

The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators presents

# *An Interactive* **PARSHA EXPERIENCE**



Sponsored by the Rosekind Family in honor of the 18th graduating cohort of the Pardes Day School Educators Program. We wish them the best of luck as they embark on their journeys as Jewish Educators and hope they will always be counted amongst their respective tribe.

**Parsha:** Bamidbar

**Title:** Stand Up and Be Counted

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## The Parsha at First Glance

### Spotlight on the Parsha:

This week we start a new book of the Torah! It is just a little over a year since *Bnei Yisrael* exited Egypt, 11 months since they received the 10 Commandments on Mt. Sinai, and one month since the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) was erected in the desert. As far as anyone knows, the next step in their big journey is: entering the Land of Israel!

As such, God tells Moshe to do a census of the people. That means that he needs to count them, to figure out how many of them there are. More specifically, God wants to know how many people are 20 years old and can therefore serve as soldiers when they enter their new land, as they may have to fight their way in.

### Questions for Consideration:

Most of our *parsha*, *Parshat Bamidbar*, talks about this census, or counting, that Moshe does. Why does it spend so much time on that, though? How hard can counting people be?!

To find out, try counting your own family. Not just the people around your table, though. Count everyone in your WHOLE family. Then consider:

- Who do you include when asked to count your WHOLE family. Just one side of the family? Or both sides?
- How far back do you go? Grandparents? Great-grandparents?
- Do you include only first cousins? Or also second cousins and third cousins?

Now imagine trying to count a whole nation – without any computers or online data.





- How/where would you even start?
- How might you divide up the nation in order to make it a little more manageable?
- Where would you get your information from? How would you know that information was reliable and accurate?

## Zooming In:

Since counting such a large group of people is obviously going to be a challenge, God tells Moshe to get the help of the leaders of each of the 12 tribes of Israel, and to have them each work on counting the people of their own tribe. That way it would already become more manageable. But then what?

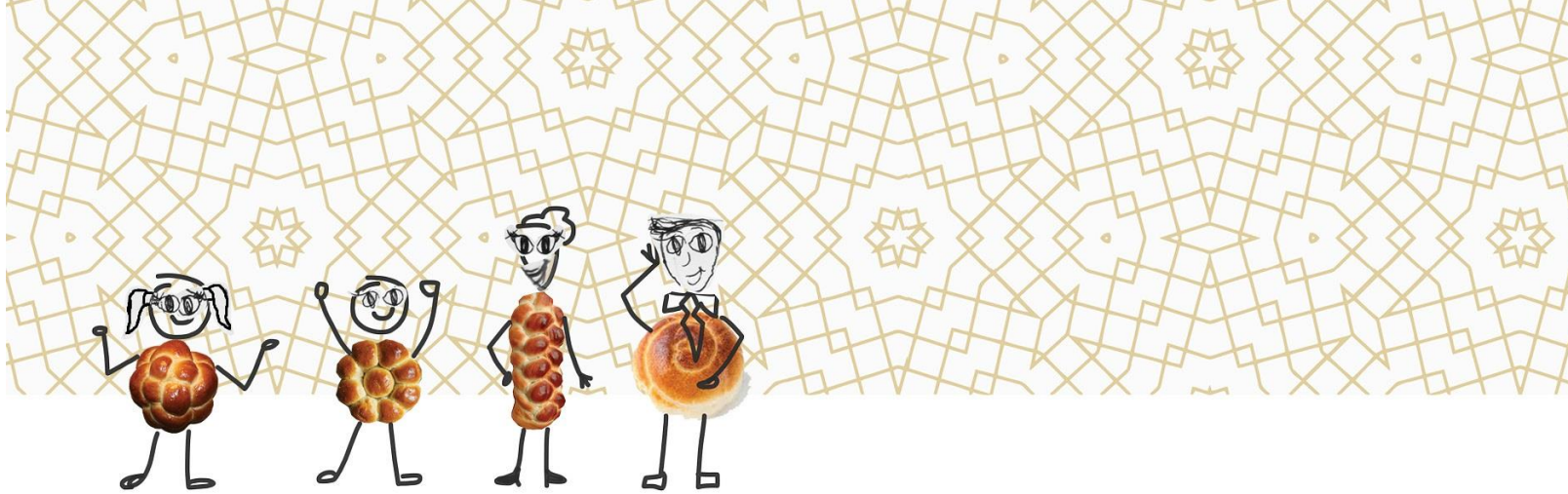
We are told in Bamidbar, chapter 1, verse 18:

And all the community they assembled on the first day of the second month, and they **were registered** by their clans, by their fathers' houses according to the number of names, from 20 years old and up, by their heads.

וְאֵת כָּל-הָעֵדָה הִקְהִילוּ, בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ  
הַשֵּׁנִי, וַיִּתְיַלְדּוּ עַל-מִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית  
אֲבֹתָם; בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁמוֹת, מִבֶּן עָשָׂרִים שָׁנָה  
וְמַעְלָה לְגִלְגֻלָּתָם.

On the first day of the month of Iyyar, all the people gathered, and in order to be counted they did something called וַיִּתְיַלְדּוּ. We have translated it as "were registered," but honestly, it's not really clear what that word actually means.

The commentator Ibn Ezra says that וַיִּתְיַלְדּוּ, from the same root word as נולדו (which means 'were born'), means that since the reason for the counting was to identify how many people were old enough to serve as soldiers, they were each asked what their birthday (and birth year) was!



The commentator Rashi says something else – that what **וַיִּתְּנֵנִי לְדוֹן** means is that they brought **סִפְרֵי יְחֻסֵיהֶם**, **their books of their family tree**, to prove that they really belonged to the tribe they said they were from. That way, each tribe was able to figure out how many people they actually had. Then Moshe added up all the numbers from all the tribes, and in that way knew how many soldiers the nation had!

## *The Parsha Through Another Lens*

### **Family Tree Time:**

**Note:** If playing the Family Tree Game, you may want to print and cut out the family tree stick figures before Shabbat. To make it work even more easily, you may want to label the printed-out figures as different members of your family, so your children can build accurate family trees.

Along the lines of Rashi's commentary – let's spend some time talking about our own **Family Tree!**

Some of us are lucky enough to live close by to some of our relatives; while some of us have to use Skype or Facetime to talk to many of our family members. But no one knows all of their relatives, or all of the interesting stories about them! Use this opportunity to talk about YOUR family tree by choosing one relative to share about. You might choose an older relative who has led a long life, or one who is gone. Alternatively, you might choose a family member who lives far away in another part of the country or the world.





1. **Show them off:** If you have photographs of that relative, pull them out to show your family.
2. **Storytelling:** Choose one or two stories to share about that relative that will pique your family's interest.
3. **The Family Tree Game:** Use the family tree stick figures below to show your family exactly how you are related to your relative.

**Shabbat Shalom!**

