

Parashat Bemidbar

The Census

NUMBERS 1:1–54

At the start of the book, just over a year has passed from when the Israelites left Egypt. The construction of the Tabernacle has concluded, and the people are ready to continue their journey to the Land of Israel. The Israelites are currently traversing the open wilderness, and they anticipate that they will soon come to Canaan and inherit the land. Consequently, all their adult males are conscripted into a newly created army and are therefore called for a census to determine the precise number of available soldiers.

- 1 **1 The Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, on the first of the second month, in the second year of their exodus from the land of Egypt, saying:**
- 2 **Take a census of the entire congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their patrilineal house, according to the number of names.** This is not merely a technical count, as it will include both the names of those counted as well as the group to which they belong. Since this is a military census, it will not encompass the entire people, but only **every male, by their head count.** The census will be performed in their presence, so that their heads can be counted.¹
- 3 **From twenty years old and above, all those fit for military service in Israel: You shall count them according to their hosts, you and Aaron.**
- 4 **With you shall be a man for each tribe.** One man shall be appointed over every tribe of Israel, and **each man is the head of his patrilineal house,** the leader of that tribe.
- 5 **These are the names of the men who shall stand with you to administer the counting of their tribes.** From the continuation below, it is evident that these men served as heads of their tribes with regard to other matters as well (7:10–84). **For Reuben, Elitzur son of Shede'ur.²**
- 6 **For Simeon, Shelumiel son of Tzurishadai.**
- 7 **For Judah, Nahshon son of Aminadav.**
- 8 **For Issachar, Netanel son of Tzuar.**
- 9 **For Zebulun, Eliav son of Helon.** The six sons of Leah, in order of birth, have now all been mentioned.
- 10 Following the sons of Leah, the sons of Rachel are listed. **For the sons of Joseph: for Ephraim, Elishama son of Amihud; for Manasseh, Gamliel son of Pedatzur.**
- 11 **For Benjamin, Avidan son of Gidoni.**
- 12 Next are the tribes of the sons of the maidservants. **For Dan, the firstborn of these maidservants,² Ahiezer son of Amishadai.**
- 13 **For Asher, Pagiel son of Okhran.**
- 14 **For Gad, Elyasaf son of De'uel.**
- 15 **For Naphtali, Ahira son of Einan.**
- 16 **These are the distinguished of the congregation, the princes of the tribes of their fathers; they are the heads of the thousands of Israel.**
- 17 **Moses and Aaron took these men,** listed above, **who were also designated by name by God, and selected by Him for their important role.**
- 18 **They assembled the entire congregation on the first of the second month, and they verified their lineages by their families, by their patrilineal house.** They all provided proof of their ancestry.³ The tribes were not merely formal units; they were also comprised of groups and subgroups: families and houses of fathers. The lists included only the Israelites, and not members of other nations who left Egypt with them. These foreigners apparently lived in a different section of the camp. The Israelites were counted **according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, by their head count.**
- 19 **As the Lord had commanded Moses, he counted them in the wilderness of Sinai.**

Second **20** The Torah now lists the census of each tribe: **These were the aliya**

DISCUSSION

1:5 | **For Reuben, Elitzur son of Shede'ur:** Although the Israelite names used here are seemingly random, one can discern an interesting phenomenon: There are twice as many theophoric names that incorporate the name of God among the children than their fathers. Perhaps the members of the previous generation, who were born in Egypt at the height of the servitude, eschewed such names. Alternatively,

perhaps there was a renewed commitment to the service of God in this generation, and there was a corresponding increase in names referring to God as well. A third possibility is that these were not the names given to them at birth but titles of sorts that they were granted due to their important status, as they probably served in that capacity even before they were officially appointed as princes (see commentary on

Genesis 11:29, 17:15). Another interesting point is that according to the division of camps detailed below (10:11–28), the names of the princes of the middle tribe in each camp, and only those names, contain the suffix *el*, which is generally considered one of the names of God: Shelumiel, Netanel, Gamliel, and Pagiel.



וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַר סִינַי בְּאַהֲל מוֹעֵד בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי בַשָּׁנָה א
הַשְּׁנִית לְצֵאתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר: שְׂאוּ אֶת-רֹאשׁ כָּל-עֵדַת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל
לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתְכֶם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת כָּל-זָכָר לְגִלְגָּלְתֶּם: מִבֶּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה
וּמֵעַלָּה כָּל-יֶזְעָא צָבָא בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל תִּפְקְדוּ אֹתָם לְצַבְּאֹתֶם אֹתָהּ וְאֶהְרֵן: וְאֹתְכֶם
יְהִיוּ אִישׁ אִישׁ לְמִטָּה אִישׁ רֹאשׁ לְבֵית-אֲבֹתָיו הוּא: וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר
יַעֲמְדוּ אִתְּכֶם לְרֹאוּבֵן אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן-שִׁדְיָאוֹד: לְשִׁמְעוֹן שְׁלֹמִיאֵל בֶּן-עֹזִי שִׁדְיָ:
לְיִהוּדָה נַחֲשֹׁן בֶּן-עַמִּינָדָב: לְיִשְׂשָׁכָר נַתָּנָאֵל בֶּן-עֹזֶר: לְזְבוּלֹן אֱלִיאָב בֶּן-
חֵלֶץ: לְבִנְיָמִן יוֹסֵף לְאֶפְרַיִם אֶלִישַׁמֶּע בֶּן-עַמִּי הוּד בֶּן-עַמִּי הוּד לְמִנְשֵׁה גַמְלִיאֵל בֶּן-פְּדָה צוֹר:
לְבִנְיָמִן אֲבִידָן בֶּן-גְּדֵעִי: לְדָן אַחִיעֶזֶר בֶּן-עַמִּי שִׁדְיָ: לְאֲשֶׁר פְּגַעִיאֵל בֶּן-עַכְרָן:
לְגָד אֶלְיָסָף בֶּן-דְּעוּאֵל: לְנַפְתָּלִי אַחִירַע בֶּן-עֵינָן: אֵלֶּה קְרִיאֵי הָעֵדָה נְשִׂאֵי
מִטּוֹת אֲבוֹתֶם רָאשֵׁי אֲלֵפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵם: וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה וְאֶהְרֵן אֶת הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה
אֲשֶׁר נִקְּבוּ בַשְּׁמוֹת: וְאֵת כָּל-הָעֵדָה הִקְהִילוּ בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי וַיִּתְּלָדוּ עַל-
מִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתְכֶם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת מִבֶּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמֵעַלָּה לְגִלְגָּלְתֶּם:
כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת-מֹשֶׁה וַיִּפְקְדֶם בְּמִדְבַר סִינַי: וַיְהִיו שְׁנֵי

קְרִיאֵי

וַיְהִיו שְׁנֵי

רש"י

פרק א | א | במדבר סיני באחד לחודש. מתוך חזקתו לטנו מונה חותם כל שעה קשוריו ממנרים מנחן (שמתי יב. ט), וכשנפלו בעגל מנחן לידע הנותרים. וכשחזר להשדות שכינתו עליהם מנחם. באחד בנסן הוקם המשכן ובאחד באר מנחם: ב | למשפחתם. דע מנן כל שבת ושבת: לבית אבתם.

טו | אלה קרואי העדה. הנקראים לכל דבר חטיבות שבעה:

יז | את האנשים האלה. חת שנים עשר גיחים הקלו: אשר נקבו. לו כאן בשמות:

יח | ויתלדו על משפחתם. הביאו ספרי יחוסיהם ועדי חזקת לדתם, כל אחד ואחד להתיחס על השבת:

מי שחזרו משבת חזק וזמנו משבת חזק יקום על שבת חזיו: לגלגלתם. על ידי שקלים, בקע לגלגלת:

ג | כל יצא צבא. מגיד שאין יוצא בצבא פחות מקבן עשרים:

ד | ואתכם יהיו. קשתפקדו חותם יהיו עמכם גיחא כל שבת ושבת:

children of Reuben, Israel's firstborn, and their descendants. They were the individuals counted by their families, which were subgroups of and listed by their patrilineal house,^D according to the number of names, by their head count, every male from twenty years old and above, all those fit for military service. This was a fixed formula, which was repeated for the census of each tribe.

- 21 Those counted, for the tribe of Reuben, were forty-six thousand five hundred.
- 22 For the children of Simeon, their descendants, by their families, by their patrilineal house, those counted, according to the number of names, by their head count, every male from twenty years old and above, all those fit for military service;
- 23 those counted, for the tribe of Simeon, were fifty-nine thousand three hundred.
- 24 For the children of Gad, their descendants, by their families, by their patrilineal house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all those fit for military service;
- 25 those counted, for the tribe of Gad, were forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty.^D
- 26 For the children of Judah, their descendants, by their families, by their patrilineal house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all those fit for military service;
- 27 those counted, for the tribe of Judah, were seventy-four thousand six hundred. As befitting Judah's status as leader of the brothers, his tribe was exceptionally large.
- 28 For the children of Issachar, their descendants, by their families, by their patrilineal house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all those fit for military service;
- 29 those counted, for the tribe of Issachar, were fifty-four thousand four hundred.
- 30 For the children of Zebulun, their descendants, by their families, by their patrilineal house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all those fit for military service;
- 31 those counted, for the tribe of Zebulun, were fifty-seven thousand four hundred.
- 32 For the children of Joseph, for the children of Ephraim, their descendants, by their families, by their patrilineal house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all those fit for military service;
- 33 those counted, for the tribe of Ephraim, were forty thousand five hundred.
- 34 For the children of Manasseh, their descendants, by their families, by their patrilineal house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all those fit for military service;
- 35 those counted, for the tribe of Manasseh,^D were thirty-two thousand two hundred.
- 36 For the children of Benjamin, their descendants, by their families, by their patrilineal house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all those fit for military service;
- 37 those counted, for the tribe of Benjamin, were thirty-five thousand four hundred.

DISCUSSION

1:20 | **By their patrilineal house:** This expression can bear a variety of meanings. Here it probably referred to the expanded family (see 3:30, 25:15). In contrast, in Joshua (7:17–18), it meant a unit smaller than a family, whereas in Exodus (12:3), it was likely a synonym for a family (see *Da'at Mikra*, 1:2).

1:25 | **Forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty:** It can be surmised that the numbers are rounded, as it is unlikely that each of the twelve tribes was comprised of an exact number of

hundreds, or of fifties as in the case of Gad. Furthermore, it is possible that the census was carried out based on military units, and therefore the totals were calculated on the basis of the leaders of hundreds and fifties, who were appointed over the people (see Exodus 18:25; see also Rav Yeshaya of Trani; *Meshekh Hokhma; Ha'amek Davar*). There is, however, an example of rounding off to tens in Judges (9:2, 5).

1:35 | **For the tribe of Manasseh:** Although Manasseh was the elder of the two, Ephraim is

listed here first, similar to the blessing of Jacob and Moses, which likewise places Ephraim first (Genesis 48:14–20; Deuteronomy 33:17). This is due to Ephraim's greater future importance and the greater number of his descendants. However, it should be noted that the other tribes are not listed here in accordance with their importance (see *Adderet Eliyahu*). In a different census in the book of Numbers, where the descendants of Manasseh are more numerous than the tribe of Ephraim, Manasseh appears first, by birth order by matriarch (see 26:28–37).

