



## ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY



**Rabbi Reuven Tradburks**  
Director of  
RCA Israel Region



**1<sup>st</sup> aliya (Bamidbar 4:21-37)** A census of the family of Gershon (son of Levi) is done. The family of Gershon is responsible for the textiles of the Mishkan: the curtains and the covers of the Mishkan. They are to function under the supervision of Aharon and his sons; in their case, under Itamar. The census of the family of Merari is taken. Their responsibility is the structure of the Mishkan: boards, sockets, wall braces.

Their tasks are assigned by name, supervised by Itamar. The census, aged 30 – 50, of the family of Kehat is 2,750.

These first 2 aliyot conclude the description of the jobs of the Leviim in managing and transporting the Mishkan. And of their census. The Leviim encamp around the Mishkan. The other 12 tribes encamp around them.



**2<sup>nd</sup> aliya (4:38-49)** The census of Gershon, 2,630, and Merari, 3,200. The total of those who will serve and carry the Mishkan is 8,580.

With the conclusion of the assigning of roles and of the census of the Leviim, the detailed description of the Jewish camp is complete. In the description of the jobs, the names, and the numbers, we begin to see the Jewish nation as a nation. It is real people, with real names and real populations. And this nation is to march with G-d in our midst and to encamp with Him in our midst. With the destination: the Land

### The OU Israel Family mourns the passing of **Rabbi Pinchas Stolper z"l**

and sends its heartfelt condolences to his wife,  
Rebbetzin Elaine Stolper and his children

Rabbi Stolper was a trailblazing pioneer in the education of Jewish teens; served as the first full-time national director of NCSY and as the longest serving executive vice president of the Orthodox Union.

During more than forty years of working with Jewish youth, Rabbi Stolper built the NCSY movement from coast to coast. His work with NCSY directly impacted multitudes of Jewish households and played a defining role in Jewish life in the global Orthodox Jewish community for the past several decades. He created and developed modalities of experiential Jewish learning and living that have become the standard for inspiring commitment in Jewish students around the world. Rabbi Stolper subsequently assumed a broader role in communal leadership, serving as Executive Vice President of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America for eighteen years.

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

of Israel. But, we who know how the rest of the book will unfold, recognize this detailed order as foreshadowing. Oh that our national life would be so neat and tidy. You here, you here. You doing your task, you doing yours. All of us recognizing G-d in our midst. This is a lovely description of how we *ought* to live and how we *ought* to travel on in to the Land of Israel. But the book of Bamidbar is the meeting of the ideal with the real. Instructions and descriptions of what ought to be are great; how they actually are lived in this less than neat and tidy world gets messy.



**3<sup>rd</sup> aliya (5:1-10)** Command the people to send those, male or female with Tzarat, or who are

Zavim or Tamei out of the camp. The people did so. A man or woman who steals, swears denying the theft and then admits, shall repay the principal plus one fifth to the owner. If the owner has died leaving no heirs, the payment is paid to the Kohen. The Kohen's portions fully belong to him.

These 2 aliyyot are also foreshadowing. Now that the march to the Land of Israel is about to become a reality, don't ignore the foibles of people in society. Keep the camp tahor – both in the details of the laws and in a metaphoric sense. Know that people will steal. And not only steal, but lie to cover it up. Stealing and lying are paradigmatic failures of people trying to live together in society. In the book of Bamidbar, when we make the shift from theory to practice, from instructions to marching, coalescing as a nation, human failures are inevitable. Stealing and lying. The Torah never portrays the Jewish people as perfect, pristine. We are a real life people with all of our

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shortcomings. A holy people; but a holy people that is real, not fairy tales.



**4<sup>th</sup> aliya (5:11-6:27)** The **Sotah**: If a married woman spends time alone with a man other than her husband, and her husband suspects her of having had relations with that man, then she is brought to the Kohen. She brings a simple offering. The Kohen places water and dust in a container. She swears that she is innocent. The Kohen writes in a scroll that should she be guilty, the water she will drink will cause fatal internal damage. These words are put in the water. Her offering is brought; the water is drunk by her. If she is guilty, this will be fatal. If innocent, this will prove it. The **Nazir**: When a person vows to be a Nazir, they may not drink wine or any product from a grape, may not cut their hair and may not come in contact with the dead, including closest relatives. If the Nazir does come in contact with the dead before the conclusion of his Nazir status, then he must bring an offering of 2 birds, one for a chatat and one for an olah. At the final end of his Nazir status he brings animals for a chatat, an olah and a shlamim. He cuts his hair and burns it. **Birkat Kohanim**: Tell Aharon that he shall bless the Jewish people with Birkat Kohanim: in so doing they place My name on the people and I bless them.

The 2 quite dramatic mitzvot in this aliya express the theme of this book of Bamidbar: the tricky business of living the ideal in this complicated world of the imperfect. The ideal has been the topic of Shemot and Vayikra: living a life with G-d in our midst, a holy life, a noble and sanctified life walking with our G-d in our midst.

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But stuff happens in life. That ideal has to be lived by real live people, who, well, get in the way.

