

בְּמִדְבָּר

B'midbar

(in wilderness)

Bemidbar [Numbers] 1:1-4:20

A Reminder from YHWH

B'midbar [Numbers] 3:1-4

1 Now these are the generations of Aharon and Moshe in the day that YHWH spoke with Moshe in Mount Sinai.

2 And these are the names of the sons of Aharon: Nadav the first-born, and Avihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

3 These are the names of the sons of Aharon, the priests that were anointed, whom he consecrated to minister in the priest's office.

4 And Nadav and Avihu died before YHWH, when they offered strange fire before YHWH, in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children; and Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's office in the presence of Aharon their father.

YHWH begins this chapter of B'midbar with a reminder about the sin of Aharon's two older sons and how they died before YHWH. It seems that YHWH wants to make sure that Aharon or his other two sons do not make the same error in judgment that Nadav and Avihu made, and who died as a result.

Once again, YHWH is basically pointing out the importance of worshipping Him only in the way in which He commands in His Torah. If any one of us makes the very unwise choice to attempt to worship YHWH in ways that He has not commanded as Nadav and Avihu did, then the result ultimately can only be (eternal) death. There is a chance that one so making such a choice today, may have the opportunity to repent of this sin. However, for Nadav and Avihu, who were Kohanim, they should have known better than to do as they did.

Please consider the following passage.

Romans 12:1-2

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of Elohim, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, set-apart, acceptable to Elohim, which is your spiritual service.

2 And be not fashioned according to this world; but you be transformed by the renewing of your mind, and you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of Elohim.

Please notice that Shaul (Paul) is admonishing us to prove (discern) what the will of Elohim is. Is it possible to prove what the will of Elohim is by doing something other than His will? No, of course not!

That would be like me asking one of my children to go milk the goats, but they went out and milked the neighbor's goats instead (Elohim forbid!). When we as parents ask our children to do something, we expect them to do it. And when they do it, they prove that it was what we wanted; they prove what our will was.

How much more so with Elohim! We only prove (discern) what His will is by doing it.

YHWH's Bondservants

B'midbar [Numbers] 3:5-10

5 And YHWH spoke to Moshe, saying,

6 "Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aharon the priest, that they may minister to him.

7 And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, to do the service of the tabernacle.

8 And they shall keep all the furniture of the tent of meeting, and the charge of the children of Yisrael, to do the service of the tabernacle.

9 And you shall give the Levites to Aharon and to his sons; they are wholly given to him on the behalf of the children of Yisrael.

10 And you shall appoint Aharon and his sons, and they shall keep their priesthood; and the stranger that comes near shall be put to death."

Oftentimes we have a tendency to think and believe that the concept of being a bondservant is a "New Testament" concept; that somehow Yeshua started it during His earthly ministry. However, this thinking is erroneous. Please consider verse seven from above.

7 And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, to do the service of the tabernacle.

וְשָׁמְרוּ אֶת מִשְׁמֶרֶתוֹ וְאֶת
מִשְׁמֶרֶת כָּל הָעֵדָה לְפָנַי אֶהְיֶה
מוֹעֵד לְעַבְדֵי אֶת עֲבֹדַת הַמִּשְׁכָּן :

There are two words that we are particularly interested in, in the above passage. The first word is לְעַבְדֹתָי (la'avod), which actually appears twice in this verse in two different forms. The root word is עָבַד (eved), which means servant or even bondservant.

The second word (which appears three times in different forms) is the word מִשְׁמָרְתוֹ (mishmarto – his charge), the root being מִשְׁמָרַת (mishmeret), which means to watch, to safeguard, and to have custody. It is as when a sentry is posted; he is given a duty to guard, to watch, and to act in accordance with any threat that comes along. He is to protect that which he is guarding, even to the point of laying down his life to guard and protect.

So the concept that YHWH seems to be placing before us, is that He has chosen His (bond)servants to do His work, and they are to watch over His people Yisrael and minister to them and their needs, both physical and spiritual, even laying down their lives so that they can serve. Please consider the following.

Ivrim [Hebrews] 13:7-8

7 Remember them that had the rule over you, men that spoke to you the word of Elohim; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith.

8 Yeshua Mashiach is the same yesterday and to-day, and forever.

YHWH raises up His bondservants to watch over and guard His people. His bondservants are His appointed leaders to do His will. But how does one recognize a bondservant? His bondservants will live as Yeshua lived, exhibiting the fruit of His Spirit in their lives. If the fruit of the Spirit is absent from one's life, can that person be a bondservant of Yeshua our Mashiach? No!