בְּיַד־אוֹבֵן בְּכַד יִשְׂרָאֵל תּוֹלְדֹתֶם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתְכֶם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת
 לְגַלְגֻּלְתֶּם כָּל־זָכָר מִבֶּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה
 רֵאשִׁיבֵן שֵׁשָׁה וְאַרְבָּעִים אֶלֶף וַחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת:

לְבָנֵי שִׁמְעוֹן תּוֹלְדֹתֶם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתְכֶם פְּקֻדֵי־וּ בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת לְגַלְגֻּלְתֶּם
 כָּל־זָכָר מִבֶּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה שִׁמְעוֹן תִּשְׁעָה
 וַחֲמִשִּׁים אֶלֶף וּשְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת:

לְבָנֵי גָד תּוֹלְדֹתֶם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתְכֶם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת מִבֶּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה
 וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה גָד חֲמִשָּׁה וְאַרְבָּעִים אֶלֶף וּשְׁשׁ מֵאוֹת
 וַחֲמִשִּׁים:

לְבָנֵי יְהוּדָה תּוֹלְדֹתֶם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתְכֶם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת מִבֶּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה
 וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה יְהוּדָה אַרְבַּעַת וּשְׁבַע־עֶשְׂרִים אֶלֶף וּשְׁשׁ מֵאוֹת:
 לְבָנֵי יִשְׂשָׁכָר תּוֹלְדֹתֶם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתְכֶם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת מִבֶּן עֶשְׂרִים
 שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה יִשְׂשָׁכָר אַרְבַּעַת וַחֲמִשִּׁים אֶלֶף
 וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת:

לְבָנֵי זְבוּלֹן תּוֹלְדֹתֶם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתְכֶם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת מִבֶּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה
 וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה זְבוּלֹן שִׁבְעָה וַחֲמִשִּׁים אֶלֶף וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת:
 לְבָנֵי יוֹסֵף אֶפְרַיִם תּוֹלְדֹתֶם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתְכֶם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת מִבֶּן
 עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה אֶפְרַיִם אַרְבָּעִים אֶלֶף
 וַחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת:

לְבָנֵי מְנַשֶּׁה תּוֹלְדֹתֶם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתְכֶם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת מִבֶּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה
 וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה מְנַשֶּׁה שְׁנַיִם וּשְׁלֹשִׁים אֶלֶף וּמֵאוֹתָיִם:
 לְבָנֵי בְנִימֵן תּוֹלְדֹתֶם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתְכֶם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת מִבֶּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה
 וּמַעְלָה כֹּל יֵצֵא צָבָא: פְּקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִטָּה בְנִימֵן חֲמִשָּׁה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים אֶלֶף וְאַרְבַּע
 מֵאוֹת:

- 38 For the children of Dan, their descendants, by their families, by their patrilineal house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all those fit for military service;
- 39 those counted, for the tribe of Dan, were sixty-two thousand seven hundred.
- 40 For the children of Asher, their descendants, by their families, by their patrilineal house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all those fit for military service;
- 41 those counted, for the tribe of Asher, were forty-one thousand five hundred.
- 42 For the children of Naphtali, their descendants, by their families, by their patrilineal house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all those fit for military service;
- 43 those counted, for the tribe of Naphtali, were fifty-three thousand four hundred.
- 44 In summary, these are the counted^d that Moses, Aaron, and the princes of Israel counted; they were twelve men, one each for his patrilineal house.
- 45 These were all the counted of the children of Israel by their patrilineal house, from twenty years old and above, all those fit for military service in Israel.
- 46 All the counted were six hundred thousand three thousand five hundred and fifty.
- 47 But the Levites by the tribe of their fathers were not counted among them, as they were not part of the army, as the Torah explains below.⁴
- 48 The Lord spoke to Moses, prior to the above census,⁵ saying:
- 49 However, the tribe of Levi you shall not count, and you shall not take a census of them among the children of Israel.
- The members of the tribe of Levi will not serve in the army, and they will not conquer nor inherit any portion of the land.
- 50 You, appoint the Levites over the Tabernacle of the Testimony, over all its vessels, and over everything that is associated with it. They shall bear the Tabernacle and all its vessels, and they shall minister to it. They shall function as a special unit for safeguarding the sacred items and serving in the Tabernacle. This role is already alluded to in Exodus 38:21, among other places. Likewise, the Levites' inheritance of designated cities in Israel is previously mentioned in Leviticus 25:32. **Around the Tabernacle they shall encamp.** They shall not reside together with the other tribes, but in the center of the camp, surrounding and keeping in close proximity to the Tabernacle of the Testimony.
- 51 When the Tabernacle travels, the Levites shall dismantle it, and when the Tabernacle encamps, the Levites shall erect it; and the stranger, a non-Levite, who approaches the Tabernacle and the sacred vessels to care for them, shall be put to death, as this service must be performed by the Levites alone.
- 52 The children of Israel shall encamp, each man in his camp, and each man at his banner,^d according to their hosts. Every member of Israel shall encamp in his designated spot.
- 53 The Levites shall encamp around the Tabernacle of the Testimony, and there shall not be divine rage against the congregation of the children of Israel, and the Levites shall protect the integrity of the Tabernacle of the Testimony, to ensure that the Israelites do not touch the Tabernacle and perish.
- 54 The children of Israel did according to everything that the Lord had commanded Moses, so they did, with regard to the division into consolidated groups, the counting of the military census, and keeping their distance from the Tabernacle.

DISCUSSION

1:44 | **These are the counted:** On a basic level, the census was required for very specific purposes: To determine the number of military men from each tribe, and to create a list of those who will inherit the land that the nation expects to enter soon (see Ramban, verse 45). In this regard, the experiences of each tribe from one

census to another were reflected in the changes in the sum totals reported. On a deeper level, by its very nature, a counting can blur the distinctive personalities of the individual members. Therefore, the Israelites were counted both as individuals by their personal names as well as numbers that are part of greater units. This

serves to emphasize that each member of the Israelites was unique, and was not swallowed up by the whole.

1:52 | **Each at his banner:** This is possibly the first literary mention of the idea that a banner represents membership in a specific group.

לח לבני דן תולדתם למשפחתם לבית אבתם במספר שמות מבין עשרים שנה
 טט ומעלה כל יצא צבא: פקדיהם למטה דן שנים וששים אלף ושבע מאות:
 מ לבני אשר תולדתם למשפחתם לבית אבתם במספר שמות מבין עשרים שנה
 מא ומעלה כל יצא צבא: פקדיהם למטה אשר אחד וארבעים אלף וחמש מאות:
 מב בני נפתלי תולדתם למשפחתם לבית אבתם במספר שמות מבין עשרים שנה
 מג ומעלה כל יצא צבא: פקדיהם למטה נפתלי שלשה וחמשים אלף וארבע
 מאות:

מד אלה הפקדים אשר פקד משה ואהרן ונשיאי ישראל שנים עשר איש איש-
 מה אחד לבית-אבתיו היו: ויהיו כל-פקודי בני-ישראל לבית אבתם מבין עשרים
 מו שנה ומעלה כל-יצא צבא בישראל: ויהיו כל-הפקדים שש-מאות אלף ושלשת
 מז אלפים וחמש מאות וחמשים: והלויים למטה אבתם לא התפקדו בתוכם:
 מח וידבר יהוה אל-משה לאמר: אך את-מטה לוי לא תפקד ואת-דאשם לא
 מט תשא בתוך בני ישראל: ואתה הפקד את-הלויים על-משכן העדות ועל כל-
 נ כליו ועל כל-אשר-לו המה ישאו את-המשכן ואת-כל-כליו והם ישרתהו
 נא וסביב למשכן יחנו: ובנסע המשכן יורידו אתו הלויים ובחנת המשכן יקימו
 נב אתו הלויים והזר הקרב יומת: וחנו בני ישראל איש על-מחנהו ואיש על-
 נג דגלו לצבאתם: והלויים יחנו סביב למשכן העדות ולא-יהיה קצף על-עדות
 נד בני ישראל ושמרו הלויים את-משמרת משכן העדות: ויעשו בני ישראל ככל
 אשר צוה יהוה את-משה בן עשו:

דש"י

נב | ואיש על דגלו. כמו שהקדלים סדורים בספר זה, שלשה שבעים לכל דגל.
 נג | ולא יהיה קצף. חס תעש: כמעטני לא יהיה קצף, ואם לאו, ש'קנסו' זרים פעבודתם זו, יהיה קצף, כמו שמענו במעשה קרח. 'כי יצא הקצף' וגו' (להלן י, יח).

שקרה על דבר שהיה ממנה עליו, כמו 'ויפקד המלך פקודים' (חסי' ב, א).
 נא | יורידו אתו. פתקגמו: 'ויפקדו', כשפחין לסע במדבר ממשע למסע היו מפקדיו חותו מהקמתו, ונשפחין חותו עד מקום חשך ישכן שם הענן ויחנו שם, ומקמינו חותו: והזר הקרב. לעבודתם זו: יומת. גידו שמים:

מט | אך את מטה לוי לא תפקד. פדחי הוא לגון של מלך להיות נמנה לבדו. דבר חרה, עפה הקדוש ברוך הוא שעתידה לעמוד גזרה על כל העמנו מבין עשרים שנה ומעלה שימותו במדבר, חמר: חל יהיו חלו בקבל, למי שהם שלי שלח טעו בעגל.
 נ | ואתה הפקד את הלויים. פתקגמו 'מני', לשון מני

The Encampment of the Israelites

NUMBERS 2:1–34

Toward the end of the previous section, the Torah stated in general terms: “The children of Israel shall encamp, each in his camp, and each at his banner, according to their hosts” (1:52). The following chapter details their encampment based on the four directions of the compass, which signals a change in their style of encampment. Until this point, the camp had

traveled in a haphazard fashion. It can be assumed that the members of each tribe stayed close to each other, and would travel and encamp together, though there may have been exceptions. However, once the Tabernacle, situated in the heart of the camp, is constructed, the arrangement of the encampments of all of the tribes in relation to each other becomes fixed.

- 2** **1 The Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying:**
- Third* **2 Each man at his banner, with the insignias of their patri-**
aliya **lineal house, the children of Israel shall encamp.** Each tribe shall be represented by its own symbol. **At a distance, around the Tent of Meeting they shall encamp.**
- 3 Those who encamp at the front, to the east side of the camp, were the banner of the camp of Judah, according to their hosts; and the prince of the children of Judah is Nahshon son of Aminadav.**
- 4 Its host and those counted were seventy-four thousand six hundred.**
- 5 Those who encamp with it⁶ were the tribe of Issachar; and the prince of the children of Issachar was Netanel son of Tzuar.**
- 6 Its host and its count was fifty-four thousand four hundred.**
- 7 Alongside them shall encamp the tribe of Zebulun; and the prince of the children of Zebulun was Eliav son of Helon.**
- 8 Its host and its count was fifty-seven thousand four hundred.**
- 9** The sum total of **all the counted for the camp of Judah,^d** which includes the tribes of Issachar and Zebulun, were **one hundred thousand eighty thousand six thousand four hundred, according to their hosts; they shall travel first.** Although these tribes were encamped to the east, when traveling they would always lead, regardless of the direction of the journey.
- 10 The banner of the camp of Reuben was to the south according to their hosts; and the prince of the children of Reuben was Elitzur son of Shede’ur.**
- 11 Its host and its count was forty-six thousand five hundred.**
- 12 Those who encamp with it were the tribe of Simeon; and the prince of the children of Simeon was Shelumiel son of Tzurishadai.**
- 13 Its host and those counted were fifty-nine thousand three hundred.**
- 14 The tribe of Gad;^d and the prince of the children of Gad was Elyasaf son of Re’uel.**
- 15 Its host and those counted were forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty.**
- 16 All the counted for the camp of Reuben were one hundred thousand fifty-one thousand four hundred and fifty, according to their hosts; and they shall travel second** when departing the encampment, after the camp of the banner of Judah.
- 17** After the camp of Reuben has begun to travel, **the Tent of Meeting,** which constituted a distinct camp, called the camp of the Divine Presence by the Sages,⁷ shall travel. And around it shall be **the Levite camp,** which shall travel in the midst of the camps; as they encamp so shall they travel, with every man in his designated place, according to their banners.
- 18 The banner of the camp of Ephraim according to their hosts was to the west; and the prince of the children of Ephraim was Elishama son of Amihud.**
- 19 Its host and those counted were forty thousand five hundred.**
- 20 With it was the tribe of Manasseh; and the prince of the children of Manasseh was Gamliel son of Pedatzur.**

DISCUSSION

2:9 | **For the camp of Judah:** This division of tribes was based on their relative importance. The tribe of Judah was chosen as the head of the first camp not only because of its size and strength but also due to its status as the central tribe among the sons of Jacob. Its banner was shared by Issachar and Zebulun, who were also

sons of Leah, and who, unlike Jacob’s eldest two sons, Reuben and Simeon, did not have any major flaws (see Genesis 34:25–30, 35:22; see also Jacob’s last speech, 49:3–7).

2:14 | **Gad:** Gad was the firstborn of Zilpa, Leah’s maidservant, and therefore his descendants encamped alongside the tribes of Leah’s

sons. Since Leah had six sons, they could theoretically have formed two full banners of three tribes each. However, as the tribe of Levi, one of the sons of Leah, was not included in the camps surrounding the Tabernacle on the outside, her sons Reuben and Simeon were joined by the tribe of Gad, the firstborn of her maidservant.

