Points to Ponder

Bamidbar 5783

**Intro to Sefer BaMidbar** – Sefer Bamidbar is referred to as Sefer HaPekudim. **Rav Aharon Lichtenstein ztl.** noted that there are three distinct interpretation to the word Pekudim. On the one hand, it refers to an accounting and in the book of Bamidbar 2 distinct accountings of the Jews are presented. At the same time a Pekuda or charge is presented to the Jewish people and their leadership in particular in Bamidbar. This version of Pekudah is more interpersonal than the former. Pakad refers to the idea of being mindful of something or someone beyond ourselves. A Jew is always counted, always charged, always attended to. There are times that we wish we would be left alone, but a Jew is never left alone. The Jew is “called.” You cannot sit on the sidelines, even if you have a box seat; you must be on the playing field. Jewish life is bound by specific halakhic guidelines and involves living a life of command. Some people like to live laid-back lives and not listen to too many orders, but to be a Jew means to be always ready.

**בְּמִדְבַּ֥ר סִינַ֖י In the Sinai desert (1:1)** - Why was the Torah given in the desert and not in the land of Israel? **Rav Pinkus ztl.** explained that in order to cement the relationship and connection between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael, Hashem wanted Matan Torah to be without any distraction or Heisech HaDaas. It would then solidify the relationship and include a building of a home in Eretz Yisrael.

**במדבר סיני In the Midbar of Sinai (1:1)** – The Midrash comments and notes that the Torah was given in the Midbar at Sinai to teach us that to properly receive the Torah, one needs to be as open to it (hefker) as a Midbar but also as humble as Sinai to be Zocheh to the Torah. **Rav Shlomo Levenstein Shlita** related a story about the **Chazon Ish** who had come to Warsaw to visit. He stopped into a Beis Hamidrash and opened a Gemara and was learning. When the Chevra Shas entered the Beis HaMidrash and needed the volume he was using, the Gabbai took it away from him and told him that a simple Jew who comes to Shul can make do with the recitation of Tehillim. The next day when “the simple Jew” was offered an Aliya and gave his name to the same Gabbai who immediate recognized that he had offended the famous Chazon Ish. He set to beg Mechilah to which he was told “the Chevra Shas had first rights and a Jew DOES need to say Tehillim. You did nothing wrong…” That’s making oneself like a Midbar for Torah.

**בְּמִדְבַּ֥ר סִינַ֖י In the Desert (1:1)** – Why wasn’t the Torah given in Eretz Yisrael? The Midrash suggests that Hashem wanted us to know that the Torah applies everywhere all the time. Additionally, the Midrash suggests that if the Torah was given in Eretz Yisrael it would have been assumed that a particular Shevet would own Torah. By offering it in the Midbar, it opened the Torah up to freedom from personal corruption from all sides. Why was this not done in Yirushalayim? The Soloveitchik family suggest that the concept of Yirushalayim not being divided means for ownership issues but not for actual division. **Rav Schachter Shlita** quoted the **Netziv** who cited the Chazal that Moshe was given the Torah to keep it but he was kind and shared it with the people. When did this happen? The Netziv suggests that it was when Be’er Es HaTorah. But how was this? After all, that point the people were in Eiver HaYarden – IN SOMEONE’S CHEILEK?! Netziv answers that when Reuven rejected a portion of the land and Dan hadn’t risen to claim it, Moshe transferred the Torah at that time.

**In the Midbar (1:1) – The Tur** notes that we always read Parshas BaMidbar before Shavuos. Chazal cite 2 reasons why. The first is that one who is studying Torah should make himself into a Midbar that everyone walks through and the second is that Torah is free like the sand in the desert. **The Lubavitcher Rebbe ztl.** explained that when one studies Torah one can be successful only if Nafshee K’Afa L’Kol Tiheyeh – only then can there be a Pisach Leebee B’Toraseicha. This is a Gavra related issue. The free Torah is more of a Cheftza related issue that one needs to see the Torah as ownerless and that one can easily be Zoche simply by making a Kinyan on it – thereby “owning” his piece in it. These are 2 critical factors in Torah – to properly have a Kabbalas HaTorah one needs to make the Torah his and that one makes Torah his, by being Battel to it.

**בְּמִדְבַּ֥ר סִינַ֖י בְּאֹ֣הֶל מוֹעֵ֑ד In Midbar Sinai in Ohel Moed (1:1)** – Why do we highlight that this conversation occurred in both the Midbar and Ohel Moed? Why the double location? Chazal tell us that one needs to make himself as Hefker as a Midbar to be ready to learn Torah. However, **Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshishcha** adds, if one is so open and Hefker s/he can become directionless, hopeless, helpless and depressed. Therefore, the **Noam Elimelech** explained that we needed both identifications – in the Midbar but also entrenched with the idea that we are NOT directionless, we are meeting Hashem and listening to his words as if meeting in Ohel Moed directly and with purpose.

**בְּמִדְבַּ֥ר סִינַ֖י  In the Sinai desert (1:1)** - The **Midrash** notes that the Torah was given in Midbar Sinai with fire and water to teach us that just like these three things are free to all, Torah too, is free to all. The midrash then adds that one must make himself free as the desert in order to receive the Torah. It sounds as if there IS an exchange rate for Torah -- that one needs to become like the desert in order to receive it? **Sfas Emes** explains that anyone can LEARN Torah for free but in order to ACQUIRE it and make it part of his existence, one must unburden himself from extraneous matters. **Rav Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht ztl** explained that while one fulfills the REQUIREMENT of Torah study by having set times for Torah study. However, when it comes to ACQUIRING it and wearing the crown of Torah, one needs to line it and make it a part of his being without boundaries of time. **Rav Yitzchak Yosef Shlita** added that this is why the desert -- as opposed to mountains and valleys -- is used as the imagery. A mountain and a valley both have limits to their identities. Deserts seem vast and endless. The same is true for the Torah.