Levites Belong to YHWH

B'midbar [Numbers] 3:11-13

11 And YHWH spoke to Moshe, saying,

12 "And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Yisrael instead of all the first-born that opened the womb among the children of Yisrael; and the Levites shall be Mine;

13 for all the first-born are mine; on the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt I sanctified to Me all the first-born in Yisrael, both man and beast; Mine they shall be; I am YHWH."

When YHWH killed all the firstborn of Egypt on that very first Pesach (Passover), He also sanctified and set apart all the firstborn of Yisrael as belonging to Him. They became His priesthood (bondservants). The only thing was, that they unwisely chose not to be His priests and bondservants, for they chose not to hear and obey His Voice.

Even so, all the firstborn of Yisrael still belong to YHWH, both of man and beast. The firstborn from among men are to be redeemed with a lamb. In this way, they become a part of the greater Yisrael (not a part of His priesthood). However, today through the Blood of Mashiach, all who come to Yeshua and are saved by His Blood become a part of His priesthood by virtue of having accepted Yeshua as Mashiach.

Kepha Aleph [1st Peter] 2:5, 9

5 you also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to Elohim through Yeshua Mashiach.

9 But you are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for Elohim's own possession, that you may show forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

This is often referred to as the priesthood of believers. Every single person who comes to Yeshua in saving faith is a part of this priesthood through the Blood of Mashiach.

The Census of the Levites

B'midbar [Numbers] 3:14-20

14 And YHWH spoke to Moshe in the wilderness of Sinai, saying,

15 "Number the children of Levi by their fathers' houses, by their families: every male from a month old and upward shall you number them."

16 And Moshe numbered them according to the word of YHWH, as he was commanded.

17 And these were the sons of Levi by their names: Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari.

18 And these are the names of the sons of Gershon by their families: Libni and Shimei.

19 And the sons of Kohath by their families: Amram, and Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

20 And the sons of Merari by their families: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to their fathers' houses.

By the time of the Exodus, the tribe of Levi had grown to include three major family groups (Levi's three sons). YHWH commands Moshe to count all the males among the Levites from one month of age and upward.

As we are about to see, each of these families was assigned a specific area to dwell in around the Mishkan; and specific tasks were also assigned to them in their ministry of the service to YHWH.

Towards the West

B'midbar [Numbers] 3:21-26

21 Of Gershon was the family of the Libnites, and the family of the Shimeites: these are the families of the Gershonites.

22 Those that were numbered of them, according to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, even those that were numbered of them were seven thousand and five hundred.

23 The families of the Gershonites shall encamp behind the tabernacle westward.

24 And the prince of the fathers' house of the Gershonites shall be Eliasaph the son of Lael.

25 And the charge of the sons of Gershon in the tent of meeting shall be the tabernacle, and the Tent, the covering thereof, and the screen for the door of the tent of meeting,

26 and the hangings of the court, and the screen for the door of the court, which is by the tabernacle, and by the altar round about, and the cords of it for all the service thereof.

Of the family of Gershon was numbered 7,500 males.

YHWH assigned this family the area directly behind the Mishkan (to the west). They were given charge of the covering of the Mishkan and the screen for the door and the hangings in the tabernacle.

Towards the South

B'midbar [Numbers] 3:27-32

27 And of Kohath was the family of the Amramites, and the family of the Izharites, and the family of the Hebronites, and the family of the Uzzielites; these are the families of the Kohathites.

28 According to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, there were eight thousand and six hundred, keeping the charge of the sanctuary.

29 The families of the sons of Kohath shall encamp on the side of the tabernacle southward.

30 And the prince of the fathers' house of the families of the Kohathites shall be Elizaphan the son of Uzziel.

31 And their charge shall be the ark, and the table, and the candlestick, and the altars, and the vessels of the sanctuary wherewith they minister, and the screen, and all the service thereof.

32 And Eleazar the son of Aharon the priest shall be prince of the princes of the Levites, (and have) the oversight of them that keep the charge of the sanctuary.

The family of Kohath was numbered 8,600 males.

YHWH assigned this family to camp south of the Mishkan. YHWH gave them charge of the ark and the furniture of the Mishkan and the altars and vessels used in the service to YHWH.

