



## *The Desert: The Key to Torah*

*By Brian Chernigoff, 10th Grade*

The first passuk of this week's parsha says, "And Hashem spoke to Moshe in the desert of Sinai in the Mishkan . . ." (Numbers 1:1). Why does the Torah need to stress that Hashem spoke to Moshe in the desert, don't we already know that throughout these forty years Hashem spoke to Moshe in the desert?

Rather, Hashem specifically mentioned desert in this case to remind us that the Torah was given in the desert, to teach us a statement from the Gemara in Nidah (55a): "Since a person makes himself ownerless like a desert, the whole Torah is given to him, as it says 'A gift from the desert' (Numbers 21:18)." Based on this Gemara, we learn that in order to acquire Torah, one must be like a desert, but what exactly does that mean?

Rashi on that Gemara explains that in order to be like a desert, one must have humility. How does humility connect to acquisition of Torah?

Torah cannot be acquired by someone who is arrogant. An arrogant person believes that he is greater than everyone else and will not care to listen to what other people have to say, for he believes he is always right. He will not strive to learn nor grow in his service of Hashem. However, one who is hum-

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## *Every Person Counts*

*By Yoni Gutenmacher, 10th Grade*

In English, Sefer Bamidbar is called Numbers, and Parshat Bamidbar tells us why. A census is taken, which is an incredibly powerful and important event in the history of Bnei Yisrael. We know that this census is important due to the fact that we are given a date for it. God tells Moses to take this census on the first day of the second month following the Exodus from Egypt.

In the census that we encounter in Parshat Bamidbar, only the men are counted. Moses is commanded to "take a census of the whole Israelite community by the clans of its ancestral houses, listing the names, every male, head by head" (Bamidbar 1:2). Why were only the males counted here? After all, the women had an extremely vital role in the exodus as well. If it weren't for them, the Jewish lineage wouldn't have been preserved. Women were part of the "Israelite community," so why were they left out? Further, Jewish identity is passed through the woman! No matter how many children the Jewish men produced, if it was not with a Jewish mother, the children would not be Jewish. So why here does it seem as if the women didn't count in this crucial enu-

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**Torah Teasers**

By Rabbi Moshe Erlbaum, 9th Grade Rebbe

Parshas Bamidbar  
Questions

1. A major census is recounted in the parsha. Where else in the book of Numbers is there a census of the Jews?
2. Which *nasi* (tribal leader) has the same first name as a *nasi* (national president) in the time of the second Temple?
3. In this parsha, with respect to which two people does the Torah explicitly state that he has no sons?
4. Which *nasi* (tribal leader) is the brother-in-law of Aharon the High Priest?
5. Which two people in this parsha are explicitly called a "firstborn"?
6. Whose death is mentioned in this parsha? (2 answers)

Answers

1. In Parshas Pinchas, in the last year of the 40-year journey in the desert, another census is taken of the Jews (Numbers 26:1).
2. Gamliel ben Pedatzur, from the tribal of Menasheh (Numbers 1:10), shares a first name with the famous *nasi* and great sage of the second Temple era - Rabban Gamliel.
3. The Torah states that the eldest sons of Aharon, Nadav and Avihu, have no sons of their own (Numbers 3:4).
4. Nachshon ben Aminadav, the tribal leader of Yehudah, is the brother-in-law of Aharon. Aharon is married to Elisheva, the sister of Nachshon (Exodus 6:23).
5. Reuven, the son of Yaakov (Numbers 1:20), and Nadav the son of Aharon (Numbers 3:2), are each called a firstborn.
6. The deaths of Nadav and Avihu are mentioned (Numbers 3:4).

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How often do you get a chance to see Elijah the Prophet? But he saw no one.

