

TORAH

חומש

במדבר

∞  
TORAH

CHUMASH BEMIDBAR  
*The Book of Numbers*

*Parshat Bemidbar*

*A free excerpt from the Kehot Publication Society's  
Chumash Bemidbar/Book of Numbers with commentary  
based on the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe,  
produced by Chabad of California.*

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*With an Interpolated English Translation  
and Commentary Based on the Works of  
The Lubavitcher Rebbe*

**THE TORAH - CHUMASH BEMIDBAR**

WITH AN INTERPOLATED ENGLISH TRANSLATION  
AND COMMENTARY BASED ON THE WORKS OF  
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

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TORAH



# חומש במדבר

## THE TORAH

*With an Interpolated English Translation  
and Commentary Based on the Works of  
The Lubavitcher Rebbe  
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson*  
וצוקללה"ה נבג"מ זי"ע

CHUMASH BEMIDBAR  
*The Book of Numbers*

*Parshat Bemidbar*



*Kehot Publication Society*  
770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn NY 11213  
5769/2009

# Foreword

**I**t is very fitting that this volume of this edition of the Torah is being reprinted on the fortieth anniversary of the opening of the world's first Chabad House. It was in 5729 (1969) that the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, established this unique institution at the UCLA campus in Westwood Village, California. Since then, this special seed that he planted has blossomed, grown, and spread, with the opening of Chabad Houses not only all across California, but throughout America and around the globe.

Over the last four decades, “Chabad House” has become a household word in the Jewish world—and to a large extent, even the non-Jewish world—synonymous with the time-honored values of education, hospitality, caring, and support. Chabad Houses are now an integral element of the Jewish landscape on every continent, each one serving as a beacon of light and warmth to guide us through life's spiritual and emotional challenges.

The success of the Chabad House movement is a living testament to the vision and dedication of the Rebbe. When presented with the key to that first Chabad House, the Rebbe asked whether this meant that the new house was his home. We immediately replied, “Yes, of course.” Our selfless leader then said, “My hand will be on the door of this house to keep it open twenty-four hours a day for young and old, men and women alike.”

The Rebbe then proclaimed: “‘Chabad House’ will grow like a chain of shopping centers and spread from the West to the North, from the North to the South and then to the East.”

As part of his devotion to the welfare of others, the Rebbe made tireless efforts to spread the study of the Torah—on all its levels, among all types of Jews. Seasoned scholars, struggling students, young pupils, men and women from all walks of life—the Rebbe constantly encouraged all of us to increase the quantity and quality of our Torah study.

Written with the “Chabad House” reader in mind, this edition of the Torah presents traditional Jewish principles in a way that informs and inspires readers regardless of their religious education. It is worth noting that this project's editor-in-chief was first touched by the Rebbe's message within the walls of that original Chabad House at UCLA.

The Rebbe teaches us that the study of the holy Torah and the application of its values are at the center of the humanity's purpose. By publishing this new edition, we hope to inspire greater Torah study and to foster a more personal identification with its timeless message. Our goal is help bring about the fulfillment of the Rebbe's vision for the Ultimate Redemption—in the words of Maimonides, “a time when the knowledge of God will fill the earth as the waters fill the sea.”

*Chabad of California*

*Lag BaOmer 5769*

# Preface

The idea for a new translation of the Five Books of Moses, the Torah, was born of necessity. The last decade has seen a significant increase in synagogue attendance—perhaps owing to the many Chabad-Lubavitch centers that have opened in recent years—by Jews from all walks of life.

Many of them, new to Torah and unfamiliar with its Hebrew text, needed a *Chumash* that would facilitate their study of the weekly *parashah* and allow them to comfortably follow along with the Torah readings at prayer services.

This project follows the success of the recently published Annotated Siddur, which has quickly gained widespread use in synagogues around the world. But it is not without trepidation that our team of translators and editors approached this task. Even the finest translations may never be fully reflective of the layers of meaning embedded in the words of the Torah, the word of God and the most sacred text of the Jewish people. At best, they offer the reader who does not know Hebrew a good approximation of the original text. With this in mind, the new translation includes a commentary that significantly helps to illuminate the plain text.

The commentary is composed of two parts. The first interpolates Rashi's commentary into the new English translation of the text.

These interpolations are based on Rashi's commentary as expounded upon in the writings of Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, of blessed memory. Also included in this section are chronological charts that summarize historical events; topic titles to help the reader navigate the subject matter; and illustrations, charts, diagrams, and maps.

The second part of the commentary is an exposition of the inner dimension of Torah as expounded upon in the teachings of the Rebbe and his predecessors.

Each of the 54 sections (*parashiot*) of the Torah is prefaced by an Overview and the Rebbe's reflections on its relation to the larger themes of the Torah. Included as well is a study of the name of each *parashah* and its relevance to the respective text.

May this volume succeed in its aim to further Torah awareness and the spreading of *Chasidut* and thus contribute to the speedy realization of the final and complete Redemption.

***Kehot Publication Society***

*3 Tammuz 5764*





## GENESIS

Bereishit  
Noach  
Lech Lecha  
Vayeira  
Chayei Sarah  
Toldot  
Vayitzei  
Vayishlach  
Vayeishev  
Mikeitz  
Vayigash  
Vayeichi

## EXODUS

Shemot  
Vaeira  
Bo  
Beshalach  
Yitro  
Mishpatim  
Terumah  
Tetzaveh  
Ki Tisa  
Vayakheil  
Pekudei

## LEVITICUS

Vayikra  
Tzav  
Shemini  
Tazria  
Metzora  
Acharei Mot  
Kedoshim  
Emor  
Behar  
Bechukotai

## NUMBERS

# Bemidbar 34 במדבר

Naso  
Beha'alotecha  
Shelach  
Korach  
Chukat  
Balak  
Pinchas  
Matot  
Masei

## DEUTERONOMY

Devarim  
Va'etchanan  
Eikev  
Re'eh  
Shoftim  
Ki Teitzei  
Ki Tavo  
Netzavim  
Vayeilech  
Ha'azinu  
Vezot Habrachah





# בְּמִדְבָּר *Bemidbar*

## Overview

The Hebrew name of the Book of Genesis, *Bereishit*, means “in the beginning”; the book gives the historical and religious background that necessitates the creation of the Jewish people, the giving of the Torah, and the gift of the Land of Israel. The Hebrew name of the Book of Exodus, *Shemot*, means “names”; it describes how God took “one nation out of another” and forged the identity and psyche of the Jewish nation, whose task it is to make this world into a sanctuary for Divine consciousness. The Hebrew name of the Book of Leviticus, *Vayikra*, means “and He called”; it details how the Jew is to answer his or her Divine calling by remaining both separate from the materialism of this world and at the same time elevating and spiritualizing it.

The Hebrew name of the Book of Numbers, *Bemidbar*, means “in the desert.” The imagery of the desert is that of an uncultivated, uncivilized wasteland, and is thus symbolic of our unrectified physical world, which is largely indifferent, antithetical, and often even antagonistic to Divine consciousness. After the Torah has told us how the world—which was originally designed as the garden of Divinity—became such a “desert,” how the Jewish people was created, and how it was given the mission to restore the world to its intrinsic nature and taught how to do this, it now tells us how the Jews are sent out into this “desert” to accomplish their goal, to test their dedication to their destiny and resistance to the hostile elements of their environment. This dramatic tension underlies the seminal history of the Jewish people as recorded in the Book of Numbers.

It is therefore no surprise that the opening *parashah* of the Book of Numbers—which shares with the book as a whole the name *Bemidbar*, “in the desert”—describes how God assembles the young nation into His army. True, the Jewish people were referred to as an army as soon as they left Egypt: “And it was on that selfsame day that the *legions of God* went out of the Land of Egypt.”<sup>1</sup> But it is only in this *parashah*, as they are about to leave the sheltered, ivory-towered “*yeshiva*” of Mount Sinai and begin their foray into the foreboding desert,<sup>2</sup> that we see the people tallied, organized by genealogy, and conscripted into a formal army.

The first lesson of this *parashah*, then, is that we should never delude ourselves into thinking that the world in its present state is a benign, neutral entity and that we have no

1. Exodus 12:41, see also v. 51.

2. The events of this *parashah* took place on Iyar 1, 2449 (as stated in its first verse). The Jews left Mount Sinai on Iyar 20, 2449 (Numbers 10:11-12).

## OVERVIEW OF BEMIDBAR

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role to play in perfecting it. The world and every thing in it is a challenge, a call to arms, which beckons us to summon our greatest spiritual strengths in order to redeem it, to transform it back into a home for God.

But why all the detail? *Parashat Bemidbar* seems to read like an endless database of family names, statistics, and redundancies. Would it not have been far simpler if the Torah would have summarized the whole census and conscription process in a few words or sentences?

In order to begin to understand this, we must first note that—with only a very few, significant exceptions—the Torah describes the counting of each tribe in exactly the same fashion. Thus, on the one hand, the census is the great equalizer: everyone counts as one, and our respective individualities are lost as we become nondescript components of the conglomerate whole. On the other hand, *everyone is counted*, and the collective whole is implicitly lacking if anything less than all its constituent units is present. This indicates that every individual has his or her unique contribution that only he or she can make to the collective whole.

In other words, the census expresses the paradoxical interplay between individual and collective identity. Each one of us is a unique individual, totally different from the next person, and blessed with his or her own strengths and challenges. Each one of us is therefore of infinite, irreplaceable value. In a general way, this individuality is expressed by the fact that the Jewish people is subdivided into twelve distinct tribes, each of which received its own, unique blessing from its common progenitor, Jacob,<sup>3</sup> based on its own, individual variation on the Torah's theme of the service of God. Thus, each tribe is counted separately, and this fact is recorded in the Torah in order to inform us both of our uniqueness and of the indispensableness of our unique contribution in the battle for Divinity in this world.

On the other hand, inasmuch as we all share a common collective identity, we therefore reflect and complement one another. None of us is capable of fighting the battle alone, and we must all draw on the strengths and inspiration of our fellow Jews. For this reason, it is not enough for us to only hear and read the Torah's census of our own tribe; we must hear and read the census of *all* the tribes, individually, even though they outwardly sound the same to us.<sup>4</sup> In this way, we absorb all their individual inner strengths and are enabled to identify with them all.

The common, collective identity we all share is the inner core of the Divine soul, the "part of God above" within each of us. But paradoxically, it is this same Divine soul that is the source of our individuality. This is because Godliness itself is both simple and complex: God is an absolutely simple, non-complex unity, and anything Godly reflects this oneness. But at the same time, God is the source of everything that is, which means that God's uncompromised unity contains the potential for infinite varieties of expression. Each Divine soul is at once an expression of the absolute simplicity of Divinity as well as a unique facet of God's potential to express Himself.

Thus, the paradox of the census forces us to consider and focus on the one aspect of our personality that we all share equally and that is at the same time the source of our infinitely unique individuality, the inner core of the Divine soul.

It is this inner point of Divinity within us that motivates and spurs us on in the struggle to redeem the world. For once we have become attuned to our inner connection with God,

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3. Genesis 49; see also Deuteronomy 33, where Moses also blesses the Jewish people as individual tribes.

4. This is particularly true nowadays, when the majority of us no longer know to which tribe we belong. The advantage of this situation is that we must now perforce focus on the reciprocal inter-inclusion of the Jewish people as we all cultivate the individual traits associated with each tribe.

## OVERVIEW OF BEMIDBAR

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nothing can oppose our dedication to the challenge of the Book of Numbers, to embark on the perilous yet promising journey through the godless desert, ultimately transforming it into the Promised Land. Thus inspired, we are ready to join the ranks of God's legions, to be counted and conscripted into the forces of goodness and holiness whose mission it is to bring reality to its truest fulfillment.<sup>5</sup>

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5. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 2, p. 296; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5733, p. 410; *Sichot Kodesh* 5724, pp. 346-347.

— ONKELOS —  
 1:1 ומליל יי עם משה במדברא  
 דסיני במשכן ומנא בחד לירחא  
 תנינא בשתא תניחא למפקדון  
 מארעא דמצרים למימר: 2 קבילו  
 ית חשבון כל כנשתא דבני ישראל  
 לזרעיתיהון לבית אבהיהון במנין  
 שמקון כל דכורא לגלגלתיהון:

1:1 וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַר סִינַי בְּאֶהֱל מוֹעֵד  
 בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי בַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִית לְצֵאתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ  
 מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר: 2 שָׂאוּ אֶת־רֹאשׁ כָּל־עַדְת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבוֹתָם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת כָּל־זָכָר  
 לְגִלְגֻלְתָּם:

— RASHI —

המשכן, ובאחד באייר מנאם: 2 למשפחותם. דע מנין  
 כל שבט ושבת: לבית אבתם. מי שאביו משבט אחד  
 ואמו משבט אחר, יקום על שבט אביו: לגלגלתם. על  
 ידי שקלים, בקע לגלגלת:

1 וידבר במדבר סיני באחד לחודש וגו'. מתוך חבתן  
 לפניו מונה אותם כל שעה: כשיצאו ממצרים מנאן,  
 וכשנפלו בעגל מנאן, לידע מנין הנותרים, וכשבא  
 להשרות שכבתו עליהם מנאם — באחד בניסן הוקם

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

the Tabernacle.<sup>10</sup>

As was mentioned in the Overview, counting the people highlights our common essence, our Divine soul. The three censuses thus served to manifest our Divine consciousness within us in three stages:

1) When we left Egypt, the Divine soul became manifest, but only in a very general way. Our Divine consciousness encompassed our whole being enough to inspire us to follow God blindly into the desert, but it did not yet change us fundamentally. (This is similar to how people possessing only simple faith in God can be willing to lay down their

lives for Jewish values even if these values have not yet affected their daily conduct.)

2) When God commanded us to build the Tabernacle, whose purpose it was to enable Him to dwell *within* us, our Divine soul became manifest enough to affect the way we think and feel. But because God “imposed” this revelation on us from above and it was not the result of any self-refinement on our part, its effect was only transient.

3) Finally, after the Tabernacle was built and we began to participate in the sacrificial rites, our Divine souls could become fully manifest; our efforts at

INNER DIMENSIONS

[1-2] In the Sinai desert in the Tent of Meeting...take a census (lit. raise the heads) of all the congregation of the Israelites: The parched desert is a metaphor for the overwhelming thirst for Godliness we feel and express in prayer. King David articulated this imagery in the Psalms: “The song of David when he was in the Judean desert: ‘God, You are my God; I seek You in the morning, My soul thirsts for You.’”<sup>11</sup>

The Tent of Meeting alludes to the revelation of God in the Torah and its commandments. A tent is an enveloping cover, alluding to the transcendent (*makif*) Divinity we access by performing the commandments, while the word “meeting” alludes to the intimate (*penimi*) encounter with Divinity we experience in learning the Torah.

Thus, the desert is a metaphor for our upward striving toward Godliness, while the Tent of Meeting alludes to the downward flow of

Godliness into our lives.

Our relationship with God must incorporate both of these opposing yet complimentary dynamics, the ascent of prayer and the descent of learning Torah and performing the commandments. It can then “raise our heads,” i.e., elevate us to the highest expression of our souls, the revelation of their source.<sup>12</sup>

[2] Take a census [‘raise the heads’]: When a person is born, only a radiance of his or her soul enters the body. The soul’s essence—its “head”—remains above, in the spiritual realms. Nonetheless, the soul’s “head” is affected by what the rest of the soul does while here below. By performing God’s commandments and fulfilling its mission from within the body, the soul below raises its “head,” enabling it to attain a higher awareness of God in the supernal realms.<sup>13</sup>

10. Ibid. 30:11-16. 11. Psalms 63:1-2. 12. *Yom Tov shel Rosh HaShanah* 5666, p. 236. 13. *HaYom Yom*, 2 Sivan; *Likutei Torah* 3:2a ff.

## The Third Census

1:1 After the Tabernacle was erected and began to function, God instructed Moses to take a census of the Jewish people. The act of counting the people at this time indicated that the erection of the Tabernacle was a pivotal junction in the people's history and that God values each individual's contribution to the Divine plan for creation. The importance of the census would have required that it be conducted on the same day the Tabernacle was erected—the first day of Nisan—but doing so would have detracted from the people's focus on the Tabernacle itself and the rites performed within it. On the other hand, postponing the census until immediately after the installation rites would have given the impression that the significance of the census was a subordinate aspect of the people's relationship with the Tabernacle, rather than an integral part of it. God therefore scheduled the census for the first day of the next month, indicating that, like the erection of the Tabernacle, the census was also important enough to take place on the *first* day of a month.<sup>1</sup> Thus, **God spoke to Moses in the Sinai Desert, in the Tent of Meeting, on the first day of Iyar, the second month of 2449, the second year after their exodus from Egypt, saying:**

2 **“Take a census of all the adult males of the congregation of the Israelites by families and then add up the family totals to arrive at the total for each tribe.<sup>2</sup> The people's tribal lineage will follow their paternal houses. Do not count them directly, but indirectly: take a half-shekel from each in accordance with the number of their names, one for each. Thus you will have an exact head count of every male.**

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### ∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

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1 **In the desert:** The silent desolation of the desert is a metaphor for the lack of Divine revelation in creation. Yet, despite its spiritual silence, the mute world can indeed be taught to express the Divinity hidden within it.<sup>3</sup> The Jewish people are uniquely suited to this task: by studying the Torah and observing its commandments, we can unveil the Divine purpose and potential behind every aspect of reality. In this way, we cultivate the barren desert, enabling it to express its Divine source and the purpose of its creation.<sup>4</sup>

2 **Take a census:** Counting something is a way of showing that we value it.<sup>5</sup> By counting how much of something we possess, we express how much each unit of the aggregate whole adds to the value of the whole and how indispensable each unit is to the whole.

In this census, the fact that each Jew counted for one—neither more nor less—indicates that every Jew is equally dear to God, as an individual. Every Jew possesses this invaluable worth by virtue of his or her unique soul-essence. By virtue of this essence,

which the simplest Jew possesses no less than did Moses, all Jews are all equally God's children.

When we recognize this, we, too, will cherish and never dismiss or overlook any Jew.<sup>6</sup>

**Take a census:** The idiom the Torah uses for “take a census” is “raise the heads.” Since the purpose of the census was to conscript us for the task of battling the desolation of the spiritual desert, this indicates that in order to overcome this enemy, we must always feel above it.

