

Parasha Meditation Bamidbar

Bamidbar 1:1-4:20

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Realigning Ourselves with Ourselves in Preparation for Receiving the Torah

Introduction:

Realigning Ourselves with Our Fellow Jews and the Torah

On the Shabbat preceding Shavuot the Jews of the Diaspora reconnect with Israel in the *Parasha* reading. In the spirit of Shavuot, we always begin the *Book of Bamidbar* together in unison prior to receiving the Torah. In *Parashat Bamidar* the position of the twelve tribes surrounding the Holy Ark with the Torah is delineated.¹ We all need to realign our position in relationship with our fellow Jews and with our holy Torah in preparation for receiving the Torah on Shavuot; keeping in mind that the Torah must always remain the center of our lives.

Giving the Torah in No-Man's-Land

Hashem chose Mount Sinai to be the place for giving the Torah, because it humbled itself saying: "I am lowly." Therefore, Hashem elevated this mountain by giving the Torah upon it.² This teaches us that the only way to receive the Torah is through humility, symbolized by the lowly Mount Sinai. Entering the bare wilderness without even trees and flowers engenders humility. Experiencing the simplicity of nothingness, but infinite sand reflected in our psyche, washes away our extraneous attachments and arrogance. It was fitting that the Giving of the Torah took place in no-man's-land amidst the stark desolation of the Wilderness. Likewise, no-one can take ownership on the Torah. Unlike the Crown of Kingdom, and *Kehuna* (Priesthood),³ the Crown of Torah is free for all to take. It enters the open hearts of those who are not too full of themselves to make a space for the Torah to enter.

The Wilderness Speaks

הַמִּדְבָּר הַמְדַבֵּר – *Hamidbar medaber* – The wilderness speaks – When we enter the vast open empty space of the wilderness, we are able to hear the sound of silence. Without the humdrum distractions of technical devices, mundane chores that need to get done, the constant background noises of cars driving by, we can turn inwardly to the Divine voice within. We can re-evaluate who we really are and learn to live more meaningful lives. When we tune into ourselves we may become aware of some of the deeper processes we are going through which we often repress through overeating and "workoholism." Perhaps some of the things we spend a lot of time doing is only an illusionary way to gain self-worth. We may serve ourselves and world better by becoming aware of our lack of self-worth, and work on letting go of the negative messages certain childhood experiences may have

¹ Bamidbar 2:2.

² *Midrash Rabah, Bamidbar* 13:3.

³ The Kingdom is inherited from the house of David, and *Kehuna* from Aharon the Kohen.



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programmed us to send ourselves. Then we can devote our lives to pursue that which is real essential and weed out the extra unessential matters that crowd our daily day and distract us from fulfilling our mission. Personally I'm working on clearing my life from excessive emailing. Sometimes we just keep writing back and forth automatically without really relaying any important message. You know how you often feel like you need to respond again although the conversation has already been completed. Not every email needs a response. I have learned that I'm OK even if I don't always get the last word.

Reconnecting with our Purpose in Life

Netivat Shalom explains that the parasha preceding receiving the Torah describes the flags of each tribe in order to reconnect each of us with our particular mission and purpose in life. "Hashem arranged flags for Israel with great endearment similar to those of the ministering angels, in order that they would be recognized."⁴ Just as flags are used to unify each population according to their particular nation, so does each of us have our own particular purpose in life. We were sent into this world in order to fulfill this mission. The importance of each of us is further highlighted by the counting of the Israelites that took place in the wilderness. Each Jew is a "small world" with his own number and name designated for his specific purpose in life. Since there is nothing more important than fulfilling our mission, unfortunately, the *yetzer hara* (negative inclination) especially try to blur our mission and confuse us to believe that we don't have any special purpose in life. Therefore prior to receiving the Torah, we read: "Every person from the children of Israel shall camp according to his own flag, with the signs of his father's house."⁵ Each Jew has his own camp and flag – his own special purpose to fulfill in life. Recognizing our personal mission prepares us for receiving the Torah.

Giving Birth To Ourselves

In this week's *Parasha*, the Israelites are counted. The word described for how each person presented himself before Moshe prior to the census is unusual:

וְאֵת כָּל הָעֵדָה הִקְהִילוּ בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי וַיִּתְּיָדוּ עַל מִשְׁפְּחֵיהֶם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת מִבְּנֵי עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמֵעֵלָה לְגִלְגָּלְתָּם (ספר במדבר פרק א:יח).

