

# B'HA-ALO-T'CHA

36th of the 54 sedras;  
3rd of 10 in Bamidbar



Written on 240 lines, ranks 10th

16 Parshiyot; 11 open, 5 closed

One of its parshiyot (a S'TUMA) is separated from the parshiyot before and after it by more than the usual blank space - namely, also by backwards NUNs. Consequently, it is the "loneliest", most isolated of all the 674 parshiyot of the Torah

136 p'sukim, ranks 11th, 4th in Bamidbar

1840 words, ranks 12th, 3rd in Bamidbar

7055 letters, ranks 12th, 4th in Bamidbar

## MITZVOT

5 mitzvot; 3 positives, 2 prohibitions.

To illustrate how uneven the distribution of mitzvot is in the Torah, B'ha-alo- t'cha has more mitzvot than 28 other sedras, and fewer than 25 sedras. Only 5 mitzvot and it's in the top half.

## Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P>] and [S>] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI; L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek & pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

**Pronunciation note:** To explain the particular transliteration of this sedra-name, I'd like to explain a number of DIKDUK (Hebrew grammar, syllabification, and pronunciation) issues. The name of the sedra sounds like it has six syllables, when it technically has only three. The BET with a SH'VA NA at the beginning of the word is considered too weak to stand on its own, as a syllable by itself. Rather, it is attached to the letter-vowel that follows it, the HEI with a PATACH, giving us the first syllable - B'HA. The AYIN that follows has a CHATAF PATACH vowel, which is treated like a letter with a SH'VA NA (because the CHATAF shortens the vowel sound, resulting in the AYIN's pronunciation being too weak to stand on its own (just like the opening BET). The AYIN joins the following letter-vowel, LAMED-CHOLAM, which itself is pronounced like the English word 'low', and does not join the TAV that follows it. So the second syllable is ALO. Almost there. The TAV is voweled by a SH'VA NA and the T' is attached to the CHAF-KAMATZ to form the third syllable of B'HA-ALO-T'CHA.

# Kohen - First Aliya - 14 p'sukim - 8:1-14

[P> 8:1 (4)] Aharon is instructed to tend the lamps of the Menora.

**SDT:** Rashi explains the connection between this portion and that of the gifts of the N'SI'IM at the end of Parshat Naso. Aharon, as leader of the tribe of Levi, was embarrassed that he had not offered gifts for the dedication of the Mishkan as did the other leaders. G-d is telling him that his gift - daily service in the Mishkan - is far greater than the other gifts. Theirs are material and transitory; his is spiritual and permanent.

The MITZVA to tend and light the Menora is recorded and counted elsewhere in the Torah. This fact makes the DRASHOT explaining the connection to Parshat N'si'im stand out all the more, since, on a P'SHAT level, it is sort of redundant (not quite) in B'haalot'cha.

Ramban sees in this portion an allusion to a future generation when descendants of Aharon (the Chashmona'im) (re)dedicated the Mikdash by lighting the Menora (which also lasts much longer than Mishkan-related gifts).

If we look at the two topics that flank Bamidbar 7, we find the two Mikdash practices that survive until this day (as opposed to the short-lived nature of the gifts described in chapter 7) -

Birkat Kohanim, still practiced daily (in Eretz Yisrael, and elsewhere less often in most communities) as commanded by the Torah, and the Menora, commemorated by the yearly observance of Chanuka. This perhaps is part of G-d's message to Aharon.

All-in-all, this opening parsha is a strong "REMEZ to Chanuka from the Torah". And the point is driven home by the fact that the haftara of B'haalot'cha is also the haftara for Shabbat Chanuka. And the beginning of this week's sedra is part of the Torah reading of the 8th day of Chanuka.

The Menora is described again with specific reference to the wicks (flames) of the lamps facing the "face (central stalk) of the Menora".

**SDT:** From the terms B'HAALOT'CHA and HE'ELA NEIROTEHA, Rashi teaches us that there was a step stool of sorts in front of the Menorah which the Kohein tending and lighting the Menora ascended for that purpose.