Therefore, the first, fundamental directive of the *Shulchan Aruch*, the Code of Jewish Law,<sup>7</sup> is that when it comes to Jewish observance, we must not be embarrassed by scoffers. This includes external scoffers—those who try to mock us for our dedication to our ideals—and our inner scoffer, the evil inclination.<sup>8</sup>

**Take a census:** This is the third time the people were counted. The first time was when they left Egypt;<sup>9</sup> the second time was after the sin of the Golden Calf, when God commanded them to build

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1. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 8, p. 2, note 11. 2. Rashi, according to *Gur Aryeh* and *Maskil LeDavid*. 3. This is alluded to by the fact that the word for “desert” in Hebrew (מדבר) is related to the word for “speaks” (מדבר). 4. *Sefer HaSichot* 5749, vol. 2, p. 477. 5. See Rashi. 6. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 8, pp. 231-232. 7. *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Orach Chaim* 1:1. 8. *Hitva'aduyot* 5743, vol. 3, p. 1612. 9. Exodus 12:37

ONKELOS

3 מבר עשרין שנין ולעלא כל  
 נפק חילא בישראל תמנן יתהון  
 לחיליהון את ואהרן: 4 ועמכון  
 יהון גברא גברא לשבטא גבר  
 ריש לבית אבהתוהי הוא:  
 5 ואלין שמהת גבריא די קומון  
 עמכון לראובן אליצור בר  
 שדיאור: 6 לשמעון שלמיאל בר  
 צורישדי: 7 ליהודה נחשון בר  
 עמינדב: 8 ליששכר נתנאל בר  
 צוער: 9 לזבולן אליאב בר חלן:  
 10 לבני יוסף לאפרים אלישמע  
 בר עמיהוד למנשה גמליאל  
 בר פדהצור: 11 לבנימין אבידן  
 בר גדעוני: 12 לזן אחיעזר בר  
 עמישדי: 13 לאשר פגעאל בר  
 עכרן: 14 לגד אליסף בר דעואל:

3 מִבְּנֵי עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כָּל־יֵצֵא צָבָא בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל  
 תִּפְקְדוּ אֹתָם לְצַבְאֹתָם אֹתָהּ וְאַהֲרֹן: 4 וְאַתְּכֶם יְהִיוּ  
 אִישׁ אִישׁ לְמִטָּה אִישׁ רֹאשׁ לְבֵית־אֲבֹתָיו הוּא:  
 5 וְאַלֶּה שְׁמוֹת הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר יַעֲמְדוּ אִתְּכֶם לְרֹאשׁוֹן  
 אֱלִיצֹר בֶּן־שְׂדִיאוֹר: 6 לְשִׁמְעוֹן שְׁלֹמִיאֵל בֶּן־צוּרִישְׁדִי:  
 7 לְיְהוּדָה נַחֲשׁוֹן בֶּן־עַמִּינָדָב: 8 לְיִשָּׁשְׁכָר נְתַנָּאל בֶּן־  
 צוּעֵר: 9 לְזַבּוּלָן אֱלִיאָב בֶּן־חֶלֶן: 10 לְבְנֵי יוֹסֵף לְאַפְרַיִם  
 אֱלִישְׁמַע בֶּן־עַמִּיהוּד לְמִנְשֵׁה גַמְלִיאֵל בֶּן־פְּדָה־צוּר:  
 11 לְבְנִימִן אַבִּידָן בֶּן־גַּדְעוֹנִי: 12 לְזֶן אַחִיעֶזֶר בֶּן־עַמִּישְׁדִי:  
 13 לְאֲשֶׁר פְּגַעִיאֵל בֶּן־דְּעוּאֵל: 14 לְגַד אֱלִיסָף בֶּן־דְּעוּאֵל:

RASHI

3 כל יצא צבא. מגיד שאין יוצא בצבא פחות מִבְּנֵי עֲשָׂרִים: 4 ואתכם יהיו עמכם. נשיא כל שבט ושכט:

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affects the entire world for the better.<sup>17</sup>

**3 You and Aaron:** Every organized country counts its citizens periodically. Those hired for this task are often unskilled people, unemployed or without credentials for more skillful work. To count the Jewish people, however, God enlisted Moses himself—the prominent leader of the Jewish people, the spiritual paragon who received the Torah directly from God—and told him to put aside his lofty concerns and go from tent to tent to count the Jewish people. Since this task stretches beyond the capacity of one person, God assigned Aaron and the tribal leaders, the next most prestigious individuals among the nation,<sup>18</sup> to assist him.

We see from the fact that God delegated taking the census only to the most prestigious dignitaries how important He considers the Jewish people, His chosen nation.<sup>19</sup>

**Shall count all those in Israel:** Although counting expresses the importance of each individual, God instructed Moses to count only the Jews over twenty, the age of conscription into the army.

This is because the army is the representative of its nation. As the soldiers go out into the world, they are expected to act as a living example of their people. The same is true of all of us, since we are all charged to act as God’s “soldiers.” We are expected

to wear our “uniforms” proudly, acting in a manner that makes it obvious that we serve in God’s army. Any observer should easily recognize that we have been drafted by God and have been charged with the mission to conquer the world with goodness and holiness.

We are counted only when we have reached the point in our spiritual maturity where we identify with our Divine soul strongly enough to enlist in God’s army. As long as we exhibit this readiness, no distinction is made regarding the level of spirituality or degree of Torah study we have achieved; no matter what, each of us counts as one.<sup>20</sup>

**4 There shall be one man with you from each tribe:** In contrast to the previous censuses,<sup>21</sup> the people were counted in this census by tribes. This indicates that God was emphasizing now not only the common spiritual denominator of every Jew but also each Jew’s unique spiritual makeup, which distinguishes him or her from every other Jew. The fact that every Jew nonetheless counted as one emphasized how each individual’s unique nature contributes equally toward the creation of the Jewish people as a vital whole. For this reason, all the princes had to assist Moses and Aaron in counting each tribe.<sup>22</sup>

17. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 8, pp. 209-215. 18. “Who are called upon for all important matters of the congregation” (Rashi on 1:16). 19. *Hitvo’aduyot* 5745, vol. 4, pp. 2092-2094. 20. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 8, pp. 219-220. 21. Exodus 12:37, 30:11-16; Rashi on Exodus 30:16. 22. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 23, pp. 6-7.

**3 You and Aaron shall count all those males in Israel 20 years old and over up to age 60—for only males between 20 and 60 are fit to serve in the army<sup>14</sup>—by their tribal troops.**

**4 Throughout the census there shall be one man with you from each tribe: i.e., the prince of that tribe, the one who is the head of his paternal house. All 12 princes shall assist you in counting each tribe.<sup>15</sup>**

**5 These are the names of the men who shall stand with you: for Reuben, Elitzur the son of Shede'ur;**

**6 for Simeon, Shelumiel the son of Tzurishadai;**

**7 for Judah, Nachshon the son of Aminadav;**

**8 for Issachar, Netanel the son of Tzu'ar;**

**9 for Zebulun, Eliav the son of Chelon;**

**10 for the descendants of Joseph: for Ephraim, Elishama the son of Amihud; for Manasseh, Gamliel the son of Pedahzur;**

**11 for Benjamin, Avidan the son of Gidon;**

**12 for Dan, Achiezer the son of Amishadai;**

**13 for Asher, Pagiel the son of Ochran;**

**14 for Gad, Eliasaf the son of De'uel;**

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self-refinement ensured that our Divine consciousness would become and remain an intrinsic part of ourselves.

This is another reason why this third census was held in Iyar rather than in Nisan. Nisan, the month of the Exodus, expresses how God takes the initiative to extricate us from our material orientation. Iyar, the month spent in spiritual preparation for the giving of the Torah, expresses our initiative in refining ourselves.

Finally, this is also why Aaron had to participate in this census, while Moses conducted the previous censuses by himself. Whereas Moses was “the Groom’s escort,” who brought God’s message down to earth, Aaron was “the Bride’s escort,” who brought the people to God, inspiring them to live their lives in a Godly way.<sup>16</sup>

**By families:** The purpose of counting the Jewish people according to families was in order to add the family tallies together and thus arrive at the sums of the different tribes. The count of the families themselves is not recorded in the Torah.

Nonetheless, the Torah still mentions the families, in order to stress the centrality of the family in Judaism. Even though we are counting the people as a whole and stressing the importance and unique-

ness of every single Jew, we must still pay attention to the proper functioning of the family structure.

Our individual and national needs, goals, desires, and fulfillment are certainly important and we must not overlook them. Together with this, however, the Torah demands of us the selflessness necessary to forge the family unit. Husband and wife are two separate people with their own natures, desires, and even mission in life, yet each one must work for and with the other. They should strive to complete each other and to seamlessly merge into two halves of one complete unit.

The strife and lack of communication the world suffers stems from selfishness, from individuals seeing others as mere means to be exploited for their own personal ends. In contrast, as Jews, we are commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves, and the primary setting in which this commandment is to be fulfilled is our families. Inasmuch as loving our fellow Jew is an expression of our love of God, practicing loving our fellow Jew enhances our love of God. Love of God, in turn, brings us to love His Torah and study it—not merely out of our obligation to do so, but out of love. This threefold love of our fellow Jew, God, and the Torah ripples outward from the family setting and

<sup>14</sup> Rashi on Song of Songs 3:7; *Gur Aryeh* on Rashi on Exodus 30:16; *Bava Batra* 121b, Rashbam here, *s.v. shepekudav*; see also *Tosefot* on *Bava Batra* 121a, *s.v. Yom shekalu*, quoting *Y. Moed Katan*; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 21, p. 92, note 27. <sup>15</sup> *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 8, p. 47. <sup>16</sup> *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 8, pp. 3-7.

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15 לנפתלי אֲחִירַע בֶּן־עֵינָן: 16 אֵלֶּה קְרִיאֵי {קְרוּאֵי} הָעֵדָה נְשִׂאֵי מִטּוֹת אַבֹּתֶם רֵאשֵׁי אֲלֵפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵם: 17 וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה וְאֶהֱרֹן אֶת הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר נִקְּבוּ בְשֵׁמוֹת: 18 וְאֵת כָּל־הָעֵדָה הִקְהִילוּ בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי וַיִּתְּיָלוּ עַל־מִשְׁפַּחְתָּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפַּר שֵׁמוֹת מִבְּנֵי עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה לְגִלְגָּלְתָּם: 19 כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה וַיִּפְקְדֵם בְּמִדְבַּר סִינַי: ׀ שְׁנֵי 20 וַיְהִיו בְּנֵי־רְאוּבֵן בְּכֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל תּוֹלְדֹתָם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפַּר שֵׁמוֹת לְגִלְגָּלְתָּם כָּל־זָכָר מִבְּנֵי עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כָּל יֵצֵא צֶבֶא: 21 פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה רְאוּבֵן שִׁשָּׁה וְאַרְבָּעִים אֶלֶף וַחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת: ׀ 22 לְבָנָי שְׁמֹעוֹן תּוֹלְדֹתָם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם פְּקֻדֵיהֶם בְּמִסְפַּר שֵׁמוֹת לְגִלְגָּלְתָּם כָּל־זָכָר מִבְּנֵי עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כָּל יֵצֵא צֶבֶא: 23 פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה שְׁמֹעוֹן תִּשְׁעָה וַחֲמִשִּׁים אֶלֶף וּשְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת: ׀ 24 לְבָנָי גַּד תּוֹלְדֹתָם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפַּר שֵׁמוֹת מִבְּנֵי עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כָּל יֵצֵא צֶבֶא: 25 פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה גַּד חֲמִשָּׁה וְאַרְבָּעִים אֶלֶף וּשְׁשׁ מֵאוֹת וַחֲמִשִּׁים: ׀

15 לנפתלי אֲחִירַע בֶּן־עֵינָן: 16 אֵלֶּה קְרִיאֵי {קְרוּאֵי} הָעֵדָה נְשִׂאֵי מִטּוֹת אַבֹּתֶם רֵאשֵׁי אֲלֵפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵם: 17 וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה וְאֶהֱרֹן אֶת הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר נִקְּבוּ בְשֵׁמוֹת: 18 וְאֵת כָּל־הָעֵדָה הִקְהִילוּ בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי וַיִּתְּיָלוּ עַל־מִשְׁפַּחְתָּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפַּר שֵׁמוֹת מִבְּנֵי עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה לְגִלְגָּלְתָּם: 19 כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה וַיִּפְקְדֵם בְּמִדְבַּר סִינַי: ׀ שְׁנֵי 20 וַיְהִיו בְּנֵי־רְאוּבֵן בְּכֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל תּוֹלְדֹתָם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפַּר שֵׁמוֹת לְגִלְגָּלְתָּם כָּל־זָכָר מִבְּנֵי עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כָּל יֵצֵא צֶבֶא: 21 פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה רְאוּבֵן שִׁשָּׁה וְאַרְבָּעִים אֶלֶף וַחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת: ׀ 22 לְבָנָי שְׁמֹעוֹן תּוֹלְדֹתָם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם פְּקֻדֵיהֶם בְּמִסְפַּר שֵׁמוֹת לְגִלְגָּלְתָּם כָּל־זָכָר מִבְּנֵי עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כָּל יֵצֵא צֶבֶא: 23 פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה שְׁמֹעוֹן תִּשְׁעָה וַחֲמִשִּׁים אֶלֶף וּשְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת: ׀ 24 לְבָנָי גַּד תּוֹלְדֹתָם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפַּר שֵׁמוֹת מִבְּנֵי עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כָּל יֵצֵא צֶבֶא: 25 פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה גַּד חֲמִשָּׁה וְאַרְבָּעִים אֶלֶף וּשְׁשׁ מֵאוֹת וַחֲמִשִּׁים: ׀

— RASHI —

מִשְׁפַּחְתָּם. הֵבִיאוּ סִפְרֵי יְחוּסֵיהֶם וְעַדִּי חֹזֶקת לְדַתְּם, כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד לְהִתְיַחֵס עַל הַשִּׁבְט:

16 אֵלֶּה קְרוּאֵי הָעֵדָה. הִנְקֻרְאִים לְכָל דָּבָר חֲשִׁיבוֹת שְׁבַע־עֵדָה: 17 הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה. אֵת שְׁנַיִם עֶשֶׂר נְשִׂאִים הִלְלוּ: אֲשֶׁר נִקְּבוּ. לוֹ כָּאֵן בְּשֵׁמוֹת: 18 וַיִּתְּיָלוּ עַל

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thanks to the protection given them by the clouds of glory, the Jews remained healthy, despite the adverse conditions of the desert.

We see from this that the Jewish people—by virtue of their connection to God expressed through studying the Torah and fulfilling its commandments—were not bound by the laws of nature. Furthermore, their ability to override nature was self-evident, ex-

pressed not only in spiritual concerns, but in physical health and well-being as well.

This holds true today as it did then. To the extent that we live our lives according to the dictates of the Torah, we too will be blessed with spiritual and physical health, despite any obstacles posed by the laws of nature.<sup>27</sup>

27. Likutei Sichot, vol. 8, pp. 220-222.

15 for Naphtali, Achira the son of Einan.”

16 **These men were** until now simply the heads of their respective tribes. By appointing them to assist Moses collectively in conducting the census, God promoted them to be **the ones summoned from the congregation** to represent the people collectively in all important matters as **the princes of the tribes of their fathers**; thus, **they all became the heads of the thousands of Israel.**

17 **So Moses and Aaron took these men, who had been designated by God by their names,** and installed them in their new capacity and office.<sup>23</sup>

18 Moses and Aaron **assembled all the congregation** of adult male Israelites on the same day, **the first day of the second month, and they all registered their lineage according to their families and according to their fathers’ houses** by producing their family records and bringing witnesses regarding the social acceptance of their family ties.<sup>24</sup> They then counted them by **the number of their names**, i.e., first making sure each gave one half-shekel and then counting these half-shekels. Thus they had **a head count of every male 20 years old and over.**

19 **As God commanded Moses, so did he count them in the Sinai desert.** They found that miraculously, the tally of each tribe was an exact round number, divisible by 50, as follows:<sup>25</sup>

- ◆ *Second Reading* 20 **This was the tally of the tribe of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel—their descendants who were counted according to their families, according to their fathers’ houses, by the number of individual names, and according to the head count of every male 20 years old and over, all who were fit to serve in the army:**

21 **the tally of the tribe of Reuben was 46,500.**

22 **This was the tally of the tribe of Simeon—their descendants who were counted according to their families, according to their fathers’ houses, by the number of individual names, and according to the head count of every male 20 years old and over, all who were fit to serve in the army:**

23 **the tally of the tribe of Simeon was 59,300.**

24 **This was the tally of the tribe of Gad—their descendants who were counted according to their families, according to their fathers’ houses, and by the number of individual names, 20 years old and over, all who were fit to serve in the army:**

25 **the tally of the tribe of Gad was 45,650.**

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20 **All who go out to war:** This phrase (and its repetition in the tally of each tribe) implies that no one included in the census was unable to go to war;

they were strong, all able-bodied men.<sup>26</sup> This was a miracle. As we know, all the sick and crippled of our people were healed when the Torah was given;

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23. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 23, pp. 1-7. Thus, although the princes’ names were mentioned a month earlier, at the installation rites (below, 7:12-83), they are repeated here. By calling them each by name, God re-identified them in their new capacity. 24. No one could testify that a particular individual was in fact the child of a particular set of parents; but witnesses could testify that a particular individual was accepted and assumed by the community to be the child of this set of parents, and this was enough to legally establish the individual’s parentage. 25. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 13, p. 111, note 13. 26. *Or HaChaim* on this verse.