So he returned to the Baal Shem Tov and said, "Master, I did not see Elijah the Prophet!" "Did you do everything I told you?" asked the Baal Shem Tov. "I did!" he said. "And you didn't see him?" "No, Rebbe." "Are you sure?" "Yes, Rebbe! I didn't see him!" "Then you'll have to return for Yom Kippur," said the Baal Shem Tov. "Go back before Yom Kippur, with a box of food, to the same house. Again, be sure to arrive an hour before sunset, and don't knock immediately. Wait for a while and just stand in front of the door, listening."

The chassid went back to his wife and told her he would be away for Yom Kippur. "How can you leave your children again?" she asked. "But the Baal Shem Tov says I'll be able to see Elijah the Prophet, like one of the great *tzaddikim!*" he said, "How can I not go?" His wife agreed that it was worth going away for two or three days if he could see Elijah the Prophet.

So he went back to Minsk before Yom Kippur. This time, he went earlier and stood in front of the door, listening. Inside he heard children crying, "Mommy, we're hungry! We haven't eaten the whole day! How can we fast for Yom Kippur?" "Children!" said the mother. "Do you remember you were crying before Rosh Hashanah that you had no food or clothes? And I told you, 'Trust in G-d! He'll send Elijah the Prophet, who'll bring you food and clothing and everything else you need!' Wasn't I right? Didn't Elijah come and bring you food and clothing? He stayed with us for two days! Now you're crying again that you're hungry. I promise you that Elijah will come now, too, and bring you food!"

Then the chassid understood what his master, the Baal Shem Tov, had meant. And he knocked on the door.



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# 10-Minute Halacha Shiur

Given by Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz  
on yutorah.org

Transcribed by  
Uri Himelstein

## Constructing Toys (Lego) on Shabbos

*This week we are going back to what we have been focusing all year: Hilchos Shabbos.*

- Uri

### I. Introduction

a. There is a Melacha Deorysa called Boneh, which is based on the attachment of the beams of the Mishkan together, and it consisted of making an Ohel and attaching different parts to create a structure. The Av Melacha is only violated through fulfilling both of these conditions, and if one does just one of them, then he is doing a Toldah of it. We will be focusing on the Toldah of being Medabek Chalakim.

### II. Medabek Chalakim

a. There is a Machlokes Rishonim if one is violating Boneh by putting together small structures with no walls or ceiling: Rashi says that there is no Issur to build Keilim; the Shulchan Aruch rejects this Shita; and Tosfos holds that anytime somebody completes a solid vessel, that is a violation of Boneh, but something flimsy isn't a problem. The Rambam holds that there is no difference how flimsy or solid it is if one puts parts together, but if one isn't putting parts together and is somehow causing structural damage, that isn't a violation of Boneh. Based on this it would seem that building with Legos on Shabbos would be a problem of putting smaller parts together.

### III. The Leniencies

a. The Chassam Soffer says that if one isn't planning on keeping the structure then it

isn't any violation of Boneh; by Legos the plan is generally to build something and knock it down, so it wouldn't be a problem. The Taz points out that when an item is made to be assembled and disassembled then that isn't Boneh at all, even if one plans to leave it standing for a significant amount of time. R' Ribiat calls this Derech Tashmisho, and says that this isn't a Melacha, just like closing a door wouldn't be Boneh.

### IV. Reasons to be Machmir

a. R' Simcha Bunim Cohen wrote that toys such as Legos are permitted, however in his lengthy footnote, he says that this isn't so Pashut and isn't agreed upon by anybody. R' Eliyahu Faulk writes that there are three potential issues when it comes to using Legos: there is the issue of Makeh Bepatish, of connecting the two things together and making a new Kli, and of Asiyas Ohel Arai, whereby one might make a Tefach of height underneath a Tefach wide Ohel. The third is the issue of Kesiva, that just like one may not shape something into a meaningful Tzurah, so too making a Lego creation would be a meaningful Tzurah. At the end, he rejects the issue of Makeh Bepatish, he sustains the issue of Asiyas Oheil (even though generally speaking this is only Assur for protecting something underneath and not if it is for the use of the top, like a folding table, the kids are making their "roofs" to cover

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# The Shevet of Zevulan

BY AVI BULKA, 9TH GRADE

In Parshas Bamidbar (2:7), the pasuk says, "The tribe of Zevulan." When the Torah lists the other Shevatim, it says, "and the...and the...and the...". By Zevulan, however, it has no "and", it just says "the..." Why is there no conjunction by Zevulan?

