

בְּמִדְבָּר

B'midbar

(in the wilderness of)

B'midbar [Numbers] 1:1-4:20

By Their Standards

B'midbar (Numbers) 1:52

“And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, according to their hosts.”

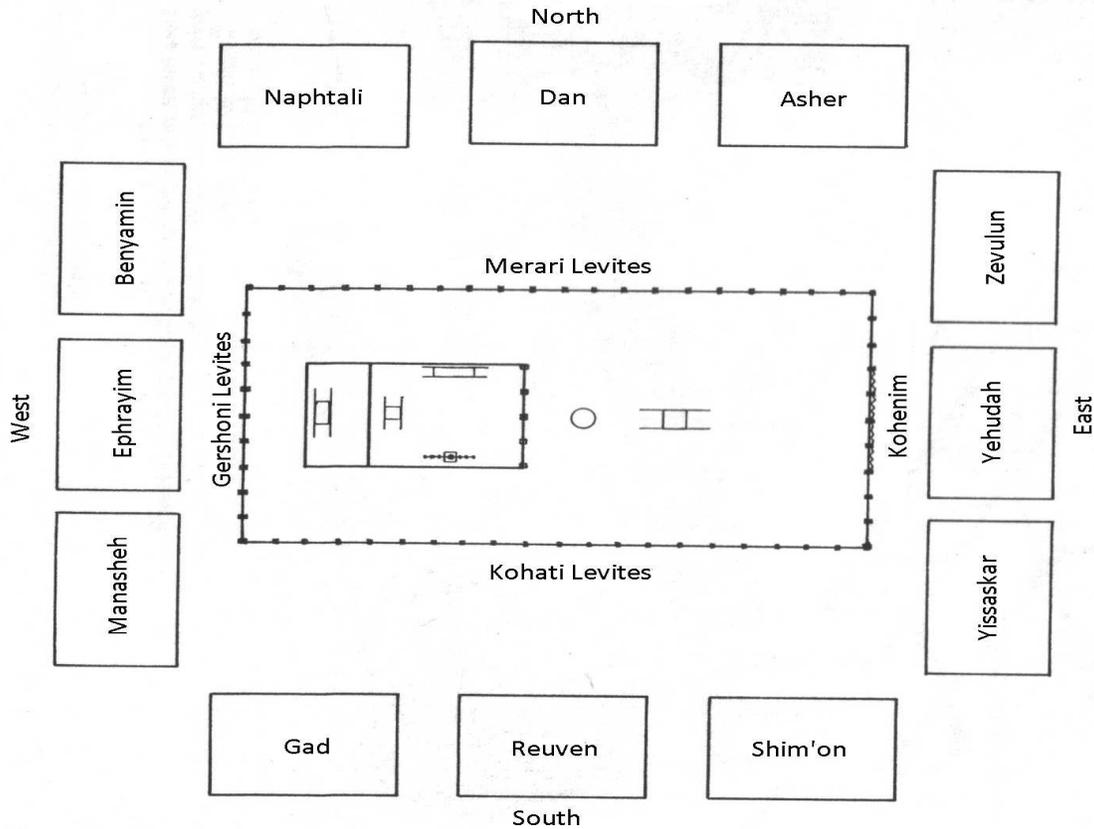
YHWH gave this above commandment to Moshe for the children of Israel to obey. We see in the next passage that they did in fact obey this commandment.

B'midbar (Numbers) 2:34

Thus, the children of Israel did according to all that YHWH commanded Moshe, so they camped by their standards, and so they set forward, everyone by their families, according to their fathers' houses.

What we are focused upon in this study today is this idea of standards. The Hebrew word that is translated as “standard” is דִּגְלוֹ – “diglo” which means “their standards” because it is in the third person masculine singular. What this tells us is that each family had its own standard. But what is a standard?

The root word is דָּגַל – “dagal” which means “signal”; then the word דִּגְלָל – “degel” by extension means “a standard” or in our culture, “a flag.” The interesting thing about the wording of this commandment is that apparently each family and each tribe already had its own flag. What YHWH commanded them each to do was to group together when they camped so that each tribe was camped together. YHWH even assigned each tribe a particular place around the mishkan. They were to camp as shown below.



Each one of these camps, each one of these tribes, had its own flag, or standard. Now this דגל – degel could have been a flag or some type of symbol placed upon a pole. Whatever it was, it was easily recognized by all who saw it and each person knew at a glance which tribe was represented.

Notice also that the tribe of Levi was to camp between the other tribes and the mishkan. The Levites were divided up into four groups. There were three groups who were called “Levites” and there was one group referred to as the “kohanim” (priests). The kohanim were to camp in front of the entrance, to the east, of the mishkan.

It is important and instructive for us to note that YHWH tells us exactly why He gives this particular commandment concerning the Levites and kohanim camping between the tribes of Israel and the Mishkan.

B' midbar (Numbers) 18:1-2

1 And YHWH said to Aharon, “You and your sons and your fathers' house with you shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary; and you and your sons with you shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood.

2 And your brothers also, the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, you shall bring near with you, that they may be joined to you, and minister to you; but you and your sons with you shall be before the tent of the testimony.”