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26 לבני יהודה תולדתהון לזרעיתהון לבית אבהתהון במנין שמקו מבר עשרין שנין ולעלא כל נפק חילא: 27 מניניהון לשבטא דיהודה שבועין וארבעא אלפין ושית מאה: 28 לבני יששכר תולדתהון לזרעיתהון לבית אבהתהון במנין שמקו מבר עשרין שנין ולעלא כל נפק חילא: 29 מניניהון לשבטא חמשין וארבעא אלפין וארבע מאה: 30 לבני זבולן תולדתהון לזרעיתהון לבית אבהתהון במנין שמקו מבר עשרין שנין ולעלא כל נפק חילא: 31 מניניהון לשבטא דובולן חמשין ושבעא אלפין וארבע מאה: 32 לבני יוסף לבני אפרים תולדתהון לזרעיתהון לבית אבהתהון במנין שמקו מבר עשרין שנין ולעלא כל נפק חילא: 33 מניניהון לשבטא דאפרים ארבעין אלפין וחמש מאה: 34 לבני מנשה תולדתהון לזרעיתהון לבית אבהתהון במנין שמקו מבר עשרין שנין ולעלא כל נפק חילא: 35 מניניהון לשבטא דמנשה תלתין ותריין אלפין ומאתן: 36 לבני בנימן תולדתהון לזרעיתהון לבית אבהתהון במנין שמקו מבר עשרין שנין ולעלא כל נפק חילא: 37 מניניהון לשבטא דבנימן תלתין וחמשא אלפין וארבע מאה: 38 לבני דן תולדתהון לזרעיתהון לבית אבהתהון במנין שמקו מבר עשרין שנין ולעלא כל נפק חילא: 39 מניניהון לשבטא דדן שתין ותריין אלפין ושבע מאה: 40 לבני אשר תולדתהון לזרעיתהון לבית אבהתהון במנין שמקו מבר עשרין שנין ולעלא כל נפק חילא: 41 מניניהון לשבטא דאשר ארבעין וחד אלפין וחמש מאה:

26 לְבָנֵי יְהוּדָה תּוֹלְדֹתֵם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבַיִת אֲבֹתְכֶם  
בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמֹת מִבְּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא:  
27 פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה יְהוּדָה אַרְבַּעַה וּשְׁבַעַיִם אֲלָף וּשְׁשִׁי  
מֵאוֹת: פ

28 לְבָנֵי יִשָּׁשְׁכָר תּוֹלְדֹתֵם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבַיִת אֲבֹתְכֶם  
בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמֹת מִבְּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא:  
29 פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה יִשָּׁשְׁכָר אַרְבַּעַה וַחֲמִשִּׁים אֲלָף  
וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת: פ

30 לְבָנֵי זְבוּלֹן תּוֹלְדֹתֵם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבַיִת אֲבֹתְכֶם  
בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמֹת מִבְּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא:  
31 פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה זְבוּלֹן שְׁבַעַה וַחֲמִשִּׁים אֲלָף וְאַרְבַּע  
מֵאוֹת: פ

32 לְבָנֵי יוֹסֵף אֶפְרַיִם תּוֹלְדֹתֵם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבַיִת  
אֲבֹתְכֶם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמֹת מִבְּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא  
צָבָא: 33 פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה אֶפְרַיִם אַרְבַּעַיִם אֲלָף וַחֲמִשִּׁי  
מֵאוֹת: פ

34 לְבָנֵי מְנַשֶּׁה תּוֹלְדֹתֵם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבַיִת אֲבֹתְכֶם  
בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמֹת מִבְּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא  
צָבָא: 35 פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה מְנַשֶּׁה שְׁנַיִם וּשְׁלֹשִׁים אֲלָף  
וּמֵאוֹת: פ

36 לְבָנֵי בְנִימִן תּוֹלְדֹתֵם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבַיִת אֲבֹתְכֶם  
בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמֹת מִבְּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא:

37 פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה בְנִימִן חֲמִשָּׁה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים אֲלָף וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת: פ

38 לְבָנֵי דָן תּוֹלְדֹתֵם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבַיִת אֲבֹתְכֶם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמֹת מִבְּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה  
וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: 39 פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה דָן שְׁנַיִם וּשְׁשִׁים אֲלָף וּשְׁבַע מֵאוֹת: פ  
40 לְבָנֵי אֲשֵׁר תּוֹלְדֹתֵם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבַיִת אֲבֹתְכֶם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמֹת מִבְּן עֶשְׂרִים  
שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: 41 פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה אֲשֵׁר אֶחָד וְאַרְבַּעַיִם אֲלָף וַחֲמִשִּׁי  
מֵאוֹת: פ

**26** This was the tally of the tribe of Judah—their descendants who were counted according to their families, according to their fathers' houses, and by the number of individual names, 20 years old and over, all who were fit to serve in the army:

**27** the tally of the tribe of Judah was 74,600.

**28** This was the tally of the tribe of Issachar—their descendants who were counted according to their families, according to their fathers' houses, and by the number of individual names, 20 years old and over, all who were fit to serve in the army:

**29** the tally of the tribe of Issachar was 54,400.

**30** This was the tally of the tribe of Zebulun—their descendants who were counted according to their families, according to their fathers' houses, and by the number of individual names, 20 years old and over, all who were fit to serve in the army:

**31** the tally of the tribe of Zebulun was 57,400.

**32** For the tribe of Joseph: this was the tally of the tribe of Ephraim—their descendants who were counted according to their families, according to their fathers' houses, and by the number of individual names, 20 years old and over, all who were fit to serve in the army:

**33** the tally of the tribe of Ephraim was 40,500.

**34** This was the tally of the tribe of Manasseh—their descendants who were counted according to their families, according to their fathers' houses, and by the number of individual names, 20 years old and over, all who were fit to serve in the army:

**35** the tally of the tribe of Manasseh was 32,200.

**36** This was the tally of the tribe of Benjamin—their descendants who were counted according to their families, according to their fathers' houses, and by the number of individual names, 20 years old and over, all who were fit to serve in the army:

**37** the tally of the tribe of Benjamin was 35,400.

**38** This was the tally of the tribe of Dan—their descendants who were counted according to their families, according to their fathers' houses, and by the number of individual names, 20 years old and over, all who were fit to serve in the army:

**39** the tally of the tribe of Dan was 62,700.

**40** This was the tally of the tribe of Asher—their descendants who were counted according to their families, according to their fathers' houses, and by the number of individual names, 20 years old and over, all who were fit to serve in the army:

**41** the tally of the tribe of Asher was 41,500.



42 This was the tally of **the tribe of Naphtali**—their descendants who were counted according to their families, according to their fathers' houses, and by the number of individual names, 20 years old and over, all who were fit to serve in the army:

43 the tally of the tribe of Naphtali was 53,400.

44 These are the tallies counted by Moses and Aaron and the princes of Israel—12 men, each representing his fathers' house.

45 These are the tallies of all the Israelites according to their fathers' houses, 20 years old and over, all those in Israel who were fit to serve in the army:

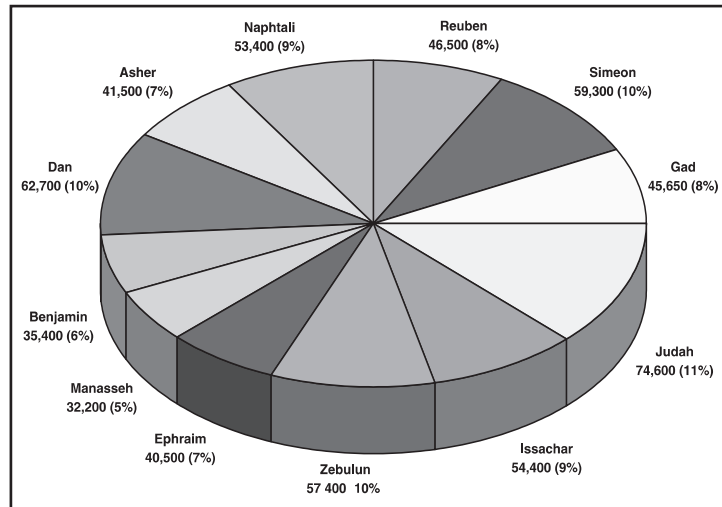


Figure 1: The Third Census

46 the sum of **all the tallies** was 603,550 (see Figure 1).

47 **But the Levites, according to their fathers' tribe, were not numbered among them**, despite the fact that the reason for this census was (a) to express the people's integral relationship with the Tabernacle, and the Levites were the Tabernacle's *officiants*, and (b) to express how God values each Jew individually, and the Levites had proven themselves to be the tribe most loyal to God in the incident of the Golden Calf!

48 So **GOD** explained why the Levites were not included. He **spoke to Moses, saying:**

49 "The Levites are indeed part of the people; **however**, they are My private legion. Therefore, **you shall not tally the tribe of Levi** the same way you counted the other Israelites, and **you shall not** add the results of their **census** to that of **the other Israelites**, for they deserve their own census. Moreover, you **shall not tally the tribe of Levi at all**; I will count them for you Myself, for reasons that will become clear later.<sup>28</sup> And even once you know how many there are of them, **you shall not** add the results of their **census** to that of **the other Israelites.**" God foresaw that in a little over three months, many of the lay Israelites would participate in the sin of the spies, and He would decree that because of their collective responsibility, the entire generation—including those innocent of this sin—would not enter the Land of Israel.<sup>29</sup> God wanted to exclude the tribe of Levi from this decree, since they had proven themselves loyal to Him at the incident of the Golden Calf.<sup>30</sup> Since it was the census that expressed the people's collective identity and responsibility, God excluded the Levites from the general census. Even though the tribe of Levi would not partici-

28. Below, 3:14 ff. 29. Below, 14:29. 30. Exodus 32:26.

— ONKELOS —

50 ואת מני ית לנאי על משכנא דסדהותא ועל כל מנוהי ועל כל די לה אנון יטלון ית משכנא וית כל מנוהי ואנון ישמשנה וסחור סחור למשכנא ישרון: 51 ובמטל משכנא יפרקון יתה לנאי ובמשרי משכנא יקימון יתה לנאי וחלונאי דיקרב יתקטל: 52 וישרון בני ישראל גבר על משרוהי וגבר על טקסה לחיליהון: 53 ולנאי ישרון סחור סחור למשכנא דסדהותא ולא יהי רגזא על כנשתא דבני ישראל וישרון לנאי ית משרת משכנא דסדהותא: 54 ועברו בני ישראל ככל די פקיד יי ית משה בן עדרו: 2:1 ומליל יי עם משה ועם אהרן למימר: 2 גבר על טקסה באתון לבית אבהתהון ישרון בני ישראל מלקבל סחור סחור למשכן זמנא ישרון:

50 ואתה הפקד את הלויים על משכן העדת ועל כל בליו ועל כל אשר לו המה ישאו את המשכן ואת כל בליו והם ישרתו וסביב למשכן יחנו: 51 ובנסע המשכן יורידו אתו הלויים ובחנת המשכן יקימו אתו הלויים והזר הקרב יומת: 52 וחנו בני ישראל איש על מחנהו ואיש על דגלו לצבאתם: 53 והלויים יחנו סביב למשכן העדת ולא יהיה קצף על עדת בני ישראל ושמרו הלויים את משמרת משכן העדות: 54 ויעשו בני ישראל ככל אשר צוה יהוה את משה בן עשו: פ  
שלישי 2:1 וידבר יהוה אל משה ואל אהרן לאמר: 2 איש על דגלו באתת לבית אבתם יחנו בני ישראל מנגד סביב לאהל מועד יחנו:

— RASHI —

כל דגל יהיה לו אות — מפה צבועה תלויה בו, צבעו של זה לא כצבעו של זה, צבע כל אחד כגון אבנו הקבועה בחשן. ומתוך כך יכיר כל אחד את דגלו. דבר אחר: "באתת לבית אבתם", באות שמטר להם יעקב אביהם כשנשאורו ממצרים, שנאמר: "ויעשו בניו לו, כן כאשר צוםם" — "יהודה ויששכר וזבולון ושאוהו מן המזרח, וראובן ושמעון וגד מן הדרום וכו'", כדאיתא בתנחומא בפרשה זו: "מנגד. מרחוק מיל, כמו שנאמר ביהושע: "אף רחוק יהיה ביניכם ובניו כאלפים אמה", שיוכלו לבא בשבת. משה ואהרן ובניו הלויים, חונים בסמוך לו:

50 ואתה הפקד את הלויים. בתרגומו: "מני" — לשון מנוי, שררה, על דבר שהוא ממנה עליו, כמו: "ויפקד המלך פקידים": 51 יורידו אתו. בתרגומו: "יפרקון" — בשבאין לסע במדבר ממסע למסע, דיו מפרקין אותו מהקמתו ונושאים אותו עד מקום אשר ישכן שם הענין ויחנו שם, ומקימין אותו: והזר הקרב. לעבודתם זו: יומת. בידי שמים: 52 ואיש על דגלו. כמו שהדגלים סדורים בספר זה — שלשה שבטים לכל דגל: 53 ולא יהיה קצף. אם תעשו כמצותי לא יהיה קצף, ואם לאו — שפינסו זרים בעבודתם זו — יהיה קצף, כמו שמצינו במעשה קרח: "כי יצא הקצף וגו'": 2 באהת.

1. אסתר ב, ג. 2. במדבר ז, יא. 3. בראשית כ, יב. 4. סימן יב. 5. יהושע ג, ד.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

**2 The Israelites shall camp:** The people's encampment on all four sides of the Tabernacle symbolized how they protect the holy edifice and the Torah that resided in its innermost sanctum. Certainly, the Torah does not need our protection—on the contrary, the Torah and its commandments protect us. However, God wishes to endow us with the noble mission of protecting the Torah.

The lesson in this is that we must guard our inner sanctuary and our inner identification with the Torah—within our hearts and our homes—from all four sides: from cool spiritual indifference on the cold north; from hot, lustful passions on the warm south; from gratification from brilliant accomplishment on the morning east; and from dark despair on the evening west.<sup>40</sup>

40. *Hitva'aduyot* 5745, vol. 4, p. 2103; *Reshimot* 62 (p. 15).

50 Explaining how the Levites are His private legion, God continued, “**Rather than having them serve in the army like the rest of the people, you shall put the Levites in charge of the Tabernacle of the Testimony, over all its furnishings and over all that pertains to it. They shall carry the Tabernacle and its furnishings when you travel, they shall serve in it, and they shall encamp around the Tabernacle.**

51 **When the Tabernacle is set to travel, the Levites shall dismantle it, and when the Tabernacle camps, the Levites shall erect it; any non-Levite who approaches and tries to do this shall be put to death by an act of God.**

52 Because of this danger, **the Israelites must camp** in a specific formation—**according to their tribal troops, each man by his tribe’s division**, three tribes per division, **and each man by his division’s banner**, as will be detailed presently<sup>34</sup>—

53 **but the Levites shall encamp around the Tabernacle of the Testimony**, separating it from the other tribes, **so that** none of them will approach the Tabernacle intending to erect, dismantle, carry, guard, or serve in it. If the Levites preserve this separation carefully, **no Divine wrath will be directed against the congregation of the Israelites**, either potentially—if the separation between the Levites and the laity is breached—or actually, if a lay Israelite attempts to perform a Levite function.<sup>35</sup> **The Levites shall guard the Tabernacle of the Testimony for this purpose.”**

54 **The Israelites did this; they did exactly according to all that God had commanded Moses.** Thus, the people encamped in three concentric camps: the Tabernacle and its courtyard was the innermost camp, known as “the camp of the Divine presence”; surrounding this was the middle camp, that of the Levites; and surrounding both was the outermost camp, that of the lay Israelites.

## The Camp

- ◆ *Third Reading 2:1* God then gave the details regarding how the camp was to be organized and how this organized camp was to travel. **God spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:**

2 **“The Israelites shall camp each man by his division’s banner**, each of which will be a unique color, and **by the insignias on the banners of their fathers’ houses**, i.e., their tribes, each of whose banners will be the color of the tribe’s stone in the high priest’s breastplate.<sup>36</sup> Their order around the Tabernacle will be the same as the order in which Jacob told his sons to carry his coffin.<sup>37</sup> **They shall encamp around the Tent of Meeting at the maximum distance** practical, in order to minimize the possibility that any layperson enter the Tabernacle precincts. This maximum practical distance is 2,000 cubits<sup>38</sup> from the outer extremity of the Tabernacle’s precincts, because it is prohibited to walk more than this distance from one inhabited area to another on the Sabbath.<sup>39</sup>

34. See below, ch. 2. 35. See *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 28, pp. 1-6. 36. Exodus 28:17-21. 37. See on Genesis 49:32. 38. See Joshua 3:4. 39. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 13, pp. 1-7. The Levites camped immediately outside the Tabernacle (above, v. 53), so it would appear that the lay camp could begin at a distance of 2000 cubits from the outer edge of the Levite camp. But since only Moses and Aaron camped on the east side of the Tabernacle (below, 3:38), and their few tents did not extend very far out from the Tabernacle’s east side, the 2000 cubits (on all sides) were measured from the edge of the Tabernacle’s precincts.

## ONKELOS

3 וְדִי שָׁרֵן קְדוּמָא מִדִּינְהָא טַקְס מְשָׁרִית יְהוּדָה לְחִילֵיהוֹן וְרָבָא לִבְנֵי יְהוּדָה נְחֻשׁוֹן בַּר עֲמִינַדָּב: 4 וְחִילָה וּמְנִינְיָהוֹן שְׁבַעִין וְאַרְבַּעַא אֲלָפִין וְשִׁית מָאָה: 5 וְדִי שָׁרֵן סְמִיכִין עֲלוּהֵי שְׁבַטָא דִּישְׁשָׁכָר וְרָבָא לִבְנֵי יִשְׁשָׁכָר נְתַנְאֵל בַּר צוּעֵר: 6 וְחִילָה וּמְנִינְיָהֵי חֲמִשִּׁין וְאַרְבַּעַא אֲלָפִין וְאַרְבַּעַ מָאָה: 7 שְׁבַטָא דְזָבוּלָן וְרָבָא לִבְנֵי זָבוּלָן אֱלִיאָב בַּר חֲלֹן: 8 וְחִילָה וּמְנִינְיָהֵי חֲמִשִּׁין וְשְׁבַעַא אֲלָפִין וְאַרְבַּעַ מָאָה: 9 כָּל מְנִינְיָא לְמְשָׁרִית יְהוּדָה וְתַמְנָן וְתַמָּא אֲלָפִין וְאַרְבַּעַ מָאָה לְחִילֵיהוֹן בְּקַדְמִיתָא נְטִלִין: 10 טַקְס מְשָׁרִית רָאוּבֵן דְרוּמָא לְחִילֵיהוֹן וְרָבָא לִבְנֵי רָאוּבֵן אֱלִיעֶזֶר בַּר שְׁדִיאֹר: 11 וְחִילָה וּמְנִינְיָהֵי אַרְבַּעִין וְתַמָּא אֲלָפִין וְחֲמִשׁ מָאָה: 12 וְדִי שָׁרֵן סְמִיכִין עֲלוּהֵי שְׁבַטָא דְשִׁמְעוֹן וְרָבָא לִבְנֵי שִׁמְעוֹן שְׁלֵמִיאֵל בַּר צוּרִישְׁדִי: 13 וְחִילָה וּמְנִינְיָהוֹן חֲמִשִּׁין וְתַשְׁעָא אֲלָפִין וְתַלַּת מָאָה: 14 וְשְׁבַטָא דְגַד וְרָבָא לִבְנֵי גַד אֱלִיסָפָא בַּר רְעוּאֵל:

3 וְהַחֲנִים קְדָמָה מִזִּרְחָה דְגֵל מְחַנְהַ יְהוּדָה לְצַבְאָתָם וְנִשְׂיָא לִבְנֵי יְהוּדָה נְחֻשׁוֹן בְּרַעְמִינַדָּב: 4 וְצַבְאָו וּפְקֻדֵיהֶם אַרְבַּעָה וְשְׁבַעִים אֲלָף וְשִׁשׁ מֵאוֹת: 5 וְהַחֲנִים עָלָיו מִטָּה יִשְׁשָׁכָר וְנִשְׂיָא לִבְנֵי יִשְׁשָׁכָר נְתַנְאֵל בְּרַעְוֵר: 6 וְצַבְאָו וּפְקֻדָיו אַרְבַּעָה וְחֲמִשִּׁים אֲלָף וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת: 7 מִטָּה זָבוּלָן וְנִשְׂיָא לִבְנֵי זָבוּלָן אֱלִיאָב בְּרַחֲלֹן: 8 וְצַבְאָו וּפְקֻדָיו שְׁבַעָה וְחֲמִשִּׁים אֲלָף וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת: 9 פְּלִתְהַפְקֻדָיִם לְמְחַנְהַ יְהוּדָה מֵאֵת אֲלָף וְשִׁמְנַיִם אֲלָף וְשִׁשְׁת־אַלְפִים וְאַרְבַּע־מֵאוֹת לְצַבְאָתָם רְאִשְׁנָה יִסְעוּ: 8

10 דְגֵל מְחַנְהַ רָאוּבֵן תִּימְנָה לְצַבְאָתָם וְנִשְׂיָא לִבְנֵי רָאוּבֵן אֱלִיעֶזֶר בְּרַשְׁדִיאֹר: 11 וְצַבְאָו וּפְקֻדָיו שִׁשָּׁה וְאַרְבַּעִים אֲלָף וְחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת: 12 וְהַחוּנָם עָלָיו מִטָּה שִׁמְעוֹן וְנִשְׂיָא לִבְנֵי שִׁמְעוֹן שְׁלֵמִיאֵל בְּרַצוּרִישְׁדִי: 13 וְצַבְאָו וּפְקֻדֵיהֶם תַּשְׁעָה וְחֲמִשִּׁים אֲלָף וְשִׁלְשׁ מֵאוֹת: 14 וּמִטָּה גַד וְנִשְׂיָא לִבְנֵי גַד אֱלִיסָפָא בְּרַעוּאֵל:

## RASHI

תחלה, וכשהולכין הולכין בדרך חנינות: הלויים והעגלות באמצע, דגל יהודה במזרח, ושל ראובן בדרום, ושל אפרים במערב, ושל דן בצפון:

3 קדמה. לפנים הקרויה "קדם". ואיזו? זו רוח מזרחית. והמערב קרוי "אחור": 9 ראשנה יסעו. כשרואין הענן מסתלק תוקעין הכהנים בחצוצרות ונוסע מחנה יהודה

## INNER DIMENSIONS

[continued...] Torah, revealing new levels of Divine insight latent within it, by learning it and obeying the Divine commandments it contains. This is why they must camp "around" the Torah, because the word for "around" (*saviv*) alludes to the transcendent aspects of Divinity (*sovev kol almin*) they draw into it.

