

LITTLE GEMS

Bamidbar

Shalom children! This week will be our first week in the book of Bamidbar. Bamidbar is a Hebrew word meaning 'in the desert' or 'in the wilderness,' but it is also the title of one of the books in the Torah. You may have also heard it called the book of Numbers.

The Yisra'elites had now reached the Wilderness of Sinai. Yahweh told Mosheh that they needed to take a census of all the men who were 20 years old and up. A census is when a group gets counted so that they can know how many people there are. Mosheh did what Yahweh said. He counted the Yisra'elites according to which family group, or tribe, they were in. These were the men who would be going out to serve in the army.

(Place each tribe with their banner along the top of the board as you read.)

The tribe of Re'uben had 46,500 men.

The tribe of Shim'on had 59,300 men.

The tribe of Gad had 45,650 men.

The tribe of Yehudah had 74,600 men.

The tribe of Yissaskar had 54,400 men.

The tribe of Zebulun had 57,400 men.

The tribe of Ephrayim, which was part of Yoseph, had 40,500 men.

The tribe of Menashsheh, which was also part of Yoseph, had 32,200 men.

The tribe of Binyamin had 35,400 men.

The tribe of Dan had 62,700 men.

The tribe of Asher had 41,500 men.

And the tribe of Naphtali had 53,400 men.

Altogether, there were 603,550 men who were counted. That's a lot of people—over half a million! But remember, only the men were counted in this census, so if you add in all the women and children, there were actually a lot more Yisra'elites than that.

Now, you may have noticed that the tribe of Lewi was not on this list. That's not because Mosheh forgot about them. Yahweh had special plans for the Lewites, so He did not want them to be included in this census. Their job was to watch over the Dwelling Place of the Witness. They would be taking care of all its furnishings. We will talk more about that next week. When it was time for Yisra'el to move to a new location, they would also take everything down and set it all back up again. This was a job that Yahweh wanted *only* the Lewites to do. In fact, anybody else who came near the Dwelling Place would not live, so it was very important that each person do the job that Yahweh had told him specifically to do. Since nobody else could come near the Dwelling Place, the Lewites were given the job of helping Aharon and his sons. **(Place Aharon, El'azar and Ithamar on board.)** All of Yisra'el's first-born were to be set-apart to Yahweh, but Yahweh picked the Lewites to do this job instead of the first-born.

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The Lewites were to camp more closely around the Dwelling Place, and the rest of the Yisra'elites were to set up their camps around them. **(Place Dwelling Place in center of board.)** Wherever each tribe set up their camp, they would display their own banner. Yehudah, Yissaskar, and Zebulun camped on the east side. **(Move three tribes and banners to the right of the Dwelling Place.)** Re'uben, Shim'on, and Gad camped on the south side. **(Move tribes and banners below the Dwelling Place.)** Ephrayim, Menashsheh, and Binyamin camped on the west side. **(Move tribes and banners to the left of the Dwelling Place.)** And Dan, Asher, and Naphtali camped on the north side. **(Place tribes and banners above the Dwelling Place.)** Whenever they moved to a different place, the group camping with Yehudah would be the first ones to leave. They would be followed by the group camping with Re'uben; then would come the Lewites and the Tent of Meeting, traveling in the middle. They were followed by the group with Ephrayim, and finally the group with Dan.

Yahweh then told Mosheh that it was time to count all the children of Lewi. Everyone else had been counted, so now it was their turn! They were to count every man and every boy who was a month old and up. Lewi's sons were named Gershon, Qehath, and Merari. **(Place Lewi's sons on board.)** The Gershonites were to camp to the west, behind the Dwelling place. **(Place Gershonites between Dwelling Place and camp of Ephrayim.)** They were responsible for the tent and its covering, the door covering, the courtyard screens, the door covering of the courtyard around the Dwelling Place and the altar, and all their cords. The Qehathites were to camp on the south side of the Dwelling Place. **(Place Qehathites between Dwelling Place and camp of Re'uben.)** They were responsible for the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the utensils, and the covering. The Merarites were to camp on the north side of the Dwelling Place. **(Place Merarites between Dwelling Place and camp of Dan.)** They were responsible for the boards, the bars, columns, sockets, and utensils. They were also to take care of the columns, sockets, pegs, and cords of the courtyard. Last but definitely not least, Mosheh, Aharon, and his sons were to camp on the east side before the Dwelling Place. **(Place Mosheh, Aharon, and sons between Dwelling Place and camp of Yehudah.)** They were responsible for guarding the duty of the set-apart place and the duty of the children of Yisra'el. When Mosheh finished counting the boys and men of the Lewites, there was a total of 22,000.

Next, it was time to count all the first-born boys of Yisra'el who were a month old and up. Now remember, Yahweh took the Lewites for Himself instead of the first-born of Yisra'el, but He still wanted all the firstborn to be counted. Well, there were 22,273 of them, and that was 273 more than the number of Lewite boys. So for each of the additional 273 firstborn boys, 5 sheqels of silver were given to Aharon and his sons. **(Place silver coins next to Aharon.)**

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Whew, that was a lot of counting! But now, I think things will be a lot more orderly for the Yisra'elites, because now they know who camps where, in Yahweh's perfect order.

Well children, we have come to the end of our story for today. We will see you next week for another exciting Little Gems story!