

B'midbar
Numbers 1:1 — 4:20
A Sensitive Spirit And A Seared Conscience

TODAY IS THE 49th DAY OF COUNTING THE OMER.

1. Torah portion begins the fourth book of the Bible called B'midbar (Numbers).
 - a. Like to remind that מִדְבָּר *midbar* “wilderness” is also *m'daber* - “to speak.”
 - b. To get to the mountain we must endure the wilderness.
 - c. Because it's there that He speaks to us about us.
2. Therefore, the wilderness is necessary even though it is full of difficulty.
 - a. Because, you might say, that whoever endures wilderness will be counted.
 - b. IOW, if you can't endure the wilderness, you can't be numbered to fight.
 - c. The portion deals with the numbering of the legions (armies) of Israel.

Numbers 1:1-3

Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of meeting, on the first day of the second month (Iyar), in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying: “Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, every male individually, from twenty years old and above—all who are able to go to war in Israel. You and Aaron shall number them by their armies.”

3. Again, this portion deals primarily with numbering the people and their encampments.
 - a. Nevertheless, the *mishkan* remained as the focal point of life.
 - b. If not, the potential for tribal affiliation to cause factions and division.
 - c. Point: If our focus in on His Presence among us, less likely to foster strife.
 - d. As long as focus in on self or others in a negative sense, problems arise.
4. Israel's development as a nation was filled with jealousy and rivalry.
 - a. Once *mishkan* established, tribal affiliation could be healthy if focus was right.
 - b. Tribes helped serve the goal of establishing the worship of YHVH as central.
5. Distinct only in terms of the role (function) they would play for national unity.
 - a. While each had unique qualities, none had everything -- they were not the same.
 - b. Incomplete without the other -- need other components to be whole as nation.
 - c. Stones on breastplate were not the same; all were needed for wholeness.

6. We are all given gifts and talents but no one has a monopoly.
 - a. In other words, who I am is not most important; who I serve is important.
 - b. But also acknowledge that we need one another -- their gifts and perspective.
 - c. This is demonstrated in the beginning with man and wife.
 - d. Two different people with different points of view -- still one flesh.

7. But like man and wife are joined by Him to be one, the tribes (and I'm alluding to us) are brought together by Him to be one with Him and with each other.
 - a. So then, remembering that He is among us should provoke our best behavior.
 - b. If we thought that in the morning, He would descend, how would we behave?
 - c. And yet, He moves among us and, therefore, we should respond accordingly.

8. That thought prompts this one: what if someone doesn't sense His Presence?
 - a. Means either His Presence isn't among us and we promote wishful thinking...
 - b. Or that person is or has become insensitive to His Presence.
 - c. Seems to me that His Spirit must be in us if we are to be sensitive to Him.
 - d. Rom. 8:16 -- "Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."

9. It is possible to become incapable of recognizing His Voice and insensitive to Him.
 - a. As Yeshua prepared to go to the cross, He said, "Father Glorify your name."

John 12:28-29

Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him."

10. Point: God spoke and not everyone heard it. Some wrote it off as natural occurrence.
 - a. Some couldn't perceive exactly what had happened.
 - b. Makes you wonder if those who heard thunder participated in "Crucify Him."
 - c. Now consider what Paul has to say as it relates to this issue:

1 Timothy 4:1-2

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron...

11. Want to focus on three points:
 - a. One: The Spirit is adamant about this issue so pay attention.
 - b. Two: They "depart from the faith" inferring they were once part of the Body.
 - c. IOW, this isn't addressing those in the world.

12. Having departed the faith (not the assembly necessarily) conscience is seared.
 - a. The Greek term is synonymous with being cauterized.
 - b. Conscience feels pain and conviction when doing wrong.

13. Being receptive to falsehood and dispensing lies leads to a conscience that is numb.
 - a. It can no longer feel conviction that comes by the Spirit.
 - b. Which leads me to believe that a "seared conscience" can't recognize Spirit.
 - c. And if that is so, more likely to focus on all the wrong things.

14. Point: if we are focused on the wrong thing -- e.g. "I'm from this tribe or congregation etc. (and we're the only ones with the truth)" -- you might find it difficult to recognize God's Presence.
 - a. He won't long abide those who are insensitive or disrespectful to Him.

15. But if we do sense that His Presence is among us, we should all focus on same goal.
 - a. What He wants to do; how He wants to do it regardless of my likes and dislikes.

Matthew 6:3

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

16. Context of this statement is about why we should not worry about temporal issues.
 - a. Things that God knows we need in this life.
 - b. Nevertheless, it is a matter of focus -- don't focus on those things.
 - c. Focus on His Kingdom and things will fall into proper order.

17. Again, focusing on other issues tends to divide rather than unite us as one people.
 - a. If He is to be in our midst, there cannot be strife – no iron tools for Temple.
 - b. We need one another in spite of the fact that the other guy is not my tribe.

18. Given that we are in a war, dealing with enemy requires the aid of my brother.
 - a. Therefore, I must be able to trust my brother.
 - b. I can do that when I know that he is fighting for the same thing that I am.
 - c. We are going to need to be able to trust one another in the days ahead.

19. That brings us back to the issue being addressed in the beginning of this portion.
 - a. Determining who is “able to go forth to war.”
 - b. As they go forward, imperative that they be an army, not unorganized rabble.
 - c. If the enemy sees us as squabbling masses, result will be devastating.

d. If you've had differences with those here, work on mending fences.