By catalyzing the revelation of these new insights from the Torah, the Jews draw the infinite Torah into the finite realm of time and space. This is alluded to by the name of the Tent of Meeting itself, for a "tent" is a structure that extends in

space, while a "meeting" is an event, a moment in time.

Yet, at the same time, God tells the people to camp at a distance of two thousand cubits from the Tent, alluding to the two thousand "years" by which the Torah preceded creation. The Jews must always be aware that there is a distance separating them from the Torah, that no matter how profound their role in wresting its treasures from it and revealing them to the world, the Torah is infinite and therefore remains forever out of reach, beyond us.<sup>42</sup>

42. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5717, pp. 176-177; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5730, pp. 231-233.

- 3 Those camping in front, to the east, will be under the banner of the division of Judah, organized according to their troops. The prince of the tribe of Judah is Nachshon the son of Aminadav;
- 4 the tally for his troop is 74,600.
- 5 Camping next to him will be the tribe of Issachar. The prince of the tribe of Issachar is Netanel the son of Tzu'ar;
- 6 the tally for his troop is 54,400.
- 7 Next to him will be the tribe of Zebulun. The prince of the tribe of Zebulun is Eliav the son of Chelon;
- 8 the tally for his troop is 57,400.
- 9 The total sum for the division of Judah according to their troops is 186,400; these shall set out first.
- 10 "Those camping under the banner of the division of Reuben will be to the south, organized according to their troops. The prince of the tribe of Reuben is Elitzur the son of Shede'ur;
- 11 the tally for his troop is 46,500.
- 12 Camping next to him will be the tribe of Simeon. The prince of the tribe of Simeon is Shelumiel the son of Tzurishadai;
- 13 the tally for his troop is 59,300.
- 14 Next to him will be the tribe of Gad. The prince of the tribe of Gad is Eliasaf the son of Re'uel, who was mentioned previously<sup>41</sup> as De'uel;

#### INNER DIMENSIONS

[2-32] They shall encamp around the Tent of Meeting: Both the Torah and the Jewish people play an integral role in channeling God's beneficence into the world. The Torah is the *instrument* through which God's blessings flow, but the Jewish people are the ones who *activate* and *use* this vessel to accomplish the goal.

In order to properly draw God's beneficence into reality, the Jewish people had to be organized and separated into tribes. This is firstly because the word for "tribe" (*shevet*), also means "branch": the branches of a tree channel the life-force of in the trunk into its fruit. This step-down process is necessary; no fruit grows directly on the trunk.

Secondly, each tribe reflected a unique Divine attribute and correspondingly emphasized a unique variation on the theme of fulfilling humanity's Divine mission on earth. Only when these different capabilities are properly defined and organized can they function together har-

moniously. When they are all jumbled together and their identities are blurred, the result is chaos. Separation is the prerequisite for true interconnectedness and unity.

In the natural order of creation, it is the heavenly array of angels that channel Divine beneficence into the world. Once the Torah was given and the Jewish people was formed, God assigned this function to the Jewish people. Therefore, we are told by the Midrash, when the Torah was given and the heavens opened up, the people saw the angels in their heavenly array, camped around the celestial Divine chariot, and instinctively wanted to be organized similarly. They sensed clearly that in order to fulfill their new function, they would have to emulate the angels' military formation.

So here God calls them into formation around the Tent of Meeting, which housed the Torah. Just as the angels elevate the Divine chariot they carry, so does the Jewish people "elevate" the

41. 1:14.

— ONKELOS —

15 וחילה ומננייהוּן ארבעין וחמשה אלפין ושית מאה וחמשיין: 16 כל מננייא למשרית ראובן מאה וחמשיין וחד אלפין וארבע מאה וחמשיין לחיליהוּן בתניתא נטלין: 17 ונטל משכן זמנא משרית לנאי בגו משריתא כמא דשרון פן נטלין גבר על אתרה לטקסיהוּן: 18 טקס משרית אפרים לחיליהוּן מערבא ורבא לבני אפרים אלישמע בר עמיהוד: 19 וחילה ומננייהוּן ארבעין אלפין וחמש מאה: 20 ודסמיכין עלוהי שבטא דמנשה ורבא לבני מנשה גמליאל בר פדהצור: 21 וחילה ומננייהוּן תלתין ותריין אלפין ומאתן: 22 ושבטא דבנימין ורבא לבני בנימין אבידן בר גדעוני: 23 וחילה ומננייהוּן תלתין וחמשה אלפין וארבע מאה: 24 כל מננייא למשרית אפרים מאה ותמניא אלפין ומאה לחיליהוּן בתליתתא נטלין: 25 טקס משרית דן צפונא לחיליהוּן ורבא לבני דן אחיעזר בר עמישדי: 26 וחילה ומננייהוּן שתין ותריין אלפין ושבע מאה: 27 ודי שרון סמיכין עלוהי שבטא דאשר ורבא לבני אשר פגעאל בר עכרון: 28 וחילה ומננייהוּן ארבעין וחד אלפין וחמש מאה: 29 ושבטא דנפתלי ורבא לבני נפתלי אחירע בר עינן: 30 וחילה ומננייהוּן חמשיין ותלתא אלפין וארבע מאה:

15 וצבאו ופקדיהם חמשה וארבעים אלף ושש מאות וחמשים: 16 כל הפקדים למחנה ראובן מאת אלף ואחד וחמשים אלף וארבע מאות וחמשים לצבאתם ושנים יסעו: ם

17 ונסע אהל מועד מחנה הלויים בתוך המחנות כאשר יחנו בן יסעו איש על־ידו לדגליהם: ם

18 דגל מחנה אפרים לצבאתם ימה ונשיא לבני אפרים אלישמע בן־עמיהוד: 19 וצבאו ופקדיהם ארבעים אלף וחמש מאות: 20 ועליו מטה מנשה ונשיא לבני מנשה גמליאל בן־פדהצור: 21 וצבאו ופקדיהם שנים ושלשים אלף ומאתים: 22 ומטה בנימין ונשיא לבני בנימין אבידן בן־גדעוני: 23 וצבאו ופקדיהם חמשה ושלשים אלף וארבע מאות: 24 כל הפקדים למחנה אפרים מאת אלף ושמןת־אלפים ומאה לצבאתם ושלשים יסעו: ם

25 דגל מחנה דן צפנה לצבאתם ונשיא לבני דן אחיעזר בן־עמישדי: 26 וצבאו ופקדיהם שנים ושלשים אלף ושבע מאות: 27 והחנים עליו מטה אשר ונשיא לבני אשר פגעאל בן־עכרון: 28 וצבאו ופקדיהם אחד וארבעים אלף וחמש מאות: 29 ומטה נפתלי ונשיא לבני נפתלי אחירע בן־עינן: 30 וצבאו ופקדיהם שלשה וחמשים אלף וארבע מאות:

— RASHI —

”יד” זו ממשמעו, רוח של צדו הוא על ידו, סמוכה לו לכל הושטת ידו. אי”ן שו”ן איש”א בלעז: 20 ועליו. בתרגומו: ”ודסמיכין עלוהי”:

17 ונסע אהל מועד. לאחר שני דגלים הללו: כאשר יחנו בן יסעו. כמו שפרשתי — הליכתו כחנינו, כל דגל מהלך לרוח הקבועה לו: על ידו. על מקומו. ואין לשון

15 the tally for his troop is 45,650.

16 The total sum for the division of Reuben according to their troops is 150,450; they shall set out second.

17 Then the Tent of Meeting shall set out, together with the Levite camp, in the center of the other camps. Just as they camp, so shall they travel, each man in his place, by their banners." According to one opinion, this means that the people traveled in exactly the same square formation as they camped in. According to another opinion, they traveled one tribe after the other, and the words "just as they camp, so shall they travel" here simply mean that they should travel in the *order* they encamped around the Tabernacle.<sup>43</sup> The description here accords with the first opinion; the description of how the people actually set out later<sup>44</sup> accords with the second opinion.

18 "Those camping under the banner of the division of Ephraim will be to the west, organized according to their troops. The prince of the tribe of Ephraim is Elishama the son of Amihud;

19 the tally for his troop is 40,500.

20 Next to him will be the tribe of Manasseh. The prince of the tribe of Manasseh is Gamliel the son of Pedahzur;

21 the tally for his troop is 32,200.

22 Next to him will be the tribe of Benjamin. The prince of the tribe of Benjamin is Avidan the son of Gidoni;

23 the tally for his troop is 35,400.

24 The total sum for the division of Ephraim according to their troops is 108,100; they shall set out third.

25 Those camping under the banner of the division of Dan will be to the north, organized according to their troops. The prince of the children of Dan is Achiezer the son of Amishadai;

26 the tally for his troop is 62,700.

27 Camping next to him will be the tribe of Asher. The prince of the tribe of Asher is Pagiël the son of Ocran;

28 the tally for his troop is 41,500.

29 Next to him will be the tribe of Naphtali. The prince of the tribe of Naphtali is Achira the son of Einan;

30 the tally for his troop is 53,400.

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∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

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17 **Just as they camp, so shall they travel:** Even when they journeyed, the Jewish people kept the same positions on their respective sides of the Tabernacle.

This teaches us that we are bidden to protect our

inner sanctuary and the Torah within it<sup>45</sup> at all times and under all circumstances, whether relaxed or restless, tranquil or unsettled, even when we are engaged in our struggle against the wilderness of the spiritual desert.<sup>46</sup>

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43. Rashi on 2:9 and 10:25. 44. Below, 10:11-28. 45. See on 2:2, above. 46. *Hitva'aduyot* 5745, vol. 4, pp. 2103-2104.

— ONKELOS —

31 כל מניינא למשרית דן מאה וחמשין ושבעא אלפין ושית מאה בביתא נטלין לטקסיהון: 32 אלין מנייני בני ישראל לבית אבהתהון כל מנייני משרתא לחיליהון שית מאה ותלתא אלפין וחמש מאה וחמשיין: 33 ולנאי לא אתמניאו בגו בני ישראל כמא די פקיד יי ית משה: 34 ועברו בני ישראל ככל די פקיד יי ית משה כן שכו לטקסיהון וכו נטלין גבר לזרעיה על בית אבהתיה: 31 ואלין תולדת אהרן ומשה ביומא דמליל יי עם משה בטורא דסיני: 2 ואלין שמחת בני אהרן בכרא נדב ואביהוא אלעזר ואיתמר: 3 אלין שמחת בני אהרן כהניא דאתרביאו די אתקרב קרבניהון לשמשא: 4 ומית נדב ואביהוא קדם יי בקרביהון אשא נוכריתא קדם יי במדברא דסיני ובנין לא הוון להון ושמש אלעזר ואיתמר על אפי אהרן אבוהון: 5 ומליל יי עם משה למימר: 6 קריב ית שבטא דלוי ותקים יתה קדם אהרן כהנא וישמשון יתה:

31 כִּלְהַפְקֻדִים לְמַחְנֵה דִן מֵאֵת אֱלֹהִים וּשְׁבַעַת וַחֲמִשִּׁים אֱלֹהִים וְשֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת לְאַחֲרָנָה יִסְעוּ לְדַגְלֵיהֶם: פ  
32 אֱלֹהִים פְּקוּדֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם כִּלְפִקוּדֵי הַמַּחֲנֵת לְצַבְאוֹתָם שֵׁשׁ־מֵאוֹת אֱלֹהִים וּשְׁלֹשֶׁת אֲלָפִים וַחֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת וַחֲמִשִּׁים: 33 וְהַלְוִיִּם לֹא הִתְפַּקְדוּ בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה: 34 וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה כִּי־חָנּוּ לְדַגְלֵיהֶם וְכֵן נָסְעוּ אִישׁ לְמִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ עַל־בֵּית אֲבֹתָיו: פ  
◆ רביעי 3:1 וְאֵלֶּה תוֹלְדֹת אֶהֱרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה בַּיּוֹם דִּבְרַר יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי: 2 וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי־אֶהֱרֹן הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדֹל וְאָבִיהוּא אֶלְעָזָר וְאִיתְמָר: 3 אֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי אֶהֱרֹן הַכֹּהֲנִים הַמְּשֻׁחִים אֲשֶׁר־מִלֵּא יָדָם לְכַהֵן: 4 וַיָּמָת נָדָב וְאָבִיהוּא לְפָנָי יְהוָה בְּהַקְרִבָם אֵשׁ זָרָה לְפָנָי יְהוָה בְּמִדְבַר סִינַי וּבָנִים לֹא־הָיוּ לָהֶם וַיְכַהֵן אֶלְעָזָר וְאִיתְמָר עַל־פָּנָי אֶהֱרֹן אֲבִיהֶם: פ  
5 וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵּאמֹר: 6 הִקְרַב אֶת־מִטְּהַ לְוִי וְהַעֲמַדְתָּ אוֹתוֹ לְפָנָי אֶהֱרֹן הַכֹּהֵן וְיִשְׂרְתוּ אוֹתוֹ:

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פני אהרן. בחייו: 6 ושרתו אתו. ומדוע השרות? ו"שקרו את משמרתו", לפי שמירת המקדש עליו שלא יקרב זר, כמו שנאמר: "אתה ובניך ובית אביך אתה, תשא את עון המקדש", והלוים הללו מסייעין אותם, זו היא השרות:

1 ואלה תולדת אהרן ומשה. ואינו מזכיר אלא בני אהרן, ונקראו "תולדות משה", לפי שלמדן תורה. מלמד שכל המלמד את בן חברו תורה, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו ילדו: ביום דבר ה' את משה. נעשו אלו התולדות שלו, שלמדן מה שלמד מפי הגבורה: 4 על

7. במדבר יח, א.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

holy, and God will be his lot and inheritance forever and ever...as He granted the priests and the Levites."<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, we may infer from Maimonides' words that a layperson can not only attain the spiritual level of a Levite, but even that of a priest, and in fact, even that of a high priest! He states that someone who has dedicated himself completely to

the service of God becomes "hallowed as the holiest of the holy," and this expression is applied in the Torah to the high priest, as it is written,<sup>51</sup> "And he separated out Aaron to sanctify him [to be] holiest of the holy."<sup>52</sup>

Based on this, we can derive numerous lessons in how to fulfill our Divine mission on earth from the details of the Levites' service.

52. 1 Chronicles 23:13. 53. *Hitva'aduyot* 5745, vol. 4, pp. 2115-2116.

31 The total sum for the division of Dan according to their troops is 157,600; they shall set out last.”

32 These are the tallies of the Israelites according to their fathers’ houses. The sum of all the tallies of the divisions according to their troops was 603,550.

33 The Levites were not counted with the rest of the Israelites, as God commanded Moses.

34 The Israelites did all that God had commanded Moses; they encamped by their banners, and they journeyed each man with his family, according to his paternal house (see Figure 2).

### The Census of the Levites

- ◆ *Fourth Reading 3:1* The Torah now turns to the census of the tribe of Levi—the priests and the Levites—and their assignments when the people would travel. It first defines the priestly caste. **These are the descendants of Moses, figuratively, and Aaron, physically.** Aaron’s sons are figuratively considered to be also Moses’ sons because Moses made special efforts to teach them the Torah.<sup>47</sup> In this sense, they became his sons **on the day that God spoke to Moses and gave the Torah at Mount Sinai.**

2 These are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadav—the firstborn, Avihu, Eleazar, and Itamar.<sup>48</sup>

3 These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom Moses consecrated to serve as priests.

4 Nadav and Avihu died before God when they brought an unauthorized fire before God in the Sinai desert,<sup>49</sup> and they had no children. Eleazar and Itamar, however, served as priests during their father Aaron’s lifetime.

5 God spoke to Moses, saying:

6 “Bring forth the tribe of Levi and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him, as follows:

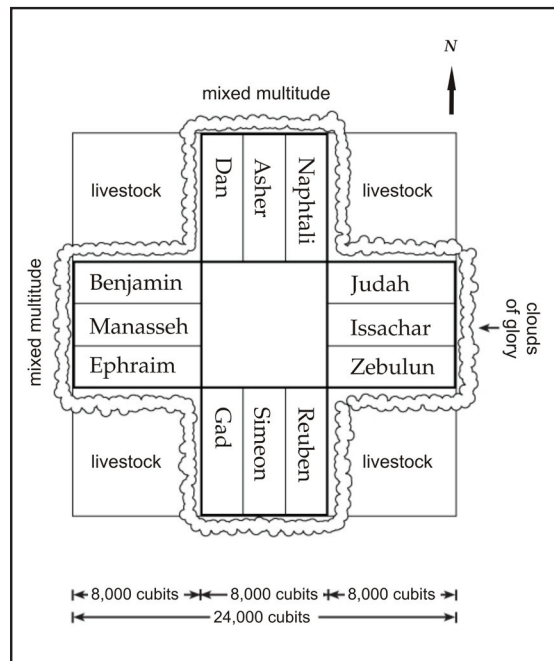


Figure 2: The Camp

6 **Bring forth the tribe of Levi:** The Levites were singled out among the rest of the Israelites to act as God’s personal servants. But, as Maimonides notes, anyone who wishes to dedicate himself to the service of God can become, in effect, a spiritual Levite, regardless of his actual tribal lineage:

“Not only the tribe of Levi [can devote themselves completely to God], but any given person in the entire world whose spirit has motivated him and whose perception has enlightened him to set himself apart to stand before God, to serve Him...has [by this fact] been hallowed as the holiest of the

47. See on Exodus 34:31-32. 48. Exodus 6:23. 49. Leviticus 10:1-2. 50. This task was reiterated in detail after the rebellion of Korach (below, 17:27 ff). 51. *Mishneh Torah, Shemittah v’Yovel* 13:13.