Commentaries ask why this was necessary, since the Menorah was 18 t'fachim tall. That's three amot, approx. 170cm, a height that a man would not need a step stool to reach.

The answer is that the Kohein Gadol was forbidden to raise his hands above the TZITZ he wore on his forehead and the step stool

prevented him from inadvertently raising his hands too high.

[P> 8:5 (18)] Next G-d commands Moshe to separate the Leviyim from among the People and to purify them. Ritual waters, shaving their hair (Rashi explains that as an atonement for the firstborns whom the Leviyim replaced, they were considered to have a ritual impurity akin to that of M'TZORA, hence the shaving of all bodily hair as part of their purification process), cleansing and purifying their clothes, and various sacrifices and ceremonies accomplish this command of "separation of the Leviyim".

## Levi - Second Aliya - 12 p'sukim - 4:38-49

After the above procedures, the Leviyim are qualified to perform their holy tasks in the Mikdash as aides to the Kohanim. They, instead of the firstborns of Israel, shall function in the Mikdash.

The Torah explains that the sacred functions were originally to be performed by firstborns who were sanctified as a result of their being spared in Egypt. (The special position of the firstborn actually predates the Egypt experience.) As a result of the sin of the Golden Calf, the Leviyim, who unanimously reacted in defense of G-d's honor, were taken by Him in lieu of the firstborns of all the Tribes.

Moshe, Aharon and the People of Israel

did to/with the Leviyim as Moshe was instructed. After purification, the Leviyim were to come to the Mishkan to "report for duty".

[S> 8:23 (4)] From age 25 until 50, the Levi was eligible for Mishkan service. (From 25 the Levi studied and trained for Temple service, at 30 he began serving. Age 50 was the retirement age for the "carrying chores", but the singing and guarding functions of the Levi continued beyond that age. Note too that the carrying "thing" was only during the time of the portable Mishkan and has no relevance to the Beit HaMikdash.)

## Shlishi - Third Aliya - 14 p'sukim - 9:1-14

[P> 9:1 (8)] G-d spoke to Moshe in the Sinai wilderness during Nissan of the second year from the Exodus. He commanded/reminded him to tell the People to bring the Korban Pesach at its proper time and with its relevant mitzvot & details. The Torah records that on the 14th of Nissan in the afternoon, the first annual Korban Pesach was indeed brought as was commanded.

This Pesach and Pesach Sheni episode occurred before the counting of the People recorded in the opening portion of Bamidbar. It was not placed at the beginning of the book because it is embarrassing to the People of Israel that they (we) only

brought this one Korban Pesach during the entire Wilderness period. This was due to the decision not to circumcise the males born in the Midbar, since traveling (which was always a possibility) might put the babies at risk. Nonetheless, the fact that no KP was done during the Midbar period except for the first year, is considered a shame to the People of Israel. This is one explanation to the episodes being out of order. OTOH, if it is so that the mitzva of Korban Pesach really applied only after entry into Eretz Yisrael, then we'd say that this first annual KP was an exception and that we'd need another explanation as to why the census is recorded first.

Next, the Torah tells us that there were people who were ritually unclean and thus unable to participate in the Korban Pesach. They approached Moshe and complained that it was unfair that they were unable to join in this mitzva with the rest of the People.

Moshe called upon G-d to answer their "complaint".

It is likely that the people who were Tamei on the 14th of Nissan were the cousins of Nadav and Avihu - namely, Misha'el and Eltzafan, sons of Uziel - who tended to the bodies of their cousins on the 8th of Nissan, when they (Nadav and Avihu) were stricken dead for bringing a "strange fire" into the Mishkan. The 14th of Nissan

would be their 7th day of impurity and as such they would be ineligible to partake of the Korban Pesach (even though they could be TAHOR by nightfall). In other words, being TAHOR for the eating of KP is not enough to permit participation in KP - one needs to be TAHOR when the KP is offered in the afternoon of the 14th.