**בְּמִדְבַּ֥ר סִינַ֖י God spoke to Moshe in the wilderness of Sinai (1:1)** - Why the stress on the Midbar? **Rav Yehudah Amital** explains, based on the Maharal that the Torah is telling us that the nation was built in a place of desolation against all odds. Technically, Rav Amital noted, one would expect the nation to grow in a place ripe for growth. But *Am Yisrael* are commanded, on the one hand, to fulfill the most elementary requirements which should be the basis of any proper, moral society.  On the other hand, they are commanded this with no connection to anything that has come before; they start off on a clean page, in the empty wilderness.  On the one hand, *Am Yisrael*, organized and arranged by God's direct command, is in constant conflict with the wilderness, representing absolute chaos; on the other hand, they are in constant conflict with the other nations of the world, who build their societies based on human priorities. Hence the Midbar – while still connected to the Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach.

**בְּמִדְבַּ֥ר סִינַ֖י  In the Midbar Sinai (1:1)** - Sefer Bamidbar deals with the life of Bnei Yisrael in the Midbar. We tend to think of this experience as a b’dieved, a punishment for the cheit hamergalim, and if not for that, it would have been a short experience. The **Meshech Chochma** gives us a different perspective. The forty years were a preparation for entering Eretz Yisrael. That generation needed a spiritual infusion before they can live a life of Torah while dealing with the challenges of living a life al derech hateva.

**בְּאֶחָד֩ לַחֹ֨דֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִ֜י בַּשָּׁנָ֣ה הַשֵּׁנִ֗ית On the first day in the second month in the second year (1:1)** - Why did Hashem make them wait to split into Degalim until the second year? Why not split them right away? **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky ztl.** explained that Hashem did not want to break Klal Yisrael into Degalim because if he breaks them into small groups then whenever there will be a difference of opinion, it will lead to Machlokes. However, once there was a Mishkan, there would be a central focus which would unite the people despite their differences. Only then could they handle their degalim differences.

**שְׂא֗וּ אֶת־רֹאשׁ֙ כָּל־עֲדַ֣ת בְּנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל  Count the heads of everyone in Bnei Yisrael (1:2)** – Why does one vote count? **Rav Mordechai Kamentzky Shlita** told the story of Henry Shoemaker who in 1842 as a farmhand in Indiana made the vote that shaped international relations. You see, voters did not directly elect U.S. Senators until 1913. Before then, state legislatures selected each state’s two senators, so voting for a state representative helped determine who would be appointed to the U.S. Senate. The candidates for state legislature in Shoemaker’s district each received 360 votes—a tie. But Madison Marsh contested those results; it seemed the election officers in Smithfield Township, DeKalb County, had rejected the ballot of Henry Shoemaker. However, after the challenge the Indiana House voted to allow Shoemaker’s vote, which in turn elected Madison Marsh to the state legislature. Marsh was a Democrat, who helped select Edward A. Hannegan as the newest Senator from Indiana. Four years later, Hannegan, United States Senator from Indiana, supplied the vote necessary to declare war against Mexico in 1846. Rav Mordechai Kamenetzky notes that we see that a single person with a single vote can make a difference on so many levels – to his home, his family & community and even the entire nation. If it is true in the US, it is certain true in Am Yisrael.

**לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָ֖ם לְבֵ֣ית אֲבֹתָ֑ם According to their families and the homes of their fathers (1:2)** - The Gemara (Bava Basra 109b) notes that for Yerusha and (Yevamos 54b) Yichus, the family of the father establishes the title of “family”. It is fascinating that in regard to certain issues, we are interested in the lineage and purity of the mother’s line and yet at other times, it is the father’s lineage that makes a difference. How do we understand this? **Rav Schachter** pointed out that there are 2 different titles of significance in family relations – Mishpacha and She’Er Basar. When it comes to the issue of illicit relationships the Torah notes that it is to a Sh’Er Basar, one cannot approach. Hence the title Mamzer falls on the one whose mother engages in inappropriate relationships but she does not make a person “family.” When it comes to family, family is determined on the basis of Beis Av – as is seen in our Possuk. There is no contradiction – just 2 different qualifications.

**מִשְׁפְּחֹתָ֖ם לְבֵ֣ית אֲבֹתָ֑ם  Each family, each Shevet a number of names (1:2)** - Why does the Torah have to be so lengthy, to repeat the same formula for each shevet over and over again? And why does it have to give the sum total at the end? **Rashi** writes at the beginning of Parshas Shemos that Klal Yisrael is compared to the stars, about which the possuk says, "Hamotzi b'mispar tze'va'am, l'chulam b'shem yikra - He brings forth their hosts by number; He calls each of them by name" (Yeshaya 40, 25.) There are billions of stars in the universe, but Hashem calls each one by its own name because each one has a specific purpose. The same is true with Klal Yisrael. Every Jew has a special name because each one has a unique role to play in this world. **Rav Elyakim Koenigsberg Shlita** added that the sum total, the mispar, of all the Bnei Yisrael demonstrates that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts because when all the individuals of Klal Yisrael join together, they can accomplish so much more as a community.

**אִ֥ישׁ אִ֖ישׁ לַמַּטֶּ֑ה Each man a leader of his Shevet (1:4)** - Why does the Torah seem to imply that the installation of the tribal leaders only took place at this time when they had already been serving in their roles for at least seven months? The **Netziv** explains that until this point, the tribal heads were decided on by each shevet, not by Hashem, and it was in this capacity that they contributed to the construction and dedication of the Mishkan. In Parshas Bamidbar, this situation appeared ripe for change, as Hashem told Moshe that He would formally designate a chief for each tribe. This may have caused anxiety among the men who would lose their jobs and the people who may see their desired nasi replaced, but to their surprise, each of the 12 tribal heads that Hashem announced was the same one the Jewish people had chosen on their own. This teaches us that we have a natural ability to select the correct leaders.