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7 וַיִּטְרוּן יְת מִטְרַתָּה וְיֵת מִטְרַת כָּל כְּנִשְׁתָּא קְדָם מִשְׁכַּן וּמְנָא לְמַפְלַח יְת פְּלַחַן מִשְׁכַּנָּא: 8 וַיִּטְרוּן יְת כָּל מְנֵי מִשְׁכַּן וּמְנָא וְיֵת מִטְרַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמַפְלַח יְת פְּלַחַן מִשְׁכַּנָּא: 9 וְתַתָּן יְת לְנָאֵי לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבְנָוֵי מִסִּירֵין יְהִיבִין אֲנֹן לָה מִן בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: 10 וְיֵת אַהֲרֹן וְיֵת בְּנוֹהֵי תַמְנֵי וַיִּטְרוּן יְת כְּהֻנָּתוֹן וְחַלּוּנֵי דִיקָרְב יִתְקַטְל: 11 וּמְלִיל יְיָ עִם מֹשֶׁה לְמִימְרֵ: 12 וְאֵנָּא הָא קְרִיבִית יְת לְנָאֵי מִגּוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲלָף כָּל בְּכָרָא פְתַח וּלְדָא מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהוֹן מִשְׁמִשִּׁין קְדָמֵי לְנָאֵי: 13 אַרְי דִּילֵי כָּל בְּכָרָא בְיוֹמָא דְקַטְלִית כָּל בְּכָרָא בְּאַרְעָא דְמִצְרַיִם אֲקַדְשִׁית קְדָמֵי כָּל בְּכָרָא בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאַנְשָׁא עַד בְּעִירָא דִּילֵי יְהוֹן אָנָּא יְיָ:

7 וְשָׁמְרוּ אֶת־מִשְׁמֶרְתּוֹ וְאֶת־מִשְׁמֶרֶת כָּל־הָעֵדָה לְפָנָי אֲהֵל מוֹעֵד לְעִבְדְּךָ אֶת־עֲבֹדֶת הַמִּשְׁכָּן: 8 וְשָׁמְרוּ אֶת־כָּל־כְּלֵי אֲהֵל מוֹעֵד וְאֶת־מִשְׁמֶרֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעִבְדְּךָ אֶת־עֲבֹדֶת הַמִּשְׁכָּן: 9 וְנָתַתָּה אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו נְתוּנִים נְתוּנִים הֵמָּה לוֹ מֵאֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: 10 וְאֶת־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶת־בָּנָיו תִּפְקֹד וְשָׁמְרוּ אֶת־כְּהֻנָּתָם וְהָזֵר הַקָּרֵב יוּמָת: פ

11 וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: 12 וְאֲנִי הִנֵּה לְקַחְתִּי אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם מֵתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תַּחַת כָּל־בְּכוֹר פֶּטֶר רֶחֶם מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיוּ לִי הַלְוִיִּם: 13 כִּי לִי כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּיוֹם הַכֹּתִי כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם הַקֹּדְשֹׁתַי לִי כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֲדָם עַד־בְּהֵמָה לִי יְהוּ אֲנִי יְהוָה: פ

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והוא נתנם לו, שנאמר: "ואתנה את הלויים נתנים וגו'": 10 ואת אהרן ואת בניו תפקד. לשון פקידות, ואינו לשון מנן: ושמרו את כהונתם. קבלת דמים וריקה והקטרה ועבודות המסורות לכהנים: 12 ואני הנה לקחתי. ואני מהיכן זכיתי בהן: מתוך בני ישראל. שיהיו ישראל שוכרין אותו לשרות שלי? על ידי הבכורות זכיתי בהם ולקחתי תמורתם, לפי שהיתה העבודה בבכורות, וכשקטאו בעגל נפסלו, והלויים שלא עבדו עבודה זרה נבחרו תחתיהם:

7 ושמרו את משמרתו. כל מנוי שהאדם ממנה עליו ומטל עליו לעשותו קרוי "משמרת", בכל המקרא ובלשון משנה, כמו שאמור בבגתן ותרש: "והלא אין משמרת ומשמרתך שנה"\*. וכן: משמרות כהנה ולויה? 8 ואת משמרת בני ישראל. שכלן היו וקוקין לצרכי המקדש, אלא שהלויים באים תחתיהם בשליחותם, לפיכך לוקחים מהם המעשרות בשכרן, שנאמר "כי שקר הוא לכם חלף עבדתכם"\*. 9 נתונים המה לו. לעורה: מאת בני ישראל. כמו מתוך בני ישראל, כלומר, משאר כל העדה נבדלו לקח בגורת המקום

8. מגילה יג, ב. 9. תוספתא תענית פרק ג. 10. במדבר יח, לא. 11. במדבר ח, ט.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

**The charge of the Israelites:** As we saw previously,<sup>63</sup> Maimonides teaches us that anyone "whose spirit has motivated him and whose perception has enlightened him to set himself apart to stand before God, to serve Him...has [by this fact] been halloved as the holiest of the holy." Based on this, we might think that in order to lead a Godly life, we must be on the lofty level Maimonides describes. But we see here that this is not true. The Talmud rules that an agent cannot be empowered to accomplish more than his dispatcher can by himself.<sup>64</sup> So, if the Levites are our agents, it means that we have the spiritual power to do all that they do. And *all* of us are responsible for tending to the needs of the Tabernacle. Thus, anyone, even one who thinks he is spiritually lacking, can be a spiritual Levite, a servant of God on earth.<sup>65</sup>

**10 And they shall guard their priesthood:** The Torah makes it clear that different people have different tasks. One person's path to holiness is another person's death—spiritual and physical. And just as the Israelites are divided by different roles, so it is for all the nations: each one has its function and responsibility. When a person is incorrectly informed that he is a member of a nation not his own, he has been robbed of his self, of his path to holiness.<sup>66</sup>

**12 I have taken the Levites:** God originally intended that the firstborn of each family perform the priestly service. He selected the tribe of Levi for this service only because—unlike the firstborn—they refused to participate in the sin of the Golden Calf.

From this we see that a person who was not born

63. On 3:5. 64. *Kidushin* 23b. 65. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 13, p. 15. 66. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 18, p. 1 ff.

**7 They shall help him keep his charge, that is, the charge given him regarding the entire lay community in front of the Tent of Meeting, which is to perform the service of the Tabernacle by keeping the laity from serving in it.**<sup>53</sup>

**8 In addition to helping the priests in this way, the Levites shall also keep the charge given to them alone, which concerns all the furnishings of the Tent of Meeting, that is, the charge they perform on behalf of the lay Israelites, which is to perform the service of the Tabernacle by transporting it and singing and playing music in it.**<sup>54</sup>

**9 But even though you shall give over the Levites to Aaron and his sons—for they are given, yes, given over to him from among the Israelites in order to help him ensure that the laity not enter the Tabernacle—**

**10 nonetheless, you shall direct Aaron and his sons to guard their priesthood from the Levites as well,**<sup>55</sup> **because any non-priest—even a Levite—who approaches to participate in the priestly duties shall be put to death by an act of God."**

**11 God** then explained by what right He had appointed the Levites as representatives of the general populace and had given them to the priests. He **spoke to Moses, saying:**

**12 "As for Me, I have taken the Levites from the other Israelites as their surrogates,**<sup>56</sup> **in place of all the firstborn of the Israelites who have opened the womb, so the Levites shall be Mine.**

**13 For all the firstborn are Mine: on the day I killed every firstborn in Egypt, I sanctified for Myself every firstborn in Israel by sparing them, both man and beast.**<sup>57</sup> But since the firstborn participated in the sin of the Golden Calf, they became disqualified to act as priests or as their assistants. In their stead, the tribe of Levi, who did not participate in this sin, **shall be Mine;**<sup>58</sup> **I am God."**

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∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

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**8 The charge of the Israelites:** The tribe of Levi did not serve God on their own behalf, but rather as representatives of the entire Jewish people.

In the Book of Psalms, the righteous are compared both to palm trees and cedar trees: "The righteous one will flourish like a palm tree; he will grow tall like the cedar in Lebanon."<sup>59</sup> The Midrash,<sup>60</sup> however, compares the Levites chiefly with the palm tree. The Ba'al Shem Tov explained this as follows:<sup>61</sup>

There are in fact two types of righteous people, exemplified by the palm tree and the cedar tree. The cedar has many great attributes—it is strong, tall, and beautiful—but it bears no fruit. Similarly, some people study Torah and fulfill God's commandments perfectly, but do not share their spiritual wealth with others; their efforts bear no fruit.

The palm tree, on the other hand, does not reach the degree of perfection the cedar does, but it bears sweet fruit that vitalizes all those who partake of it.

Similar to this are those people who give of the time and energy they could have spent on striving for self-perfection in order to help others. Their efforts ensure that others, too, can become sweet fruit.

Of course, the first lifestyle is a bona fide way of serving God, and someone who follows it attains the rank of a *tzadik*. However, the Ba'al Shem Tov taught, this is not the ultimate path that God desires. He wishes us to follow the example of the palm tree and to spare neither time nor energy to ensure that we bring benefit to others.

This was the path of the tribe of Levi. To be sure, there were other tribes with different ways of serving God. But the Levites embodied the value of the palm: they ensured that their service would be beneficial not only for themselves, but for every Jew. In this way, they showed us the path and provided us an example of how we can illuminate the entire world.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>54.</sup> *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 13, p. 9 ff. <sup>55.</sup> *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 18, pp. 1-5. <sup>56.</sup> *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 13, pp. 11-14. <sup>57.</sup> Exodus 13:2. <sup>58.</sup> *Ibid.* 32:26-29. <sup>59.</sup> Psalms 92:13. <sup>60.</sup> *Tanchuma, Bemidbar* 15. <sup>61.</sup> *Tzava'at HaRibash* 125. <sup>62.</sup> *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 2, pp. 557-558.

— ONKELOS —  
 14 ומליל יי עם משה במדברא  
 דסיני למימר: 15 מני ית בני לוי  
 לבית אבהתהון לזרעייתהון כל  
 דכורא מבר ירחא ולעלא תמננון:  
 16 ומנא יתהון משה על מימרא  
 דיי במא דאתפקד: 17 והוה אלן  
 בני לוי בשמהתהון גרשון וקהת  
 ומררי:

◆ חמישי 14 וידבר יהוה אל־משה במדבר סיני לאמר:  
 15 פקד את־בני לוי לבית אבתם למשפחתם כל־זכר  
 מבן־חדש ומעלה תפקדם: 16 ויפקד אתם משה על־פי  
 יהוה כאשר צוה: 17 ויהיו־אלה בני־לוי בשמתם גרשון  
 וקהת ומררי:

— RASHI —

חסר אחת, והיא השלימה את המנין: 16 על פי ה'.  
 אמר משה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא: "היאך אני נגנס  
 לתוך אהליהם לדעת מנין יונקיהם?" אמר לו הקדוש  
 ברוך הוא: "עשה אתה שלף ואני אעשה שלי". הלך  
 משה ועמד על פתח האהל, והשכינה מקדמת לפניו,  
 ובת קול יוצאת מן האהל ואמרת: "כך וכך תיגוקות  
 יש באהל זה". לכה נאמר: "על פי ה'":

15 מבן חדש ומעלה. משיצא מכלל נפלים, הוא נמנה  
 לקרא שומר משמרת הקדש. אמר רבי יהודה גרבי  
 שלום: למוד הוא אותו השבט להיות נמנה מן הבטן,  
 שנאמר: "אשר ילדה אתה ללוי במצרים"<sup>12</sup> — עם  
 כניסתה בפתח מצרים ילדה אותה ונמנית בשבעים  
 נפש, שקשאתה מונה חשבונם לא תמצאם אלא שבעים

12. במדבר כו, ט.

INNER DIMENSIONS

[17] **Gershon, Kehat, and Merari:** In the Song at the Sea, the Tabernacle was referred to as "The Sanctuary that Your hands have established."<sup>74</sup> The phrase "Your hands" alludes to the three ways God's hand is described in Scripture, describing the three basic ways God acts in the world:

- the "great hand,"<sup>75</sup> signifying God's kindness (*chesed*), the source of His beneficence,
- the "strong hand,"<sup>76</sup> signifying God's strength or severity (*gevurah*), and
- the "uplifted hand,"<sup>77</sup> signifying God's beauty (*tiferet*).

Spiritually, the three Levite clans reflect these three hands in the service they performed in the Sanctuary:

- Levi's first son, Gershon, personified the "great hand," since the long final *nun* with which his name is spelled depicts God's bestowal of beneficence to the lowest levels, which is motivated by kindness.
- Merari, whose name is related to the word for "bitterness," personified the "strong hand" that metes out punishment.
- Kehat personified the "uplifted hand" since

his clan carried (or "uplifted") the ark and the tablets on their shoulders (as opposed to the other sons, who were allowed to transport their respective parts of the Tabernacle on wagons).<sup>78</sup>

Yocheved, Moses' mother and Levi's daughter, had three children: Miriam, Aaron, and Moses. These three children resembled Yocheved's three brothers, Gershon, Kehat, and Merari, since, according to the Talmud, children generally take after their mother's brothers.<sup>79</sup> Thus, Moses, Aaron, and Miriam also correspond to the three pillars of Divine service:

- Moses (who received the Torah and is therefore associated with *da'at*, which is in turn aligned with *tiferet*) resembled Kehat,
- Aaron (the man of kindness) resembled Gershon, and
- Miriam (whose name means "bitterness") resembled Merari.

Thus, the numerical value of *Yocheved* is 42, which is 3 x 14, 14 being the numerical value of the word for "hand" (*yad*), alluding to the three "hands" that she bore.<sup>80</sup>

Clan	Part of Tabernacle	Hand of God	Significance	Allusion	Yocheved's children
Gershon	Curtains and veils	"Great hand"	Kindness ( <i>chesed</i> )	Final <i>nun</i>	Aaron
Merari	Walls and pillars	"Strong hand"	Strength ( <i>gevurah</i> )	Name means "bitterness"	Miriam
Kehat	Vessels and screen	"Uplifted hand"	Beauty ( <i>tiferet</i> )	Carried vessels on shoulders	Moses

110a. The reason for this is that women are intrinsically modest and therefore do not flaunt all their personality traits; the traits a woman inherits from her parents are therefore more visible in her parents' male children—her brothers—than in her. 80. *Torat Levi Yitzchak*, p. 292.

◆ **Fifth Reading 14 God spoke to Moses in the Sinai desert, saying:**

15 “The Levites are to take the place of the firstborn on a head-for-head basis. Therefore, you must tally both the Levites and the lay firstborn. First, **tally the Levites according to their fathers’ houses, according to their families.** When I killed the Egyptians’ firstborn, I killed them all, regardless of their age, so I therefore sanctified all the firstborn of Israel, regardless of their age. Thus, since the Levites will be replacing the firstborn, *all* of them should really be counted, from birth. Furthermore, their very existence—even from birth—contributes to the size of the Levite camp, and therefore they can be considered to be serving as Levites and helping distance the laity from the Tabernacle as soon as they are born.<sup>67</sup> Nonetheless, you should **count only all males one month old and over**, for only from this age is a baby considered viable.” (Precedent for counting the Levites in recognition of their contribution even from birth can be taken from Levi’s daughter Yocheved, who as a newborn completed the tally of Jacob’s family to 70 members.<sup>68</sup>)

16 Moses protested, “How can I enter their private tents and count the nursing babies?” God told him to stand at the entrance of each tent and He would announce how many babies were inside. **So Moses tallied them according to God’s word** as He announced the count of children in each tent, **just as he was commanded.** Here, too, the tallies were exact round numbers.

17 **These were the sons of Levi, by name: Gershon, Kehat, and Merari.**

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

into the spiritual elite and was not originally destined for the highest levels of Divine service can ascend to these levels by virtue of his merits. A businessman, for instance, need not think that he is excluded from in-depth Torah study.<sup>69</sup>

This is the textual support for Maimonides’ claim that we quoted above.<sup>70</sup>

**15 One month old and over:** As we have mentioned, counting a group of individuals accentuates the essential value of every individual, the value they all share regardless of their differences. Nevertheless, all of the tribes except the Levites were counted only from the age of twenty, the age of conscription. Allegorically, we said,<sup>71</sup> this indicates that laypeople are counted only once they have exhibited their spiritual preparedness to join God’s army.

The Levites, however, are different. Their very nature as a tribe is defined by their willingness to separate themselves from mundane pursuits and serve God in all facets of their lives. It is therefore not necessary to wait for them to exhibit their willingness to serve in God’s army; in their case, every member of the tribe is counted from the moment his life is assured.<sup>72</sup>

As mentioned, we all have the capacity to join the spiritual legions of the Levites. We can all, just as did the Levites, reveal and implement in our daily lives the intrinsic connection between the essence of our soul and the essence of God—the connection that transcends all variations in time and environment. When we do this, our willingness to serve God becomes intrinsic and assumed; it no longer has to be demonstrated. Based on this connection, we can fulfill the injunction to “know Him in all your ways,” down to the mundane aspects of life that a mature adult shares with the smallest child.<sup>73</sup>

**17 Gershon, Kehat, and Merari:** The Levites were divided into three clans, the descendants of Levi’s three sons. These clans were assigned the job of erecting, dismantling, and transporting the different components of the Tabernacle when it had to be moved. In particular, the clan of Gershon was in charge of the curtains of the Tabernacle and veils of the enclosure, the clan of Merari was in charge of the walls of the Tabernacle and pillars of the enclosure, and the clan of Kehat was in charge of the furnishings and the screen.