It is important to understand that the laws of Pesach Sheni are part of the original Torah miSinai. However, they were not revealed to the People until this point. And, we can say, it was done at this point to honor those who "complained".

Contrast this kind of complaining with the other kind that unfortunately occurs too many times in Bamidbar - soon to come in this sedra and beyond.

[P> 9:9 (6)] A person who is TAMEI or far away from the Mikdash and is unable to bring KP shall bring a KP on the afternoon of the 14th of Iyar [380, A57 9:11] and eat it that night [381, A58 9:11] with matza and maror. Nothing of it may be left over for the morning [382, L119 9:12] and no bone of it may be broken [383, L122 9:12]; all rules of KP apply to this Pesach Sheni (actually there are differences concerning peripheral details, but the korbanot themselves are the same). Intentionally not bringing KP is punishable by "karet" (excision).

Although the Torah mentions two specific "excuses" for not bringing KP, anyone who did not bring KP for any reason - even including intentionally - is eligible and obligated (men are obligated; KP2 is optional for women) to bring Pesach Sheni. This Divine "second chance" is available EVEN to the intentional violator. There are distinctions concerning KAREIT depending upon why a person did not do Korban Pesach the first and the second time.

The Torah once again emphasizes that there is one law for the born-Jew and the convert.

## **R'vi'i** - Fourth Aliya - 19 p'sukim - 9:15-10:10

[S> 9:15 (9)] From the day that the Mishkan was erected, it was covered by a heavenly Cloud during the day and a fiery cloud at night. Only when the cloud would lift would the People travel. And when the cloud rested, the People would camp. It happened that sometimes the People traveled a few hours after they had camped; sometimes they stayed in one place for a period of days or months or years. By G-d's command the People camped and by G-d's command the People would travel.

**SDT:** The pasuk (9:18) says: "AL PI HASHEM (by the word of G-d) the People of Israel shall travel, and by G-d's word they shall camp." The

**SHLA"H HAKADOSH** writes that this is the source for the concept that a person should use the phrases **IM YIRTZEH HASHEM, BARUCH HASHEM, TODA LAKEIL, B'EZRAT HASHEM**, and the like whenever he speaks of doing something. Our travels and every activity should also be **AL PI HASHEM**.

[P> 10:1 (10)] G-d commanded Moshe to fashion two silver trumpets to be used to assemble the People (or their leaders) and to signal their movement. The T'KI'A sound on both trumpets was a call for everyone to gather to Moshe. The T'KI'A on one trumpet was a call to the leaders of the people. The T'RU'A sound indicated that traveling was to commence - one T'RU'A (with T'KI'A before and after) for each camp (of three tribes each). Kohanim are charged with the mitzva of sounding the trumpets when called for.

The above-mentioned purposes of the trumpets applied to the generation of the wilderness only, but the mitzva for future generations concerning the trumpets is as follows:

When the People enter the Land of Israel, the trumpets are to be used during times of troubles and on festive occasions during Temple service [384, A59 10:9,10].

## **MITZVA**notes

When does the mitzva apply? The blowing of the CHATZOTZROT in the

Beit HaMikdash, to accompany certain korbanot, obviously applies when we have the Beit HaMikdash.

What about the blowing during times of crises? Some authorities hold that the mitzva does not apply in our time - only at the time of the Beit Mikdash. Some say that this aspect of the mitzva would apply in our time except that we do not know how to make the Chatzotzrot, and therefore we cannot fulfill this mitzva on that "technicality". Others disagree and hold that the mitzva of blowing in times of trouble DOES apply and we use CHATZOTZROT made today to the best of our knowledge and ability.

Rabbi J. David Bleich in his Contemporary Halachic Problems mentions a fascinating opinion on this topic. Rather than Eretz Yisrael per se or the Mikdash being a pre-requisite for this mitzva (the blowing in times of national crisis aspect of the mitzva), it is Jewish sovereignty in Eretz Yisrael that activates the mitzva. Therefore, according to this opinion (one of many), we have a mitzva - maybe the only one - that reactivated for us on a D'Oraita level, in 1948.

