign that Passover is approaching—a holiday when the possession of all leavened substances is banned for eight days.

Shavuot is the holiday that marks the anniversary of the day when G-d gave us the Torah. This monumental day also follows a preparation period—the seven-week Omer counting period. We prepare for [Shavuot](#) by counting numbers.

Interestingly, the [Torah](#) portion of Bamidbar is always read shortly before Shavuot, usually on the Shabbat immediately preceding the holiday. This Torah reading begins the book of Numbers, and the portion is indeed filled with numbers. First a census is taken of the Israelites, and the Torah supplies us with the number of Israelites in each tribe and in each of the four “flags,” and then gives the grand totals. The Levites are then counted—twice. The firstborns earn their very own headcount, too.

Why the countdown to the holiday of Shavuot? What is the connection between numbers and counting, and the special gift our nation received on this holiday?

Counting is an equalizer. Every unit which is counted adds up to one, no more and no less. Let us use the two countings which we

have just mentioned—the Omer counting and the censuses of the Israelites—as examples:

The seven weeks of the Omer period contain many different days, some holy and exciting, others seemingly mundane and ordinary. On one side we have the days of [Passover](#), seven Shabbats, Rosh Chodesh, and the deeply mystical holiday of Lag BaOmer; and then we have the “back to dull work” Mondays and the rest of the run-of-the-mill days. But as concerns the counting of the Omer, each of these days has the exact same value: one day in the journey towards Shavuot. This is because no matter the external qualities (or non-qualities) that any given day may possess, in essence every day is a carbon copy of the day that just passed and the day to follow. Every day is a gift from G-d, and we are intended to use it, to maximize it to its utmost in His service. *How* we are to serve Him on any particular day will vary—some days we serve G-d by going to work, and on other days we serve Him by abstaining from work. Some days we serve Him by eating, and on others we serve Him by fasting. Counting days allows us to focus on what unites them all, their common factor and purpose.

The same is true with regards to counting Jews. As a nation, we are far from a homogenous group. This is true in all areas—and our service of G-d is no exception. Depending on our unique talents, some of us serve G-d through assiduous Torah study, others through volunteering time in public service, others through financially supporting worthy causes, and yet others through reciting Psalms with devotion and sincerity. Leaders and followers. Old and young. Men and women. Scholars and laymen. Every segment of our nation, and indeed every individual person, serves G-d in his or her unique way.

And the counting of the Jews teaches us that the service of any one person isn't more or less important than the service of another. One's service may be more attractive, flashy and attention-grabbing than another's;

but at the core we are all involved in the exact same pursuit—serving our Creator with all our available talents and resources.

All these countings lead to Shavuot, the day when we were given the Torah, the ultimate equalizer.

The essence and purpose of all of creation is G-d's desire for a physical abode, an earthly realm which would be transformed into a hospitable habitat where His essence could be expressed. It is the Torah that (a) reveals to us this divine plan; (b) contains the mitzvot, the tools with which we bring this purpose to realization; and thus (c) brings harmony and equality to all of creation—for it shows us how every one of its myriads of components is essentially identical, for they all have one purpose.

As Shavuot approaches, let us take this message to heart. Every person counts. Every day counts. Every component of creation counts. And we should be counting our blessings that we were given the Torah—without which nothing would count.

By Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

## One and the Many

According to Rabbi Akiva, the “great principle” of Judaism is “Love your fellow as yourself.”<sup>1</sup> A similar idea was expressed a century earlier by the great sage, Hillel. When asked to sum up the whole of Jewish teaching “while I stand on one foot” he replied: “That which you do not like, do not do to others. This is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary. Go and study!”<sup>2</sup>

This week's [Torah](#) reading ([Bamidbar — Numbers 1:1-4:20](#)), which begins the fourth Book of the Torah, is always read on the Shabbat before the festival of Shavuot, which celebrates the giving of the Torah at Sinai. If the great principle of the Torah is the theme of loving one's fellow, we might expect to find this idea in our Parshah as well. After all, in Jewish teachings there are many

matching patterns, and each step forward is a preparation for the next.

However, when we examine the verses of this week's Torah reading we find that it largely consists of a census of the Jewish people who were together with Moses in the Sinai desert. The numbers of the Jewish people are given tribe by tribe in great detail. Later sections of the Book also contain similar lists of numbers of the population, and for this reason the entire fourth Book of the Torah is termed in English the "Book of Numbers." (The sages, too, use a similar term: *Chumash HaPikkudim*.)

The Lubavitcher Rebbe points out that the idea of counting the Jewish people itself expresses the theme of love of one's fellow.

Each person is an individual, different from others. Yet when people are being counted, each person is simply "one." The most highly talented, distinguished individual is "one" and somebody who might feel himself to be just a very simple and plain person with no special qualities is also "one."

A common problem in human relationships is precisely the feeling that we are worth more than another. We are valuable and significant, while the other is hardly relevant. Consequently, what does he matter to me? Further, how could I possibly help him?