ב וידבר יהוה אל-משה ואל-אהרן לאמר: איש על-דגלו באתת לבית אבתם ב שלישי
 יחנו בני ישראל מנגד סביב לאהל-מועד יחנו: והחנים קדמה מזרחה דגל
 מחנה יהודה לצבאתם ונשיא לבני יהודה נחשון בן-עמינדב: וצבאו ופקדיהם
 ארבעה ושבעים אלף ושש מאות: והחנים עליו מטה יששכר ונשיא לבני
 יששכר נתנאל בן-צווער: וצבאו ופקדיו ארבעה וחמשים אלף וארבע מאות:
 מטה זבולן ונשיא לבני זבולן אליאב בן-חלון: וצבאו ופקדיו שבעה וחמשים
 אלף וארבע מאות: כל-הפקדים למחנה יהודה מאת אלף ושמונים אלף
 וששת-אלפים וארבע-מאות לצבאתם ראשנה יסעו: דגל
 מחנה ראובן תימנה לצבאתם ונשיא לבני ראובן אליצור בן-שדיאור: וצבאו
 ופקדיו ששה וארבעים אלף וחמש מאות: והחונם עליו מטה שמעון ונשיא
 לבני שמעון שלמיאל בן-צודישידי: וצבאו ופקדיהם תשעה וחמשים אלף
 ושלש מאות: ומטה גד ונשיא לבני גד אליסף בן-דעואל: וצבאו ופקדיהם
 חמשה וארבעים אלף ושש מאות וחמשים: כל-הפקדים למחנה ראובן
 מאת אלף ואחד וחמשים אלף וארבע-מאות וחמשים לצבאתם ושנים
 יסעו: ונסע אהל-מועד מחנה הלויים בתוך המחנות כאשר
 יחנו בן יסעו איש על-ידו לדגליהם: דגל מחנה אפרים
 לצבאתם ימה ונשיא לבני אפרים אלישמע בן-עמיהוד: וצבאו ופקדיהם ארבעים
 אלף וחמש מאות: ועליו מטה מנשה ונשיא לבני מנשה גמליאל בן-פדהצור:

רשי

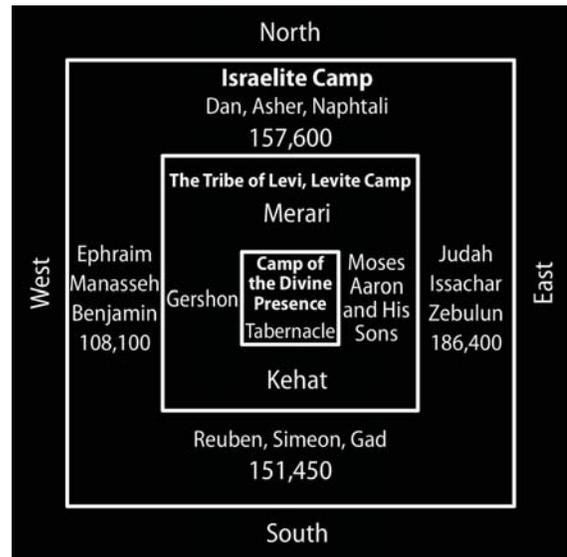
באמנע, דגל יהודה פמוקת, ושל לחובן פקרוס, ושל
 חפרים פמערכ, ושל דן פנפון:
 יי ונסע אהל מועד. לחחר שני דגלים הכלו:
 כאשר יחנו בן יסעו. כמו שפירשתי, הליכתן פחניתן,
 כל דגל מהלך לריח הקבוע לו: על ידו. על מקומן,
 ואין לשון 'ד' זו ממשמעו, ריח של עדו קרוי 'על
 ידו', הסמוכה לו לכל הושתת ודו, אינשון אישי'
 פלעו:
 כו ועליו. פתרגומו: 'ודסמיכון עלוהו':

ב'יהושע': 'חך לחוק יהיה פינכס ובינו פחלפים חמה'
 (יהושע ג, 7) שזיכלו לזכר בשפת. משה וזהלן ובינו והלויים
 חונם פסמוך לו:
 ג קדמה. לפנס הקרויים 'קדם', ואיזו זו ריח מוקחית,
 והמערכ קרוי חלול:
 ט ראשנה יסעו. פשרוהיו הענן מסתלק, תוקעין
 הפהנים פחצונרות ונסע מחנה יהודה תחלה;
 וקשהולכין - הולכין פקדך חניתן, הלויים והעגלות

פרק ב
 ב באות. כל דגל יהיה לו חות, מפה צבועה תלויה
 פו, צבעו של זה לז פבעו של זה, צבע כל חדר פגון
 חכנו הקבועה פחשן, ומיעון כך יכיר כל חדר חית דגלו.
 דבר חחר, 'בחירת לבית חבתם', בחות שפסר להם יעקב
 חביהם פששאוהו ממקרים, שפומר: 'ויעשו בניו לו פן
 פחשר עם' (גדלשית נ יב) - יהודה וששכר וזבולן ישאוהו
 מן המוקח, ורחובן ושמעון ודן מן הקרוס וכו', פדחיתח
 פתנחומח פכסה זו (יב) מנגד. מרחוק מיל, כמו שפומר

- 21 Its host and those counted were thirty-two thousand two hundred.
- 22 The tribe of Benjamin; and the prince of the children of Benjamin was Avidan son of Gidoni.
- 23 Its host and those counted were thirty-five thousand four hundred.
- 24 All those counted for the camp of Ephraim^d were one hundred thousand eight thousand one hundred, according to their hosts; and they shall travel third. They journeyed either directly behind the Levites, or on their side, parallel to them.
- 25 The banner of the camp of Dan^d was to the north according to their hosts; and the prince of the children of Dan was Ahiezer son of Amishadai.
- 26 Its host and those counted were sixty-two thousand seven hundred.
- 27 Those who encamp with it were the tribe of Asher; and the prince of the children of Asher was Pagiel son of Okhran.
- 28 Its host and those counted were forty-one thousand five hundred.
- 29 The tribe of Naphtali; and the prince of the children of Naphtali was Ahira son of Einan.
- 30 Its host and those counted were fifty-three thousand four hundred.
- 31 All those counted for the camp of Dan were one hundred thousand fifty-seven thousand six hundred; they shall travel last by their banners.
- 32 These are those who were counted of the children of Israel by their patrilineal house; all those counted of the camps according to their hosts were six hundred thousand three thousand five hundred and fifty.

- 33 The Levites were not counted among the children of Israel, as the Lord had commanded Moses. The unusual form for the words “were not counted” [*hotpakdu*] indicated that they did not count themselves, nor did others count them.⁸
- 34 The children of Israel did according to everything that the Lord had commanded Moses, so they encamped according to their banners,^d and so they traveled, each man according to his families, by his patrilineal house.



Arrangement of the Israelite camps

The Descendants of Levi

NUMBERS 3:1–51

After the Levites have been counted, the Torah depicts how they assumed their responsibilities from the firstborn, who formerly performed the sacred service. The consecration of the Levites in place of the firstborn is another stage in the census of the people, as it almost entirely negates the previous unique status of the firstborn, who are now reincorporated into the general community of the rest of the people.

- 3 **1** These are the descendants of Aaron and Moses on the day that the Lord spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai. Despite the mention of the descendants of Moses, only the descendants of Aaron are listed in the next verse. Moses’ descendants are only indirectly mentioned in verse 27, via the wording “the family of the Amramites,” as Amram had no sons other than Moses and Aaron, and this cannot be referring to Aaron’s descendants, who are listed before that verse. Nevertheless, their names

Fourth aliya

As was mentioned above, the tribe of Levi is not counted together with the rest of the Israelites. This section focuses on various issues relevant specifically to the members of this tribe: the results of their census, their encampment adjacent to the Tabernacle, and the general function of each of the three central patrilineal houses.

are not specified.⁹ The reason for this is that the descendants of Aaron alone were granted a special role. Although Aaron himself was secondary to his younger brother Moses, his sons served as priests. In contrast, Moses’ descendants were ordinary Levites like the rest of their tribe.

- 2 **These are the names of the sons of Aaron: the firstborn, Nadav, and Avihu, Elazar, and Itamar.**

וַיֵּצְאוּ וַיִּקְדְּיֵהֶם שְׁנַיִם וּשְׁלֹשִׁים אֶלְפֵי וּמֵאוֹתַיִם: וּמִטָּה בְּנִימָן וְנִשְׂיָא לְבָנֵי בְנִימָן
 אֲבִידָן בֶּן־גְּדֵעִי: וַיֵּצְאוּ וַיִּקְדְּיֵהֶם חֲמִשָּׁה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים אֶלְפֵי וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת: כָּל־
 הַפְּקָדִים לְמַחֲנֵה אֶפְרַיִם מֵאֵת אֶלְפֵי וּשְׁמֹנֶת־אֶלְפִים וּמֵאָה לְעֵבְאֵתֶם וּשְׁלֹשִׁים
 יִסָּעוּ: דָּגַל מַחֲנֵה דָן צִפְנָה לְעֵבְאֵתֶם וְנִשְׂיָא לְבָנֵי דָן אַחֲיעֶזֶר בֶּן־
 עַמִּישַׁדַּי: וַיֵּצְאוּ וַיִּקְדְּיֵהֶם שְׁנַיִם וּשְׁלֹשִׁים אֶלְפֵי וּשְׁבַע מֵאוֹת: וְהַחֲנִים עָלָיו מִטָּה
 אֲשֶׁר וְנִשְׂיָא לְבָנֵי אֲשֶׁר פִּגְעִיָאֵל בֶּן־עֲכָרָן: וַיֵּצְאוּ וַיִּקְדְּיֵהֶם אֶחָד וְאַרְבַּעַיִם
 אֶלְפֵי וַחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת: וּמִטָּה נִפְתָּלִי וְנִשְׂיָא לְבָנֵי נִפְתָּלִי אַחֲרָע בֶּן־עֵינָן: וַיֵּצְאוּ
 וַיִּקְדְּיֵהֶם שְׁלֹשָׁה וַחֲמִשִּׁים אֶלְפֵי וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת: כָּל־הַפְּקָדִים לְמַחֲנֵה דָן מֵאֵת
 אֶלְפֵי וּשְׁבַעַה וַחֲמִשִּׁים אֶלְפֵי וּשְׁשׁ מֵאוֹת לְאַחֲרָנָה יִסָּעוּ לְדֹגְלֵיהֶם:
 אֵלֶּה פְּקוּדֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם כָּל־פְּקוּדֵי הַמַּחֲנֵה לְעֵבְאֵתֶם שֵׁשׁ־מֵאוֹת
 אֶלְפֵי וּשְׁלֹשֶׁת אֶלְפִים וַחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת וַחֲמִשִּׁים: וְהַלְוִיִּם לֹא הִתְּפַקְדוּ בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי
 יִשְׂרָאֵל כֹּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה: וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה
 אֶת־מֹשֶׁה בְּנַחֲנוּ לְדֹגְלֵיהֶם וּבֵן נָסָעוּ אִישׁ לְמִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ עַל־בֵּית אֲבֹתָיו:
 וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת אֶהְרֹן וּמִשִּׁה בְּיוֹם דִּבְרַר יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי: וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת ג רביעי

רשי

פרק ג

א | ואלה תולדות אהרן ומשה. וזינו מזכיר חלח בני חלון, ונקראו תולדות משה, לבי שלמון תורה, מלמד שכל המלמד חת בן חברו תורה מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו וקדו: ביום דבר ה' את משה. נעשו חלו התולדות שלו, שלמון מה שלמד מפי הגבורה:

DISCUSSION

2:24 | **The camp of Ephraim:** This camp, which included Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, was the camp of the descendants of Rachel. It was possible that the location of this camp was related to the idea that the Divine Presence was located in the west (see *Zevahim* 54b; *Bava Batra* 25a; *Zohar* 3:119:2). The First and Second Temples were in fact built in the portions of Rachel's sons: The Tabernacle in Shilo was situated in Joseph's inherited land, while the Temple was situated in Benjamin's land (see *Bemidbar Rabba* 2:9; *Abravanel*).

2:25 | **The camp of Dan:** This camp consisted of the sons of the maidservants. It was headed by

Dan, the firstborn of Bilha, Rachel's maidservant, who was accompanied by Naphtali, Bilha's other son, and Asher, son of Zilpa, Leah's maidservant.

As mentioned above, the largest camp was that of Judah, but the camp of Dan was second in size. It is likely no coincidence that the two camps of Judah and Dan, which were significantly larger than the rest, were instructed to lead the way and travel at the rear, respectively (see *Ramban*, verse 2). Moreover, the entire structure of the camp appeared to be similar to an organized battle formation, including banners and trumpets. Although the people did not actually engage in war on their journey

until near the end of the forty years in the wilderness, they nevertheless traveled in a similar manner to a military camp. In addition to their visible shape, the arrangement of the camps also revealed an esoteric symbolic meaning (see *Bemidbar Rabba* 2:10).

2:34 | **So they encamped according to their banners:** According to tradition, each tribe's banner had its own color, identical to the color of the precious stone that represented it on the High Priest's breast piece (*Bemidbar Rabba* 2:7; *Rashi*, verse 2). In addition to the banners of the individual tribes, each group of tribes that encamped together had its own banner, which

- 3 These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom he invested to serve as priests,** at the time of the inauguration of the Tabernacle.
- 4** However, soon after they were anointed, **Nadav and Avihu died before the Lord, when they presented strange fire before the Lord,** as a result of which they were burned and died¹⁰ **in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children;**^D **and Elazar and Itamar served as priests^D in the presence of Aaron, their father.** In addition to Elazar and Itamar's role as Levites, they were also appointed to serve as priests.
- 5 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:**
- 6 Bring the tribe of Levi near,^D and stand it before Aaron the priest, and they shall serve him.** From this point onward, the Levites shall serve the priests and the Tabernacle.
- 7 They shall keep his, Aaron's, commission, and the commission of the entire congregation before the Tent of Meeting, to perform the service of the Tabernacle.** The Levites will become the guard of the Tabernacle and will encamp around it in close proximity. This is not a military guard; rather, they are responsible to tend to the needs of the priests and the Tabernacle.
- 8 They shall safeguard all the vessels of the Tent of Meeting, and the commission of the children of Israel, to perform the service of the Tabernacle.**
- 9 You shall give the Levites to Aaron and to his sons** as appointed assistants to the priests. **They are entirely given to him from the children of Israel.** The Levites, a relatively small tribe, are considered here as a gift from the Israelites to the priests to aid in the Tabernacle service. As stated elsewhere,

the Israelites must also designate cities for the Levites and give them a tithe from their produce.¹¹

- 10 You shall count Aaron and his sons, and they shall observe their priesthood,** to the exclusion of all others, who may not serve in their capacity; **and the stranger who approaches shall be put to death.**
- 11 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:**
- 12 I have hereby taken the Levites from among the children of Israel in place of every firstborn, first issue of the womb from the children of Israel,** who previously performed the sacred service. The priests mentioned at Mount Sinai are in fact identified as the firstborns.¹² **And the Levites shall be Mine.**
- 13 For every firstborn is Mine; on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified to Me every firstborn in Israel, from man to animal; they shall be Mine; I am the Lord.** Upon the striking of all firstborns in Egypt, including both man and beast, both the firstborn Israelites and their animals became consecrated to God. Now the unique status of Jewish male firstborns, and their function and rights, passes to the Levites.¹³
- 14 The Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying:**
- 15 Count the children of Levi by their patrilineal house, by their families; every male from one month old and above you shall count them.** Unlike the counting of the other tribes, which was similar to a military census, and therefore included only those aged twenty and upward, the counting of the Levites applied even to children as young as a month old, when their health is considered stable and they are classified as viable offspring.¹⁴

*Fifth
aliya*

DISCUSSION

incorporated the colors of the three tribes collectively (see *Targum Yonatan*). It was also possible that each of the patrilineal houses had their own smaller banners or emblems.