The Shevet of Zevulan engaged in business, supporting the shevet of Yissachar, so that Yissachar can continue learning. The Torah writes "the" without any conjunction to show that Zevulan was in no way inferior or secondary to Yissachar, who learned all day. This shows that they were equal in merit to the Shevet of Yissachar. We learn from this that one who supports those who study Torah is just as great as the one who actually studies the Torah.

Taken from the *Ba'al Haturim*

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(10-Minute Halacha — Continued from page 3)

what is underneath). He discusses the Chashash of Kesiva, and is Mechalek between two different types of Lego building that kids engage in: if they are constructing a toy that they can use, that would be no issue because it isn't about a shape but rather it is about making an object, but if they are building just for the challenge of building, this would be just for appearances and maybe this could be Koseiv (if it is possible to have Kosiev without a defined background - the Noda Beyehuda says that it would be an issue, and many others disagree). At the end of the day, he paskens that it is a Chashash Issur and should be avoided. Nevertheless, the majority of Poskim assume that there is no issue of Ohel and Kosiev, because, as the Ohr Letzion writes, it is going to be pulled apart after time, because it is just like covering a pot which is meant to be taken apart. He says that anything which is made just for a game and not for the image might not be Koseiv (this applies for puzzles as well, which the Tzitz Eliezer is Matir).

#### V. Different Types of Toys

- a. If one is Meikel for Legos, which actually stick together, then Kal Vechomer for Magna-Tiles, which are stuck to each other in a very flimsy way.

(Yoni Gutenmacher — Continued from page 1)

meration of the Jewish people? This census, God tells Moses, is of “all those in Israel who are able to bear arms” (Bamidbar 1:3). So because only men could serve in the military, they were the only ones to be counted? Were theirs the only identities Hashem wished to count?

Taking a deeper look at the Jewish view of gender differences, we can see how men and women play such different roles for the Jewish people. According to Rabbi Baruch Halevi Epstein (Tosefet Berachah to Num. 1:2), the Hebrew word for son, ben, comes from the word boneh, or build. Bat, the word for daughter, is a contracted form of bayit, or home. We can infer from this that men are builders of community, while women are builders of homes. Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks applied this view to our patriarchs and matriarchs. Both Rivka and Rachel had the insight to know which son would continue the covenant. Rabbi Sacks continues to describe the other powerful women throughout the Jewish historical narrative. He writes:

“The story of the ‘six women’ of the Exodus who played key roles in the story of redemption: Yocheved, Miriam, Shifra, Puah, Pharaoh’s daughter and Zipporah...there are many other female heroes in the pages of Tanach: Hannah, Deborah, Ruth and Esther .... What characterizes these women is their emotional-spiritual intelligence and the moral courage that comes from it.”

The fact that only the men were counted in the census is because of the inherent masculine quality of being more likely to be in the public and constructive domain, as is necessary for their status as military fighters. While the strength of a military, on one hand, might come from the males, the strength of the nation, the ummah (from the same root as eim - mother), comes from the women.

Thus, the Torah, despite your view on gender equality or feminism or civil rights, can only truly grow to fulfill its potential through intense study and conversation by both men and women.

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## *Each One Has a Role*

*By Meishy Rothman, Editor of Student Articles, 12th*

The formation of the twelve tribes in the *Midbar* ostensibly is strange and superfluous. Yehuda is in front, flanked by Reuven and Dan, and in the back is Ephra'im. Why does the Torah have to go out of its way to tell us the placement of the tribes? What lesson does one derive from it? Rav S.R. Hirsch explains that the configuration of the encampment actually expresses the formula for a God-like nation.

