

Torah: B'midbar (Numbers) 1:1 – 4:20
Haftarah: Hoshea (Hosea) 2:1-22
B'rit Hadashah: Mattityahu (Matthew) 4:1-17

	yr. 1 25:1-38	yr 2 2:1-3:13	yr 3 3:14-4:20
1	1:1 – 4	2:1 – 2:9	3:14 – 20
2	1:5 – 16	2:10 – 16	3:21 – 26
3	1:17 – 19	2:17 – 24	3:27 – 39
4	1:20 – 27	2:25 – 31	3:40 – 43
5	1:28 – 35	2:32 – 34	3:44 – 51
6	1:36 – 43	3:1 – 4	4:1 – 10
7	1:44 – 54	3:5 – 13	4:11-20

and HaShem spoke to Moshe in the wilderness of Sinai saying / count the sons of Levi according to the house of their fathers according to their clans / every male from a month old and above you shall count them	<i>va'yedaber ADONÁI el-Mosheh b'midbar Sinay le'mor p'qod et-b'ney leviy le'veyt 'votam le'mish'pékhotam kol-zakar miben-khódesht va'ma'elah tif'qedem</i>	וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַּר סִינַי לֵאמֹר: פְּקֹד אֶת-בְּנֵי לֵוִי לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם כָּל-זָכָר מִבֶּן-חֹדֶשׁ וָמַעְלָה תִּפְקְדֵם:
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This is the first parashah of the Book of *B'midbar* (in the wilderness), known in English as Numbers. The Israelites have fled Egypt, received the revelation of Torah from Mt. Sinai, erected the Tabernacle and have been instructed in its operation. They now prepare both spiritually and militarily for their travels to the land of promise. A census of the individual, family unit, the tribe and the nation is ordered. This includes the count of able-bodied adult men. The arrangement of the people in their encampments is centered on the Tabernacle, emphasizing the responsibilities of Aaron, his descendants, and the tribe of Levi. One way of dividing up the book is to see Chapters 1-10 portraying order in the camp, then Chapters 11-25 contain the chaos of dissension in the camp, then Chapters 26-36 set a new beginning with a new census and a new generation.

The Haftarah predicts Israel's innumerable growth, and that one day HaShem will lead her back into the wilderness to reclaim her fidelity.

Highlights

- Nu. 3:14-20** Speech (*daber* – דַּבֵּר) frames the context of the wilderness (*midbar* – מִדְבָּר), evoking connection with *ha'davar* (דְּבָר) – the Word, and *medabber* – the Speaker of the Word. It is said that you have to be nowhere to encounter the God of everywhere. It is in the silence and isolation of the wilderness that you hear the voice of HaShem. The wording of the text would indicate that it was HaShem that counted (*al-pi* – עַל-פִּי) the Levi'im, while Moshe appointed (*p'qod* – פְּקֹד). High infant mortality in the ancient world is seen in the one-month age accounting.
- Nu. 3:21-26** The clan of Gershon was responsible for maintaining (portage) the external structure of the Tabernacle.
- Nu. 3:27-39** The clan of K'hat was responsible for the most sacred objects, under the supervision of El'azar the son of Aharon. The clan of M'rari was responsible for the planks, bars, posts and sockets of the Tabernacle. Anyone who encroached upon the Tabernacle suffered the death penalty. Why so harsh? To prevent prohibited activity that was common in pagan temples and worship. Torah desexualized its practice and forbid idols (corporeal objects) in the worship of the One invisible and incorporeal God.
- Nu. 3:40-43** A census of all the firstborn males as well as the firstborn of cattle.
- Nu. 3:44-51** Because there were 273 more firstborns than Levites, they were redeemed through payment of five silver shekels.
- Nu. 4:1-10** Another census of the Levites between the ages of 30 and 50 for the purpose of transporting the Tabernacle, beginning with the descendants of K'hat, who will carry the most sacred objects of the Tabernacle after they have been secured by Aharon and his sons.

7. **Nu. 4:11-20** Sacred objects are important for several reasons. They contain the words of HaShem, serving as a reminder of his presence and how we connect to him in our daily lives. They remind us of his reality, and that the tangible world is not the only reality. They remind us that some things are holy (fit for and dedicated to a very specific purpose) while some are for everyday (profane) use. The clan of K'hat were subject to the same death penalty for mishandling sacred objects. This is why supervision by El'azar (the son of Aharon) was so important.

Theme

The Challenge of "B'midbar" – This fourth book of the Torah is the most difficult of the five. The English name (Numbers) is not at all inviting, while its Hebrew name suggests barrenness, danger, death, chaos and darkness. It contains a range of genres and subject matters, including census, laws, itineraries, and narratives. It covers topics including suspected adultery, vows, purifications, sacrifices, battles, rebellions, failures of nerve, and talking donkeys! It is given in the context of miracle – fed by manna, and led by fire and cloud, on a daily basis. Could this be the essence of our lives in the stretches of wilderness after the dramatic salvation of Exodus? Perhaps our lives are not about relying on miracles and the dramatic, or even getting to our Promised Land, but rather on how we live and find meaning in our wilderness?

Daily Devotional questions for reflection and application

1. (1:1) Do you have a quiet place where you go to meet with God on a regular basis? (Mat 6:6, 1Ki 19:9-14, Luk 6:12-19)
2. (1:20) Yeshua is the first-born of all creation. Does He have first place in your life? (Exo 34:20, Deu 21:15-17, Rom 8:28-29, Psa 89:20(19)-30(29), Col 1:15, 18, Luk 2:6-7, 22-23, 25-35)
3. (2:2) Do you recognize Yeshua as the banner over the Jewish people, and all nations, today? (Exo 17:15, Psa 60:4, Isa 11:12, Isa 27:13, Eze 37:15-28, Mat 24:27-31)
4. (3:1) Are there "spiritual" children whom you foster? If not, why not find one today? (Act 16:1, 1Ti 1:2, 2Ti 1:2-5, Mar 10:24, Joh 21:5, Gal 3:6-9, 1Co 4:14-17)
5. (3:15) Do you "count" in the Kingdom of God? (Num 1:3, 18:16, Deu 24:8, Deu 33:9-10, 1Ti 3:4,12, Tit 1:6, Pro 22:6, Mat 5:13-16, 2Ch 17:7-9)
6. (4:3) Thirty years old seems a good age to begin service to God. Where are you in relation to age, growing and serving? (Rom 8:29-30, 2Co 9:8, Eph 3:20-21, Phil 2:13)