**לִבְנֵ֣י יוֹסֵ֔ף לְאֶפְרַ֕יִם To the children of Yosef for Ephraim (1:10) - Ramban** notes that when it comes to the Degalim, Ephraim comes first while in regard to the division of the land, it is Menashe who is introduced as the first of the children of Yosef. Why? **Rav Schachter Shlita** noted that Yosef’s children excelled in different arenas. Ephraim was a Torah learner primarily while Menashe was an Askan par excellence. The Torah needs Askanus as it upholds the Torah but when giving the Berachos, Ephaim was put on a higher plane insofar as he was the Talmid Chacham. Here too, when it came to the issue of the Degalim which determined who would be close to Moshe Rabbeinu, the lead was given to Ephraim. However, when it came to dividing up the land which included Tzorchei Tzibbur, the primacy was given to Menashe.

**אֶלְיָסָ֖ף בֶּן־דְּעוּאֵֽל: For Gad Eliyasaf Ben Deu’el (1:14**) - Later he is referred to as Elyasaf ben Reuel. Why the change of name? The **Sefer Tal Oros** learns a valuable lesson here: If a person works hard to get people to know Hashem (Deu Keil), he will also merit to be a Reiya to Hasem (Reiyo Keil).

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| **And they gave birth according to their families (1:18) –The Yalkut** notes that at the time of the  |
| giving of the Torah, the nations of the world challenged Hashem. Hashem silenced them by |   |
| asking them to bring their Sefer yichus. What is the connection? **Rav Modechai Banet of** |  |
| **Nikolsburg** explains that based on tehillim 119:150, kirvu rodfei zima mitoraseicha richeiku  |
| that one who does not have purified yichus isn’t ready to receive the Torah. Hence, Bamidbar is  |
| always read prior to Shavuos. |   |

**And they gave birth according to their families (1:18) – Sforno** comments that each family examined its Yichus to determine that it was part of a Shevet. This was done since the Shechina does not rest except on the Mishpachos Miyuchasos shel Yisrael. **Rabbi Akiva Eiger** likened this to a pot filled with water (Mayim Rabim Lo Yuchlu L’Chabos) where the heating of the water cannot squash the fire as long as there is a container containing its spread. That container is the barrier against assimilation.

**את משה ויפקדם במדבר סיני ’כאשר צוה ה As Hashem commanded Moshe, they were counted in the Midbar (1:19)** – What is added with this phrase? Everything the Jews did, they followed Hashem? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** explained that usually when a census is undertaken, it is undertaken because the government needs the numbers for taxes or to know how to properly provide for programs for its citizens. However, the Jews were not paying taxes at this point. The Manna and Be’er made the need for a census for programs superfluous. The only reason the Jews were undertaking the census was because Hashem told them to. This becomes a special proof that Bnei Yisrael was motivated purely to do the Ratzon HaBorai.

**To the children of Yosef, to Efrayim (1:32)** – The **Ramban** comments that Efraim precedes Menashe when we speak about the encampment of Bnei Yisrael even though when we talk about receiving the portion in Eretz Yisrael, Menashe precedes. **Rav Schachter Shlita** pointed out that while Menashe was an askan, efraim was dedicated to the study of Torah. Thus, Menashe does not lose out on his reward but Efraim precedes him due to his Torah supremacy. When we discuss who take a portion in the encampment first, which is a discussion about who would be closer to Moshe Rabbeinu, Efraim precedes. After all, he was the bigger Torah Scholar and implicitly more spiritual. However, when receiving a portion in the land, which was a matter of Tzorchei Tzibbur, the tribe of Menashe took precedence since it was a matter of communal contribution.

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| **And with you shall be each man according to his tribe, each a leader to his family he shall be** |
| **(1:40) – The Darchei Teshuvah of Munkatz ztl**. would often quip that a man keeps his eyes |   |
| down as a sign of humility (L”Mateh = L”Matta) for he knows where he fits in within his family |

**אֵ֣לֶּה הַפְּקֻדִ֡ים These are the people who were counted by Moshe, Aharon and the Nesiim (1:44)** - The **Ramban** asks why the need to know the entire count was necessary. We understand why there was a need for each member of Klal Yisrael to know his “place” but why the count and the total? **Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** noted that there are two types of counting -- to know a sum and also to make sure everyone is accounted for. While in the first, we need the total, in the latter each person makes a difference. Here, Rav Soloveitchik notes, Moshe was taking on the role of Rabban Shel Yisrael and as a result he needed to teach each and every member. In order to do so, he needs to know each one by name (a point made by Ramban) and to pray for each one’s success as well. Perhaps this is why the census is introduced with the word שאו. We are making it clear that the Kahal is made up of each and every individual and we all count.

**וְהַֽלְוִיִּ֖ם לְמַטֵּ֣ה אֲבֹתָ֑ם The Leviim were not included in the numbers (1:47**) - The **Sefer Taam V’Daas** points out that in the previous census, the numbers totaled 603,550 and this time again, the exact number came through -- 603,550. The only difference was that Shevet Levi was not included. In other words, the birth rate of Klal Yisrael was enough to cover the gap of removing Shevet Levi from the census. **Rav Shimshon Dovid Pinkus ztl** comments that this teaches us an important lesson - when we separate a group in Klal Yisrael to serve Hashem, it does not come as a cost to the Yotzai Tzava (the size of the army). Hashem fills in the gap in the quantity and quality of the soldiers.