20. Prophetically speaking, only those equipped and prepared for battle and ready to possess the land are counted.

- a. This is a pattern for us to take to heart; weak and infirm weren't counted.
- b. Now is the time to overcome our spiritual infirmities and weaknesses.
- c. Now is the time to lay aside "every weight and the sin that easily besets us."
- d. Do not allow our conscience to be seared with a hot iron.

21. Also, now is not the time to be looking at the other guy with contempt or jealousy.

- a. Peter looked at the other guy when Yeshua told him of his future.
- b. It's none of your business what I do with him. You follow me; not the other guy.
- c. Want to highlight this point because each of us must be content in our role.
- d. Function in your purpose as opposed to I want to function in his purpose.

22. Consider: there are certain men from the tribes that God called by name to serve.

- a. Doesn't mean that they were less or more than other men in terms of value.
- b. Meant that they carried certain responsibilities that others didn't have.
- c. Still, every person in the tribe and congregation had responsibility to be holy.
- d. Meaning, couldn't lose sight of overall purpose -- God dwelling among them.

23. In this portion, God specifically called the tribe of Levi to perform a certain purpose.

Numbers 3:12-13

Now behold, I Myself have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel. Therefore the Levites shall be Mine, because all the firstborn are Mine. On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast. They shall be Mine: I am the Lord."

24. In lieu of the firstborn from each tribe, God appointed the Levites in their stead.

- a. Didn't mean the Levites were more special than the rest.
- b. Meant they were called for a special purpose.
- c. Calling upon some to do certain things; for others is something different.
- d. The Priests/Levites were assigned to do things on behalf of the entire nation.

Numbers 3:38

Moreover those who were to camp before the tabernacle on the east, before the tabernacle of meeting, were Moses, Aaron, and his sons, keeping charge of the sanctuary, to meet the needs of the children of Israel.

25. That is why they were out front -- to serve the people, not themselves.
a. Serving the people by serving God.

Numbers 1:52-53

The children of Israel shall pitch their tents, everyone by his own camp, everyone by his own standard, according to their armies; but the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the Testimony, that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the children of Israel; and the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony.

26. Literally, the Levites shall “guard the watch” - they are the sentries for *mishkan*.
a. They surrounded the *mishkan* and other tribes camped around them.
b. Served as a “bodyguard” to protect the Presence.
c. Not for God’s protection but the people’s benefit lest someone cross boundaries.
d. This was for the protection of others.
27. Part of their job was to make sure boundaries weren't crossed so that the Presence would remain.
a. In that sense, responsible for the well-being of the entire congregation.
28. There are those that God has assigned to serve in that capacity here in our assembly.
a. They are no better or no less than anyone else in the congregation.
b. They aren't special necessarily; just called to do something special.
c. To serve God's people by serving God and be guardians of the Presence.
29. Therefore, pray for those in leadership seeing that, according to the pattern, they are charged with guarding what is holy.
a. Don't think that you aren't also responsible for be a guardian.
b. We all have a responsibility to protect what has been entrusted to us.
c. Still, those in leadership carry a lot; responsible for a lot.
30. Adversary will try to get in any way he can -- through you or through me.
a. Point: those in leadership are not exempt from those attacks.
b. By virtue of their function, may have a bigger target on their back.
c. Again, not because they are more important.
d. Because of the role they play in the overall function of the congregation.
31. If he can strike the shepherds, so to speak, then the flock may scatter.
a. When the flock scatters, the roaring lion goes to work on those separated.
b. So then, it is our duty to stay strong, united and focused.

32. Backtracking a bit because we can't overlook this point; all "firstborn" belong to God.
- First of all, "Firstborn" should not be confused with "only begotten."
 - That is reserved for only one, the Messiah.
 - Still, He refers to His people as His firstborn.
 - Exodus 4:22 -- "Israel is My son, My firstborn."
33. There are those who, in the natural, are firstborn but there is a spiritual concept revealed through the natural.
- Also, the natural firstborn isn't always God's firstborn.
 - i.e. Ishmael was the son of the flesh; Isaac was son of promise (firstborn).
 - Esau despised birthright (seared conscience?).
 - Jacob led the family because he was sensitive to the things of God.
34. Consider this: the firstborn were redeemed from Egypt by blood of the Lamb.
- Thus the picture: first born are those who have been redeemed.
 - Also those who recognize the Presence because being conformed to His image.

Romans 8:28-29

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

35. If we are a true worshiper (spirit and truth), then we are "firstborn."
- Meaning that we are all His and all serve a specific purpose;
 - Just because the Levites were assigned to a duty didn't make them better.
 - Didn't make them more important; God still valued the others as firstborn.
36. Some appointed to lead and some are not; yet, most are in position to lead someone.
- IOW, we are all shepherds, in a sense, and simultaneously we are all sheep.
37. We are laborers sent into the field to work and to protect what is entrusted to us.
- We know what happens when we don't guard.
 - Wheat and tares - the enemy sowed tares (thistles) in the midst of the wheat.
 - Field (world) was polluted with tares because men went to sleep.
 - Supposed to be on guard duty - "guarding the watch."
38. Consider that this parable is about the wheat harvest which is related to Shavuot.
- Shavuot is also known as "the festival of the (wheat) harvest."

- b. Interesting tradition: on Shavuot, men stay awake all night to receive revelation.
- c. If we go to sleep, the whole camp is at risk; we must be alert and good sentries.
- d. A lot of things are happening in the world that would like to infiltrate the camp.
- e. 1 Thess 5:6 -- "Let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober."

39. Be more sensitive to His Spirit and not so much to ourself.

- a. And by that I mean, be alert and resist anything that would sear conscience.