

# Torah Weekly

7"ב

## PARSHAT BAMIDBAR

27 Iyar - 4 Sivan 5785  
25 - 31 May 2025

*Torah:* Numbers 1:1-4:20  
*Haftarah:* Hosea 2:1-22

CALENDAR

Chaplains have monthly calendars available.

PSALMS DAILY

### Psalm for our brethren in the Holy Land

*Psalm 117*

1. Praise the Lord, all nations, laud Him, all peoples.  
2. For His kindness has overwhelmed us, and the truth of the Lord is eternal. Hallelujah!

(Please say Chapter 20 daily)

SEFER HAMITZVOT

### Negative Mitzvah 52 Intermarriage

It is forbidden for a Jew to marry a non-Jew.

### Negative Mitzvah 347 Adultery

It is forbidden to engage in adultery with a married woman.

## COUNTDOWN

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 counting's 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 counting's 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 Naftali Silberberg  
Editor, Jewish Learning Institute*

## BAMIDBAR IN A NUTSHELL

The name of the Parshah, "Bamidbar," means "In the desert" and it is found in Numbers 1:1.

In the Sinai Desert, G-d says to conduct a census of the twelve tribes of Israel. Moses counts 603,550 men of draftable age (20 to 60 years); the tribe of Levi, numbering 22,300 males aged one month and older, is counted separately. The Levites are to serve in the Sanctuary. They replace the firstborn, whose number they approximated, since they were disqualified when they participated in the worshipping of the Golden Calf. The 273 firstborn who lacked a Levite to replace them had to pay a five-shekel "ransom" to redeem themselves.

When the people broke camp, the three Levite clans dismantled and transported the Sanctuary, and reassembled it at the center of the next encampment. They then erected their own tents around it: the Kohathites, who carried the

### Aleph Institute

*Hyman & Martha Rogal Center*

5804 Beacon Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15217

412-421-0111

Fax: 412-521-5948

[www.AlephNE.org](http://www.AlephNE.org)

[info@AlephNE.org](mailto:info@AlephNE.org)



**ALEPH INSTITUTE**  
No One Alone,  
No One Forgotten.

Sanctuary's vessels (the Ark, menorah, etc.) in their specially designed coverings on their shoulders, camped to its south; the Gershonites, in charge of its tapestries and roof coverings, to its west; and the families of Merari, who transported its wall panels and pillars, to its north. Before the Sanctuary's

entranceway, to its east, were the tents of Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's sons.

Beyond the Levite circle, the twelve tribes camped in four groups of three tribes each. To the east were Judah (pop. 74,600), Issachar (54,400) and Zebulun (57,400); to the south, Reuben (46,500), Simeon (59,300) and Gad

(45,650); to the west, Ephraim (40,500), Manasseh (32,200) and Benjamin (35,400); and to the north, Dan (62,700), Asher (41,500) and Naphtali (53,400). This formation was kept also while traveling. Each tribe had its own Nasi (prince or leader), and its own flag with its tribal color and emblem.

## IN JEWISH HISTORY

**Monday, 28 Iyar 5785 - 26 May 2025**

### **Passing of Samuel (877 BCE)**

The prophet Samuel (2830-2884, or 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"

Samuel was born in the year 2830 (931 BCE) after his barren mother, Chanah (Hannah), prayed for a child at the Sanctuary at Shiloh and pledged, "O L-rd of hosts... If You will give Your maidservant a man child, I shall dedicate him to G-d all the days of his life..." (I Samuel 1:11). At age two, his mother brought him to Shiloh in fulfillment of her vow, where he was raised by Eli the High Priest; shortly thereafter, Samuel had his first prophetic communication (described in I Samuel 3). In 4650 (890 BCE), Samuel succeeded Eli as leader of the Jewish people.

After ten years under Samuel's guidance, the people approached him with the request, "Appoint for us a king... like all the nations around us." Samuel disapproved of their request, believing that the people of Israel should be subject only to G-d and not to any mortal king; but G-d instructed him to do as the people ask. Samuel then anointed 4651 (879 BCE) Saul as the first king of Israel. When Saul disobeyed G-d during the war on Amalek, Samuel proclaimed David the legitimate king in Saul's stead.