In fact, the Rabbinat in Israel has, on occasion, decreed that the Chatzotzrot (from the Temple Institute in the Old City) and Shofarot be blown during times of national peril.

May we be privileged to the reactivation of the full mitzva of the

CHATZOTZROT, and may we soon hear their happy blasts in the Beit HaMikdash, BIMHEIRA V'YAMEINU, AMEIN.

**Baal HaTurim comments that the two Chatzotzrot correspond to Avraham and Yaakov, each of whom fought successful battles. He also says that the Chatzotzrot were silver and not gold, so as not to remind G-d (so to speak) of the KOL HAAM B'REI'O, the sound of the people shouting, associated with the golden calf.**

## **Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 24 p'sukim - 10:11-34**

[P> 10:11 (18)] On the 20th of Iyar in the year following the Exodus, the Cloud lifted from the Mishkan (for the first time). The People of Israel traveled through the Sinai wilderness and the Cloud rested in the Paran Desert. First group to travel was the "flag-camp" of Yehuda consisting of the Tribes of Yehuda, Yissachar and Zevulun. The Mishkan was dismantled and the Levi-families of Gershon and M'rari followed with their laden, covered wagons. Then came the camp of Reuven, Shimon and Gad. Then the Levi family of K'hat carrying the sacred vessels on their shoulders followed. Next came Efrayim, Menashe, and Binyamin followed by the "camp collectors", Dan, Asher and Naftali. (This description conforms to the simple reading of the text and one of the Talmudic opinions as to how the

people traveled in the Midbar - viz. linearly. There is another opinion that they traveled as they camped, in the square formation.)

[S> 10:29 (6)] Moshe informs his father-in-law Yitro (called Chovav) of Israel's traveling plans and asks him to come along. Yitro declines the invitation and returns to his home.

The People travel from Sinai for three days, led by the ARON which was 'searching' for a resting place, so to speak. G-d's Cloud accompanied and protected them.

At this point in the Torah, we are 13 months out of Egypt and neither the people nor Moshe Rabeinu have done what later caused them to be barred from entry into Eretz Yisrael. After Moshe talks to Yitro, it was supposed to be a three-day trip (miraculously condensed into one day) to bring us WITH Moshe, into Eretz Yisrael.

But then we started messing things up.

## **Shishi** - Sixth Aliya - 31 p'sukim - 10:35-11:29

[\*S\*> 10:35 (2)] The two special p'sukim about the moving and resting of the Aron are quoted in our davening when the Torah is taken out and returned to the Ark. In the Torah, this 2-pasuk portion is flanked by the letters NUN written backwards. This serves to "split the Book of Bamidbar into separate books". Rashi indicates

that this portion does not belong here and the unusual "scribal brackets" indicate its abnormal placement. Other commentaries point out that the split in the book is between the "good stuff" in the first part and the "bad episodes" in the second part.

[P> 11:1 (15)] Next follows another "black period" in the early history of the Nation - the Complaints. The People complained and were punished by fire. Moshe pleaded for the people and G-d stopped the punishing fire.

They complained about the Manna and demanded meat. With great chutzpa, they 'remembered' the fish and other 'fine foods' they ate in Egypt. And they disparaged the wonderful, miraculous sustenance from G-d. This angered (so to speak) G-d greatly. Even Moshe Rabeinu complained about G-d's anger with the People and expressed his difficulty in handling the People alone. Moshe also questioned where he would possibly be able to get enough meat to satisfy the People's demands.

[P> 11:16 (7)] G-d told Moshe to gather 70 elders who would help ease the burden of leadership. G-d would instill in them the Divine Insight so that Moshe would not have to lead the people alone.

To the People, G-d promised meat (quail) which would descend in such great quantities for a sustained period of time (a month) until the People would become "sick of them". Moshe

expressed doubt as to how so many people could be thus fed.