3:4 | And they had no children: There is an opinion in the Midrash that Nadav and Avihu did not marry (see *Vayikra Rabba* 20:9). It is also possible that they married late, and therefore had not fathered children, or that they had only daughters. If so, the word "children" should be translated as sons.

And Elazar and Itamar served as priests: In addition to the three priests listed here, Aaron and two of his sons, it is logical that there were others as well. For instance, Elazar's son Pinhas is mentioned as a hero toward the end of this book (25:11–13). Likewise, Elazar and Itamar may have

had other sons, whose identity and function is not mentioned here, perhaps because they were young or unimportant. It is also quite possible that those descendants were not appointed to the priestly role together with Aaron and his sons (see Ibn Ezra, verse 10; commentary on 25:13).

3:6 | Bring the tribe of Levi near: The tribe of Levi was counted independently, and the sum of its members was listed separately from those of the other tribes. This was consistent with the establishment of the Levites' unique status among the children of Israel. This tribe, which according to the Sages was not enslaved in Egypt, was to be distinguished from the rest of the people in their public, social, and cultural life. The tribe was dedicated to the sacred service, and its

members did not participate in the worship of the Golden Calf with much of the rest of the nation. On the contrary, the Levites' loyalty to God and Moses enabled them to smite even their close relatives on that occasion (Exodus 32:26–29). Furthermore, the tribe of Levi did not join the misguided initiative to send spies to the land of Canaan.

The Levites, however, did not inherit a portion in the land, and did not work in fields or vineyards, but rather dwelled in cities that belonged to the other tribes. Their livelihoods were generally unsteady and irregular, and they had to rely on the gifts given to them by their brethren. Their growth rate was also far lower than that of the other tribes. As the King's legion, as it were, it is fitting for the tribe of Levi to be counted by itself (*Midrash Aggada*, cited by Rashi, 1:49).

בְּנֵי־אֶהֱרֹן הַכֹּהֵן וְנָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא אֲלֻעָזָר וְאִיתָמָר: אֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי אֶהֱרֹן הַכֹּהֵנִים
הַמְשֻׁחִים אֲשֶׁר־מִלֵּא יָדָם לְכַהֵן: וַיִּמַּת נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא לִפְנֵי יְהוָה בְּהִקְרַבְסָם אֲשֶׁר
זָרָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה בְּמִדְבַר סִינַי וּבְנִים לֹא־הָיוּ לָהֶם וַיִּכְהֵן אֲלֻעָזָר וְאִיתָמָר עַל־פְּנֵי
אֶהֱרֹן אֲבִיהֶם:

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: הִקְרַב אֶת־מִטֵּה לְוִי וְהִעַמְדַתְּ אֹתוֹ לִפְנֵי אֶהֱרֹן
הַכֹּהֵן וְשָׂרְתוּ אֹתוֹ: וְשָׂמְרוּ אֶת־מִשְׁמֶרְתּוֹ וְאֶת־מִשְׁמֶרֶת כָּל־הָעֵדָה לִפְנֵי אֶהֱלֹ
מוֹעֵד לַעֲבֹד אֶת־עֲבֹדַת הַמִּשְׁכָּן: וְשָׂמְרוּ אֶת־כָּל־כְּלֵי אֶהֱלֹ מוֹעֵד וְאֶת־מִשְׁמֶרֶת
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲבֹד אֶת־עֲבֹדַת הַמִּשְׁכָּן: וְנָתַתָּה אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם לְאֶהֱרֹן וּלְבָנָיו נְתוּנִם
נְתוּנִם הֵמָּה לֹא מֵאֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: וְאֶת־אֶהֱרֹן וְאֶת־בָּנָיו תִּפְקֹד וְשָׂמְרוּ אֶת־
כְּהֻנָּתְךָ וְהִזַּר הַקָּרֵב יוֹמַת:

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: וַאֲנִי הִנֵּה לִקְחָתִי אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם מִתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
תַּחַת כָּל־בְּכוֹר פֶּטֶר רֶחֶם מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיוּ לִי הַלְוִיִּם: כִּי לֹא כָל־בְּכוֹר בְּיוֹם
הַפֶּתִי כָל־בְּכוֹר בְּאָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם הִקְדַּשְׁתִּי לִי כָל־בְּכוֹר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאָדָם עַד־
בְּהֵמָה לִי יְהִיוּ אֲנִי יְהוָה:

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַר סִינַי לֵאמֹר: פִּקֹּד אֶת־בְּנֵי לְוִי לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם חֲמִישִׁי
לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם כָּל־זָכָר מִבֶּן־חָדָשׁ וּמַעְלָה תִּפְקְדֵם:

רש"י

הַבְּכוֹרוֹת וְזֵיתֵי בָהֶם וּלְקַחְתֶּם תְּמוּנַתָּם לְמִי שֶׁהִיָּתָה
הָעֲבוּדָה בְּבָכוֹרוֹת, וְכִשְׁחִטּוּוּ בַעֲגֵל נִפְסָלוּ, וְהַלְוִיִּם שֶׁלֹּא
עָבְדוּ עֲבוּדָה זָרָה וְנִחְדָּו תִּחְתַּתֶּיהֶם:
טו | מִבֶּן חָדָשׁ וּמַעְלָה. מְשִׁיבָא מִכְּלָל נִפְלִים הוּא נִמְנָה
לְקַרְחָא שׁוֹמֵר מִשְׁמֶרֶת הַקֹּדֶשׁ. חָמֵר רַבִּי יְהוּדָה בְּרַבִּי
שְׁלוֹם: לְמַגֵּד הוּא חוֹתֵן הַשְׂבָּע לְהִיּוֹת נִמְנָה מִן הַבְּטוּן,
שְׂנַחֲמֵר: "חָשֵׁר יִלְדָה חֵתָה לְלוֹי בְּמִנְיָתָם" (לֵהֲלוֹ טו, עו),
עַם כְּנִסְתָּה בְּפִתְחָא מִנְיָתָם יִלְדָה חוֹתָה וְנִמְנָתָה בְּשָׂבָעִים
נִפְשָׁה, שְׂבָעִיתָה מוֹנֵה חֲשׂוֹנָם לֹא תִמְנָחֵם חֵלָא שְׂבָעִים
חֲסֵר חֵתָה, וְהִיא הַשְּׂבָעִיתָה חֵת הַמִּנְיָן:

לְפִיכָךְ לֹקַחְתִּים מֵהֶם הַמַּעֲשָׂרוֹת בְּשִׂבְעָה, שְׂנַחֲמֵר: "כִּי
שָׂכַר הוּא לְכֶסֶם חִלְקֵי עֲבָדְתְּכֶם" (לֵהֲלוֹ יח, לח):
ט | נְתוּנִים הֵמָּה לוֹ. לְמַנְיָה: מֵאֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. כְּמוֹ מִתּוֹךְ
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, כְּלוּמַר מִשְׁאֵר כָּל הָעֵדָה נִגְדְּלוּ לְכָךְ בְּמִצְרַת
הַמִּקְוֹס וְהוּא נְתָנָם לוֹ, שְׂנַחֲמֵר: "וְחֵתָנָה חֵת הַלְוִיִּם
נְתָנָם" (לֵהֲלוֹ ט, עו):
י | וְאֶת אֶהֱרֹן וְאֶת בְּנָיו תִּפְקֹד. לְשׁוֹן פְּקִידוֹת, וְזֵיתֵי לְשׁוֹן
מִנְיָן: וְשָׂמְרוּ אֶת כְּהֻנָּתָם. קִבְּלַת דְּמִיָּים וּמִקְרָה וְהַקְטָרָה
וְעֲבוּדוֹת הַמִּסְוִיּוֹת לְכַהֵנִים:

יב | וַאֲנִי הִנֵּה לִקְחָתִי. וְזֵיתֵי מִהִיכָן וְזֵיתֵי בָהֶם "מִתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל", שֶׁהֵיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל שׂוֹכְרֵי חוֹתֵן לְשָׂרֵי שְׂפִי עַל יְדֵי

ד | עַל בְּנֵי אֶהֱרֹן. בְּחִיּוֹ:
ו | וְשָׂרְתוּ אֹתוֹ. וְמָה הַשְׂרִית? וְשָׂמְרוּ חֵת מִשְׁמֶרֶתוֹ?
לְמִי שְׂמִירַת הַמִּקְדָּשׁ עָלָיו שְׂלֵחַ יִקְרַב זָר, כְּמוֹ שְׂנַחֲמֵר:
"חֵתָה וְכִנְיָן וְזֵיתֵי חֵתָה תִּשְׂחֹז חֵת עוֹן הַמִּקְדָּשׁ"
(לֵהֲלוֹ יח, לח), וְהַלְוִיִּם הִלְלוּ מִסִּיעוּן חוֹתָם, זו הוּא הַשְׂרִית:
ז | וְשָׂמְרוּ אֶת מִשְׁמֶרֶתוֹ. כָּל מְנוֹי שֶׁחָדָשׁ מְמַנָּה עָלָיו
וּמְטֵל עָלָיו לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ קְרִי מִשְׁמֶרֶת כָּכָל הַמִּקְדָּשׁ וּבִלְשׁוֹן
מִשְׁנָה, כְּמוֹ שְׂמִירָה בְּבִגְתָן וְתֵלָה: "וְהֵלֵךְ חֵין מִשְׁמֶרֶת
וּמִשְׁמֶרֶתךָ שְׂנֵה", וְכֵן מִשְׁמֶרֶת כְּהֵנָה וְלִוְיָה:
ח | וְאֶת מִשְׁמֶרֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. שְׂכָלוּ הֵיוּ זְכוּרֵי לְעַרְכֵי
הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, חֵלָא שְׂהַלְוִיִּם בְּחִיָּים תִּחְתַּתֶּיהֶם בְּשִׁלְיֻחוֹתָם,

- 16** **Moses counted them according to the directive of the Lord, as he was commanded.** Since this census included children and newborns, it was harder to perform than that of the rest of the people, where all those counted were adults who could appear in person. Therefore, the verse stresses that God assisted Moses in the count.¹⁵
- 17** **These were the sons of Levi by their names: Gershon, Kehat, and Merari.**
- 18** **These were the names of the sons of Gershon by their families: Livni and Shimi.**
- 19** **The sons of Kehat by their families: Amram, Yitzhar, Hebron,^D and Uziel.**
- 20** **The sons of Merari by their families: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites by their patrilineal house.**
- 21** Following the listing of the names of the Levite families, the Torah details their numbers, the place of their encampment in relation to the Tabernacle, and their role in carrying the Tabernacle. **For Gershon, the family of the Livnites, and the family of the Shimiites; these are the families of the Gershonites.**
- 22** **Those counted, of the descendants of Gershon, according to the number of all males from one month old and above; those counted were seven thousand five hundred.**
- 23** **The families of the Gershonites shall encamp behind the Tabernacle to the west.**
- 24** **The prince of the patrilineal house of the Gershonites was Elyasaf son of Lael.**
- 25** **The commission of the sons of Gershon in the Tent of Meeting** was the responsibility for the curtains of dyed wool and linen, that was above **the Tabernacle, and the Tent, the upper curtains of goats' hair, its outer covering of rams' skins and sealskins, and the screen of the entrance of the Tent of Meeting,**
- 26** **and the hangings of the courtyard, and the screen of the entrance of the courtyard that is near the Tabernacle, and near**
- the altar surrounding, and its cords,** which hold the screen of the courtyard as well. It is possible that stretched cords were also used to tie the coverings of the Tabernacle to the ground. Furthermore, the descendants of Gershon were responsible **for all its work,** which included handling all the textiles, skins, and ropes of the Tabernacle, in addition to their other tasks.¹⁶
- 27** **For Kehat, the family of the Amramites, the family of the Yitzharites, the family of the Hebronites, and the family of the Uzielites; these are the families of the Kehatites.**
- 28** **According to the number of all males, from one month old and above, eight thousand six hundred, keepers of the commission of the sacred.** They were entrusted with the special task of carrying the sacred vessels, as detailed below.
- 29** **The families of the sons of Kehat shall encamp on the side of the Tabernacle to the south.**
- 30** **The prince of the patrilineal house of the families of the Kehatites was Elitzafan son of Uziel.^D**
- 31** **Their commission that they must perform is to carry the ark, the table, the candelabrum, the altars, and the sacred vessels with which they would serve, and the screen,** which divides the Holy of Holies from the Sanctuary,¹⁷ **and all the rest of its work.** Alternatively, “the screen” refers to the screen of the courtyard, and “all its work” refers to its cords.¹⁸
- 32** Serving above the princes of the three patrilineal houses of the tribe of Levi was a prince of the whole tribe, from the Kehatites: **The prince of the princes of the Levites was Elazar son of Aaron the priest,** and he was given **the appointment over the keepers of the commission of the sacred.** Aaron himself had a special role in the Tabernacle. He was not the prince of the Levites; rather, that task was entrusted to his firstborn son.
- 33** **For Merari, the family of the Mahlites, and the family of the Mushites; these are the families of Merari.**
- 34** **Those counted, according to the number of all males, from one month old and above, were six thousand two hundred.**
- 35** **The prince of the patrilineal house of the families of Merari was Tzuriel son of Avihayil; they shall encamp on the side of the Tabernacle to the north.**

DISCUSSION

3:19 | **Hebron:** This individual may have been named after the city of Hebron in the land of Canaan. Alternatively, this name is similar to that of Hever, which means friend or colleague. There are four people in the Bible with that name (see Genesis 46:17; Judges 4:17; I Chronicles 4:18, 8:17).