YHWH tells Aharon that he and his sons with him along with the whole tribe of Levi will bear the iniquity of the sanctuary and their priesthood. What YHWH is saying in essence is that when Israel comes to be atoned for due to their sins, then YHWH transfers that sin from them to the sanctuary and to the priests.

Now notice why YHWH does this.

B'midbar (Numbers) 18:5

“And you shall keep the charge of the sanctuary, and the charge of the altar; that there is wrath no more upon the children of Israel.”

YHWH does not want there to be any wrath upon Israel! In order to do that He must transfer their sin from them to someone else, namely the priest who is presiding in Israel at that given time.

B'midbar (Numbers) 8:19

“And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aharon and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tent of meeting, and to make atonement for the children of Israel; that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come near to the sanctuary.”

The picture that YHWH has given us is that in order to come into His sanctuary one must first pass through the ministry of the Levites and the kohanim. As we see in these passages YHWH has a great love and concern and compassion upon Israel. He has provided the means for Israel to come to Him, but she must do so according to His command, else she dies.

It is also important to note that this word דֶּגֶל – “degel” is found only in this book of the Torah – B'midbar. It is found 13 times in B'midbar. This is equivalent to one time for each tribe. This teaches us that it is important for each of the 13 tribes to each have its own degel.

We also learn that the tribes were grouped together into four groups and placed under one degel -- standard. The three tribes that camped east of the mishkan were grouped under the degel of Y'hudah.

B'midbar (Numbers) 2:3

“Now those who camp on the east side toward the sunrise shall be of the standard of the camp of Y'hudah, by their armies, and the leader of the sons of Y'hudah; Nachshon the son of Amminadav.”

The three tribes which camped south of the mishkan were grouped under the degel of Reuven.

B'midbar (Numbers) 2:10

“On the south side shall be the standard of the camp of Reuven by their armies, and the leader of the sons of Reuven; Elitzur the son of Shede'ur,”

The three tribes which camped west of the mishkan were grouped under the degel of Ephrayim.

B'midbar (Numbers) 2:18

“On the west side shall be the standard of the camp of Ephrayim by their armies, and the leader of the sons of Ephrayim shall be Elishama the son of Ammihud,”

The three tribes which camped north of the mishkan were grouped under the degel of Dan.

B'midbar (Numbers) 2:25

“On the north side shall be the standard of the camp of Dan by their armies, and the leader of the sons of Dan; Achi'ezer the son of Ammishaddai,”

What this teaches us is the order by which we are to conduct ourselves. YHWH is an Elohim of order and not confusion.

Qorintyah (1st Corinthians) 14:33a

For Elohim is not an Elohim of confusion, but of peace.

This is something that YHWH has commanded His people to do, to get in line and march in one's proper place and proper order. He is the One who has placed each one in the body as He has desired, therefore, when we get in order and do as He commands, then we are pleasing Him.

Outside of the Torah this word is only found five times; one time in Tehillim and four times in Shir Hashirim (Song of Songs). Let us examine those to see what else we can learn about degel.

Tehillim (Psalm) 20:5

***We will sing for joy over your victory,
And in the name of our Elohim we will set up our degel.
May YHWH fulfill all your petitions.***

Notice that when we do set up our degel, our standards or our banners, then we are to do it in the name of YHWH our Elohim. We are not to do it in our own name or in the name of some man or in the name of some country. We are to do it in the name of YHWH!

There are four occurrences of this word in the book of Shir HaShirim (Song of Songs). Two of those occurrences are virtually the same, those in 6:4 and 6:10. Here is the one in 6:4.

Shir HaShirim (Song of Songs) 6:4

***“You are as beautiful as Tirtzah, my darling,
As lovely as Jerusalem,
As awesome as an army with banners.”***

The word “banners” in the above verse is the plural form of the word “degel.” Most of us have seen pictures of an army marching under all their banners. Each company, each platoon, each battalion has its own banner or standard. So when one sees a large army marching there are many banners or standards present. It is quite impressive. The beauty of his love is as awesome as an army with all its many banners present.

Since this song is really about the love of YHWH Tzava’ot towards Israel (and vice versa) we can see the male figure here (YHWH) referring to Israel when she is properly camped or marching under all her banners or degel. What an awe inspiring picture.

Shir HaShirim (Song of Songs) 5:10

***“My beloved is dazzling and ruddy,
Outstanding among ten thousand.”***

Notice how the bride responds and speaks of her dear husband. She tells us that he is outstanding among ten thousand. However, the word “outstanding” takes on special significance when we understand that this word is actually translated from the word “degel.” Our Husband, Mashiach Yeshua, is outstanding among ten thousand because He is our degel, our banner, our standard.

Shir HaShirim (Song of Songs) 2:4

***“He has brought me to his banquet hall,
And his banner over me is love.”***

There have been many songs written with these words or this idea in them concerning Mashiach Yeshua. Of all the banners or degel that we can march under or camp under the most important one is this one. We need to learn how to live under the degel of love that belongs to Mashiach Yeshua. There is no more important degel than this one. Let us strive to live in harmony under His degel of love with one another.

ABBA YHWH, teach us to camp and march under Your degel of love; in the name of Yeshua our Mashiach. Amein.

Shabbat Shalom

Zerubbabel ben Emunah

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