**וְהַֽלְוִיִּ֖ם לְמַטֵּ֣ה אֲבֹתָ֑ם לֹ֥א הָתְפָּֽקְד֖וּ The Leviim were not counted among them (1:47)** - Why were the Leviim set aside for a counting separate from Am Yisrael? **Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz ztl.** explains that those who were included in the census of 20 and above were destined to die in the Midbar because of the sin of the Meraglim. Seeing that, Hashem wanted the Shevet Levi not to be included in that census so that the tribe that as a whole did not participate in the sin, would not be included in the group that needs to be punished collectively.

**And you should establish the Leviim as agents in charge of the Mishkan (1:50)** – Why was Moshe told to establish the Leviim before he was told to count them? **Rav Chaim Kanievsky** Shlita explains that the census of Leviim is quite small in comparison to the census of the rest of Bnei Yisrael. This is due to the fact that they didn’t work in Mitzrayim so they didn’t receive the Beracha of Kein Yirbeh V’Chein Yifrotz. Thus, the purpose in their census was different than the reason for the general census. Hashem declares the purpose of the Leviim – once they are separated for a new purpose, we need to know how many of them were there.

**וְאִ֥ישׁ עַל־דִּגְל֖וֹ לְצִבְאֹתָֽם And the Jewish people should encamp each person on his encampment and by his flag (1:52)** – What is the intent of the double language (which we also find in Zemiros – Ish Al Machaneihu V’Ish Al Diglo)? **Rabbi Bernard Weinberger Shlita** noted that the encampment sets a person’s role – one knows his place when he sees his flag. He is grounded and can move forward with a life plan that is individual specific. But at the same time, one needs the energy and inspiration to know that he has so much more that he can achieve in life – the flag flying overhead reminds a person that he should set his sights high above – like the flag that flies in the air – giving a person a means to strive and a location to begin. (Shabbos is similar – keeping it both grounds us in time and place and gives us a transcendence over the world to have bigger things in mind for ourselves and our relationship with Hashem.)

**וְאִ֥ישׁ עַל־דִּגְל֖וֹ לְצִבְאֹתָֽם Each man on his Degel (1:52)** - The Midrash notes that Moshe was worried about the concept of the Degalim and the damage that might result from the in fighting that would arises as each Shevet jockeyed for best position in the travelling camp. Hashem reminded him that they already had a trial run when they carried Yaakov up to his burial in Eretz Yisrael and that would be the deciding factor here too. But why would an episode of generations past make a difference at the present? **Rav Mordechai Rogov** suggested that Hashem was calming Moshe to realize that the people were already conditioned to be mentschin even in trying times. If the people already understood how to be mentsches when they were in pain (over the loss of Yaakov) they would be mentsches in the present too.

**אִ֧ישׁ עַל־מַֽחֲנֵ֛הוּ וְאִ֥ישׁ עַל־דִּגְל֖וֹ  Each under his banner (1:52)** - Why did it take a whole year for Hashem to assign degalim for Bnei Yisrael? Why didn’t they do so immediately after leaving Mitzrayim? **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky ztl.** suggests that the degalim represent the diversity of klal Yisrael. Each shevet has its own unique traits. This has the potential to cause people from different shevatim to grow apart from one another. As such, HaShem waited until there was a Mishkan set up. The Mishkan serves as a hub to unify all of Klal Yisrael.

**And the Leviim shall camp around the Mishkan and there will be no anger on the Jewish people (1:53) – Ramban** notes that this Mitzva applies even in the future – in the Beis HaMikdash as it is the source of the Mishmaros – that the Leviim would guard the outside of the Beis HaMikdash. **Rav Nosson Meir Wachtfogel ztl.** explained that this guarding even led to an episode where a guard fell asleep and was punished accordingly. Why did Hashem need the guards? Rav Nosson Meir explained that Hashem wanted to show his people that even a second of break from D’veikus from his chosen agents caused a strain in the relationship. This could not be allowed.

**אִ֣ישׁ עַל־דִּגְל֤וֹ בְאֹתֹת֙ לְבֵ֣ית אֲבֹתָ֔ם יַֽחֲנ֖וּ בְּנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל They will camp surrounding the Ohel Moed (2:2) - Rav Boruch Mordechi Ezrachi** once noted that the Parasha surrounded two major themes, counting and camping. Why? He explained  that there is superficiality that governs the generations. Each person often gets lost into the boxes into which s/he fits. This is especially so among the nations where it is not who you are that makes a difference but to whom you are connected. The Torah fights the superficiality and encourages us to remember that we are complete maximums. 2 is not greater than one in number – 2 is really 2 maximums together. But at the same time each maximum is at its maximum in its proper environment and that  is why the camping was stressed.

**אִ֣ישׁ עַל־דִּגְל֤וֹ  Each according to his flag (2:2)** – It seems that this idea of having a flag was important to Chazal and it is a sign of love between Hashem and his people. How? And why is it so important? **Rav Avraham Rivlin Shlita** offered 2 distinct perspectives. The first is that the flag of Am Yisrael highlights the fact that Hashem selected Am Yisrael as the chosen people. These flags would be a sign that even if a member of Am Yisrael lost his way, he would be able to look for the flags and rejoin not only the nation but the choice status that every member has. In addition, the flags were also an internal design – each Shevet had a different one because each had a different Tafkid – a different job to do when serving Hashem that they were the primary responsible party. In that manner the flags were a distinction and a guidepost about how the individual person would best link into Hashem.