3:30 | **Elitzafan son of Uziel:** Undoubtedly, Kehat was considered the senior patrilineal house, as Moses and Aaron, the leaders of the people, were the sons of Amram, the firstborn of Kehat. The fact that the prince of this patrilineal house was the son of the third son, Uziel, rather

than the son of the older Yitzhar, is cited as one reason for Korah's bitterness toward Moses and Aaron that motivated his rebellion (see 16:1–3), as he had received no public appointment in the family of the Kehatites (*Bemidbar Rabba* 18:2).

טז ויפקד אתם משה על־פי יהוה כאשר צוה: ויהיו־אלה בני־לוי בשמתם גר־שון
 יז וקהת ומררי: ואלה שמות בני־גר־שון למשפחתם לבני ושמעי: ובני קהת
 כ למשפחתם עמרם ויצהר חברון ועזיאל: ובני מררי למשפחתם מחלי ומושי
 כא אלה הם משפחת הלוי לבית אבתם: לגר־שון משפחת הלבני ומשפחת השמעי
 כב אלה הם משפחת הגר־שני: פקדיהם במספר כל־זכר מבין־חדש ומעלה פקדיהם
 כג שבעת אלפים וחמש מאות: משפחת הגר־שני אחרי המשפן יחנו ימה: ונשיא
 כד בית־אב לגר־שני אליסף בן־לאל: ומשמרת בני־גר־שון באהל מועד המשפן
 כה והאהל מכסהו ומסך פתח אהל מועד: וקלעי החצר ואת־מסך פתח החצר
 כו אשר על־המשפן ועל־המזבח סביב ואת מיתריו לכל עבדתו: ולקהת
 כז משפחת העמרמי ומשפחת היצהרי ומשפחת החברני ומשפחת העזיאלי
 כח אלה הם משפחת הקהתי: במספר כל־זכר מבין־חדש ומעלה שמנת אלפים
 כט ושש מאות שמרי משמרת הקדש: משפחת בני־קהת יחנו על ירך המשפן
 ל תימנה: ונשיא בית־אב למשפחת הקהתי אליצפן בן־עזיאל: ומשמרתם
 לא הארץ והשלחן והמנרה והמזבחת וכלי הקדש אשר ישרתו בהם והמסך וכל
 לב עבדתו: ונשיא נשיאי הלוי אלעזר בן־אהרן הכהן פקדת שמרי משמרת
 לג הקדש: למררי משפחת המחלי ומשפחת המושי אלה הם משפחת מררי:
 לד ופקדיהם במספר כל־זכר מבין־חדש ומעלה ששת אלפים ומאתים: ונשיא
 לה בית־אב למשפחת מררי צוריאל בן־אביחיל על ירך המשפן יחנו צפנה:

רשי

דגל לחובן החונם תמנה, חוי לדשע וחוי לשכנו, לךך לקו מיהס דתן וחזיקים ומחמשים חיש עם וקחי ועדתו, שגמשכו עמהם גמחלקתם:

לא | והמסך. היא הפלקת, שחף היא קרויה 'פלקת המסך' (ולכן ה. ה):

לב | ונשיא נשיאי הלוי. ממנה על פלם, ועל מה היא נשיאותו? 'פקדת שמרי משמרת', על ידו היא פקדת פלם:

הפקודים משפחת הלבני ומשפחת השמעי, פקודיהם כך וכך:

כה | המשפן. ידועות התחנות: והאהל. ידועות עגים העשויות לגג: מכסהו. עורות חילים ותקשים: ומסך פתח. הוא היולון:

כו | ואת מיתריו. של מסכן והחוקל, ולא של חצר:

כז | משפחת בני קהת יחנו... תימנה. וסמוכין להם

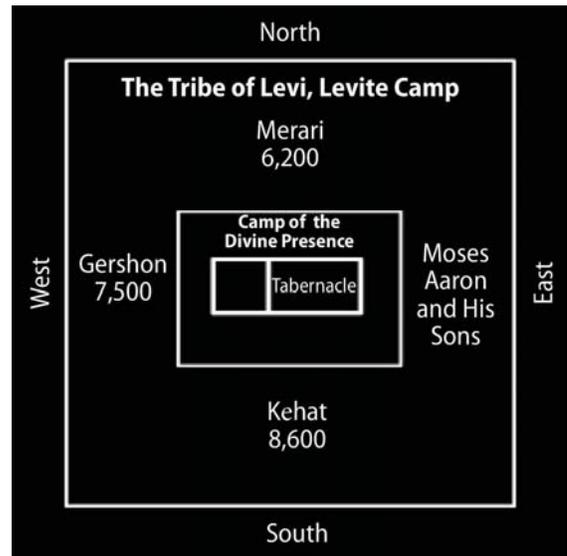
טז | על פי ה'. חמר משה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא: היאך חני נכנס לתוך חהליהם לדעת מניו יונקיהם? חמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא: עשה חתה שלך וחני חגשה שלי. הלך משה ועמד על פתח החוקל, והשכינה מקדמת לפניו, ובת קול יוצאת מן החוקל וחומרת: כך וכך תעולות יש בחוקל זה, לךך חמר: "על פי ה'":

כא | לגר־שון משפחת הלבני. כלומה, לגר־שון היו

- 36 The appointed commission of the sons of Merari** was the responsibility for **the beams of the Tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, all its accompanying instruments, and all its work,**
- 37 and the pillars of the courtyard all around, their sockets, their pegs, and their cords.**
- 38** The previous verses detailed the functions of the three patrilineal houses of the tribe of Levi: The descendants of Kehat, who were the most important, were in charge of the sacred vessels. The descendants of Gershon, the firstborn, dealt with the woven fabrics and the skins of the Tabernacle, while the descendants of Merari had the most physically taxing job, to carry all the heavy, solid components of the Tabernacle, including the beams, sockets, pegs, and the like. When the Israelites were encamped, these three patrilineal houses surrounded the Tabernacle on three sides, with Gershon to the west, Kehat to the south, and Merari to the north. On the remaining side, **those encamped in front of the Tabernacle,** where its entrance was located, **to the east, in front of the Tent of Meeting: Moses, and Aaron, and his sons, keeping the commission of the Sanctuary, for the commission of the children of Israel; and the stranger who approaches shall be put to death.** Although Moses was not a priest, due to his unique status he encamped alongside his brother.
- 39 All those counted of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron counted by the mandate of the Lord, by their families, all males from one month old and above, were twenty-two thousand.**
- 40 The Lord said to Moses: Count all the firstborn males of the children of Israel from one month old and above, and take the number of their names.** Corresponding to the counting of the Levites, you must conduct another census, that of the Israelite firstborns. Since this counting is also unrelated to military roles, but is rather to determine the number of firstborns, it too includes newborns.
- 41 You shall then take the Levites for Me, I am the Lord, in place of all the firstborn among the children of Israel.** The firstborns are thereby removed from the Tabernacle service and all ritual functions and are replaced by the Levites. The firstborns will retain only a minor element of sanctity, for which they require redemption, as will be explained below. **And likewise, you shall take the animals of the Levites in place of all**

Sixth aliya

- the firstborn among the animals of the children of Israel,** which were consecrated to God.¹⁹
- 42 Moses counted, as the Lord had commanded him, all firstborn among the children of Israel.**
- 43 All the firstborn males according to the number of names, from one month old and above, by their count, were twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three.^d**
- 44 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:**
- 45 Take the Levites in place of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the animals of the Levites instead of their animals, those of the Israelites; and the Levites shall be Mine, as a special group dedicated to the Tabernacle, I am the Lord.**
- 46** Each firstborn is removed from his function and replaced by one of the Levites. As the number of firstborns is not identical to the number of Levites, **for the redemptions of the two hundred and seventy-three of the firstborn of the children of Israel, who remain beyond the Levites,**
- 47 you shall take five shekels each by head, for every additional firstborn. In the sacred shekel you shall take; twenty gera^b is the shekel.²⁰**



Levite families and those counted

DISCUSSION

3:43 | **Twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three:** A comparison of the number of firstborns to the total number of the children of Israel (603,550) indicates that there was an unusually high number of children in each household. One possible explanation for this is

a high mortality rate, as in ancient times more than half of all children died before the age of five, and the firstborn often did not survive. Therefore, the total number of children could be significantly disproportionate to the number of firstborns. Another suggestion is that in the

final years of slavery in Egypt, the severity of the servitude, which included the killing of children, brought about a decrease in the number of Israelites. Consequently, a relatively large number of children who were not firstborns survived.

לו וּפְקַדְתָּ מִשְׁמֶרֶת בְּנֵי מְרֵדֵי קְרִשֵׁי הַמִּשְׁפָּן וּבְרִיחֵי וְעַמְדָּיו וְאֲדָנָיו וְכָל־כְּלָיו
 לח וְכָל עֲבָדָתוֹ: וְעַמְדֵי הַחֲצֵר סָבִיב וְאֲדָנֵיהֶם וַיִּתְּדָתֶם וּמִיִּתְרֵיהֶם: וְהַחֲנִים לִפְנֵי
 המִשְׁפָּן קִדְמָה לִפְנֵי אֹהֶל־מוֹעֵד וּמִזְרְחָה מֹשֶׁה וְאֶהְרֹן וּבְנֵיו שְׁמֵרִים מִשְׁמֶרֶת
 לט הַמִּקְדָּשׁ לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָזֶר הַקָּרֵב יוֹמֵת: כָּל־פְּקוּדֵי הַלְוִיִּם אֲשֶׁר
 פָּקַד מֹשֶׁה וְאֶהְרֹן עַל־פִּי יְהוָה לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֶּם כָּל־זָכָר מִבֶּן־חֹדֶשׁ וּמַעְלָה שְׁנַיִם
 מ ועֲשָׂרִים אֶלֶף: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה פָּקַד כָּל־בְּכֹר זָכָר לִבְנֵי
 מא יִשְׂרָאֵל מִבֶּן־חֹדֶשׁ וּמַעְלָה וְשָׂא אֶת מִסְפַּר שְׁמֹתֶם: וּלְקַחְתָּ אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם לִי אֲנִי
 יהוָה תַּחַת כָּל־בְּכֹר בְּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֵת בְּהֵמַת הַלְוִיִּם תַּחַת כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּבֵהֶמַת
 מב בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיִּפְקַד מֹשֶׁה כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
 מג וַיְהִי כָל־בְּכוֹר זָכָר בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמֹת מִבֶּן־חֹדֶשׁ וּמַעְלָה לִפְקוּדֵיהֶם שְׁנַיִם וְעֲשָׂרִים
 אֶלֶף שְׁלֹשָׁה וּשְׁבַעִים וּמֵאָתָּיִם:
 מד וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: קַח אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם תַּחַת כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
 מה וְאֶת־בְּהֵמַת הַלְוִיִּם תַּחַת בְּהֵמַתֶּם וְהָיוּ־לִי הַלְוִיִּם אֲנִי יְהוָה: וְאֵת פְּדוּיֵי
 מו הַשְּׁלֹשָׁה וְהַשְּׁבַעִים וְהַמֵּאָתָּיִם הָעֵדֻפִים עַל־הַלְוִיִּם מִבְּכוֹר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: וּלְקַחְתָּ
 מז חֲמִשָּׁת חֲמִשָּׁת שְׁקָלִים לַגִּלְגָּלַת בְּשֵׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ תִּקַּח עֲשָׂרִים גֵּרָה הַשְּׁקָל:

רש"י

חת בכורי בהמה טהורה של ישראלי, חלף חת פטרי
 חמומיהם, ושה אחד של בן לוי פטר פמה פטרי חמומיהם
 של ישראלי. תדע, שהי מנה העודפים בחכם ולא מנה
 העודפים בבהמה.
 מו-מז | ואת פדויי השלשה וגו'. וחת הבכורות הנריכין
 להפדות בהם, חלו שלשה ושבעים ומאתים העודפים
 בהם יתרים על הלויים, מהם תקח חמשת שקלים
 לגלגלת. כך היתה מכירתו של יוסף, עשרים פסח,
 שהיה בכורה של רחל.