These three divisions of the components of the Tab-

67. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 18, pp. 6-15. 68. Genesis 46:27. 69. *Hitva’aduyot 5745*, vol. 4, pp. 2115-2116. 70. On 3:5. 71. Above, on 1:3. 72. The Talmud explains that a newborn child’s survival is not considered certain until after he lives thirty days. 73. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 2, pp. 558-559. 74. Exodus 15:17. 75. *Ibid.* 14:31. 76. Deuteronomy 7:19. 77. Exodus 14:8. 78. *Likutei Torah 3:21b*. 79. *Bava Batra*

ONKELOS

18 ואלין שמחת בני גרשון לזרעיהון לבני ושמעי: 19 ובני קהת לזרעיהון עמרם ויצהר וזרעיהון מררי לבני ושמעי: 20 ובני מררי לזרעיהון מחלי ומושי אלין אנון ורעית לוי לבית אבהיהון: 21 לגרשון ורעית לבני ורעית שמעי אלין אנון ורעית גרשון: 22 ממנייהון במנין כל דכורא מבר ירחא ולעלא ממנייהון שבא אלפין וחמש מאה: 23 ורעית גרשון אחורי משבנא ישרון מערבא: 24 ורב בית אבא לבית גרשון אליסר בר לאל: 25 ומשרת בני גרשון במשפן זמנא משבנא ופרסא חופאה ופרסא דתרע משפן זמנא: 26 וסרדי דרתא וית פרסא דתרע דרתא די על משבנא ועל מדבא סחור וית אשונוהי לכל פלחנה: 27 ולקהת ורעית עמרם ורעית יצהר ורעית חברון ורעית עזאל אלין אנון ורעית קהת: 28 במנין כל דכורא מבר ירחא ולעלא ממניא אלפין ושית מאה וטרי משרתא דקדשא:

18 ואלה שמות בני-גרשון למשפחתם לבני ושמעי: 19 ובני קהת למשפחתם עמרם ויצהר חברון ועזאל: 20 ובני מררי למשפחתם מחלי ומושי אלה הם משפחת הלוי לבית אבתם: 21 לגרשון משפחת הלבני ומשפחת השמעי אלה הם משפחת הגרשני: 22 פקדיהם במספר כל-זכר מבן-חדש ומעלה פקדיהם שבעת אלפים וחמש מאות: 23 משפחת הגרשני אחרי המשפן יחנו ימה: 24 ונשיא בית-אב לגרשני אליסר בן-לאל: 25 ומשמרת בני-גרשון באהל מועד המשפן והאהל מכסהו ומסך פתח אהל מועד: 26 וקלעי החצר ואת-מסך פתח החצר אשר על-המשפן ועל-המזבח סביב ואת מיתריו לכל עבדתו: ס 27 ולקהת משפחת העמרמי ומשפחת היצהרי ומשפחת החברני ומשפחת העזאלי אלה הם משפחת הקהתי: 28 במספר כל-זכר מבן-חדש ומעלה שמנת אלפים ושש מאות שמרי משמרת הקדש:

RASHI

יריעות עזים העשויות לגג: מכסהו. עורות אילים ותחשים: ומסך פתח. הוא הוילון: 26 ואת מיתריו. של המשפן והאהל, ולא של חצר:

21 לגרשון משפחת הלבני. כלומר, לגרשון היו הפקודים משפחת הלבני ומשפחת השמעי, פקודיהם כף וקר: 25 המשפן. יריעות המתחנות: והאהל.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

relationship with God changes our lives and enables us to spiritualize reality. The central feature of this component of the Tabernacle was the ark, which housed the Tablets of the Covenant, the quintes-

sence of the Torah, which is our guide for transforming both ourselves and reality. This aspect of spiritual life was personified by Kehat.<sup>82</sup>

The Levite Clans

Clan	Part of Tabernacle	Aspect of Spiritual Life
Gershon	Curtains of the Tabernacle and veils of the enclosure	Emotional relationship with God
Merari	Walls of the Tabernacle and pillars of the enclosure	Selfless devotion to God's will
Kehat	Vessels and screen	Transforming ourselves and reality

82. Likutei Torah 3:20b-21a.

**18 The names of the sons of Gershon according to their families were Livni and Shimi.**

**19 The sons of Kehat according to their families were Amram, Yitzhar, Hebron, and Uziel.**

**20 The sons of Merari according to their families were Machli and Mushi. These were the families of Levi according to their fathers' houses.<sup>81</sup>**

**21 For Gershon, Moses tallied the family of Livni and the family of Shimi, these being the families of Gershon.**

**22 Their tally was the number of males one month old and over, whose tally was 7,500.**

**23 The families of Gershon camped behind the Tabernacle, to the west.**

**24 The prince of the paternal house of the families of Gershon was Eliasaf the son of Lael.**

**25 The charge of the clan of Gershon in transporting the Tent of Meeting was the three coverings that served as its roof—the bottom cover of tapestries draped over the Tabernacle, the middle Tent of goat skins placed on top of this, and the topmost cover of ram skins and *tachash*-skins over it—the Screen for the entrance to the Tent of Meeting,**

**26 the curtains of the courtyard, the Screen at the entrance to the courtyard that enclosed the Tabernacle and the Altar, the ropes used to fasten the two lower covers draped over the Tabernacle (the bottom, tapestry cover and the middle, goat-skin cover) to the ground, and all the work involved.**

**27 For Kehat, Moses tallied the family of Amram, the family of Yitzhar, the family of Hebron, and the family of Uziel; these being the families of Kehat.**

**28 The number of all males one month old and over was 8,600; they were the keepers of the charge of the Sanctuary.**

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✧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ✧

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ernacle reflect the three spiritual components of the spiritual Tabernacle we are to construct for God out of our own lives:

The rigid walls and pillars are the skeletal structure that gives the Tabernacle and its courtyard their form. The basic, rigid structural foundation of our spiritual Tabernacle is our selfless devotion to God's will. This devotion is born of the resentment we feel toward egocentricity and its empty promises of fulfillment, which leads us to turn instead to God as the true reality. This facet of our spiritual life was personified by Merari, whose name is derived from the word for "bitter" (*mar*).

The fluid curtains and veils of the Tabernacle and its courtyard are the pliant flesh that covers the skeleton. The flesh of our spiritual Tabernacle is our emotional involvement with God, which flows naturally from our growing focus on God as the only true reality, and our loving expression of this emotional relationship in performing His commandments. This aspect of spiritual life was personified by Gershon.

The Tabernacle's furnishings are the instruments used for the specific activities for which the Tabernacle serves as a setting. In our spiritual Tabernacle, the furnishings are the particulars of how our re-

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<sup>81</sup> Exodus 6:16-19.

ONKELOS

29 זרעית בני קהת ישרון על צדא דמשכנא דרומא: 30 ורב בית אבא לזרעית קהת אליצפן בר עזיאל: 31 ומשנתהון ארונא ופתורא ומנרתא ומדבתיא ומני קדשא די ישמשון בהון ופרסא וכל פלחנה: 32 ואמרכלא דממנא על רברבי לנאי אלעזר בר אהרן כהנא דמתחות ידוהי ממנן נטרי מטרת קדשא: 33 למררי זרעית מחלי וזרעית מושי אלין אנון זרעית מררי: 34 ומניניהון במנן כל דכורא מבר ירחא ולעלא שתא אלפין ומאתן: 35 ורב בית אבא לזרעית מררי צוריאל בר אביחיל על צדא דמשכנא ישרון צפונא: 36 ודמסיר למטרת בני מררי דפי משכנא ועברוהי ועמודוהי וסמכוהי וכל מנוהי וכל פלחנה: 37 ועמודי דרתא סחור סחור וסמכיהון וספיהון ואטוניהון: 38 ודי שרון קדם משכנא קדומא קדם משכן זמנא מדינחא משה ואהרן ובנוהי נטרין מטרת מקדשא למטרת בני ישראל וחלוני דיקרב יתקטל:

29 משפחת בני־קהת יחנו על ירך המשכן תימנה: 30 ונשיא בית־אב למשפחת הקהתי אליצפן בן־עזיאל: 31 ומשמרתם הארן והשלחן והמנורה והמזבחת וכלי הקדש אשר ישרתו בהם והמסך וכל עבדתו: 32 ונשיא נשיאי הלוי אלעזר בן־אהרן הכהן פקדת שמרי משמרת הקדש: 33 למררי משפחת המחלי ומשפחת המושי אלה הם משפחת מררי: 34 ופקדיהם במספר כל־זכר מבין־הקדש ומעלה ששת אלפים ומאתים: 35 ונשיא בית־אב למשפחת מררי צוריאל בן־אביחיל על ירך המשכן יחנו צפנה: 36 ופקדת משמרת בני מררי קרשי המשכן ובריהיו ועמדיו ואדניו וכל־כליו וכל עבדתו: 37 ועמדי החצר סביב ואדניהם ויתדתם ומיתריהם: 38 והחנים לפני המשכן קדמה לפני אהל־מועד | מזרחה משה | ואהרן ובניו שמרים משמרת המקדש למשמרת בני ישראל והזר הקרב יומת:

RASHI

היא פקדת כלם: 38 משה ואהרן ובניו. וסמוכין להם דגל מחנה יהודה והזוהי החונים עליו יששכר ובוולן — טוב לצדיק, טוב לשכנו. לפי שהיו שכניו של משה שהיה עוסק בתורה, נעשו גדולים בתורה, שנאמר: "יהודה מחקקי".<sup>91</sup> "ומבני יששכר יודעי בינה וגו' מאתים"<sup>92</sup> — ראשי סנהדראות. ומזבולן "משכים בשבט ספר"<sup>93</sup>:

29 משפחת בני קהת יחנו וגו' תימנה. וסמוכין להם דגל ראובן החונים תימנה — "אוי לרשע ואוי לשכנו". לכה לקו מהם דתן ואבירם ומאתים וקמשים איש עם קרח ועדתו, שנמשכו עמהם במחלקתם: 31 והמסך. היא הפרכת, שאף היא קרויה "פרכת המסך": 32 ונשיא נשיאי הלוי. ממנה על כלם. ועל מה היא נשיאותו? "פקדת שמרי משמרת הקדש" — על ידו

13. תהלים ט, ט. 14. דה"א יב, לג. 15. שופטים ה, יד.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

than that of negative influence. Thus, even according to the first perspective, the camp of Judah experienced an *internal* change for the good.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, while Korach only negatively affected the tribe of Reuben (but not the other two tribes that camped with it), Moses and Aaron positively affected all three tribes of Judah's camp.<sup>92</sup>

**38 In front of the Tent of Meeting to the east:** As we have mentioned,<sup>93</sup> the tribes of Judah, Issachar,

and Zebulun became great Torah scholars because of their proximity to Moses and Aaron, while the tribe of Reuben was adversely affected by its proximity to Korach. The juxtaposition of these two lessons teaches another, double lesson: (a) the way to avoid being dragged into a dispute is by studying the Torah, and (b) the way to study the Torah in its ultimate form, to become one with the Torah, is by distancing oneself from any trace of dispute.<sup>94</sup>

91. Midrash Tanchuma reads: "...they became great in Torah." 92. Likutei Sichot, vol. 33, p. 10 ff. 93. On 3:29. 94. Likutei Sichot, vol. 33, p. 16-17.

- 29 The families of the clan of Kehat camped to the south side of the Tabernacle.
- 30 The prince of the paternal house of the families of Kehat was Elitzafan the son of Uziel.
- 31 Their charge in transporting the Tabernacle was the Ark, the Table, the Candelabrum, the Altars, the utensils of the Sanctuary with which they would minister, the Screen that divided between the outer and inner chambers of the Tent of Meeting, and all the work involved.
- 32 The prince over all the princes of the Levites was Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest; his job was the appointment of the keepers of the charge of the Sanctuary.
- 33 For Merari, Moses tallied the family of Machli and the family of Mushi; these being the families of Merari.
- 34 Their tally, the number of males one month old and over, was 6,200.
- 35 The prince of the paternal house of the families of Merari was Tzurriel the son of Avichail. They camped on the north side of the Tabernacle.
- 36 The appointed charge of the clan of Merari in transporting the Tabernacle was the planks of the Tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, all its utensils, all the work involved,
- 37 the pillars of the surrounding courtyard, their sockets, their stakes, and the ropes used to hang the curtains of the courtyard from its pillars.
- 38 Camping in front of the Tabernacle, in front of the Tent of Meeting to the east, were Moses, Aaron and his sons, the keepers of the charge of the Sanctuary as a trust for the Israelites, for any outsider who approached to participate was to be put to death by an act of God.

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 ∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞
 

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29 To the south side of the Tabernacle: "Woe to the wicked and woe to his neighbor!"<sup>83</sup> The tribe of Reuben also camped on the south, near the clan of Kehat.<sup>84</sup> Consequently, Dathan and Aviram and 250 other members of the tribe of Reuben joined with Korach, one of the clan of Kehat, in his mutiny against Moses.<sup>85</sup>

In Rabbinic sources, there are three perspectives on the effect our neighbors can have on us:

- Neighborly influence is superficial. We may be swept up in our neighbors' evil schemes and even share in their punishment—as, in this case, the rebels from the camp of Reuben were swallowed up with Korach—but their influence does not in and of itself penetrate into our psyche.<sup>86</sup>
- Neighborly influence can affect how we think and feel. In this case, this would mean that the rebels from the camp of Reuben were influenced by Korach to become what they were

not before: rebels.<sup>87</sup>

- Neighborly influence reveals inherent predispositions. We settle next to our neighbors because even prior to our contact with them, we shared similar characteristics. We were drawn to them because of their deep similarity to us; our physical proximity to them then causes these common traits to surface. In the present case, this would mean that the camp of Reuben possessed a propensity toward rebellion even before Korach began his revolt.<sup>88</sup>

But neighborly influence also works in the other direction: "Fortunate for the righteous one and fortunate for his neighbor!" The tribes of the camp of Judah, who camped on the east side of the Tabernacle,<sup>89</sup> became great Torah scholars because of their proximity to Moses and Aaron, who also camped on the east side of the Tabernacle.<sup>90</sup>

Moreover, the effect of positive influence is greater

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83. *Negaim* 12:6; *Sukah* 56b. 84. Above, 2:10. 85. Below, 15:1 ff. 86. *Midrash Tanchuma, Bemidbar* 12 (ed. Buber 13). 87. Rashi on this verse. 88. *Bemidbar Rabbah* 3:12. 89. Above, 2:3. 90. Below, 3:38; see Rashi *ad loc.*

ONKELOS

39 כל מנניני לנאי די מנא משה ואהרן על מימרא די לורעיתיהון כל דכורא מבר ירחא ולעלא עשרין ותריין אלפיין: 40 ואמר יי למשה מני כל בכריא דכריא לבני ישראל מבר ירחא ולעלא וקבל ית מנין שמהתהון: 41 ותקריב ית לנאי קדמי אנא יי חלף כל בכריא בבני ישראל וית בעריא דלנאי חלף כל בכריא בבכריא דבני ישראל: 42 ומנא משה כמא די פקיד יי ותה ית כל בכריא בבני ישראל: 43 ותהו כל בכריא דכריא במנין שמהון מבר ירחא ולעלא למנניניהון עשרין ותריין אלפיין מאתן ושבעין ותלתא: 44 ומליל יי עם משה למימר: 45 קרב ית לנאי חלף כל בכריא בבני ישראל וית בעריא דלנאי חלף בעריהון ויהון משמשין קדמי לנאי אנא יי: 46 וית פרקן מאתן ושבעין ותלתא דיתירין על לנאי מבכריא דבני ישראל: 47 ותסב חמש חמש סלעין לגלגלתא בסלעי קדשא תסב עשרין מעין סלעא:

39 כָּל־מְנַנְי הַלְוִיִּם אֲשֶׁר פָּקַד מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן עַל־פִּי יְהוָה לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם כָּל־זָכָר מִבְּנֵי־חֹדֶשׁ וּמַעְלָה שְׁנַיִם וְעֶשְׂרִים אֵלֶּף: 8

◆ שִׁישִׁי 40 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה פָּקַד כָּל־בְּכֹר זָכָר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִבְּנֵי־חֹדֶשׁ וּמַעְלָה וְשָׂא אֶת מִסְפַּר שְׁמֹתָם: 41 וְלָקַחְתָּ אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם לִי אֲנִי יְהוָה תַּחַת כָּל־בְּכֹר בְּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֵת בְּהֵמַת הַלְוִיִּם תַּחַת כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּבֵהֶמַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: 42 וַיִּפְקַד מֹשֶׁה כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֹתוֹ אֶת־כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: 43 וַיְהִי כָּל־בְּכוֹר זָכָר בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמֹת מִבְּנֵי־חֹדֶשׁ וּמַעְלָה לְפָקְדֵיהֶם שְׁנַיִם וְעֶשְׂרִים אֵלֶּף שְׁלֹשָׁה וְשִׁבְעִים וּמֵאֲתָיִם: 9

44 וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: 45 קַח אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם תַּחַת כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֵת־בְּהֵמַת הַלְוִיִּם תַּחַת בְּהֵמַתָּם וְהַיּוֹדֵי הַלְוִיִּם אֲנִי יְהוָה: 46 וְאֵת פְּדוּיֵי הַשְּׁלֵשָׁה וְהַשְּׁבַעִים וְהַמֵּאֲתָיִם הָעֹדְפִים עַל־הַלְוִיִּם מִבְּכוֹר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: 47 וְלָקַחְתָּ חֲמִשָּׁת חֲמִשָּׁת שֶׁקֶלִים לְגִלְגֻלַּת בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ תִּקַּח עֶשְׂרִים גֵּרָה הַשֶּׁקֶל:

RASHI

משינא מכלל ספק נפלים: 45 ואת בהמת הלויים וגו'. לא פדו בהמת הלויים את בכורי בהמה שהורה של ישראל, אלא את פטרי חמוריהם, ושה אחד של בן לוי פטר כמה פטרי חמורים של ישראל. תדע, שהרי מנה העודפים באדם ולא מנה העודפים בהמה: 46 ואת פדויי השלשה וגו'. ואת הבכורות הצריכין להפדות בהם — אלו השלשה ושבעים ומאתים העודפים בהם יתרים על הלויים, מהם תקח חמשת שקלים לגלגלת. כך היתה מכירתו של יוסף, עשרים כסף, שהיה בכורה של רחל:

39 אֲשֶׁר פָּקַד מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן. נקוד על "ואהרן", לומר שלא היה במנין הלויים: שנים ועשרים אלף. ובפרטן אתה מוצא שלש מאות יתרים: בני גרשון — שבעת אלפים וחמש מאות, בני קהת — שמונת אלפים ושש מאות, בני מררי — ששת אלפים ומאתים. ולמה לא כללן עם השאר, ויפדו את הבכורות, ולא יהיו וקוקים השלשה ושבעים ומאתים בכורות העודפים על המנין לפדיון? אמרו רבותינו במסכת בכורות: "אוחן שלש מאות לויים — בכורות היו, ודיים שיפקיעו עצמם מן הפדיון: 40 פקד כל בכר זכר וגו' מבן חודש ומעלה.

.16 ה, א.

47 you shall take five shekels per head from each of them. Take them according to the shekel of the Sanctuary, by which the shekel is 20 gerahs. This 'price' for a firstborn was established when Rachel's firstborn, Joseph was sold by his brothers for 20 pieces of silver.<sup>98</sup>

98. Genesis 37:28.

**39 All the tallies of the male Levites, according to their families, one month old and over, whom Moses and Aaron counted according to the word of God, was 22,300**

(see figure 3).

Of these, 300

were firstborn.

Thus, there

were only

**22,000** Levites

who were *not*

firstborn. For

the procedure

of redeeming

the Israelite

firstborn, which

will be described

presently, only

these Levites

were considered.

Clan	Total Count	Location Around Tabernacle	Prince	Carried
Gershon Livni Shimi	7,500	West	Eliasaf son of Lael	Tapestry-cover , cover of goat skin, cover of ram and tachash skins, entrance Screen, curtains and screen of the Courtyard, ropes for these curtains
Kehat Amram Yitzhar Hebron Uziel	8,600	South	Elitzafan son of Uziel	Ark of the Testimony, show-bread Table, Candelabrum, Inner and Outer Altars, utensils, dividing Screen
Merari Machli Mushi	6,200	North	Tzuriel son of Avichail	Planks, bars, pillars, sockets, and utensils of the Tabernacle; pillars, sockets, stakes, and ropes of the Courtyard
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,300</b>			

Figure 3: The Levite Census

- ◆ ***Sixth Reading* 40 God said to Moses, “Now, tally all the firstborn Israelite males one month old and over, and take a census of their names.**

**41 And you shall take the Levites for Me—I am God—in place of all the Israelite firstborn, head for head, and the Levites’ lambs<sup>95</sup> in place of all the firstborn donkeys of the Israelites.** The substitution of Levite lambs for lay donkeys, however, is not on a head-for-head basis; one Levite lamb may redeem any number of lay donkeys. And there is no redemption for the firstborn cattle, sheep, or goats of the lay Israelites; they must give these to the priests.”<sup>96</sup>

**42 So Moses counted all the Israelite firstborn, as God had commanded him.** He did not need God’s assistance as he did when he counted the Levites, since he only had to enter the laity’s tents if the firstborn of a particular family was still a nursing baby.<sup>97</sup>

**43 The tally of the firstborn males one month old and over, according to the number of names, was 22,273.** Of the 22,300 Levites, 300 were firstborn, as we saw; these 300 substituted (as Levites) for themselves (as firstborn), and could therefore not substitute for first born lay Israelites. There were thus 273 more firstborn Israelites than there were Levites that could redeem them.