**אִ֣ישׁ עַל־דִּגְל֤וֹ בְאֹתֹת֙** **Each according to his flag (2:2)** - The Dor Hamidbar led a miraculous life. Things were fairly simple. Yet the Torah has such rigorous instructions for how they moved through the desert. Why is this so? **Rav Aharon Kotler ztl.** says that the reason for degalim is to teach future generations that organization is a key to life.

**י מנגד סביב לאהל מועד יחנו”איש על דגלו באתת לבית אבותם יחנו בנ The Jews shall camp, each on its camp and each by its flag surrounding the Mishkan they shall camp (2:2) – Rav Meir Shapiro ztl.** noted that the beauty of diversity of Bnei Yisrael is that no matter where they plant their flags, it is always surrounding the Mishkan – the Torah. He used this idea when establishing the Daf Yomi noting that the Mishna may have originated in Eretz Yisrael, the Talmud in Babylonia, Rashi in France, Tosafos in Germany, Rif in Fez, Morocco and Rambam in Spain but one thing united them -- and us -- that no matter where we are, we are surrounding the Mishkan and the Torah that brings us together.

**אִ֥ישׁ עַל־יָד֖וֹ לְדִגְלֵיהֶֽם: According to their flags (2:17)** -  Why did it take a whole year for HaShem to assign degalim for Bnei Yisrael? Why didn’t they do so immediately after leaving Mitzrayim? **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky** suggests that the degalim represent the diversity of klal Yisrael. Each shevet has its own unique traits. This has the potential to cause people from different shevatim to grow apart from one another. As such, HaShem waited until there was a Mishkan set up. The Mishkan serves as a hub to unify all of Klal Yisrael.

**כֵּן־חָנ֤וּ לְדִגְלֵיהֶם֙ וְכֵ֣ן נָסָ֔עוּ אִ֥ישׁ לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָ֖יו עַל־בֵּ֥ית אֲבֹתָֽיו They camped by their tribes and they traveled each with his family (2:34) - Rav Yechiel Perr** noted that it is important for us to understand that while the Torah of all of us is the same and the Halacha is the same, the worldview is different. And by being different each group prevents the other from going off the path and becoming too extreme. Ehrlicher Yidden can also look and be different as long as their commitment to Torah and Halacha is the same. That is the diversity that existed in our shevatim and that keeps us strong.

**And this is the history of Aharon and Moshe (3:1) – Rashi** explains that we learn that one who teaches his friend’s son Torah is treated as though he birthed him. The only problem is that Moshe taught Aaron’s sons on the same day he received the word of Hashem. Why is it as if he birthed him? **Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro** explains that if the student accepts the teacher emphatically, then he is a mikabel – and it is as if the teacher “birthed” him.

**וְאֵ֛לֶּה תּֽוֹלְדֹ֥ת אַֽהֲרֹ֖ן וּמשֶׁ֑ה And these are the offspring of Moshe and Aharon (3:1-2) - Rashi** cites the Gemara which notes that when a person teaches his friend’s child Torah it is as if he raised him because although Aharon’s biological children are listed, they are listed as the children of both Moshe AND Aharon. **Rav Wolbe** observes that a teacher needs to show devotion to a student as if the student were his own child. In turn, the student needs to relate to the teacher as a parent. Hence, Elisha called Eliyahu Avi, Avi twice since he saw Eliyahu as both his mother and his father.

**נדב ואביהוא ואלה תולדות אהרן ומשה...הבכור These are the children of Aharon & Moshe…Nadav and Avihu Elazar and Itamar (3:1-2) – Rashi** explains that they were called the future generations of Moshe because Moshe taught them Torah. The **Maharal** explains that even though ALL of Bnei Yisrael learned Torah from Moshe and thus are his children, Moshe went the EXTRA mile to learn with his nephews. **Rav Neriah ztl.** points out that when one commits himself without limit to his students, he becomes a parent to them, and they, in return become his sons.

**And these are the children of Aaron and Moshe (3:1-2)** – It is fascinating that the children of Moshe are themselves never mentioned in the census. Why not? **Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** suggested that Moshe Rabbeinu lost his family life when Bnei Yisrael left the Mamad Har Sinai. From that moment, he was no longer an individual because he was now the nursemaid (Omein) of Klal Yisrael. Hence, the children of Moshe do not get mentioned as his own in the census. For as the Goel of the Jewish people requires complete dedication to the nation even at the expense of one’s own family.

**וַיָּ֣מָת נָדָ֣ב וַֽאֲבִיה֣וּא  Nadav and Avihu died (3:4)** - Why does the Torah use the singular וימת instead of the more correct וימותו? **Chasam Sofer** noted that the Midrash lists a number of possible sins that Nadav and Avihu did for which they lost their lives. One listed is that they did not ask one another for advice. However, this is odd as there is no Avaira in not taking advice from a peer. Chasam Sofer concludes that this is not the sin, but rather a fact -- had they spoken out their logic to the other issues with one another, they would have discovered the mistakes in their actions and would not have come to sin. **Rav Betzalel Rudinsky Shlita** suggests that the same can be said here: each one died as an individual for had they spoken with one another, they would not have died.

**וְשָׁמְר֣וּ אֶת־מִשְׁמַרְתּ֗וֹ They may serve him." (3:6**)- The **Rambam** (Kelei Ha-Mikdash 3:1) notes that serving as a Levi is not a choice but rather an obligation. **Rav Amital ztl.** explained that this coercion has a function and purpose: the inculcation of the concept of discipline and coercion in Divine service.  Through this command to the Levites, who symbolize the entire nation, the rest of the nation observes and learns the importance of this concept. Obedience out of coercion and out of love - were the guiding principles of two radical phenomena which we witnessed during this century.  On one hand - the Communist regime, which ruled by pure coercion, authoritarianism and suppression of the people and which eventually collapsed, and on the other hand - the Western concept of total freedom, which is also on its way to bankruptcy. Am Yisrael and Jewish philosophy create a balance between these two paths.