וחמש מאות, בני קהת שמנת חלפים ושש מאות, בני
 מררי ששת חלפים ומאתים: ולמה לא כללן עם השחר
 ויפקדו חת הבכורות, ולא היו זקוקים השלשה ושבעים
 ומאתים בכורות העודפים על המנען לפדיון? חמרו
 דבותננו במסכת בכורות (דף ה ע"א): חזתן שלש מאות
 לויים בכורות היו, ודנים שיפקיעו עגמם מן הפדיון:
 מ | פקד כל בכר זכר וגו' מבן חודש ומעלה. משינעו מכלל
 ספק נפלים:
 מז | ואת בהמת הלויים וגו'. לא פדו בהמות הלויים

לח | משה ואהרן ובניו. וסמוכין להם דגל מחנה יהודה
 והחונים עליו וששכר וזבולן, טוב למדיק טוב לשכנו, לפי
 שהיו שכניו של משה שהיה עוסק בתורה, נעשו גדולים
 בתורה, שנאמר: "יהודה מחרקי" (תהלים ס, ט), "ומבני
 וששכר יודעי בינה" וגו' (דברי הימים א' יב, לב) מיתים ראשי
 סנהדריות, ומגזולן משכים בשכט סכר" (סופטים ה, יד):
 לט | אשר פקד משה ואהרן. נקוד על וחרון, לומר
 שלח היה ממנו הלויים: שנים ועשרים אלף. ובקטן
 חתה מוצא שלש מאות יתרים: בני גרשון שכעת חלפים

BACKGROUND

3:47 | **Gera**: This is the smallest measurement of weight for silver, probably equivalent to 0.83 g, and is called a *ma'a* by the Sages. Ten of these gera is worth a regular shekel, while twenty is equal to the sacred shekel (see commentary on Leviticus 27:25).

- 48** You shall give the silver to Aaron and to his sons; the redemptions of those among them who remain. This money shall serve to redeem those firstborns for whom there is no Levite to replace them.
- 49** Moses took the silver of the redemption from those who remain beyond the redemptions of the Levites.^D

- 50** From the firstborn of the children of Israel he took the silver: One thousand three hundred and sixty-five shekels, in the sacred shekels. Five shekels were paid for each of the 273 remaining firstborns.
- 51** Moses gave the silver of the redemption to Aaron and to his sons, according to the directive of the Lord, as the Lord had commanded Moses.^D

The Service of the Levites and Their Census

NUMBERS 4:1–49

The division of labor for the Tabernacle between the three patrilineal families of the tribe of Levi (Kehat, Gershon, and Merari), mentioned briefly in the previous section, is spelled out in detail here. The Torah describes the function of each patrilineal family during this time that the Israelites embark on a journey, which involves the dismantling of the Tabernacle and the bearing of its various parts. In the previous chapter, the Levites were counted from the age of one month. This is a significant factor contributing to their identity as Levites, and to their replacing the firstborn in their duties. By contrast, the census

conducted here is part of the practical preparations for the Levites to bear the Tabernacle and its vessels, and therefore only includes men between the ages of thirty and fifty. The assistance of the Levites in such matters is especially vital in the wilderness, as the number of priests at this time is negligible compared to the size of the people.

The Sages comment that the repetition and detail with regard to these matters indicates the Torah's great love for them.

- 4** **1** The Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying:
- Seventh aliya* **2** Take the census of the sons of Kehat, and appoint them for their important task, from among the sons of Levi, by their families, by their patrilineal house.
- 3** From thirty years old and above and until fifty years old,^D all those enlisted for duty, to perform labor in the Tent of Meeting.
- 4** This is the work of the sons of Kehat in the Tent of Meeting: the sacred sacraments [*kodesh hakodashim*]. Here, this expression does not bear its usual meaning of the Holy of Holies, which is the location behind the curtain in the Sanctuary where the ark was located but rather means the sacred sacraments.
- 5** The priests must prepare the vessels before the Kehatites may carry them. Aaron and his sons shall come when the camp travels, and they shall remove the curtain that screens, divides between the Sanctuary and the Holy of Holies, and with it they shall cover the Ark of the Testimony. The curtain, which itself is part of the Sanctuary, shall serve as the first cover over the ark.

- 6** They shall then place upon it, the ark, above the curtain, a covering of the hide of a tahash,^B which is stronger and more impermeable than the curtain, and they shall spread a third layer, a cloth entirely of sky-blue wool, a valuable woven material, over it, and they shall straighten and fasten its staves^D in preparation for its journey.
- 7** On the table for the showbread they shall spread a cloth of



Dugong, possibly the *tahash*

DISCUSSION

3:49 | **From those who remain beyond the redemptions of the Levites:** The Sages explained that in order to determine which of the firstborn would be considered “those who remain,” all of them participated in a lottery. On twenty-two thousand slips, the word “Levite” was written, and the firstborn who picked these slips were exempt from payment, as a Levite had been chosen to replace each firstborn. On the 273 remaining slips it was written that they had

to pay the redemption (see *Tanḥuma, Bemidbar* 25; Rashi, verse 50).

3:51 | **As the Lord had commanded Moses:** This emphasis is important, as it might appear that Moses is granting favorable status to his family. One of the motivations for Korah's rebellion against him and his brother Aaron was in fact such suggestions of nepotism (chap. 16). Therefore, the verses stress on several occasions

that everything was performed upon God's command (see *Or HaḤayyim*).

4:3 | **From thirty years old and above and until fifty years old:** In comparison to the Israelite males fit for conscription, who were counted from the age of twenty (1:3), the Levites were only fit for service to carry the sacred vessels at the age of thirty and were counted from that age. As such, their period of service in the Tabernacle was shorter perhaps due to the



וְנִתְּתָהּ הַפֶּסֶף לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו פְּדוּיֵי הָעֵדֻפִים בָּהֶם: וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת פֶּסֶף הַפְּדִיּוֹם
מֵאֵת הָעֵדֻפִים עַל פְּדוּיֵי הַלְוִיִּם: מֵאֵת בְּכוֹר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לָקַח אֶת־הַפֶּסֶף חֲמִשָּׁה
וּשְׁשִׁים וּשְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת וָאַלְף בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ: וַיִּתֵּן מֹשֶׁה אֶת־פֶּסֶף הַפְּדִיּוֹם לְאַהֲרֹן
וּלְבָנָיו עַל־פִּי יְהוָה כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה:
וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: נָשָׂא אֶת־דְּרֹאשׁ בְּנֵי קֹהֵת מִתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי
לְוִי לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם: מִבְּן שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וּמִמְעֹלָה וְעַד בֶּן־חֲמִשִּׁים
שָׁנָה כֹּל־בָּא לְצִבָּא לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלָאכָה בְּאַהֲל מוֹעֵד: זֹאת עֲבֹדַת בְּנֵי־קֹהֵת
בְּאַהֲל מוֹעֵד קֹדֶשׁ הַקְּדוֹשִׁים: וּבָא אַהֲרֹן וּבָנָיו בְּנִסְעַ הַמַּחֲנֶה וְהוֹדְדוּ אֶת
פְּרֻכַת הַמָּסַךְ וְכִסּוּ־בָהּ אֶת אֲרֹן הָעֵדֻת: וּנְתַנּוּ עָלָיו פָּסוּי עוֹר תַּחֲשׁ וּפְרָשׁוּ
בְּגָד־פְּלִיל תְּכֵלֶת מְלֻמְעָה וְשָׂמוּ בְּדִיּוֹ: וְעַל וְשָׁלַחַן הַפָּנִים יַפְרֹשׁוּ בְּגָד

רש"י

מַשְׁלֵשִׁים לֹא נִתְמַלֵּא כִּחוֹ, מִכֹּחַ חֲמִדוֹ: "בֶּן שְׁלֹשִׁים לִפְחִ" (חֲטוּת ה', ב'ח), וְהַיּוֹתֵר עַל בֶּן חֲמִשִּׁים כִּחוֹ מִכֹּחַיִם מֵעֵתָה:
ד | קֹדֶשׁ הַקְּדוֹשִׁים. הַמְקַדֵּשׁ שֶׁבְּקִלּוֹ, הַיְחָדוֹ וְהַשְׁלָחַן
וְהַמְנוּחָה וְהַמְנוֹבְחוֹת וְהַפְּרֻכַת וְכִלֵּי שְׂרָתִי:
ה | וּבָא אַהֲרֹן וּבָנָיו וְגו'. וְכִנְסוּ כָל כְּלֵי וְכִלֵּי לְגִדְתִּיקוֹ
הַמְסַכֵּשׁ לוֹ בְּפִשְׁטָה זוֹ, וְלֹא יִנְטְרוּכוּ הַלְוִיִּם בְּנֵי קֹהֵת
חֲלָץ לְשֹׂאֲתֵי: בְּנִסְעַ הַמַּחֲנֶה. כִּשְׁהַעֲגֹן מִסְמֵלָה, הוּא יוֹדְעוֹן
שִׂיסְעוֹ:

עַל־הֵס "בֶּן לְוִי", וּמִחֲתִים וְשִׁבְעִים וְשִׁלְשָׁה פְּתִיקוֹן כְּתִב
עַל־הֵס "חֲמִשִּׁים שָׁקֵלִים", בְּלִלְוֹ וְנִתְּנָן בְּקִלְפֵי חֲמִד לְהֵס:
כּוֹחַ וְטִלוֹ פְּתִיקוֹס לְפִי הַגֹּדֶל:
פֶּרֶק ד
ב | נָשָׂא אֶת דְּרֹאשׁ וְגו'. מִנֵּה מֵהֶס חֵת הַדְּרוֹיִין לְעִבּוּדַת
מִשָּׂא, וְהֵס מְבֹן שְׁלֹשִׁים וְעַד בֶּן חֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה, וְהַפְּחוֹת

מטו | הָעֵדֻפִים עַל פְּדוּיֵי הַלְוִיִּם. עַל חוֹתֵן שְׁפָדוֹ הַלְוִיִּם
בְּגוֹשְׁוֹ:
ג | חֲמִשָּׁה וּשְׁשִׁים וּשְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת וָאַלְף. כֶּן סְכּוּם הַחֲשׁוּבֹן:
חֲמִשִּׁים שָׁקֵלִים לְגִלְגֵּלֶת, לְמִחֲתִים בְּכוֹרוֹת - חֲלָף שָׁקֵל,
לְשִׁבְעִים בְּכוֹרוֹת - שְׁלֹשׁ מִחוֹת וְחֲמִשִּׁים שָׁקֵל, לְשִׁלְשָׁה
בְּכוֹרוֹת - חֲמִשָּׁה עֶשְׂרֵי שָׁקֵל. חֲמִד: פִּינֵד חֲעֵאָה? בְּכוֹר
שְׂחֲמֵר לוֹ: תֵּן חֲמִשִּׁים שָׁקֵלִים! יִחְמֵד לוֹ: חֲנִי מִפְּדוּי
הַלְוִיִּם. מֵה עֵאָה? הַיִּחַ שְׁנַים וְעֶשְׂרִים חֲלָף פְּתִיקוֹן וְכִתֵּב

DISCUSSION

➔ necessary training they received before beginning the service, which commenced prior to age thirty (see Rashi and Ramban, 8:24; *Hullin* 24a). Furthermore, beyond the physical effort which the Levites' work entailed, their proximity to the sacred vessels and the Tabernacle required a serious, composed state of mind, as well as an alertness and a respectful attitude more typical of mature adults.
4:6 | **And they shall fasten its staves:** This does not mean that the staves were placed on the ark, as even when the ark was at rest the staves were never removed from its rings

BACKGROUND

4:6 | **Tahash:** The identity of the *tahash* is uncertain. It is mentioned in the book of Ezekiel as an expensive material used for making shoes: "I clothed you in embroidery, and shod you with sealskin [*tahash*], and I wrapped you with linen and covered you with silk" (Ezekiel 16:10). Some maintain that *tahash* is the name of a color; purple according to Rabbi Yehuda in the Jerusalem Talmud (*Shabbat* 2:3). Alternatively, Onkelos and *Targum Yonatan* translate it simply as a colorful hide. Interestingly, researchers note the similarity between this name and *tah-si-a*, mentioned

in the Nuzi Tablets, fourteenth century BCE, which means a yellow or pink hide.
Others hold that the *tahash* is an animal, but there has never been any consensus as to which. The Talmud (*Shabbat* 28b) identifies the *tahash* as an extinct unicorn. In light of the Arabic cognate, it may be the dugong, a porpoise that can be found in the Red Sea, and whose skin is sometimes used by the Bedouin in shoemaking. Some posit that the *tahash* is a narwhal, a species of arctic whale. Narwhals travel in small groups and can grow to 6 m in length. The narwhal is mostly light yellow with dark spots,

sky-blue wool, and place upon it the bowls and the spoons, the supports, which were the pillars on the sides of the table, and the covering tubes, which were the thin tubes installed on the supports. In short, all the movable appurtenances of the table are placed upon the cloth. And the perpetual bread shall remain upon it, the table which is beneath the cloth of sky-blue wool. The bread may not be removed from the table during the journey.