**44 God spoke to Moses, saying:**

**45 “Take the Levites in place of all the Israelite firstborn and the Levites’ lambs in place of the Israelites’ firstborn donkeys, and the Levites shall be Mine; I am God.**

**46 As for those yet to be redeemed, the 273 Israelite firstborn who are in excess of the Levites,**

95. Exodus 13:13. 96. Below, 18:17-18. 97. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 18, p. 7, note 10.

— ONKELOS —

48 ונתתה הכסף לאהרן ולבניו פדוויי העדפים בהם:  
 49 ויקח משה את כסף הפדוים מאת העדפים על  
 פדוויי הלויים: 50 מאת בכור בני ישראל לקח את-  
 הכסף חמשה וששים ושלוש מאות ואלף בשקל  
 הקדש: 51 ויתן משה את-כסף הפדוים לאהרן ולבניו  
 על-פי יהוה כאשר צוה יהוה את-משה: פ  
 שביעי 4:1 וידבר יהוה אל-משה ואל-אהרן לאמר:  
 2 נשא את-ראש בני קהת מתוך בני לוי למשפחתם  
 לבית אבתם: 3 מן שלשים שנה ומעלה ועד בן  
 חמשים שנה כל-בא לצבא לעשות מלאכה באהל  
 מועד: 4 ואת עבדת בני-קהת באהל מועד קדש  
 הקדשים: 5 ובא אהרן ובניו בנסע המתנה והורדו את  
 פרכת המסך וכסו-בה את ארון העדת:

48 ונתתה הכסף לאהרן ולבניו פדוויי העדפים בהם:  
 49 ויקח משה את כסף הפדוים מאת העדפים על  
 פדוויי הלויים: 50 מאת בכור בני ישראל לקח את-  
 הכסף חמשה וששים ושלוש מאות ואלף בשקל  
 הקדש: 51 ויתן משה את-כסף הפדוים לאהרן ולבניו  
 על-פי יהוה כאשר צוה יהוה את-משה: פ  
 שביעי 4:1 וידבר יהוה אל-משה ואל-אהרן לאמר:  
 2 נשא את-ראש בני קהת מתוך בני לוי למשפחתם  
 לבית אבתם: 3 מן שלשים שנה ומעלה ועד בן  
 חמשים שנה כל-בא לצבא לעשות מלאכה באהל  
 מועד: 4 ואת עבדת בני-קהת באהל מועד קדש  
 הקדשים: 5 ובא אהרן ובניו בנסע המתנה והורדו את  
 פרכת המסך וכסו-בה את ארון העדת:

— RASHI —

הגורל: 2 נשא את ראש וגו'. מנה מהם את הראויין  
 לעבודת משא, והם מן שלשים עד בן חמשים שנה.  
 והפחות משלשים לא נתמלא כחו, מכאן אמרו: בן  
 שלשים לבחי'. והיותו על בן חמשים, כחו מכויש  
 מעתה: 4 קדש הקדשים. המקדש שבבבל: הארון,  
 והשלחן, והמנוורה, והמזבחות, והפרכת, וכלי שרת:  
 5 ובא אהרן ובניו וגו'. יבגיסו כל כלי וכלי לנרתקו  
 המפרש לו בפרשה זו, ולא יצטרכו הלויים בני קהת  
 אלא לשאת: בנסע המחנה. כשהענן מסתלק, הם  
 יודעים שיסעו:

49 העדפים על פדוויי הלויים. על אותן שפדו הלויים  
 בגופן: 50 חמשה וששים ושלוש מאות ואלף. כך סבום  
 החשבון: חמשת שקלים לגלגלת, למאתים בכורות —  
 אלה שקל, לשבעים בכורות — שלש מאות וחמשים  
 שקל, לשלושה בכורות — חמשה עשר שקל. אמר:  
 "ביצד אעשה? בכור שאמר לו: תן חמשת שקלים,  
 יאמר לי: אני מפדוויי הלויים!" מה עשה? הביא שנים  
 ועשרים אלה פתקין וכתב עליהן: "בן לוי", ומאתים  
 ושבעים ושלושה פתקין כתב עליהם: "חמשת שקלים",  
 בללן ונתנן בקלפי, אמר להן: "בואו וטלו פתקיכם לפי

17. אבות ה, כא.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

assertive facets of spiritual life.<sup>105</sup>

**3 Take a census...from the age of thirty until the age of fifty:** God led the Jews through the desert with the Tabernacle in order to break the forces of evil, which the desert embodies.<sup>106</sup> The desert is an uninhabited, uncultivated, desolate, and dangerous place, but wherever the Jews traveled, the desert became green and verdant: the water from Miriam's well caused manifold trees and plants to sprout<sup>107</sup> and the protective clouds neutralized the desert's dangers, killing snakes and scorpions and leveling the treacherous terrain.<sup>108</sup>

As we have explained previously, the Jews were

counted before their sojourn in the desert in order to give them the power to overcome the spiritual challenges it posed. In this general counting, the laity was counted from age 20 and the Levites from one month old. Now, the Levites between ages 30-50 were counted again. These Levites were given the mission of carrying the Tabernacle and its vessels into the desert, this being the principal way they transformed the desert into a hospitable place. In order for these Levites to do this, they required a spiritual "boost." Inasmuch as "count" (*naso*) also means "uplift," it was this census that provided them with the power to successfully and fearlessly

107. *Bemidbar Rabbah* 19:26. 108. *Sifrei* and Rashi on Numbers 10:34.

**48 You shall give the money to Aaron and his sons, as redemption for the firstborn who are in excess of them."**

49 Moses used a lottery to determine which of the Israelite firstborn would be redeemed head-for-head by a Levite and which ones would have to pay the five-shekel redemption fee. **Moses then collected the redemption money from those 273 Israelite firstborn who were in excess of those redeemed by the Levites head-for-head.**

**50 He took the money from the firstborn of the Israelites: 1,365 shekels of the Sanctuary.**

**51 Moses then gave the money of the redeemed Israelites to Aaron and his sons, in accordance with the word of God, as God had commanded Moses.**

### The Levite Clans

◆ *Seventh Reading 4:1* **God** now told Moses to count the Levites who were able to transport the Tabernacle and its furnishings, clan by clan. He **spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:**

**2 "Take a separate census of the clan of Kehat from among the Levites by their families, according to their fathers' houses,**

**3 from the age of 30 until the age of 50, all who are strong enough to lift heavy things and are thus eligible for the troop, to do work in the Tent of Meeting.**

**4 The following is the service of the clan of Kehat in transporting the Tent of Meeting:**<sup>99</sup> they will carry **the holiest of the holy** furnishings: the Ark, the dividing Screen, the showbread Table, the Candelabrum, the two Altars, and all their utensils.

**5** But before they approach these furnishings, the priests will cover them, as follows: **When the cloud moves forward, indicating that the camp is about to travel, Aaron and his sons shall come and take down the dividing Screen and cover the Ark of the Testimony with it.**

#### ∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

**2 Take a census:** The three Levite clans are now counted, each one separately. But the idiom of "take a census" (literally, "raise the head") is used only twice: here, in the case of the clan of Kehat, and later,<sup>100</sup> in the case of the clan of Gershon. Of the clan of Merari, it is simply said, "count them."<sup>101</sup>

This is because the preeminence acknowledged in this census was the physical strength necessary to carry the components of the Tabernacle and its furnishings. The clan of Kehat had the hardest burden: they had to carry the furnishings themselves from encampment to encampment, without loading them on wagons.<sup>102</sup> The jobs of the clans of Gershon and Merari were much easier, for they were allowed to place their burdens on wagons. Still, the clan of Gershon had to use their strength more than the clan of Merari did: they had to climb up the walls

and poles to drape and undrape the curtains and hangings of the Tabernacle and its courtyard before laying them on their wagons. The clan of Merari, in contrast, hardly had to do any carrying at all: they simply dismantled the Tabernacle's walls and courtyard poles and laid them on their wagons.<sup>103</sup>

We explained above<sup>104</sup> that Merari personified the selflessness that serves as the foundation of our spiritual life, while Gershon and Kehat personified our emotional involvement with God and the way our relationship with God changes us and enables us to transform reality. Thus, allegorically, the fact that Merari is not accorded any acknowledgement of preeminence is not because of any shortcoming on his part, but rather because his is the expression of pure selflessness. In this aspect, he exceeded his two brothers, who personified more the active, self-

99. Above, 3:31. 100. 4:22. 101. Below, 4:29. 102. Below, 7:9. 103. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 18, pp. 46-50; *Sefer HaSichot* 5748, p. 466. 104. On 3:17. 105. *Sefer HaSichot* 5748, vol. 2, pp. 466-468. 106. *Likutei Torah* 3:20a ff; cf. *Zohar* 2:184a.

— ONKELOS —

6 ויתגנון עלוהי חופאה דמשך ססגונא ויפרסון לבוש גמיר תכלא מלעלא וישוון אריחיה: 7 ועל פתורא דלחם אפיא ופרסון לבוש תכלא ויתגנון עלוהי ית מגיסאי וית בויכיא וית מכילתא וית קסוות נסוכא ולחם תדירא עלוהי ית: 8 ויפרסון עליהון לבוש צבע ודורוי ויכסון יתה בחופאה דמשך ססגונא וישוון ית אריחיה: 9 ויסבון לבוש תכלא ויכסון ית מנרתא דאנהורי וית בוצינהא וית צבתהא וית מחתיתאה וית כל מני משחה די ישמשון לה בהון: 10 ויתגנון יתה וית כל מנהא לחופאה דמשך ססגונא ויתגנון על אריחא: 11 ועל מדבחא דדבבא ויפרסון לבוש תכלא ויכסון יתה בחופאה דמשך ססגונא וישוון ית אריחיה: 12 ויסבון ית כל מני שמושא די ישמשון בהון בקדשא ויתגנון ללבוש תכלא ויכסון יתהון בחופאה דמשך ססגונא ויתגנון על אריחא: 13 ויספון ית קטמא דמדבחא עלוהי לבוש ארגון: 14 ויתגנון עלוהי ית כל מנהי די ישמשון עלוהי בהון ית מחתיתא וית צבוריתא וית מגרופיתא וית מורקאי כל מני מדבחא ויפרסון עלוהי חופאה דמשך ססגונא וישוון אריחיה:

6 ונתגנו עליו כסוי עור תחש ופרשו בגד כלייל תכלת מלמעלה ושמו בדיי: 7 ועל שלחן הפנים ופרשו בגד תכלת ונתנו עליו את הקערת ואת הכפת ואת המנקית ואת קשות הנסך ולחם התמיד עליו יהיה: 8 ופרשו עליהם בגד תולעת שני וכסו אתו במכסה עור תחש ושמו את בדיי: 9 ולקחו בגד תכלת וכסו את מנרת המאור ואת נרתיה ואת מלקחיה ואת מחתיה ואת כל כלי שמנה אשר ישרתו לה בהם: 10 ונתנו אתה ואת כל כליה אל מכסה עור תחש ונתנו על המוט: 11 ועל מזבח הזהב ופרשו בגד תכלת וכסו אתו במכסה עור תחש ושמו את בדיי: 12 ולקחו את כל כלי השרת אשר ישרתו בהם בקדש ונתנו אל בגד תכלת וכסו אותם במכסה עור תחש ונתנו על המוט: 13 ודשנו את המזבח ופרשו עליו בגד ארגמן: 14 ונתנו עליו את כל כלי אשר ישרתו עליו בהם את המחנות את המזולגת ואת היעים ואת המזולקת כל כלי המזבח ופרשו עליו כסוי עור תחש ושמו בדיי:

— RASHI —

13 ודשנו את המזבח. מזבח הנחשת: ודשנו. וטלו את הדשן מעליו: ופרשו עליו בגד ארגמן. ואש שירדה מן השמים רבוצה תחת הבגד כארי בשעת המשעות, ואינה שורפתו, שהיו כופין עליה פסכתה של נחשת: 14 מחתת. שבהן חותמים וקלים לתרומת הדשן, עשויה כמין מחבת שאין לה אלא שלש מחצות, ומלפניה שואבת את הגחלים: מזולגת. צנורות של נחשת, שבהן מכין באיברים שעל המזבח להפכו, כדי שיתעכלו ופה ומרה: יעים. הם מגרפות, ובלעז דוילי. והן של נחשת, ובהן מכבדין את הדשן מעל המזבח:

7 קערת וכפת קשות ומנקית. כבר פרשתיים במלאכת המשכן: הנסך. הכסוי, לשון "מסך", כדכתיב: "אשר יסך בהן": 9 מלקחיה. כמין צבת שמושך בה את הפתילה לכל צד שירצה: מחתיה. כמין כף קטנה, ושוליה פשוטין ולא סגלגלים, ואין לה מחצה לפניה אלא מצדיה, וחיתה בה את דשן הברות כשמיטיבן: נרתיה. לוצי"ש בלעז, שנותנים בהן הדשן והפתילות: 10 אל מכסה עור תחש כמין מרצוף: 12 את כל כלי השרת אשר ישרתו בהם בקדש. בתוף המשכן שהוא קדש, והן כלי הקטרת שמשרתין בהן במזבח הפנימי:

18. שמות כה, כט. 19. מנורות. 20. עירובין קד, ב. 21. יעה, מנרפה.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

awareness of Him in the "desert," in the mundane, material world, even though doing so prevents us from maintaining the intense consciousness of God that is ours when the Tabernacle is set up and all its furnishings are uncovered.

Yet, even while involved in refining the world, we must always carry the ark and the Torah inside it with us. Even though it is submerged in our memory, Divine consciousness must accompany us even (and especially) into the bleakest moments and as-

6 They shall put a covering of *tachash*-skin on it, and on top of that they shall spread a pure turquoise wool cloth bag. Then they shall put its poles in place.

7 They shall spread a fitted, turquoise wool cloth bag on the showbread Table and they shall place on it the forms, spoons, supports, and covering canes, the continual bread remaining upon it.

8 They shall then spread a fitted, scarlet wool cloth bag on them and cover that with a covering of *tachash*-skin. Then they shall put its poles into place.

9 They shall take a fitted, turquoise wool cloth bag and cover the Candelabrum of illumination, its lamps, its tongs, its scoops, and all its oil vessels they use in performing its service.

10 They shall put it and all its utensils into a covering of *tachash*-skin and place the bag and its cover on a pole, since the Candelabrum has no poles with which it can be carried.

11 They shall spread a fitted, turquoise wool cloth bag over the golden, Inner Altar and cover it with a covering of *tachash*-skin, and then set its poles in place.

12 They shall then take all the utensils they use for the golden Altar, which is inside the Sanctuary, put them into a turquoise wool cloth bag, cover them with a covering of *tachash*-skin, and put this bag and its cover onto a pole in order to carry it.<sup>109</sup>

13 They shall remove the ashes from the Outer Altar and spread a fitted, purple wool cloth bag over it. The heavenly fire will be covered with a copper bowl so that it does not burn this wool bag.

14 They shall place on it all the utensils with which they minister upon it: the scoops, the forks, the shovels, and the basins—all the implements of the Altar. Then they shall spread over it a covering of *tachash*-skin and set its poles into place.

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∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

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accomplish their task.

Analogously, our own environment sometimes seems like a spiritual “desert,” devoid of Godliness. This perspective makes it easy to lose heart in the daunting task of living our lives as practicing Jews. The Torah teaches us, however, that not only can we persevere, God has given us the capacity to overcome and transform the world around us, just as the Levites did in their time.

Still, upon honest reflection, we may realize that we *ourselves* have become a “desert”—i.e., that we have developed habits and modes of behavior that are contrary to our task of spreading Divine consciousness. How can we possibly hope to change ourselves (let alone the outside world) when these habits and behavior have already become embedded within us as second nature?

Here, too, we can take our cue from the Levites.

They reached the age of thirty before they ever carried the Tabernacle, yet they were instructed and empowered with the ability to begin their holy service at this age despite this. God gives us, too, the ability to begin something we feel unqualified and unprepared to carry out; we just have to avail ourselves of it.<sup>110</sup>

**5-6, 20 Aaron and his sons...shall cover the Ark of the Testimony:** We see here that great care is to be taken to keep the holy furnishings and utensils of the Sanctuary hidden. The lesson for us in this is that even though these furnishings express and embody sublime levels of Divine consciousness, God does not want us to bask constantly in the experience of the spirituality they express. This was the mistake of Nadav and Avihu, “when they drew near to God and died”<sup>111</sup> in their ecstasy of Divine awareness. Rather, God desires that we spread

109. On this whole passage, see *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 8, pp. 8-17. 110. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 13, pp. 16-19. 111. Leviticus 16:1.

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15 וישיצו אהרן ובנָהוּי לְכַסְאָה ית קדָשָׁא וְיֵת כַּל מְנֵי קדָשָׁא בְּמַשְׁל מְשֻׁרְיָתָא וּבְתֵר כֵּן יַעֲלוּן בְּנֵי קֹהֵת לְמַשְׁל וְלֹא יִקְרְבוּן לְקדָשָׁא וְלֹא יִמוּתוּן אֲלֵין מַטּוּל בְּנֵי קֹהֵת בְּמַשְׁכָּן זְמָנָא: 16 וְדַמְסִיר לְאַלְעָזָר בַּר אַהֲרֹן כֹּהֵנָא מִשְׁחָא דְאַנְהִירוּתָא וְקִטְרֵת בּוֹסְמִיָּא וּמִנְחָתָא תְּדִירָא וּמִשְׁחָא דְרִבּוּתָא מִשְׁרֵת כַּל מְשַׁכְּנָא וְכַל דִּי בַּהּ בְּקדָשָׁא וּבְמִנְחָה: 17 וּמְלִיל יֵי עִם מִשָּׁה וְעַם אַהֲרֹן לְמִימְרָ: 18 לֹא תִשְׁיָצוּן יֵת שְׂבֵט זְרַעִית קֹהֵת מִגּוּ לְוָאֵי: 19 וְדֹא עֵבִידוּ לְהוֹן וְיַחֲוֹן וְלֹא יִמוּתוּן בְּמִקְרָבָהוֹן לְקדָשׁ קדָשָׁא אַהֲרֹן וּבְנָהוּי יַעֲלוּן וַיִּמְנוּן יִתְהוֹן גִּבְר גִּבְר עַל פְּלִחְנָה וּלְמַטּוּלָה: 20 וְלֹא יַעֲלוּן לְמַחֲזִי כַּד מְכַסֵּן יֵת מְנֵי קדָשָׁא וְלֹא יִמוּתוּן:

15 וְכִלְהָ אַהֲרֹן וְיִבְנִי לְכַסֵּת אֶת־הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְאֶת־כָּל־כְּלֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ בְּנִסְעֵי הַמִּחְנֶה וְאֶחָרֵי־כֵן יָבֹאוּ בְנֵי־קֹהֵת לְשִׂאת וְלֹא־יִגְעוּ אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּמָתוּ אֵלֶּה מִשָּׂא בְנֵי־קֹהֵת בְּאַהֲל מוֹעֵד: 16 וּפְקַדְתָּ אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן־אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן שֹׁמֵן הַמְּאֹר וּקְטֹרֶת הַסִּמִּים וּמִנְחַת הַתָּמִיד וְשֹׁמֵן הַמִּשְׁחָה פְּקַדְתָּ כָּל־הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ בְּקֹדֶשׁ וּבְכִלָּיו: פ

◆ מַפְטִיר 17 וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: 18 אֶל־תְּכַרְיֵתוּ אֶת־שִׁבְט מִשְׁפַּחַת הַקֹּהֲלִי מִתּוֹךְ הַלְוִיִּם: 19 וְזֹאת אֲעֲשֶׂה לָהֶם וְחִיו וְלֹא יָמָתוּ בְּגִשְׁתֶּם אֶת־קֹדֶשׁ הַקֹּדֶשִׁים אַהֲרֹן וּבְנָיו יָבֹאוּ וְשָׂמוּ אוֹתָם אִישׁ אִישׁ עַל־עִבְדוֹתָיו וְאֶל־מִשְׁאֹ: 20 וְלֹא־יָבֹאוּ לְרִאוֹת כְּבָלַע אֶת־הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּמָתוּ:

פ"ה פסוקים. פ"ה אל פה סימן.