Towards the North

B'midbar [Numbers] 3:33-37

33 Of Merari was the family of the Mahlites, and the family of the Mushites: these are the families of Merari.

34 And those that were numbered of them, according to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, were six thousand and two hundred.

35 And the prince of the fathers' house of the families of Merari was Zurriel the son of Abihail: they shall encamp on the side of the tabernacle northward.

36 And the appointed charge of the sons of Merari shall be the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and the sockets thereof, and all the instruments thereof, and all the service thereof,

37 and the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords.

The family of Merari was numbered 6,200 males.

YHWH assigned this family to camp north of the Mishkan. He assigned them to take care of the boards and pillars and sockets and all those things that hold the Mishkan together.

Towards the East

B'midbar [Numbers] 3:38-39

38 And those that encamp before the tabernacle eastward, before the tent of meeting toward the sun rising, shall be Moshe, and Aharon and his sons, keeping the charge of the sanctuary for the charge of the children of Yisrael; and the stranger that comes near shall be put to death.

39 All that were numbered of the Levites, whom Moshe and Aharon numbered at the commandment of YHWH, by their families, all the males from a month old and upward, were twenty and two thousand.

Now YHWH gives us the total of the census of the Levites – 22,000. But herein lies a difficulty. Please note the following:

Gershon	7,500
Kohath	8,600
Merari	6,200
Total	22,300

As we can easily see, the total that we get by adding up the census of each tribe is 300 greater than the total listed in the text. Why?

Some learned men have proposed that there has been an error that has crept into the Hebrew text. In fact, there have been two such propositions made.

One such proposition has been that there is an error in the census of Kohath. We find in the text the following text, וְשֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת (six hundred), and some suppose that what we should find is וְשָׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת (three hundred), in which a lamed was inadvertently left out.

Another such similar proposition is concerning the census of Gershon. In this case the proposition is that the number for five hundred is a final kaph (ך), and that it should rather be a resh (ר), the number for 200. The thinking is, that since these two letters could easily be mistaken for the other, this is what happened. Please note the following verse.

B'midbar 3:22

<p><i>22 Those that were numbered of them, according to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, even those that were numbered of them were seven thousand and five hundred.</i></p>	<p>פְּקֻדֵיהֶם בְּמִסְפָּר כָּל זָכָר מִבֶּן חֹדֶשׁ וָמַעְלָה פְּקֻדֵיהֶם שִׁבְעַת אַלְפִים וַחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת :</p>
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Please note, that what is contained in this verse is not the Hebrew characters used as numbers, but rather the words for the numbers spelled out. So this proposition seems highly unlikely.

Whenever a person proposes to rectify Scripture by inserting a supposed error into the text, it becomes quite problematical. Basically, if we know an error is noted because some manuscripts have one thing and other manuscripts have another, then we can deal with those differences in a Scriptural way. However, when no such notes or discrepancies exist in the text, to just arbitrarily propose an error is being dishonest and lazy.

So is there some other possibility as to why there is a difference in the numbers? Let us consider the following.

B'midbar 3:13

“for all the first-born are mine; on the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt I sanctified to Me all the first-born in Yisrael, both man and beast; Mine they shall be; I am YHWH.”

As we noted earlier, all the firstborn of Yisrael belong to YHWH. This, of course, is the firstborn of all the tribes, including the firstborn of Levi. So, when YHWH had Moshe number all the males of Levi that total came to 22,300. However, what we need to understand is that this total number had to include a certain number of firstborn males.

But as we see in the above passage, all firstborn males already belong to YHWH. It would seem reasonable that since these firstborn males of the tribe of Levi already belong to YHWH, then He would not (could not) use them to redeem (substitute) the firstborn males of the rest of Yisrael. Therefore, He could (and would) only use those males in the tribe of Levi that were not firstborn males.

So it seems that the likely answer would be, that this difference of 300 is actually the number of firstborn males in the tribe of Levi that were excluded from the redemption process (because they already belonged to YHWH). What is left then are 22,000 non-firstborn males of Levi to redeem (substitute for) the firstborn of the rest of the tribes of Yisrael.

Census of the Firstborn Males

B'midbar [Numbers] 3:40

And YHWH said to Moshe, "Number all the first-born males of the children of Yisrael from a month old and upward, and take the number of their names."

Unlike the census of the Levites, which included all males from one month old and upwards, this census is only of the firstborn males of the rest of Yisrael, from one month old and upwards.