- 8 They shall spread upon them another cloth of scarlet wool, and they shall cover it as well with a covering of the hide of a *taḥash*, and shall place its staves, with which the table for the showbread shall be carried.
- 9 They shall take a cloth of sky-blue wool, and cover the candelabrum of the light, its lamps, its tongs, its fire-pans, and all its oil vessels with which they serve it.
- 10 They shall place it and all its vessels into a covering of the hide of a *taḥash*, and shall place it on a pole. In contrast to the table for the showbread and the Ark of the Covenant, the candelabrum did not have staves inserted into rings. In order to carry it, the candelabrum must be placed inside a covering of a *taḥash* hide, into which a pole is inserted, and the pole is carried by two Levites.
- 11 Upon the golden altar they shall spread a cloth of sky-blue wool, and cover it with a covering of the hide of a *taḥash*, and they shall place its staves. They shall insert the staves with which the altar is carried into the rings of the altar.
- 12 They shall take all the service vessels with which they serve in the Sanctuary, and they shall place them in a cloth of sky-blue wool, and cover them with a covering of the hide of a *taḥash*, and they shall place them all on the pole.

13 The chapter now moves from discussing the vessels that were placed inside the Tent of Meeting to those vessels located outside the Tent. They shall remove the ashes^d from the altar, and spread a cloth of purple^b wool over it.

14 They shall place upon it all its vessels with which they serve upon it: the fire-pans, which are spoon-like utensils, the forks, for handling the flesh of offerings, the shovels, for sweeping the ashes, and the basins, for collecting and sprinkling the blood. This was done for all the vessels of the altar; and they shall spread upon it a covering of the hide of a *taḥash*, and place its staves for carrying the altar. Despite its size, the altar was not heavy, as it was hollow.

15 Aaron and his sons shall conclude to cover the sacred, and all the sacred vessels, when the camp travels. And thereafter, the sons of Kehat shall come to bear. Only after the priests have prepared and covered the vessels for the journey are the sons of Kehat permitted to carry them, so that they shall not touch the sacred and die, as direct contact with the sacred vessels is permitted to the priests alone. These are the burden of the sons of Kehat in the Tent of Meeting.

16 The charge, the area of responsibility,²¹ of Elazar son of Aaron the priest, who, as the oldest of Aaron's remaining sons, has a special role, is the bearing of the illuminating oil, the fragrant incense, the meal offering of the daily offering, and the anointing oil. He did not necessarily bear these himself, but it was his job to ensure that they were carried.²² As the prince of the princes of the Levites (3:32), he also had the charge of the entire Tabernacle, and of all that is in it, in the sacred, and in its vessels.

Maṭtir 17 The Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying:

18 Do not excise, or cause the death of the tribe of the families

BACKGROUND

and it is the only spotted cetacean. A twisted tooth, up to three meters long, grows out of one side of its mouth, and throughout history its horn has been mistaken for that of the unicorn. According to Rabbi Neḥemya (Jerusalem Talmud, *Shabbat* 2:3), the *taḥash* is the *galaktin*, a small weasel-like creature (*Arukh*).

4:13 | **Purple:** This is a reddish-purple dye extracted from the spiny dye-murex, *Murex brandaris*, a type of sea snail. Early documents indicate that wool dyed with this substance was four times more expensive than other

dyed wool. In addition to its use together with the sky-blue dye in the construction of the Tabernacle, as mentioned frequently in the Bible, it also was used in knitting the covers of the Tabernacle's accoutrements and the vestments of the High Priest. The dye also appears in external sources dating from the fourteenth century BCE. In the Roman period, purple dye was used mainly by priests, kings, and ministers. Due to its importance and high price, its production was monitored, and free commerce with the dye was prohibited.

DISCUSSION

(Exodus 25:15). Perhaps the staves were generally left loose inside the rings, possibly so that they could be inserted into the sockets of the cover. Consequently, when the ark was carried, the staves had to be fixed firmly to the rings to prevent them from moving (see *Bekhor Shor*; Ramban; *Panim Yafot*; *Bekhor Shor*, Exodus 25:16; *Responsa of the Radbaz* 6:219b).

4:13 | **They shall remove [vedishnu] the ashes:** This verb is one of those that has conflicting meanings: It either means placing the ashes on the altar or removing the ashes (see Rashi and Ibn Ezra, Exodus 27:3).

תִּלְכַּת וְנָתַנוּ עָלָיו אֶת־הַקְּעֹדֹת וְאֶת־הַפַּפֹּת וְאֶת־הַמִּנְקִיִּית וְאֶת קִשּׁוֹת הַנֶּסֶךְ
 ח וְלַחֵם הַתָּמִיד עָלָיו יִהְיֶה: וּפְרָשׁוּ עֲלֵיהֶם בַּגְּד תוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי וְכִסּוּ אֹתוֹ בְּמַכְסֵה
 ט עוֹר תַּחַשׁ וְשָׂמוּ אֶת־בַּדָּיו: וְלָקְחוּ בַּגְּד תִּלְכַּת וְכִסּוּ אֶת־מִנְרַת הַמָּאוֹר וְאֶת־
 י גִּרְתֵּיהָ וְאֶת־מִלְקָחֶיהָ וְאֶת־מַחְתֵּתֶיהָ וְאֶת כָּל־כְּלֵי שִׁמְנֵהָ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁרְתוּ־לָהּ
 יא בָּהֶם: וְנָתַנוּ אֹתָהּ וְאֶת־כָּל־כְּלֵיהָ אֶל־מַכְסֵה עוֹר תַּחַשׁ וְנָתַנוּ עַל־הַמּוֹט: וְעַל
 יב מִזְבַּח הַזֹּהֵב יִפְרָשׁוּ בַּגְּד תִּלְכַּת וְכִסּוּ אֹתוֹ בְּמַכְסֵה עוֹר תַּחַשׁ וְשָׂמוּ אֶת־בַּדָּיו:
 יג וְלָקְחוּ אֶת־כָּל־כְּלֵי הַשָּׂרֵת אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁרְתוּ־בָם בַּקֹּדֶשׁ וְנָתַנוּ אֶל־בַּגְּד תִּלְכַּת וְכִסּוּ
 יד אוֹתָם בְּמַכְסֵה עוֹר תַּחַשׁ וְנָתַנוּ עַל־הַמּוֹט: וְדִשְׁנוּ אֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וּפְרָשׁוּ עָלָיו
 טו בַּגְּד אַרְגָּמָן: וְנָתַנוּ עָלָיו אֶת־כָּל־כְּלֵי אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁרְתוּ עָלָיו בָּהֶם אֶת־הַמַּחְתֹּת
 טז אֶת־הַמְּזֻלְגֹת וְאֶת־הַיַּעֲשִׂים וְאֶת־הַמְּזֻרְקֹת כָּל כְּלֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וּפְרָשׁוּ עָלָיו כִּסּוֹי עוֹר
 ז תַּחַשׁ וְשָׂמוּ בַדָּיו: וְכִלָּה אֶהְרֹן וּבָנָיו לְכַסֹּת אֶת־הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְאֶת־כָּל־כְּלֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ
 ח בְּנִסְעַת הַמַּחֲנֶה וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן יָבֹאוּ בְּנֵי־קֹהֵת לְשֹׂאת וְלֹא־יָגִעוּ אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּמִתּוֹ
 ט אֵלֶּה מִשָּׂא בְּנֵי־קֹהֵת בְּאַהֲל מוֹעֵד: וּפְקֻדֹת אֲלֻעָזָר וּבֶן־אֶהֱרֹן הַכֹּהֵן שֹׁמֵן
 י הַמָּאוֹר וְקִטְרֹת הַסַּמִּים וּמִנְחַת הַתָּמִיד וְשֹׁמֵן הַמִּשְׁחָה פְּקוּדֹת כָּל־הַמִּשְׁכָּן
 יא וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ בַּקֹּדֶשׁ וּבְכָלָיו:

יב וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אֶהֱרֹן לְאָמֹד: אֶל־תְּבָרִיתוֹ אֶת־שֵׁבֶט מִשְׁפַּחַת ד מַפְטִיר

רש"י

טו לְכַסֹּת אֶת הַקֹּדֶשׁ. הָאֵרוֹן וְהַמִּזְבֵּחַ: וְאֶת כָּל כְּלֵי
 הַקֹּדֶשׁ. הַמִּנְקִיִּית וְכִלָּי שָׂרֵת: וְאֵת. שָׂחַס יָגִעוּ חִיבִין
 מִיִּתְהָ בִּיְדֵי שָׂמִים:
 טז וּפְקֻדֹת אֲלֻעָזָר. שֶׁהוּא מְמַנֶּה עֲלֵיהֶם לְשֹׂאת חוֹמֵם,
 שֹׁמֵן וְקִטְרֹת וְשֹׁמֵן הַמִּשְׁחָה וּמִנְחַת הַתָּמִיד, עָלָיו מִטֵּל
 לְעוֹת וְלָרֹז וְלִהְרִיב כְּעֵת חֲנֻמָּה: פְּקֻדֹת כָּל הַמִּשְׁכָּן.
 וְעוֹד הָיָה מְמַנֶּה עַל מִשְׁחָ בְּנֵי קֹהֵת, לְעוֹת חֵיט חֵיט
 עַל עֲבֹדָתוֹ וְעַל מִשְׁחָ, וְהוּא הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְכָל חֵשֶׁךְ בּוֹ, כָּל
 הַסְדוּרִים לְמַעַל פְּקֻדָּה זוּ. חָבֵל מִשְׁחָ בְּעַגְלוֹן וּמְקָרִי,
 שְׁחִינָן מִקֹּדֶשׁ הַקֹּדֶשִׁים, עַל פִּי אִיתְמָר הָיָה, כְּמוֹ שְׂכַנְעוֹב
 פְּקֻדֹת 'נִשְׂחָ' וְלִכְלוֹ ה' כח, לו:
 יח אֶל תְּבָרִיתוֹ. חָל תְּבָרִיתוֹ לֹהֵם שְׂמִינֹת:

הַמִּשְׁכָּן שֶׁהוּא קֹדֶשׁ, וְהוּ כְּלֵי הַקִּטְרֹת שֶׁמִּשְׁכַּתְנוּ בָּהֶם
 בְּמִזְבֵּחַ הַפְּנִינִי:
 יג וְדִשְׁנוּ אֶת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ. מְזַבְּחֵ הַנִּחֻשֶׁת: וְדִשְׁנוּ. יְטוּלוּ חֵת
 הַדָּשָׁן מֵעֵלָיו: וּפְרָשׁוּ עָלָיו בַּגְּד אַרְגָּמָן. וְחֵט שֶׁנִּדְרָה מִן
 הַשָּׂמִים רְכֻזָה תַּחַת הַבַּגְּד פְּחָדִי בְּשַׁעַת הַמַּסְפְּעוֹת, וְחֵיטָה
 אֹדְרִפְתוּ, שֶׁהוּא כּוֹפִין עֲלֶיהָ פְּסֻכָתָהּ שֶׁל נְחֹשֶׁת:
 יד מַחְתֹּת. שְׂבָהוּ חוֹמֵם גְּזֻלִים לְחִיּוּמֵת הַדָּשָׁן. עֲשׂוּיָה
 כְּמוֹן מַחְבֵּת שְׁחִין לֵה חָלָף שֶׁלֵּם מַחְטָה, וּמִלְפִנֶּה אֹחֲרֵת
 חֵת הַגְּזֻלִים: מְזֻלְגֹת. עֲגוּדוֹת שֶׁל נְחֹשֶׁת שְׂבָהוּ מִכֵּן
 בְּחִיבֵרִים שֶׁעַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְהַפְּכוּ כְּדֵי שִׁתְּעַבְלוּ יָסֵה וּמֵהָר:
 יעִים. הֵם מְנַדְּפוֹת, וְכִלָּעוּ וּודִיָּל, וְהוּ שֶׁל נְחֹשֶׁת, וְכֵהוּ
 מְכַבְּדִין חֵת הַדָּשָׁן מֵעַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ:

יז קְעֹדוֹת וְכַפּוֹת וְקִשּׁוֹת וּמִנְקִיִּית. כְּבֵד פְּרָשִׁתִּים
 בְּמִלְחֻקַּת הַמִּשְׁכָּן (שְׂמִיטָה כ"ה, כ"ו): הַנֶּסֶךְ. הַפְּסוּי, לְשׁוֹן
 מִסָּךְ, כְּדָרְכֵי: "חֵשֶׁךְ יִסַּךְ בְּהוֹ" (סו):
 ט מִלְקָחֶיהָ. כְּמוֹן עֲבֵת שְׂמוֹשֶׁךְ בַּה חֵת הַפְּתִילָה לְכָל
 זַד שִׁינֵי: מַחְתֵּתֶיהָ. כְּמוֹן כַּף קִטְנָה וְשׁוּלְיָה פְּשׁוּטִין
 וְלֹא סֻלְגָלִים וְחִין לֵה מַחְטָה לְפָנֶיהָ חָלָף מְנִדָּה, וְחֹתָה
 בַּה חֵת דָּשָׁן הַגְּדוֹת קְשָׁמִיטִיבָן: גִּרְתֵּיהָ. לֹנִי"ט בְּלַעַז,
 שְׂנֹתֵנִים בְּהוּ שְׂמֵן וְהַפְּתִילוֹת:
 יח אֶל מַכְסֵה עוֹר תַּחַשׁ. כְּמוֹן מַרְעוּךְ:
 יט אֶת כָּל כְּלֵי הַשָּׂרֵת אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁרְתוּ בָם בַּקֹּדֶשׁ. בְּתוֹךְ

ט הַקְּהֹתִי מִתּוֹךְ הַלְוִיִּם: וְזֹאת וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם וְחִיּוּ וְלֹא יָמָתוּ בְּגִשְׁתֶּם אֶת־קֹדֶשׁ
הַקְּדוֹשִׁים אֲהַרֵן וּבָנָיו יָבֹאוּ וְשָׂמוּ אוֹתָם אִישׁ אִישׁ עַל־עֲבֹדָתוֹ וְאֶל־מִשְׁאֹ:
כ וְלֹא־יָבֹאוּ לִרְאוֹת כְּבִלְעַתְּ אֶת־הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּמָתוּ:

רשי

כ. וְלֹא יָבֹאוּ לִרְאוֹת כְּבִלְעַתְּ אֶת־הַקֹּדֶשׁ. לתוך נתינתו שלו, כמו שפירשתי למעלה בקהה זז (פסוק ה), וקראו עליו בגז פלוני וקשו חזרו במקסה פלוני, ובלוע שלו הוא פסוק:

of the Kehatites from among the Levites, due to lack of appropriate caution.