RASHI

אָבַל מִשָּׂא בְּנֵי גֵרְשׁוֹן וּמִרְרֵי, שְׂאִינָן מְקַדְשׁ הַקֹּדֶשִׁים, עַל פִּי אִיתְמַר הִיָּה, כְּמוֹ שְׂכָתוּב בְּפָרֶשֶׁת נִשְׂא: 18 אֶל תְּכַרְיֵתוּ. אֶל תִּגְרְמוּ לָהֶם שְׂמִימוֹת: 20 וְלֹא יָבֹאוּ לְרִאוֹת כְּבָלַע אֶת הַקֹּדֶשׁ. לְתוֹךְ גֵּרְתֵּק שְׁלוֹ, כְּמוֹ שְׁפָרְשִׁיתִי לְמַעַלָּה בְּפָרֶשֶׁה זֹו. וּפְרָשׁוּ עֲלָיו בְּגַד פְּלוּנֵי, וְכִסּוּ אוֹתוֹ בְּמַכְסָּה פְּלוּנֵי, וּבְלוּעַ שְׁלוֹ הוּא כְּסוּיוֹ: חסלת פרשת במדבר

15 לְכַסֵּת אֶת הַקֹּדֶשׁ. הָאָרוֹן וְהַמִּזְבֵּחַ: וְאֵת כָּל כְּלֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ. הַמְּנוּרָה וְכִלֵּי שֶׁרֶת: וּמָתוּ. שְׂאִם יִגְעוּ — חִיבִין מִיתָה בִּידֵי שְׂמִים: 16 וּפְקַדְתָּ אֶלְעָזָר. שֶׁהוּא מְמַנָּה עֲלֵיהֶם לְשִׂאת אוֹתָם — שְׁמֹן, וְקִטְרֵת, וְשֹׁמֵן הַמִּשְׁחָה, וּמִנְחַת הַתָּמִיד, עֲלָיו מְטַל לְצוּוֹת וּלְזָרוּ וּלְהַקְרִיב בְּעַת הַנִּזְתָּן: פְּקַדְתָּ כָּל הַמִּשְׁכָּן. וְעוֹד הִיָּה מְמַנָּה עַל מִשָּׂא בְּנֵי קֹהֵת, לְצוּוֹת אִישׁ אִישׁ עַל עִבְדוֹתָיו וְעַל מִשְׁאֹ, וְהוּא הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְכָל אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ, כָּל הַסְּדוּרִים לְמַעַלָּה בְּפָרֶשֶׁה זֹו.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

er to confront them with the power of Aaron, the peacemaker.<sup>114</sup> The power of loving-kindness mitigates the severity of the other's negativity, or often

eliminates it altogether. And turning an adversary into an ally is the most complete victory possible.<sup>115</sup>

## INNER DIMENSIONS

[19] **Aaron and his sons shall come and appoint each man:** In Kabbalah, the Levites personify *gevurah* (restraint and judgment), while the priests (and Aaron in particular) personify *chesed* (love and kindness). In the Temple service, the music of the Levites inspired the worshippers to scale the heights of holiness and purity, while the sacrifices offered by the priests drew down Divine

blessing and revelation. By placing the priests in charge of the Levites, the Torah here indicates that while both *chesed* and *gevurah* are necessary and complimentary facets of spiritual life, we should nonetheless ensure that *chesed* sweeten *gevurah*—that love temper fear and kindness direct strictness.<sup>116</sup>

114. Avot 1:12. 115. Hitvo'aduyot 5748, vol. 3, pp. 405-407. 116. Hitvo'aduyot 5748, vol. 3, pp. 405-407.

**15 Aaron and his sons shall finish covering the holy furnishings and all the utensils of the Sanctuary when the camp is set to travel, and only afterwards shall the clan of Kehat come to carry them. But the clan of Kehat must not touch the sacred objects themselves, for then they will die. These furnishings are the burden of the clan of Kehat in transporting the Tent of Meeting.**

**16 The charge of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest is as follows: he must carry the oil for lighting and the spice incense; he must ensure the daily meal offering is offered when they make camp; and he must carry the anointing oil. In addition, he has the charge of supervising the work of the clan of Kehat, assigning each one of them what they should carry from the entire Tabernacle and all that is in it, that is, from the holy things and from all the Tabernacle's furnishings (see Figure 4)."**

◆ **Maftir 17** **GOD spoke to Moses to speak to Aaron, saying:**

**18 "Do not let the tribe of the families of Kehat be eliminated from among the Levites.**

**19 Do this for them, so they should live and not die when they approach the holiest of the holy things in order to carry them, as was just described: Aaron and his sons shall first come and appoint each man individually to his task and his load.**

**20 But the clan of Kehat shall not come in to see when the holy furnishings are being wrapped up, lest they inadvertently touch them and die."**

Furnishing	First Cover	Second Cover
Ark (covered by <i>parochet</i> )	<i>tachash</i>	turquoise ( <i>techelet</i> )
Table	turquoise ( <i>techelet</i> , on which is placed its utensils and showbread), then scarlet ( <i>tola'at shani</i> )	<i>tachash</i>
Candelabrum	turquoise ( <i>techelet</i> )	<i>tachash</i>
Golden Altar	turquoise ( <i>techelet</i> )	<i>tachash</i>
Utensils of Golden Altar	turquoise ( <i>techelet</i> )	<i>tachash</i>
Outer Altar	purple ( <i>argaman</i> ), on which is placed its utensils	<i>tachash</i>

Figure 4: The Charge of the Clan of Kehat

The *Haftarah* for *parashat Bemidbar* may be found on p. 229.

The *Haftarah* for *Machar Chodesh* may be found on p. 260.



### CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

pects of our lives. In this way, the Torah can illumine even these last moments of the multi-layered darkness<sup>112</sup> of our Exile.

The Torah also gains by this: carrying the ark within this thick cloak allows us to transport it to yet-unreached levels of expression and ultimately bring it to its natural setting, the Holy Temple.<sup>113</sup>

**19 When they approach the holiest of the holy things: Aaron and his sons shall come and appoint**

**each man:** Allegorically, "the holiest of the holy things" represents the highest levels of spiritual life and Divine consciousness. It often happens that when we strive to reach our potential in spiritual matters, we encounter various forces of opposition. Sometimes these are other people's ridicule and hostility; sometimes these are inner voices of doubt. The Torah teaches us here that the proper response to these challenges is not to battle them, but rath-

112. Cf. Deuteronomy 31:18; *Keter Shem Tov*, et al. 113. *Hitva'aduyot* 5745, vol. 4, pp. 2139-2141; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 8, p. 20.





*Bemidbar*

הפטרות  
*Haftarot*



## Haftarah for any Sabbath that falls on the 29<sup>th</sup> of the Month (Machar Chodesh)

1 Samuel 20:18-42

This *haftarah* begins with the words, “Tomorrow is the new moon,” the first day of the month.

20:18 King Saul, noticing how David’s popularity was increasing with his successive victories in battle, suspected him unfairly of challenging his authority, and therefore sought to have him killed. King Saul’s son, Jonathan, was David’s friend and knew that he was loyal to the king. He had recently convinced his father not to kill David, but after David’s most recent victory, King Saul tried again to kill David. Jonathan found this hard to believe, so they devised a test to determine the king’s true intentions. David was to be absent from the royal meal held on the first of the month, and Jonathan would note Saul’s reaction. **Jonathan said to David, “Tomorrow is the new moon,** and as you know, it is the custom of the king’s inner circle to dine at his table on the first day of the month. **You will be remembered by my father, and he will ask where you are, for your seat will be vacant.** 19 **After three days, you shall descend into a hiding place and hide very well,** for in three days the king’s men will seek you. **You shall come to the hiding place where you hid today, which is a day of work, and you shall stay beside the traveler’s stone that serves as a landmark.** 20 **I shall come there and pretend to practice shooting arrows. I shall shoot three arrows to the side, as though I shot at a mark.** 21 **Behold, I shall send the youth that I will bring with me, saying, ‘Go, find the arrows.’ If I say to the youth, ‘Behold, the arrows are on this side of you,’ emerge from your hiding place and take them and come, for it is well with you, and there is nothing the matter, as God lives.** 22 **But, if I say thus to the youth, ‘Behold, the arrows are beyond you,’ then go! For it means that God has sent you away by making my father displeased with you, and you must flee for your life.** 23 **Concerning the matter which we have spoken, I and you—the covenant we have made that I shall protect you and you shall protect my family when you become king<sup>42</sup>— behold, God is the witness between me and you that we shall honor it forever.”** 24 **David hid in the field, and when it was the new moon, King Saul sat down to the meal to eat.**

20:18 וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ יְהוֹנָתָן מָחָר הַחֹדֶשׁ  
וְנִפְקְדָתָ כִּי יִפְקֹד מוֹשֶׁבֶד: 19 וּשְׁלֹשֶׁת  
יָמִים מְאֹד וּבָאתָ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־  
נִסְתַּרְתָּ שָׁם בַּיּוֹם הַמַּעֲשֵׂה וַיִּשְׁבֶּת אֶצְלֵ  
הָאָבִן הָאֵוֹל: 20 וְאֵנִי שְׁלֹשֶׁת הַחֳצִיִּים  
צֵדָה אֹרְגָה לְשַׁלְּחֵנִי לְמַטְרָה: 21 וְהִנֵּה  
אֲשַׁלַּח אֶת־הַנְּעָר לְךָ מֵצֵא אֶת־הַחֳצִיִּים  
אִם־אָמַר אֲמַר לְנֶעַר הִנֵּה הַחֳצִיִּים |  
מִמֶּנִּי וְהִנֵּה קָחְנוּ וּבָאָה בִּי־שָׁלוֹם לְךָ  
וְאִין דָּבָר חִי־יְהוּדָה: 22 וְאִם־כָּבָה אֲמַר  
לְעֵלָם הִנֵּה הַחֳצִיִּים מִמֶּנִּי וְהִלָּאָה לְךָ כִּי  
שְׁלַחְךָ יְהוּדָה: 23 וְהִדְבַר אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְנוּ אֵנִי  
וְאַתָּה הִנֵּה יְהוּדָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ עַד־עוֹלָם:  
24 וַיִּסְתֵּר דָּוִד בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיְהִי הַחֹדֶשׁ וַיִּשָּׁב  
הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־הַלֶּחֶם (וְאֶל־הַלֶּחֶם) לֶאֱכֹל:

42. 1 Samuel 20:11-17.

25 The king sat upon his seat, as at other times, upon the seat by the wall. Usually, David sat next to Saul and Jonathan next to David, because it was disrespectful for Jonathan to recline next to his father. But, this time, David was absent, so there was no one intervening between Saul and Jonathan. So Jonathan arose, rather than recline while seated next to his father, and did not sit down again until Avner, Saul's general, sat down beside Saul. In any case, David's place was vacant. 26 Saul did not say anything about this on that day, for he thought, "It is probably due to an incident of seminal emission that David is not here; he is probably not pure since he did not get a chance to immerse himself.<sup>43</sup> He did not come because he is not pure and does not wish to contaminate the food." 27 It was, on the next day, the morrow of the new moon, the second day of the month, that David's place was again vacant, and Saul said to Jonathan, his son, "Why has not David, the son of Jesse, come to the meal either yesterday or today?" 28 Jonathan answered Saul, "David asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem, where his family lives. 29 He said, 'Let me go away now, for we have a family sacrifice in the city, and Eliav,<sup>44</sup> my eldest brother, commanded me to come. Now, if I have found favor in your eyes, let me slip away now, just for one day, and see my brothers.' He, therefore, did not come to the king's table." 30 Saul did not believe this. His wrath was kindled against Jonathan, and he said to him, cursing him, "You son of a parading woman, deserving of punishment! Don't you think that I know that you choose to be loyal to David the son of Jesse rather than to me, to your shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness? By remaining loyal to David rather than me, you imply that there is something amiss in how you were conceived, rendering you unfit to inherit the crown. 31 You should realize that as long as the son of Jesse is living on the earth, you and your kingdom will not be established. Now, send for him and take him to me, for he is condemned to death." 32 Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said to him, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" 33 Saul cast the spear upon Jonathan to strike him, and Jonathan knew that his father had indeed decided to put David to death.

25 וַיֵּשֶׁב הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־מוֹשְׁבוֹ בַּפֶּעַם | בַּפֶּעַם אֶל־מוֹשֵׁב הַקִּיר וְיָקָם יְהוֹנָתָן וַיֵּשֶׁב אַבְנֵר מֵצֵד שְׂאוּל וַיִּפְקֹד מְקוֹם דָּוִד: 26 וְלֹא־דָבַר שְׂאוּל מֵאוֹמֶה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כִּי אָמַר מִקְרָה הוּא בְלִתי טְהוֹר הוּא כִּי־לֹא טְהוֹר: 27 וַיהִי מִמַּחֲרַת הַחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי וַיִּפְקֹד מְקוֹם דָּוִד וַיֹּאמֶר שְׂאוּל אֶל־יְהוֹנָתָן בְּנוֹ מִדָּוִד לֹא־בָא בְּיָשִׁי גַם־תְּמוּל גַּם־הַיּוֹם אֶל־הַלֶּחֶם: 28 וַיַּעַן יְהוֹנָתָן אֶת־שְׂאוּל נִשְׂאֵל נִשְׂאֵל דָּוִד מֵעַמְדֵי עַד־בֵּית לֶחֶם: 29 וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁלַחְנִי נָא כִּי זָבַח מִשְׁפָּחָה לָנוּ בְעִיר וְהוּא צִוְּהֵלִי אֲחִי וְעַתָּה אִם־מְצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אִמְלֹטָהּ נָא וְאַרְאֶה אֶת־אֲחִי עַל־כֵּן לֹא־בָא אֶל־שְׁלֹחַן הַמֶּלֶךְ: 30 וַיַּחֲרֵ אָף שְׂאוּל בִּיהוֹנָתָן וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ בְּיָנְעוּת הַמַּרְדּוּת הַלּוֹא יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־בָחַר אֶתְּךָ לְבְנֵי־יִשְׁרָאֵל לְבִשְׁתֶּךָ וּלְבִשְׁתַּת עֲרוֹת אֲמֹךָ: 31 כִּי כָל־הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר בְּיָשִׁי חַי עַל־הָאָדָמָה לֹא תִכּוֹן אֶתְּךָ וּמַלְכוּתְךָ וְעַתָּה שְׁלַח וְקַח אֹתוֹ אֵלַי כִּי בְּיָנְעוּת הוּא: 32 וַיַּעַן יְהוֹנָתָן אֶת־שְׂאוּל אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו לָמָּה יוֹמַת מֶה עָשָׂה: 33 וַיִּטֵּל שְׂאוּל אֶת־הַחֶנֶת עָלָיו לְהַכֹּתוֹ וַיִּדַע יְהוֹנָתָן כִּי־כָלָה הָיָא מֵעַם אָבִיו לְהָמִית אֶת־דָּוִד:

43. See Leviticus 15:16. 44. 1 Samuel 16:6; 17:13.

34 Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger. He did not eat any food on that day, the second day of the month, for he was grieved concerning David, for his father had put him to shame. 35 In the morning, Jonathan went out into the field for the meeting with David, and a small boy went with him. 36 He said to the boy, "Run ahead, and please find the arrows that I shoot." The boy ran; and he shot the arrow beyond him. 37 The boy came up to the place where the arrow that Jonathan had shot had landed. Jonathan called after the lad, and said, "Isn't the arrow beyond you?" 38 Jonathan called after the lad, "Quickly! hasten; do not stand still!" Jonathan's boy gathered up the arrows, and came to his master. 39 The boy knew nothing; only Jonathan and David knew the matter. 40 Jonathan gave his weapons to the boy who accompanied him, and said to him, "Go, bring them into the city." 41 The boy departed, and David arose from the landmark toward the south. He fell upon his face on the ground three times, and prostrated himself three times. He and Jonathan kissed one another and wept one with the other, until David exceeded Jonathan's weeping. 42 Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace! And remember that we have sworn both of us in the name of God, saying, 'May God be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever.'"

34 וַיָּקָם יְהוֹנָתָן מֵעִם הַשְּׁלֵחַן בְּחַר־אָף וְלֹא־אָכַל בַּיּוֹם־הַחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי לֶחֶם כִּי נִעְצַב אֶל־דָּוִד כִּי הִכְלִמוֹ אָבִיו: 35 וַיְהִי בַבֹּקֶר וַיֵּצֵא יְהוֹנָתָן הַשְּׂדֵה לְמוֹעֵד דָּוִד וַנְּעַר קָמֹן עִמּוֹ: 36 וַיֹּאמֶר לְנֶעְרוֹ רֵץ מֵצֵא נָא אֶת־הַחֵצִים אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מוֹרֵה הַנֶּעַר רֵץ וְהוּא־יָרֶה הַחֵצִי לְהַעֲבֹרוֹ: 37 וַיָּבֹא הַנֶּעַר עַד־מְקוֹם הַחֵצִי אֲשֶׁר יָרָה יְהוֹנָתָן וַיִּקְרָא יְהוֹנָתָן אַחֲרָי הַנֶּעַר וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלוֹא הַחֵצִי מִמֶּנִּי וְהִלָּאֵה: 38 וַיִּקְרָא יְהוֹנָתָן אַחֲרָי הַנֶּעַר מְהֵרָה הוֹשֵׁה אֶל־תַּעֲמֹד וַיִּלְקֹט נֶעַר יְהוֹנָתָן אֶת־הַחֵצִי וְאֶת־הַחֵצִים וַיָּבֹא אֶל־אֲדֹנָיו: 39 וְהַנֶּעַר לֹא יָדַע מֵאוֹמָה אִךְ יְהוֹנָתָן וְדָוִד יָדְעוּ אֶת־הַדָּבָר: 40 וַיִּתֵּן יְהוֹנָתָן אֶת־כְּלָיו אֶל־הַנֶּעַר אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ לֶךְ הִבֵּיָה עִיר: 41 הַנֶּעַר בָּא וְדָוִד קָם מֵאֶצֶל הַנָּגֶב וַיִּפֹּל לְאָפָיו אַרְצָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים וַיִּשְׁקוּ אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ וַיִּבְכּוּ אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ עַד־דָּוִד הִגְדִּיל:





*Dedicated in honor of our children*

**Nathan, Yitzchok,  
Moshe Lev,  
and Gilana**

*May you continue to grow in the ways  
of our holy Torah*

**Yuri and Deana Pikover**