**כִּ֣י לִי֘ כָּל־בְּכוֹר֒ בְּיוֹם֩ הַכֹּתִ֨י כָל־בְּכ֜וֹר בְּאֶ֣רֶץ מִצְרַ֗יִם For all the Bechorim are mine (3:13)** - The Torah tells us that the sanctity of the Bechor is special since Hashem saved the Bechorim in Mitzrayim. However, what about the Bechor born in the Midbar? Why is HE uniquely Kadosh? He was not sanctified at the time of Makas Bechoros? **Rav Elya Svei ztl.** explained that when a Bechor is born, he is born with the ability to understand more. Hence more is expected of him. The Bechor relates to the miracles of Yetzias Mitzrayim better than other children for he can relate to the unique situation he would have been in as a Bechor in Egypt. Hence, he can sense Hashem’s Chessed better which in turn brings him more Kedusha and creating the opportunity for the Mitzva of Pidyon. More awareness means greater responsibility.

**Count the Leviim from the age of 30 days (3:15)** – why are the Jews counted from 20 while everyone else is counted earlier? **Rav Moshe Feinstein** notes that when Jews are counted, it is because they are taking their rightful place among the members of Am Yisroel – for the next generation in place of the current one. We do not know if the children will live up to the educational values of the parents until they are fully grown. Leviim are different. By being involved with the Mishkan directly, they are more likely to stick to the

**כָּל־זָכָ֛ר מִבֶּן־חֹ֥דֶשׁ וָמַ֖עְלָה תִּפְקְדֵֽם Every male older than a month (3:15**) – So the Leviim are counted from once they were a month old for at that point they were Shomrei Mishmeres HaKodesh. They were counted again at 30 to know who could actually work. Why the double count? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** explains that there are multiple stages to Chinuch to be learned here. The first is the understanding that to provide for a proper Chinuch you need to start when the kids are young – even at a month old. However at the same time, you are never finished raising your kids and even when they become old enough to work on their own, you need an accounting and a reminder that they are still a part of your family and reflect accordingly. Hence, you can continue to guide and advise.

**מִשְׁפְּחֹ֥ת בְּנֵֽי־קְהָ֖ת יַֽחֲנ֑וּ עַ֛ל יֶ֥רֶךְ הַמִּשְׁכָּ֖ן תֵּימָֽנָה: And those camped (3:29)** - The Midrash on our parsha, commenting on the proximity of Kehas to Shevet Reuvein, refers us to the Mishna that reminds us oy l’rasha, oy l’shcheino. How could it be that by following God’s orders of where to camp it resulted in death to members of their tribe?  If God Himself tells you to buy a certain house, implicitly expressing that is the best place for you, wouldn’t you assume He wasn’t setting you up for tragedy? **Rav Nebenzahl Shlita** suggests that even if hashgacha seems to have placed us somewhere, we must never let down our guard from negative influences in our environment.  We may never become apathetic, indifferent or unaware of the harmful pressures that constantly lurk wherever we may find ourselves.  God never gave Reuvein a license to stop thinking, to cease being cautious and acting judiciously.   God is not to blame for Reuvein’s losses in the episode with Korach.  Reuvein is to blame for not being vigilant in not allowing a toxic neighbor to influence them.  Reuvein should have been aware that his environment could impact him.

**משֶׁ֣ה | וְאַֽהֲרֹ֣ן וּבָנָ֗יו שֹֽׁמְרִים֙ מִשְׁמֶ֣רֶת הַמִּקְדָּ֔שׁ Moshe, Aharon and his children, the keepers of the watch(3:38)** - The Gemara (Tamid 26a) learns that the Kohanim stand guard at three locations based on this possuk. But if the Kohanim (in this case Aharon Elazar and Itamar) were each in one of the guarding locations, how could they be available to do the Avodah? **Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl Shlita** explained that this is a proof to the words of the Rambam that Shmirah was only at night. Of course, we then need to ask that if they did the Avodah during the day and stood watch at night, when did they sleep? Rav Nebenzahl answered that they didn’t do the Avoda all day. Rather, when there was a lull in the work, they slept.

# And God spoke to Moshe saying, Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aharon the Kohen that they may serve him." (3:5-6)- The Rambam (Hil. Kli HaMikdash 3:1) rules that the Levite service is not up to the Levi's choice. Whether he wishes to serve or not, he is obligated to do so and he is forced to perform it. Rav Amital ztl. explained that this coercion has a function and purpose: the inculcation of the concept of discipline and coercion in Divine service. Through this command to the Levites, who symbolize the entire nation, the rest of the nation observes and learns the importance of this concept. (A similar idea is found at Har Sinai where we read about Kafa Aleihem Har K’Gigit which ironically is balanced with the overt story of the Jewish response of Naaseh V’Nishma). The Rambam, in Moreh Nevukhim, teaches that the mitzvos can be explained only in a general sense, and that a person who seeks to understand the reason for every detail of the mitzvos is foolish. What we have said above helps us to understand why this is true: If every detail of every mitzva had a reason which we knew and understood, then the aspect of Divine command in the mitzva would be lost; an action which is performed for a reason and purpose which we can understand does not need to be commanded. Hence the correct balance involves fulfillment of the mitzvos with a general understanding of their purpose - willingly, as well as performance of all their details - symbolizing the aspect of command and coercion.

**And they shall place a multicolored covered covering and put a blue cloth on top of it (4:6)** – Why was the covering on top of the Aron Kodesh made of Techeiles while the other Keilim sufficed with the Tachash multicolored one? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** explained that the Aron represented the Torah was covered with Techeilis because it was reminiscent of the Kisei HaKavod. Once that serves as a reminder to the people that the cornerstone of the Mishkan – and thus of life—is Yiras Shomayim, it is possible to consider the strengthening of life through the beauty symbolized by the colors of the Tachash.