Shortly thereafter, Samuel passed away in his birthplace, Ramah, in the hills of Judah, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of Iyar 2884 (877 BCE).

### **Eichmann Executed (1962)**

Adolf Eichmann was hanged at Ramleh Prison in Israel following his trial and conviction for his crimes against the Jewish people, crimes against humanity and war crimes during World War II.

Eichmann was a key party in implementing of Hitler's infamous "final solution." The height of his "career" was reached in Hungary in 5704 (1944), when he managed to transport 400,000 Jews to the gas chambers in less than five weeks.

### **Jerusalem Liberated (1967)**

The Old City of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount were liberated during the 5727 (1967) Six-Day War. The day is marked in Israel as "Jerusalem Day."

**Tuesday, 29 Iyar 5785 - 27 May 2025**

### **Passing of Rabbi Meir of Premishlan (1850)**

Rabbi 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.

### **Hebron Liberated (1967)**

One day after Israeli forces liberated the Old City of Jerusalem during the Six-Day War, another of the holy cities, Hebron, was also liberated.

Following the 5708 (1948) war, Jordan took over the control of Hebron along with the rest of Judea and Samaria. During this time, Israelis were not allowed to enter Judea and Samaria. The Jewish Quarter was destroyed, Jewish cemeteries were desecrated, 58 synagogues were destroyed, and an animal pen was built on the ruins of the Patriarch Abraham Synagogue.

**Wednesday, 1 Sivan 5785 - 28 May 2025**

### **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

### **Encampment at Sinai (1313 BCE)**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of Sivan 2448 (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."

### **Worms Jews Massacred (1096)**

At the end of a week in which a group Jews took refuge in a local castle in Worms, Germany, the crusaders massacred them during their morning prayers on 1 Sivan 4856 (1096).

**Thursday, 2 Sivan 5785 - 29 May 2025**

### **Chosen People (1313 BCE)**

2 Sivan is marked on the Jewish calendar as Yom HaMeyuchas ("Day of Distinction"); it was on this day in 2448 (1313 BCE) 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

### **Israel Captures Golan Heights (1967)**

Until the Six-Day War, the Syrian army was deployed in strong fortifications on the Golan Heights, from which they repeatedly shelled the Israeli towns and farms below. On the fifth day of the war, the Israeli Army broke through the Syrian front. Facing very difficult topographical conditions, they scaled the steep and rugged

heights. The Engineering Corps cleared the way of mines, followed by bulldozers which leveled a route for the tanks on the rocky face. After more than 24 hours of heavy fighting, the Syrian deployment collapsed and the Syrian forces fled in retreat.

**Friday, 3 Sivan 5785 - 30 May 2025**

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

On 3 Sivan 2448 (1313 BCE), 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 6 Sivan.

### **Vespasian Captures Jericho (68 CE)**

In his advance towards the destruction of Jerusalem, Rome Emperor Titus Flavius Vespasianus ("Vespasian") captured Jericho on 3 Sivan 3828 (68) and massacres all its inhabitants.

### **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.

**Shabbat, 4 Sivan 5785 - 31 May 2025**

### **Forced Conversion in Clermont (576)**

On 4 Sivan 4336 (576), a mob, accompanied by the bishop of Clermont-Ferrand, France, razed the local synagogue to the ground. The bishop then informed the Jews that he, as bishop, could have but one flock, and unless they were willing to embrace Christianity, they must leave the city. Five hundred Jews were forced to be baptized and the remainder fled to Marseilles.

### **Jews Returned to Spain (1481)**

Pope Sixtus IV instructed his local bishops that all Jews who had fled the Spanish Inquisition should be sent back to Spain.

### **Chmielnitzki Massacres (1648)**

The Cossack rebellion against Polish rule in Ukraine, under the leadership of Bogdan Chmielnitzki (may his name be blotted out) began on the 4<sup>th</sup> of Sivan 5408 (1648). In their bloody march through the Ukraine, Volhynia, Podolia, Poland proper and Lithuania, Chmielnitzki's peasant army massacred between 100,000 and 300,000 Jews. Three hundred Jewish communities were destroyed.