Yehuda, who is in the front, is the leader of the tribes and therefore absorbs the attribute of the other tribes to create a society ideal for the observance of the Torah. Yehuda is the lawgiver and leader, as expressed in Ya'akov's blessings. With him are Yissachar and Zevul'in: the partnership of Torah and livelihood. The leading camp (of the four) is the paradigm; it's a blend of spiritual and material factors, which aid in the service of Ha-Shem.

From Yehuda's camp, two other groups fork: Reuven and Dan; each group harmonizes the other. Reuven's group represents the features of a firstborn: a sense of integrity and a desire to be a role model for what is right. With him are Shimon, the hero in the story of Shechem, and Gad, the leader of the troops. Both of them have the will power to take revenge of injustice. This character trait aids Yehuda by reinforcing the importance of doing what is just and right.

The other group is from Dan. This group, consisting of Dan, Naftali, and Asher, has a refined attitude. Ya'akov calls Dan "clever", Naftali "eloquent," and Asher as having "good taste." To complement the harsh and vengeful nature of Reuven, the group of Dan adds a more distinguished and less aggressive nature to the Jewish nation.

The last group is Ephra'im. This group, which incorporates Menashe, Ephra'im, and Binyamin, represents bravery. Like the other groups, which aid Yehuda, Ephra'im's role is reinforcing the Jewish nation's nature of leadership. Binyamin, Ephra'im, and Menashe are associated with Yosef: a person known for being a leader as shown during the exile in Egypt. Rav Hirsch explains that Ephra'im is really considered the "sub-king" to Yehuda. The ideal objective of Ephra'im is to supplement Yehuda's leadership of the Jewish people.

What is seen from the organization of the tribes is something profound: each subunit of the nation has a unique and crucial role to play in the development of the Jewish nation. Though alone, each tribe is seen as an incomplete, together they complement and augment each other, resulting in a more conducive environment to serve Hashem. Having Shevuos, the festival of the Jewish nation being, "K'ish Echad Bi'Lev Echad," one person and one heart, it's crucial to gain a sense of camaraderie and friendship, for they are the ingredients for receiving the Torah.



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Strength of an army may have come from the men, as in Sefer Bamidbar. However, the strength of a nation comes from the women. Torah takes physical strength and emotional compassion. Torah needs as many different outlooks as possible. The Hebrew title of this sefer, Bamidbar, means “in the desert”. Just like a desert is open to all, Torah is open to all. To maximize Torah’s potential, all must have access to it, and all must contribute. If we keep Torah as the sole responsibility of half of the Jewish population, we are stripping Torah of the other half of her potential. Torah needs women just as much as women need Torah.

*(Brian Chernigoff — Continued from page 1)*

ble will always be around Torah scholars seeking their wisdom, for a humble man knows his place and will not be ashamed to admit that he is inferior to those great masters of Torah.

We can learn this lesson of always being humble as the way to access Torah from King David. The passuk says, “And David was the young one” (Samuel I 17:14). Based on this, the Gemara in Masechet Megillah (11a) learns out that just as David always situated himself by Torah scholars greater than him in Torah in his youth, so too when he was older, he always made sure he was near those greater than him in Torah. Based on this, we see that if even King David humbled himself to listen to the words of the Torah scholars, so must we.

“Being a desert” has further implications besides for the need to be humble. When a person travels into the desert, he only takes with him the absolute necessities, such as food and water. He must sacrifice any type of luxuries he has in order to make the journey into the desert. The same is required if one wants to access Torah. If one wants to succeed in his Torah studies, he must be willing to make sacrifices in order to do so and must be willing to live off the barest minimum.