[P> 11:23 (13)] G-d reproaches Moshe for the doubt. Moshe speaks to the People and gathers the Elders who were given the gift of prophecy by G-d.

Two of these "new prophets" (Eldad and Medad) remained within the camp and prophesied amongst the People.

(Commentaries tell us that they prophesied Moshe's death and Yehoshua's accession to leadership.) Yehoshua, protective of his mentor Moshe, pleads with Moshe to punish them. Moshe assures Yehoshua that it is G-d's will that they should prophesy.

**SDT: About 18 times in the Tanach, it says "And G-d got angry with..." Yisrael / Bnei Yisrael / His people. When the People complained about the Manna, etc., the Torah says VAYICHAH AF HASHEM M'OD, G-d got VERY angry. Why? Kedushat Levi explains that usually when G-d got angry at the People, Moshe would rise to their defense and persuade G-d, so to speak, not to punish them. This time, the Torah says that "and in Moshe's eyes it was bad". Moshe Rabeinu was more upset with the people than usual. This "angered" G-d all the more, that Moshe did not defuse G-d's anger as in the other instances.**

## Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 23 p'sukim - 11:30-12:16

Moshe and the Elders gather the People. G-d sends the quail, as He has promised, carried by a Divine wind. The supply is overwhelming. The People spend day and night collecting the quail. No sooner had they started eating, when G-d's anger was manifest in a devastating plague that struck the People. The location became known as KIVROT HATA'AVA (graves of lust), because that is where the "complainers" were buried.

[P> 12:1 (3)] Miriam speaks critically against Moshe to Aharon by belittling Moshe's unique stature among prophets and people.

[S> 12:4 (10)] G-d rebukes them (Miriam and Aharon) and clearly states how unique Moshe is among all prophets, past and future. Miriam is stricken with Tzora'at. Moshe offers a short but eloquent prayer behalf of his sister Miriam.

[P> 12:14 (3)] The People delay their travels for the week of Miriam's isolation.

81 years earlier, Miriam had stood by the Nile protectively watching over her baby brother Moshe in the basket. Her "reward-in-kind" is this 7-day delay, as the people of Israel stand-by for her. The Mishna points out that good deeds are thusly rewarded. This, of course, is the

**well-known MIDA K'NEGED MIDA  
(measure for measure).**

**On the other hand, the Torah in D'varim 24:9 tells us to remember what G-d did to Miriam on our way from Egypt. This becomes a classic warning against speaking LASHON HARA.**

**The Baal HaTurim further points out that the pasuk describing Miriam's vigil at the river, consists of 7 words, corresponding to the 7 days that the people waited for Miriam to "heal".**

The People move to the Paran desert.

The last 3 p'sukim are reread for the Maftir.

## **Haftara - 21 p'sukim - Zecharya 2:14-4:7**

As if to offset the depressing sequence of events from the sedra, and to answer the question as to how it is possible for the People of Israel to rise from the depths of their iniquity, the haftara provides us with the optimistic prophecies of messianic times, when G-d will once again be completely in our midst.

The haftara contains Zecharya's vision of the Golden Menora flanked by olive branches. This serves as an appropriate counter-point to the description of the Menora of the Mishkan at the beginning of the sedra. The Haftara also tells about a Kohen Gadol

(Yehoshua - not that Yehoshua - in the haftara; Aharon in the sedra).

This vision of the Menora was taken by the State of Israel to be the national emblem (not exactly, but close). Wouldn't it be wonderful if our leaders would truly understand and appreciate the words of Zecharia in explaining that vision: "Not by might nor by power, but by My spirit..." Only when we act properly, which also means differently from other nations, will we merit the Geula. This does NOT mean that we shouldn't have a well-trained army and the most advanced military equipment. We have that B"H and we need it. And we thank HaShem for it.

**This is also the haftara of Shabbat Chanuka (and the first Shabbat Chanuka, if there are two.)**