

Taking a Census of My Own Life; is that a Sin?

This weeks reading is from Parashat Bamidbar (*Bamidbar / Numbers 1:1-4:20*), the Lord God speaks to Moshe in the Tent of Meeting (Ohel Moed) saying (בְּאָתָּה רֹאשׁ כָּל־עֵדֶת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתֶם לְבֵית אֲבֹתֶם בְּאַתְּלָמָד) **1:2 'Take a census of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, every male, head by head. (NASB)** The men who are to be numbered are those who are able to go to war, twenty years and older, the number of men from each tribe is given in *Bamidbar / Numbers 1:4-46*. The Levites however were not numbered because they are given to the service of the Lord in the Tabernacle (*1:47-50*). The scriptures state that the Levites are to camp around the Tabernacle so God's wrath does not fall upon the congregation of Israel (*1:53*). The Scriptures list who will camp on the north, east, south, and west sides of the Tabernacle (*2:1-34*). The generations of Aaron are given (*3:1-4*), then the Lord commands that the Levites be brought before Aaron and declares *3:13 'For all the firstborn are Mine; on the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, from man to beast. They shall be Mine; I am the Lord.' (NASB)* Moshe then numbered Aaron's sons according to the command of the Lord (*3:14*) and the number of the first born are listed (*3:15-50*). This week's reading ends with the mitzvot (commandments) on what to do when the Tabernacle moves from one place to another, how the Levites are to prepare the Tabernacle for traveling (*4:4-20*).

שׂודקה יבתכ / The Holy Scriptures

ספר במדבר פרק א'

א וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים־מֵשֶׁה בְּמִקְרָב סִינִי בְּאָתָל מוֹעֵד בְּאַחֲרֵי
לְהַקְרֵשׁ הַשְׁנִי בְּשִׁנְיוֹת לִצְאתֶם מִארְץ מִצְרָיִם לְאָמֵר בָּאָתָה
שָׂאו אֶת־רֹאשׁ כָּל־עֵדֶת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתֶם לְבֵית אֲבֹתֶם
בְּמִסְפֵּר שְׁמוֹת כָּל־זֶכֶר לְגַלְגָּלָתֶם: ג' מִבּוּנְשָׁרִים שָׁנָה וּמֵעֶלֶת:
כָּל־יִצְאָא עָבָא בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל תִּפְקֹדוּ אֶתְכֶם לְצַבְאֹתֶם אַתָּה וְאַהֲרֹן:

Bamidbar / Numbers 1:1-3

1:1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying, 1:2 'Take a census of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, every male, head by head 1:3 from twenty years old and upward, whoever is able to go out to war in Israel, you and Aaron shall number them by their armies. (NASB)

In the reading for this week from *Bamidbar / Numbers 1:1-3*, God speaks to Moshe telling him to number the people. Studying the Scriptures it is interesting to note that, on occasion, when a king takes a census it is considered a sin to do so before the Lord. Have you ever asked the question concerning the census that is recorded in the books of *1 Chronicles 21:1-4* and *2 Samuel 24*; why did David number Israel? Why was it was a sin that king David numbered Israel? Many people look upon this episode as an esoteric commentary not immediately knowing or understanding why God would deal so harshly with King David for simply numbering the people of Israel? Counting the people may be done for various reasons, both good and bad. For example, a country might count its people for a census to see how many new roads need to be built. Numbering the people for this reason would not result in sin by doing so. On the other hand, if a country counted the people to determine how many man are able to draw the sword (as David did) in order to determine whether to invade another country, to attack an enemy, or to glory being great in power, then this is sinful. King David counted for the purpose of satisfying his pride, which was provoked by Satan. Based on the biblical text, the conclusion we are able to make regarding David taking a census of the people, he did his census taking out of human ego and pride. He wanted to know how powerful Israel's army was. This is confirmed by God declaring plainly that the number of the men that he counted were "those that drew the sword" (*2nd Samuel 24:9-10*). The offense to the Lord God Almighty concerning Israel was that David had begun to trust in man rather than the Lord. What was the reason for God asking Moshe to number the people in *Bamidbar / Numbers* chapter *1*? It was not for the purpose of knowing the power of Israel's army. In fact, Israel was going to spend another 40 years wandering the desert. So why number the people here? The reason was to provide an account of the number of able bodied men who were delivered up out of Egypt. In addition to this, we do not read that Moshe taking a ransom for the people following the census (*Shemot / Exodus 30:11-12*). This is most likely because God motivated Moshe's actions by giving the mitzvah to do so. What is the lesson for us this week? Will we trust in the Lord for all of our needs or will we behave like David, to take account of all that we have and take pride in our wealth believing the work of our hands was something of our own making and not God's blessing? This is related to our walking humbly before the Lord and with repentant hearts. As we live each day, we should be quick to seek God's mercy and to seek His Son Yeshua to take away our iniquity. *Matthew 6:33 But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (NASB)*