 **וּפְקֻדַּ֞ת אֶלְעָזָ֣ר | בֶּן־אַֽהֲרֹ֣ן הַכֹּהֵ֗ןThe job of Elazar (4:16) - Ramban** points out that although the amounts here are intense Elazar was as strong as Yaakov Aveinu and was able to carry everything himself. How are we to understand that Elazar would be charged with the need to carry everything? The **Alter of Kelm** learned a valuable lesson from this charge. He explained that the Torah was telling us that whomever is greater than his friend his load is greater too. Elazar recognized the challenges in him and thus, the Torah symbolized the message in having carry all the elements of what he needed to be.

**פְקֻדַּ֞ת אֶלְעָזָ֣ר | בֶּן־אַֽהֲרֹ֣ן הַכֹּהֵ֗ן שֶׁ֤מֶן הַמָּאוֹר֙ וּקְטֹ֣רֶת הַסַּמִּ֔ים וּמִנְחַ֥ת הַתָּמִ֖יד  The job of Elazar HaKohein is the Ketores and the Minchas HaTamid (4:16)** – Why would Elazar need or even be able to transport the Ketores and Minchas HaTamid? These things are Nifsal B’Yotze – they are ruined once they are removed from the Mikdash. How then were these ever able to be transported? What would be the point? **The Brisker Rav ztl** answered based on Rashi (Shabbos 93) it seems that the Mikdash retained its status even when it was in a transitory state – Machaneh Shechina was on the go. (it is interesting to think that as we are also a Machaneh currently on the go, we can still carry the Shechina with us).

**ופקודת אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן שמן המאור וכו The job of Elazar the son of Aaron the Kohein was the Shemen HaMaor, the Ketores, Minchas Hatamid, and Shemen HaMishcha (4:16) – Yirushalmi** (Shabbos 10:3)explains that Elazar carried his responsibilities on him at all times. **Ramban** notes that the sheer weight he would be expected to carry would have been enormous. How could he have carried the weight? Ramban explains that Elazar must have possessed the strength of Yaakov Avienu, who despite being a single individual facing a need to move a boulder that required all of the shepards of the area, was able to move it . **Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel ztl.** explained that we learn the value of having שאיפות – aspirations. Through the power of aspiration, one can achieve way beyond that which is normally assumed to be possible for a person. Elazar didn’t give up, Yaakov Avienu didn’t give up. We cannot either. (When one considers the personage of Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel ztl. who was stricken with debilitating Parkinson’s Disease and continued to deliver Shiurim & Schmoozin, studying Torah and inspiring his personal students and lovers of Torah around the world all while leading the world’s largest Yeshiva with a monthly budget of millions of dollars despite his illness -- these words become all the more powerful).

 **ופקודת אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן שמן המאור וכו The job of Elazar the son of Aaron the Kohein was the Shemen HaMaor, the Ketores, Minchas Hatamid, and Shemen HaMishcha (4:16) – Rav Schachter Shlita** used this possuk to answer a major difficulty in our Parsha. After all, the encampments in the Parsha are clearly a Horaas Shaah. But the question is for what? Generally, it was assumed that this was a Horaas Shaah for how to travel. However, Rav Schachter suggested that this Possuk shows that it was more of a Horaas Shaah for the building of the Mishkan. After all, we learn the rules of Hotzaah from the Mishkan building. Rashi in Shabbos shows that one who carries with his weaker hand is still guilty of Hotzaah. His proof is the fact that for the building of the Mishkan, Elazar was able to carry in either hand at the same time.

**אַל־תַּכְרִ֕יתוּ אֶת־שֵׁ֖בֶט מִשְׁפְּחֹ֣ת הַקְּהָתִ֑י Do not cut off the Shevet Kehas (4:18)** - HaShem tells Moshe that we should not allow the Kehasim to be cut off. The midrash explains that the Kehasim all wanted to carry the Aron and not the rest of keilim. This wasn’t only a bizayon to the keilim, it also caused fighting among the Kehasim. **Rav Pam ztl.** quotes Ramchal that sometimes it looks like we are performing a mitzvah, but because we don’t think about the consequences, we are performing an aveirah.

**וזאת עשו להם וחיו ולא ימותו This is what you shall do that they will live and not die: when they approach the Kodesh HaKodashim Aharon and his sons will come and assign each one to his job (4:19)** – Why was it so dangerous to let the people enjoy the splendor of the Aron and the Kedusha of Hashem? **Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** noted that in contrast to the Greek culture that appreciated and glorified superficiality and revealed nudity, the Jewish style is to prefer the holiness in the mysterious -- the non-revealed. Hence, the most holy of our Keilim are kept under wraps.

**וָמֵֽתוּ: And they will die (4:20)** – How could the Torah end Parashas Bamidbar on the note and message of death? What happened to ending on a good note? **Sefer Megadim Chadashim (Moed Katan 28b)** explains that the Torah is not ending on a bad note here. Rather, the Torah is reminding us not to gaze at the Keilim. The Torah can warn us carefully so that bad things do not result! That is the point of the section here and the reminder lest you die.

Haftara

 Simply the Haftorah and the Parsha seem to connect in that they both focus on the idea of the census. However, **Rav Hershel Schachter Shlita** suggested a deeper level of connection. The Parsha ends with the idea of not gazing at the Aron Hakodesh. A similar idea exists in the Haftorah when Bnei Yisrael are K’Ishee U’K’Baalee. When we are in the Beis HaMikdash in an ideal relationship with Hashem, there is no issur to gaze at the Kruvim. In fact it was the practice to show the Olei Regel this love directly. However, when travelling in the Midbar or in the second temple time or in the Galus, so our relationship with Hashem is like an Arusa and as such not everything is yet revealed.