"The entire congregation assembled together on the first day of the second month, (וַיִּתְּיָדוּ – *veyitvaldu*), and they declared their pedigrees after their families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, by their polls."⁶

Rabbi Yisroel Sisskind notices the special meaning of the word the word (וַיִּתְּיָדוּ – *veyitvaldu*), which appears only once in all of the *Tanach* (Pentateuch). Literally this word means that the Israelites gave birth to themselves. Yet, Rashi explains that "they accounted for and gave bona fides for their genealogical descent, thereby proving their right to claim membership in a particular tribe."⁷ Rabbi Sisskind asks, why use such a unique form of the verb "to give birth to oneself" as a way of saying "they presented their family records"? It is possible that by researching our family tree and realigning ourselves with our ancestors we can become aware of our source and who we really are. This is similar to giving birth to ourselves. May we all merit to give birth to our true selves and reconnect with our particular portion in Torah!

⁴Midrash Rabah, Bamidbar, 2:3.

⁵ Bamidbar 2:2.

⁶ Bamidbar 1:18.

⁷ Rashi, ibid.

Meditation:

If possible, it is beneficial to practice this meditation in nature, optimally in the actual desert. Yet, make yourself comfortable wherever you are whether on your cushion or chair, or in the sand. Close your eyes and take several very deep breaths.

1. Try to empty yourself completely with every exhalation. Allow all the background noise to pass through you, and imagine now that you are walking in the wilderness.
2. All around you is only sand and bare mountains. You are all alone as you face the emptiness of the void. Allow this emptiness and space to enter into you. Become aware of all the superfluous items you are holding on to.
3. Imagining digging a deep hole, deeper and deeper, big enough to bury everything you no longer have any use for. You may enter into this imaginary hole anything you don't need, be it physical, emotional or spiritual.
4. Make sure you enter all of your arrogance into this hole. Notice how liberated you feel without it. Imagine emptying your heart from resentment, jealousy, anger and hatred.
5. Place your hands near your heart without touching and feel the warmth emanating from it. Your heart is now ready to be reborn and infused with the holiness of Torah.
6. Imagine the smallest letter of י – *yud* inside of your heart. This is the letter of wisdom and beginning. Following the *yud*, appears the ל – *lamed*, which means teaching. Hashem's Torah teachings enter you, as you are reborn. Now visualize how the *lamed* extending itself to give its teaching over to the letter ד – *dalet*, which is turning its back as it receives *lamed's* teachings. This symbolizes how children turn away from their parents, as they receive their teachings, in order to forge their own personal path.
7. *Dalet* can also mean a door. Imagine the door of your heart opening, and through it walks your mother and father, they each give you a gift. Behind your parents their mother and father walk in with a special gift for you. Behind each of your grandparents, all your four sets of great grandparents walk through the door, each with a gift for you.
8. Keep visualizing all their mothers and fathers for as far back as you are able to imagine. Try to fathom the infinite mothers and fathers it took to create you, with your particular gifts, talents and character-traits. Feel thankful and centered in yourself and enjoy the gift of being you! Whenever you are ready you may open your eyes and face the world.

Notes:

Shavuot is called in the Torah "Day of the First Fruits."⁸ This is a time when the fruits are beginning to ripen on the trees in *Eretz Yisrael*. Likewise, at this time, after having matured emotionally and spiritually through the counting of the Omer, we ripen into what we are meant to be, becoming reborn as who we really are.

⁸ *Bamidbar* 28:26.

About Us



Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum, a native of Denmark, is Founder and Director of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Bible and Jewish Philosophy from Michlala Jerusalem College for Women, and a Masters of Art in Jewish History from Touro College. Chana Bracha also began her practice as a spiritual healer through Emuna, tefila and energy work.

*For more than two decades Chana Bracha has taught Bible studies with special emphasis on women's issues in Israel and the United States. She creates curricula emphasizing women's spiritual empowerment through traditional Torah values. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin located in the Judean Hills of Israel offers a unique program to women of all ages and backgrounds to learn in a holistic Torah study environment that nurtures the mind, body and soul. Intensive textual study of Tanach, Halacha and Chassidut are woven together with creative spiritual expression, and connection with the land of Israel through organic gardening, herbology, Jewish sources of healing and sustainable living. Classes in Jewish mysticism, Chassidism and Jewish meditation are directed at the spiritual thirst so prominent in our times. In 2010 Rebbetzin Chana Bracha published her first book, *Women at the Crossroads: A Woman's Perspective on the Weekly Torah Portion*.*

Chana Bracha has a married son and several granddaughters. She lives with her husband and younger son on the land of the Judean hills, Israel.

If you are interested in:

Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin contact info@berotbatayin.org or in Spiritual Healing with Rebbetzin Chana Bracha, please contact her at director@berotbatayin.org

or visit her blog: <http://rebbetzinchanabracha.blogspot.com/2010/11/emunah-healing-for-women.html>

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