



Parshas Bamidbar 2023, pray for me

This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of all those who need a quick and speedy recovery.

This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Daniel Aaron Ben Yigal, Leah Mintche Bas Ya'akov Yosef, Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

The Sefer of Bamidbar takes up the story from the end of Sefer Shemos; the Jewish people traveled from Egypt to Mt. Sinai, where they received the Torah and committed the sin of the Golden Calf.

After obtaining forgiveness from G-d through Moshe's prayer, they built a Mishkan. They inaugurated it on the first of Nissan, almost one year since their exodus from Egypt. The Jewish people are now ready to travel to the promised land through the desert.

Our Parsha begins with Hashem commanding Moshe to count every Jewish man from 20 to 60. The number totaled 603,550, excluding the tribe of Levi. They were counted separately and from just one month old totaling 22,000.

G-d then tells Moshe the arrangement the Jewish people will be in as they travel throughout the desert. The Mishkan was at the center of the formation; on the east side were the tribes of Yehuda, Issachar, and Zevulun.

On the south side, the tribes of Reuven, Shimon, and Gad. On the west side, the tribes of Ephraim, Manash, and Benyamin. On the north side, the tribes of Dan, Asher, and Naftali.

However, a question comes to mind: Following the details of the formation for traveling, the Torah repeats the priestly duties. The Pasuk begins (3:1-2), *"And these are the children of Aaron and Moshe when G-d spoke to Moshe by Mt Sinai. These are the names of Aaron's sons, Nadav, Avihu, Elazar and Itamar."* But the Torah doesn't recall Moshe's children as the Pasuk implies it would. Why does a Torah not detail the sons of Moshe as well?

Rashi, Rav Shlomo Yitzchaki, the leading Torah commentator, answers this question by quoting the Talmud in Sanhedrin (19b). He writes that since Moshe taught Aaron's sons Torah, he is considered to be their father. Rav Yonatan, a student of the great Rav Yishmael holds, *"A person who teaches Torah to another person's son, it is as if he is given birth to him."*

However, the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh, Rav Chaim Ben Attar, gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He comes to a similar conclusion as Rashi but from a different perspective. He agrees that Torah doesn't skip Moshe's children because Aaron's children were also considered his.

The Ohr Hachaim writes that Aaron's children were considered Moshe's because he begged G-d for mercy and prayed for them. In his final speech to the nation, Moshe recounts the sin of the golden calf and the consequences of it. He says (Devarim 9:18), *"I threw myself before G-d and I ate no bread and drink no water for forty days and nights because of the great sin you committed before G-d."* By Aaron, Moshe recounts (9:20), *"And with Aaron, G-d was angry enough to destroy him and his family, so I interceded on their behalf at this time."*

The Ohr Hachaim explains that when Moshe prayed and intervened for Aaron and his sons, he became considered like their father. For Aaron and his descendants until today were all spared and saved by Moshe's appeal to G-d's sense of mercy and compassion.

The Ohr Hachaim quotes the Midrash (*Vayikra Rabbah* 19) that G-d is more likely to listen to our prayers when said for someone else. Undoubtedly, Aaron prayed to G-d to save his children from punishment for his role in the sin of the

Golden Calf. But G-d chose to answer the prayers said by Moshe on their behalf because it was said with selflessness and humility.

We see examples of this multiple times throughout the Torah, Avraham prayed for Avimelach, the King of Gerar, and G-d finally gave him a son, Yitzchak. Similarly, Yitzchak prayed and begged G-d to show mercy and compassion to his wife and give them a son. But Yitzchak did not pray for a son; rather, he prayed that his wife be granted a wish she desired more than life itself, to be a mother to the next generation.

The Ohr Hachaim's profound lesson is ever more relevant as we approach the holiday of Shavous, the giving of the Torah. The Pasuk recounts the unity and selflessness of the Jewish people at Mt Sinai; they were like one person with one heart. They were selfless, humble, giving and most importantly, united as one. We must emulate their unity as we beg G-d to heal the sick or to give prosperity and success to the poor, for G-d will mirror our actions and give us the ultimate redemption.

In our daily life, it is imperative to realize that in a society that prioritizes self-interest, we must emphasize selflessness, compassion and kindness. Such benevolence and empathy creates a community that lasts far beyond its founders. It fosters a spirit of unity, integrity and responsibility that will thrive in the face of adversity. The test of time is no match for the perseverance of a one people, a total sum of commitment and unity.

"Prayer is a conversation between heaven and earth.

But conversation is also a prayer – for in true conversation,

I open myself up to the reality of another person.

I enter their world. I begin to see things from a perspective not my own.

In the touch of two selves, both are changed."

- Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*