**– י יחדיו ושמו להם ראש אחד ועלו מן הארץ”ונקבצו בני יהודה ובנ The children of Yehuda and Yisrael will gather together and have one leader and go up from the land for the day of Jezre’el is great (Hoshea 2:2)** – The **Alshich** notes that this time speaks of the time of Techiyas HaMeisim when the dead will ascend and come up in Eretz Yisrael. This is the reason that Jews want to be buried in Israel even if they never lived there. The **Ponovehzer Rav ztl.** explained that at the time of Techiyas HaMeisim, the process will begin in Eretz Yisrael. Getting the chance to perform Mitzvos even if but for a few extra minutes is reason enough to plan on burial in Eretz Yisrael. **Rav Pam ztl.** thought that this message was especially poignant in the week prior to Shavuos when we see how privileged we are to learn Torah and to make the most of the time and the opportunity.

**:  תִּקְרְאִ֖י אִישִׁ֑י וְלֹֽא־תִקְרְאִי־לִ֥י ע֖וֹד בַּעֲלִֽי: On that day you shall call me Ishee and no longer Baali (Hoshea 2:18) - Rav Schachter Shlita** would regularly remind us that there is a deep connection between the Haftara and the leining based on this Possuk. What is the difference between Ishi and Baali? The Gemara, Kesuvos 71b, explains that Ishi means fully married and Baali means betrothed and still living in her father’s house.  **Rav Yerucham Perlow** explains that while we were in the desert, our relationship was like an arusa (someone who is betrothed but still living in her father’s home). When we have the status of arusa, we don’t have the right to look at the Aron as is clear in the Parasha. When the Beis Hamikdash was built, we attained the status of nesuah (fully married) and we were entitled to look at the Aron. The **Mishneh Lamelech** suggests that we might have thought that after two rounds of exile, we could never restore our status of nesuah. The pasuk is teaching us that when the Third Beis Hamikdash is rebuilt, we will have the status of nesuah and as such, we will once again have the ability to look at the Aron.

**וְאֵֽרַשְׂתִּ֥יךְ לִ֖י לְעוֹלָ֑ם And you will be Bound to me forever ( Hoshea 2:21) - The Sfas Emes** notes that after the traditional Eirusin a Kallah still lives in her father’s house. So what then is the intention of L’Olam – forever? The Sfas Emes explains that the feelings of uniqueness and specialness that accompany the Eirusin should stay forever. **Rav Yisrael Reisman Shlita** added that every year when it comes to Shavuos we try once again to have the original excitement of Matan Torah. The whole idea of staying up Shavuos by night is really to have that sense of excitement which Klal Yisrael should have had at the first Matan Torah. A sense of excitement of what is coming and what is going to be. It is hard to stay up, some people question if it is Kedai. It is Kedai to make the statement of excitement of what is coming. We even stay up to show the Ahavah to the Borei Olam. We want to show the sense of looking forward and excitement to Matan Torah.

**וְאֵֽרַשְׂתִּ֥יךְ לִ֖י לְעוֹלָ֑ם And you will be bound to me forever (Hosheiya 2:21)** - Isn’t the order here out of place? Shouldn’t the Eirusin be first with Chessed, Mishpat Chessed Rachamim and Emunah and only then forever? Why the reverse? **Rav Yaakov Neuberger Shlita** suggested that first one needs to know that commitments are forever. Once one does, these commitments will be filled with all of the Chessed, Tzedek, Mishpat, Emunah and Rachamim

**וְאֵֽרַשְׂתִּ֥יךְ לִ֖י לְעוֹלָ֑ם And I will be betrothed to thee forever (Hoshea 2:21)** - Why would we want to remain betrothed to God forever? Isn’t it better to move to a stronger relationship, that of Nesuin? **Rav Schachter, Shlita**, quoting the Gemara (Yoma 54a) that notes that the relationship between the Jewish People and God fluctuates between an erusin and a nissuin state. We move from erusin, to nissuin, and, at times, without a get, back to erusin, something humans cannot do in their marriages. Thus, we are not being cursed by Hoshea to *always remain* arusot. The Jewish people have, and will, be fully married to God. Instead, we are assured that we will never be *less* that arusot, even at times of churban. **Rav Avraham Rivlin Shlita** takes a different approach suggesting that it is not that we will not reach the stage of nissuin, but that we must always maintain the excitement of erusin. God promises us that His relationship with us will never grow stale.

**Machar Chodesh**

**בֵּינִ֣י וּבֵינֶ֗ךָ וּבֵ֥ין זַרְעִ֛י וּבֵ֥ין זַרְעֲךָ֖ עַד־עוֹלָֽם: Between me and you (Shmuel Alef 20:42 Haftorah Machar Chodesh)** - What is the connection between the date of Erev Rosh Chodesh and the Haftara events? And if the relationship between Dovid and Yehonasan was so strong why did Yehonasan need to relinquish his right to the throne to Dovid? **Rav Soloveitchik** suggested that the lunar cycle represents Jewish history which hit a highlight during the reign of Shlomo but shrunk until the time of Tzidkiyahu. Yet, when we think we are done and out, we are told Machar Chodesh – not to worry because tomorrow is Rosh Chodesh and we will endure. Yehonasan knew that the hope of Jewish destiny was built around Dovid and his reign. For the sake of the people Yehonasan transferred his rights to Dovid. Thus, at Kiddush Levana we declare Dovid Chai V’Kayam which was a symbol that the new moon was spotted (See Rosh Hashana 25a).