The 2 elaborate mitzvot mentioned here, Sotah and Nazir, are breaches in communal life in particular. Sefer Bamidbar, as the book of the march to the Land of Israel, is both the transition from the ideal life of camping at Mt. Sinai, to the rough and tumble of real people living real lives. And it is the maturing of the Jewish people in our communal, national expression. Sotah and Nazir are breaches in communal life. The Sotah, the wife suspected of adultery, is a breakdown in the holiness of family life. The Nazir is a breach in the reach for super holiness; as if to say the Torah isn't enough, isn't holy enough for me. Insufficient holiness is a breach, but no less a breach is super holiness.

In the mitzvah of the Nazir, left unsaid is what prompts this person to swear off wine, contact with the dead and cutting their hair. Something is going on in their life so that they need to restrict themselves. Vows of restriction of this sort could be a desire to live an even more rarified and holy life than the rest of us. That may be a noble desire; or it may be distorted. When the Nazir has failed himself and wants to

Condolences to the family of  
**Dr. Henry Chanoch  
Reuven Hashkes z"l**  
on his passing

Yakir Yerushalayim, Lecturer on medicine,  
student of Torah at the OU Israel Center

Born on 28 Iyar, Buried in Jerusalem  
on 28 Iyar, Yom Yerushalayim

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rectify his weaknesses by swearing off wine, that would appear positive. But if the Nazir ascribes to himself a holier than thou position, that the Torah is fine for you, but not for me, then this is a breach not of erosion but of hubris, of condescension.



**5<sup>th</sup> aliya (7:1-41)** On the day Moshe completed, anointed and sanctified the Mishkan and all it contains, the leaders of the tribes brought a contribution. They brought 6 wagons and 12 oxen for the transport of the Mishkan: 2 wagons and 4 oxen were given to Gershon, 4 wagons and 8 oxen to Merari. Kehat did not receive any for they carried the vessels of the Mishkan on their shoulders. The leaders of each of the 12 tribes brought offerings as an inauguration of the Mishkan. Each day the leader of the tribe is named and his offering brought. Each leader's offering is identical.

Our parsha is the longest parsha in the Torah due to these last 3 aliyot. In fact, these 3 aliyot are only one chapter but a chapter of 89 verses, longer than many full parshiot.



**6<sup>th</sup> aliya (7:42-71)** The description of the leader's offerings continues, outlining days 6 to 10.

Each day a different Nasi, head of the tribe brought an offering, though the offering was identical each day. This repetition

engages the commentators. Perhaps this relates to the nature of leadership itself. Jonathan Sacks, z"l, occupied himself extensively with the notion of leadership. One of his dominant themes was the theme of service versus power. A Jewish leader serves his people. And serves his G-d. Not himself. This is hammered home by the offerings of the Nasi. In offering to G-d, the Nasi is expressing that he is a servant of G-d and a servant of His people. The march to the Land will be demanding of these leaders. They need to affirm from the outset that they serve not themselves but their G-d and their people.



**7<sup>th</sup> aliya (7:72-89)** The description of the leader's offerings continues, with days 11 and 12.

The Torah enumerates the totals of each of the offerings brought by the leaders. These served as inauguration of the anointed altar. When Moshe entered the Ohel Moed to speak with G-d, he heard the Voice emanate from upon the kaporet, the covering of the Aron, from between the angels and He spoke with him.

The Parsha concludes with a repetition that G-d spoke to Moshe from above the Aron. Whereas the emphasis previously was on the magic of the meeting of G-d and man, here the emphasis is on the content: Moshe acts on Divine instruction, not his own personal power and pride.

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## HAFTORAH NASO SHOFTIM 13:2-25

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The theme of the laws related to the *nazir* comes to light in the haftorah by describing the birth of Shimshon.

לעילוי נשמות

**Rabbi Dr. Aaron Baer z"l**

on his fourteenth yearzeit (2 Iyar)

and

**Rebbetzin Hannah Baer a'h**

on her first yearzeit (29 Iyar)

*May their memory be blessed*

A child is to be born to Manoach and his wife, members of the tribe of Dan. An angel of Hashem conveys the message that this child is to observe the nazarite laws by abstaining from all foods forbidden to a nazarite. The angel also declares that this child will defend the Jewish people from the Philistine oppression and will protect the nation of Israel in the Land.

God then sends the angel a second time to convey the same message and establish that these instructions are to be closely followed. The angel instructs Manoach to take a goat that he wished to slaughter for a celebratory meal upon hearing of this joyful news, and instead, bring it as a sacrifice to God.

The prophecy from heaven comes to fruition and the child Shimshon is born into the world: "And the boy grew up, and God blessed him." ■



## STATS

35th of 54 sedras; 2nd of 10 in Bamidbar  
 Written on 311 lines in a Sefer Torah.  
 That's a record breaking 7.4 columns 26 Parshiyot; 18 open, 8 closed. Only 4 sedras have more parshiyot  
 176 p'sukim, 2264 words, 8632 letters  
 Indisputably the longest sedra in the Torah, however you count length.  
 Naso is well below average, though, in length of p'sukim, but not enough to affect its first place ranking



## MITZVOT

18 mitzvot; 7 positive, 11 prohibitions - the most of Bamidbar's 10 sedras  
 18 might not seem to be that many mitzvot, but only 9 sedras in the Torah (of 54) have more mitzvot than Naso

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