- 19 **But this do for them, and they will live, and will not die, upon their approach to [et] the Holy of Holies.** Although “to” is usually signified by the Hebrew word *et*, a similar example where the word *et* means “to” can be found in I Samuel 9:18. **Aaron and his sons alone shall come, and assign them, the**

Levites, **each man to his work and to his burden.** The Levites shall do nothing of their own accord.²³ All the vessels shall be covered by the priests and be ready for the journey when the Kehatites enter the Holy of Holies.

- 20 **They shall not come to see while the sacred is covered,** when the priests cover the sacred vessels.²⁴ And the reason is **that** if they gaze upon the holy to satisfy their curiosity,²⁵ **they will die.**

Haftara for
Shabbat Rosh Hodesh Eve

David's Last Flight from the House of Saul, and His Farewell to Yonatan

I SAMUEL 20:18–42

The first verse of this *haftara* includes the phrase “tomorrow is the new moon.” While this is clearly a central reason this passage was chosen to be read on the eve of the New Moon, some suggest that other ideas in the passage are thematically related to the New Moon as well. David’s many temporary periods of hiding and his covenant of everlasting survival allude to the uniqueness of the nation of Israel as the eternal people of God, despite all the blatant and concealed hardships it must endure. One of the signs of this

special status is the manner in which Israel sets its calendar and festivals in accordance with the waxing and waning of the moon. This analogy is hinted in the verse: “This month is for you” (Exodus 12:2); the passage of the months themselves symbolizes Israel.

20 18 Yonatan said to him: Tomorrow is the New Moon, and you will
 19 be remembered because your seat will be empty. Wait three
 20 days, lie very low, and come to the place where you hid on
 21 the day of the incident, and remain near the Ezel stone. I will
 22 shoot three arrows to the side, as though shooting at a target.
 23 Behold, I will send the lad: Go, find the arrows. If I say to the
 24 lad: Here are the arrows; they are on this side of you; take them
 25 and come, then peace is with you and there is no concern, as
 26 the Lord lives. But if I say this to the boy: Behold, the arrows
 27 are beyond you, go, for the Lord has sent you away. But with
 28 regard to the matter of which we spoke, I and you, behold, the
 29 Lord is between me and you forever. David concealed himself
 30 in the field. It was the New Moon, and the king sat to the meal
 31 to eat. The king sat on his seat, as at other times, on the seat near
 32 the wall; Yonatan rose, and Avner sat at Saul’s side, but David’s
 33 place was empty. Saul did not say anything that day, as he said:
 34 It is incidental; he is impure, as he is not purified. It was on the
 35 next day, the second day of the month, and David’s place was
 36 empty. Saul said to Yonatan his son: Why did the son of Yishai
 37 not come to the meal, both yesterday and today? Yonatan an-
 38 swered Saul: David requested of me to go to Bethlehem. He
 39 said: Please let me go, as there is a family feast offering for us
 40 in the city, and my brother, he commanded me; now, if I found
 41 favor in your eyes, please let me get away and see my broth-
 42 ers. Therefore, he did not come to the king’s table. Saul’s wrath
 was enflamed at Yonatan, and he said to him: Son of a perverse,
 rebellious woman! Don’t I know that you choose the son of

Yishai to your own shame, and to the shame of your mother’s
 nakedness? For all the days that the son of Yishai lives upon
 the earth, you and your kingdom will not be established. Now,
 send and take him to me, as he is deserving of death. Yonatan
 answered Saul his father, and he said to him: Why should he
 be put to death? What did he do? Saul cast his spear at him to
 smite him. Yonatan knew that it was settled with his father to
 put David to death. Yonatan arose from the table in enflamed
 wrath, and he did not eat food on the second day of the month,
 as he was sad over David, because his father had humiliated
 him. It was the morning and Yonatan went out to the field at the
 time appointed with David, and a small lad was with him. He
 said to his lad: Run now, find the arrows that I am shooting. The
 lad ran, and he shot an arrow to go beyond him. The lad came
 to the place of the arrow that Yonatan shot, and Yonatan called
 after the lad, and said: Isn’t the arrow beyond you? Yonatan
 called after the lad: Quickly, hurry, do not stand. Yonatan’s lad
 gathered the arrows and he came to his master. The lad did
 not know anything; only Yonatan and David knew the matter.
 Yonatan gave his weapons to his lad, and he said to him: Go,
 bring it to the city. The lad was gone, and David rose from the
 south side, and he fell on his face to the ground and prostrated
 himself three times. Each kissed the other, and each wept with
 the other, until David was overcome. Yonatan said to David: Go
 in peace, for we have taken an oath, both of us, in the name of
 the Lord, saying: The Lord shall be between me and you, and
 between my descendants and your descendants, forever.

שבת ערב ראש חודש

כ י"ח וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ יְהוֹנָתָן מִחֵר חֹדֶשׁ וְנִקְדַּתְתָּ כִּי יִפְקֹד מוֹשֶׁבֶךְ: וּשְׁלֹשֶׁת תָּרַד מְאֹד וּבָאתָ אֶל־
 ב המָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־נִסְתַּרְתָּ שָׁם בְּיוֹם הַמַּעֲשֵׂה וּשְׁבַתְתָּ אֶצֶל הָאֲבֹן הָאֵוֶל: וְאֲנִי שְׁלֹשֶׁת הַחֲצִיִּים
 כא צָדָה אוֹרְהָה לְשַׁלַּח־לִי לְמִטְרָה: וְהִנֵּה אֶשְׁלַח אֶת־הַנְּעָר לְךָ מִצָּא אֶת־הַחֲצִיִּים אִם־אָמַר אָמַר
 כב לְנָעַר הִנֵּה הַחֲצִיִּים וּמִמֶּךָ וְהִנֵּה קָחְנוּ וּבָאָה בִּי־שְׁלוֹם לְךָ וְאִין דָּבָר חִי־יְהוּהוּ: וְאִם־כֹּה אָמַר
 כג לְעֹלָם הִנֵּה הַחֲצִיִּים מִמֶּךָ וְהִלָּאָה לְךָ כִּי שַׁלַּחְךָ יְהוּהוּ: וְהַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְנוּ אֲנִי וְאַתָּה הִנֵּה
 כד יְהוּה בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ עַד־עוֹלָם: וַיִּסְתֵּר דָּוִד בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיְהִי הַחֹדֶשׁ וַיֵּשֶׁב הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־
 כה הַלֶּחֶם לֶאֱכֹל: וַיֵּשֶׁב הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־מוֹשָׁבוֹ כַּפְּעַם וּכַפְּעַם אֶל־מוֹשֶׁב הַקִּיר וַיִּקָּם יְהוֹנָתָן וַיֵּשֶׁב
 כו אֲבִנָּר מִצָּד שָׂאוֹל וַיִּפְקֹד מְקוֹם דָּוִד: וְלֹא־דִבֶּר שָׂאוֹל מְאוּמָה בְּיוֹם הַהוּא כִּי אָמַר מִקְרָה
 כז הוּא בִלְתִּי טָהוֹר הוּא כִּי־לֹא טָהוֹר: וַיְהִי מִמַּחֲרַת הַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי וַיִּפְקֹד מְקוֹם
 דָּוִד וַיֹּאמֶר שָׂאוֹל אֶל־יְהוֹנָתָן בְּנֹו מִדּוֹעַ לֹא־בָא בְּיָשִׁי גַם־תִּמּוֹל גַּם־הַיּוֹם אֶל־הַלֶּחֶם:
 כח וַיַּעַן יְהוֹנָתָן אֶת־שָׂאוֹל נִשְׂאָל נִשְׂאָל דָּוִד מִעַמְדֵי עַד־בֵּית לַחֵם: וַיֹּאמֶר שַׁלַּחְנִי נָא כִּי זָבַח
 כט מִשְׁפָּחָה לָנוּ בַּעִיר וְהוּא צוּה־לִּי אַחִי וְעַתָּה אִם־מִצְאָתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אִמְלֻטָה נָא וְאֶרְאֶה
 ל אֶת־אַחִי עַל־כֵּן לֹא־בָא אֶל־שַׁלַּחַן הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיַּחֲרֵאֲף שָׂאוֹל בִּיהוֹנָתָן וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ
 לא בְּנִיעוֹת הַמַּרְדּוֹת הֲלוֹא יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־בָחַר אֶתָּה לְבְנֵי־יִשְׁרָאֵל לְבִשְׁתֶּךָ וּלְבִשְׁתֵּי עֲרוֹת אִמְךָ: כִּי כָל־
 הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר בְּנֵי־יִשְׁרָאֵל חִי עַל־הָאָדָמָה לֹא תִבּוֹן אֶתָּה וּמִלְכוּתְךָ וְעַתָּה שַׁלַּח וְקַח אֶתְּךָ אֵלָי כִּי
 לב בְּנִימֹות הוּא: וַיַּעַן יְהוֹנָתָן אֶת־שָׂאוֹל אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו לְמָה יוֹמַת מִה עָשָׂה:
 לג וַיִּטֵּל שָׂאוֹל אֶת־הַחֲנִית עָלָיו לְהַכּוֹתוֹ וַיִּדַע יְהוֹנָתָן כִּי־כָלָה הִיא מַעַם אָבִיו לְהַמִּית אֶת־
 לד דָּוִד: וַיִּקָּם יְהוֹנָתָן מִעַם הַשַּׁלַּחַן בַּחֲרֵי־אָף וְלֹא־אָכַל בְּיוֹם־הַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי
 לה לַחֵם כִּי נִעְצַב אֶל־דָּוִד כִּי הִכְלָמוּ אָבִיו: וַיְהִי כַּפְּקָר וַיֵּצֵא יְהוֹנָתָן הַשָּׂדֶה
 לו לְמוֹעֵד דָּוִד וְנָעַר קָטָן עִמּוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר לְנָעָרוֹ רֵץ מִצָּא־נָא אֶת־הַחֲצִיִּים אֲשֶׁר אֲנִכִּי מוֹרְהָה הַנְּעָר
 לו רֵץ וְהוֹאֲרֶהָ הַחֲצִי לְהַעֲבֹרוֹ: וַיָּבֹא הַנְּעָר עַד־מְקוֹם הַחֲצִי אֲשֶׁר יָרָה יְהוֹנָתָן וַיִּקְרָא יְהוֹנָתָן
 לח אַחֲרָי הַנְּעָר וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלוֹא הַחֲצִי מִמֶּךָ וְהִלָּאָה: וַיִּקְרָא יְהוֹנָתָן אַחֲרָי הַנְּעָר מְהֵרָה חוּשָׁה אֶל־
 לט תַּעֲמֹד וַיִּלְקָט נָעַר יְהוֹנָתָן אֶת־הַחֲצִי וַיָּבֹא אֶל־אֲדָנָיו: וְהַנְּעָר לֹא־יָדַע מְאוּמָה אֲךָ יְהוֹנָתָן
 מ וְדָוִד יָדָעוּ אֶת־הַדְּבָר: וַיִּתֵּן יְהוֹנָתָן אֶת־כָּלִּיו אֶל־הַנְּעָר אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ לְךָ הִבִּיא הָעִיר:
 מא הַנְּעָר בָּא וְדָוִד קָם מֵאֶצֶל הַנְּגָב וַיִּפֹּל לְאַפָּיו אֶרְצָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ שְׁלֹשׁ פַּעֲמִים וַיִּשְׁקֹו וַיֵּשֶׁב אֶת־
 מב רַעְהוּ וַיִּבְכּוּ אִישׁ אֶת־רַעְהוּ עַד־דָּוִד הַגְּדִיל: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹנָתָן לְדָוִד לְךָ לְשְׁלוֹם אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְנוּ
 שְׁנֵינוּ אֲנַחְנוּ בְּשֵׁם יְהוּה לֹא־מָדַד יְהוּה יִהְיֶה וּבֵינִי וּבֵינְךָ וּבֵינֵינוּ וְעַד־עוֹלָם:

שמואל א'

אל-

החצצים