The third implication of “being a desert” is that in order for one to acquire Torah, his mind must be empty and barren of immoral and negative thoughts, just as a desert is barren of nearly everything but its sand. In order for Torah to enter one’s soul and mind, he must first clear them of any thoughts contrary to Torah views, and only then can the Torah and eventually the Shecina (G-d’s presence) rest with someone.

The passuk says in the third paragraph of Shema, “And it shall be for you tzitzit . . . and you shall not go astray after your hearts and eyes” (Numbers 15:39). This shows us how wearing tzitzit helps us keep our minds clean from foreign influences. It is interesting to note that when Korach rebelled against Moshe, he mocked him with the very mitzvah of tzitzit. The Medrash teaches that Korach and his followers appeared before Moshe in entirely blue garments, and asked Moshe whether or not their garments require tzitzit to be placed on them. Moshe answered in the positive. Korach and his followers then began to mock Moshe. “How could it be that any colored garment with just one string of techeilet (blue) fulfills the obligation of tzitzit, while an entirely blue garment does not?” Based on this we see that because Korach first mocked the mitzvah of tzitzit (which represents the removal of foreign thoughts from one’s mind), he then eventually challenged Moshe’s position and the entire authority of the Torah. We see from here that one who fails to remove evil, impure, pagan, and immoral thoughts from his brain will not only not be able to learn Torah but even may come to deny it.

Although it may seem that acquiring Torah is a very difficult venture, requiring humility, the will to give up one’s luxuries, and the purifying of one’s mind, the ability to study Torah is in fact promised to us as our inheritance. The passuk says, “The Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the congregation of Yaakov” (Deuteronomy 33:4). The Torah is ours, and no one else’s, and we must realize that even though we may not be able to reach the goals of humility, self-sacrifice, and self-purification, the Torah is still ours, and we must do everything we can to acquire it.

## STORIES OF GREATNESS

TOLD OVER BY: NOAM LEVY

*The Rambam writes that everyone has the ability to be as great as Moshe Rabbeinu. It is all up to us. We can all make a difference in people's lives, and every time we do, we climb levels and levels. Hopefully we can all become great and then the time for Mashiach will come sooner than we think. Adapted from [chabad.org](http://chabad.org). Have a great Shabbos!!*

- Noam

A chassid went to the Baal Shem Tov in Mezhibuzh and said, "Rebbe, I want to see Elijah the Prophet."

"It's simple," said the Baal Shem. "I'll tell you what to do. Get two boxes and fill one with food and the other with children's clothes. Then, before Rosh Hashanah, travel to Minsk. On the outskirts of town, right before where the forest begins, is a dilapidated house. Find that house, but don't knock on the door immediately; stand there for a while and listen. Then, shortly before candle-lighting time at sunset, knock on the door and ask for hospitality."

The chassid went home and told his wife he would be away for the holiday. "How can you leave your family?" she said. "The children want their father to take them to the

synagogue!" He told her, "I have a once-in-a-lifetime chance to see Elijah the Prophet!" Finally, she agreed that it was something that he could not pass up.

So he went and did as the Baal Shem Tov told him. He filled the parcels with food and clothing and went to Minsk, where he found the broken-down house at the edge of town. He arrived shortly before evening and stood in front of the door, listening. Inside, he heard children crying, "Mommy, we're hungry. And it's Yom Tov and we don't even have decent clothes to wear!" He heard the mother answer, "Children, trust in G-d. He'll send Elijah the Prophet to bring you everything you need!"

Then the chassid knocked on the door. When the woman opened it, he asked if he could stay with them for the holiday. "How can I welcome you when I don't have any food in the house?" she said. "Don't worry," he said, "I have enough food for all of us." He came in, opened the box, gave the children the food, and they ate. Then he opened the other box and the children all took clothes for themselves: this one a shirt, that one a jacket, the other one a hat. He was there for two days, waiting to see Elijah the Prophet. He did not even sleep. How could he sleep?

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