Here, explains the Rebbe, the Torah comes to teach us that each person is simply "one." We are no more significant than anyone else. Further, we recognize that since we are only "one" we need that other person in order that we can join together. Recognizing that each of us is just "one" also helps us see how similar we actually are to each other — and we then soon find ways that we can help that other person as well.

By Rabbi Mordechai Wollenberg

## Humble Pride

The Torah was given freely, in an ownerless public place. If it had been given in the land of Israel, the nations of the world would say that they have no portion in it. Anyone who wishes to properly accept it is welcome to do so.

Why was Mount Sinai chosen to be the site for the giving of the [Torah](#)? The conventional answer is that the choice of Mount Sinai was to teach us humility, since Mount Sinai was the most humble of all mountains. If so, why was it not given in a low lying valley? Surely that would have been a stronger lesson in humility?

Hence, we learn that a Jew must be able to distinguish between being proud and being arrogant. Arrogance is distasteful. Being proud of one's roots is a virtue. The Torah therefore, was given on a humble mountain.

**Sunday, May 29, 2022 --- 28 Iyar, 5782**

**Passing of Samuel (877 BCE)**

The prophet Samuel (931-877 BCE) was one of the most important figures in Jewish history; our sages describe him as the equivalent of "Moses and Aaron combined." Samuel was the last of the *Shoftim* ("Judges") who led the people of Israel in the four centuries between the passing of Joshua and the establishment of the monarchy, and the author of the biblical books of "Judges", "Samuel" and "Ruth"

**Monday, May 30, 2022 --- 29 Iyar, 5782**

**Passing of R. Meir of Premishlan (1850)**

R. Meir of Premishlan was a famous chassidic master and a noted miracle worker. Although he lived in poverty, he exerted himself tirelessly for the needy and the suffering. His divine inspiration and his ready wit have become legendary.

**Tuesday, May 31, 2022 --- 1 Sivan, 5782**

**Flood Waters Recede (2105 BCE)**

150 days after the rains stopped falling in the Great Flood, the raging waters which covered the face of the earth calmed and began to subside at the rate of one cubit every four days (Genesis 8:3; Rashi, *ibid.*1)

**Encampment at Sinai (1313 BCE)**

On the 1st of Sivan of the year 2448 from creation (1313 BCE), six weeks after their exodus from Egypt, the Children of Israel arrived at Mount Sinai in the Sinai Desert and camped at the foot of the mountain "as one man, with one heart" in preparation for the receiving of the Torah from G-d. On this day, however "Moses did not say anything to them, because of their exhaustion from the journey."

**Korach Swallowed (1312 BCE)**

Korach, who led a rebellion against the leadership of Moses and Aaron, met his end when, miraculously, "the ground split beneath them... And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained to Korach, and all their possessions" (Numbers 16:31-32).

**Wednesday, June 1, 2022 --- 2 Sivan, 5782**

**Chosen People (1313 BCE)**

Sivan 2 is marked on the Jewish calendar as *Yom HaMeyuchas* ("Day of Distinction"); it was on this day that G-d told Moses -- when Moses ascended Mount Sinai for the first time -- to tell the people of Israel: "You shall be My chosen treasure from among all the nations, for all the earth is Mine. You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:4-6).

**Thursday, June 2, 2022 --- 3 Sivan, 5782**

**Jews Prepare to Receive Torah (1313 BCE)**

On Sivan 3, G-d instructed Moses to "set boundaries for the people around, saying, 'Beware of ascending the mountain or touching its edge...'" (Exodus 19:10-12) in preparation for the Giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai three days later. To this day, we mark the "Three Days of Hagbalah ('Boundaries') leading to the Giving of the Torah on Sivan 6.

3 Sivan, 5781

**Maimonides Arrives in Israel (1165)**

On 4 Iyar, 4925 (1165), Maimonides sets sail from Fez, Morocco, to escape Islamic persecution. The journey is fraught with danger, including a storm on 10 Iyar that threatens to capsize his ship. Finally, on 3 Sivan, Maimonides arrives safely in Acco, Israel. He establishes this date as a day of rejoicing, festivities, and gifts to the poor, to be kept by him and his descendants until the end of time (*Charedim* ch. 65 [5744 ed.]).

**Friday, June 3, 2022 --- 4 Sivan, 5782**

**Moses Transcribes (first part of) Torah (1313 BCE)**

On Sivan 4 of the year 2448 from creation (1313 BCE)--two days before the revelation at Mount Sinai--Moses wrote down the first 68 chapters of the Torah, from Genesis 1:1 ("In the Beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth") to the Giving of the Torah in Exodus 19 (Exodus 24:4; Rashi *ibid.*).

**Shabbat, June 4, 2022 --- 5 Sivan, 5782**

**Jews Accept Torah (1313 BCE)**

On this day, Moses made a covenant with the Jewish people at the foot of Mount Sinai at which the people declared, "All that G-d has spoken, we shall do and hear" (Exodus 24:7) committing themselves to observe the Torah's commandments ("do") and strive to comprehend them ("hear"), while pledging to "do" also before they "hear."