You Shall Take

B'midbar [Numbers] 3:41-43

41 "And you shall take the Levites for me (I am YHWH) instead of all the first-born among the children of Yisrael; and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the firstlings among the cattle of the children of Yisrael."

42 And Moshe numbered, as YHWH commanded him, all the first-born among the children of Yisrael.

43 And all the first-born males according to the number of names, from a month old and upward, of those that were numbered of them, were twenty and two thousand two hundred and threescore and thirteen.

Once again, please note that YHWH states He is taking the Levites in place of the firstborn males. The firstborn males of the tribe of Levi already belonged to YHWH. So YHWH is taking the other male offspring of Levi and substituting (redeeming) them for the firstborn males of the other tribes.

The number of firstborn males of Yisrael numbered 22,273. This gives us a difference of 273 firstborn that did not have a Levite to redeem them. I wonder how those men felt when they realized that there was no one to redeem them?

Redemption of the Firstborn

B'midbar [Numbers] 3:44-51

44 And YHWH spoke to Moshe, saying,

45 "Take the Levites instead of all the first-born among the children of Yisrael, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites shall be mine; I am YHWH.

46 And for the redemption of the two hundred and threescore and thirteen of the first-born of the children of Yisrael, that are over and above (the number of) the Levites,

47 you shall take five shekels apiece by the poll; after the shekel of the sanctuary shall you take them (the shekel is twenty gerahs);

48 and you shall give the money, wherewith the odd number of them is redeemed, to Aharon and to his sons."

49 And Moshe took the redemption-money from them that were over and above them that were redeemed by the Levites;

50 from the first-born of the children of Yisrael took he the money, a thousand three hundred and threescore and five (shekels), after the shekel of the sanctuary;

51 and Moshe gave the redemption-money to Aharon and to his sons, according to the word of YHWH, as YHWH commanded Moshe.

Once again, YHWH states very plainly that He is taking the Levites in place of the firstborn of Yisrael. This would seem to necessitate that the Levites could not be firstborn males because those already belonged to Him.

YHWH then commands that for these 273 males that did not have anyone to redeem them, Moshe was to take five shekels apiece for them. This money was to go to the priesthood (bondservants).

This is where Judah gets the practice of giving money to the rabbis when they have a son born to them who is a firstborn son.

Redemption

Titus 2:14

who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works.

Redemption is an easy concept to grasp at least on the surface. Many of us can remember when soda pop came in bottles and one could take an empty bottle into a store and get cash for it.

Or, how many of us have used coupons? This is also a type of redemption, substituting one thing for another.

In our Parasha today, we see that YHWH substituted or redeemed all the firstborn of Yisrael with the Levites. In this case, YHWH owned the firstborn; i.e., had exclusive rights to them, but He gave those rights up when He substituted or replaced the firstborn with the Levites. This gave Him exclusive rights over the Levites. Basically, all the firstborn had belonged to YHWH and He gave them up in favor of the Levites. The Levites became His bondservants.

To say it another way, the Levites had not been His exclusive bondservants, but He made them His exclusive bondservants through the redemption process.

We were lost in our sin and far from our Father in heaven because of our gross rebellion. Yeshua came to offer to each and every one of us, a chance to be restored back or redeemed to our Father's house to be able to keep and obey His Torah.

To receive the fullness of that redemption, one must accept the full yoke of being His bondservant.

Matithyah [Matthew] 11:29

29 "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest to your souls.

30 For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

As we can see, we should willingly and gladly take upon ourselves the full burden or yoke of following Yeshua by hearing and obeying His Voice

Yochanan [John] 12:25-26

25 "He that loves his life loses it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal.

26 If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be; if any man serve Me, him will the Father honor."

So the question that YHWH has placed before us today through this Parasha is as follows: are we redeemed? And if we are redeemed, then who are we serving with that gift of redemption? Are we using it to serve Him? Or, are we just serving ourselves?

May YHWH make us to be like Yeshua.

Luqa [Luka] 22:26-27

26 "But you shall not be like that, but he that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that does serve.

27 For which is greater, he that sits at meat, or he that serves? Is not he that sits at meat? But I am in the midst of you as He that serves."

ABBA YHWH, please cause us to serve one another in the fullness of Your love so that we may prove what Your will is to all around us; in the Name of Yeshua our Mashiach. Amein.

Shabbat Shalom

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