

PI-N'CHAS

41st of the 54 sedras;
8th of 10 in Bamidbar



Written on 280 lines (rank: 2nd)

35 Parshiyot; 10p 25s (2nd most)

168 p'sukim - 2nd (2nd in Bamidbar)

1887 words - 9th (2nd in Bamidbar)

7853 letters - 4th (2nd in Bamidbar)

Second shortest p'sukim in the Torah, wordwise. Longest words in the Torah (on average). 49th of 54 in length of p'sukim, letterwise. Second longest sedra, pasuk-wise. These factors combine to explain the different ranks above.

MITZVOT

Contains 6 of the 613 mitzvot, all positive. One of only six sedras that have only positive mitzvot.

(Four sedras have only prohibitions; 17 sedras have none of the Taryag; the rest have some positives and some prohibitions.)

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.

Concerning the strange transliteration of the name of this week's sedra - Pi-N'CHAS. English speakers will usually call someone with that name, PIN-chas, which is doubly inaccurate. The NUN has a SH'VA NA under it and belongs to the second syllable, not the first. And the accent is on that second syllable, not the first.

As to correct accenting of names, native English speakers are notorious about misaccenting them. MO-sheh, YITZ-chak, YAA-kov, YO-sef and so on - all wrongly accented. But totally acceptable in a colloquial way. When reading the Torah or davening, names should be pronounced correctly.

Israelis get most names accented properly. I have a grandson named yo-na-TAN. If I accidentally slip and call him YO-na-tan, my daughter corrects me. (Politely and respectfully, of course.)

Same for my newest grandchild - Avigayil Bracha. Americans would say BRA-cha. Correct is b'ra-CHA. avi-GA-yil is correct.

As to the small I - that's for the small YUD, as it appears in a Torah at the beginning of the sedra.

Kohen - First Aliya - 13 p'sukim - 25:10-26:4

[P> 25:10 (6)] When Pinchas killed Zimri and Kozbi, a tremendous controversy erupted among the people as to whether his actions were correct

or criminal. This week's sedra begins with G-d "testifying" to the correctness of what Pinchas did. First, because of what Pinchas did, the plague that had broken out, stopped. Second, the Torah repeatedly identifies Pinchas as the grandson of Aharon HaKohen. Third, G-d places His stamp of approval upon Pinchas by giving him "the covenant of the eternal kehuna" and the "covenant of peace". Perhaps, without G-d's seal of approval, the controversy would have continued.

SDT: A scribal tradition is to write the VAV in the word SHALOM with a split. Peace that results from violence, even required and approved violence, is defective. (Just one possible idea.)

Other commentaries look at the unusual VAV as allowing the word SHALOM to be read also as SHALEIM, complete. This relates to the Kohein, who must be without blemish in order to serve in the Mikdash.

[P> 25:16 (3.23)] Next, G-d tells Moshe to go to war against Midyan in revenge for their seduction of Israel to the worship of Baal Peor. (The battle does not take place until next sedra, the rest of Pinchas is a digression of sorts.) It is after the plague...

[P> 26:1* (10.77)] (this parsha break comes in the middle of a pasuk - unusual, but there are others.) G-d commands Moshe and Elazar that a new census be taken of the people.

The counting of the people at this point has several functions. Rashi says that after the plague(s) that devastated the people, G-d wants to count them as a shepherd would count his sheep after wolves attacked the flock. Second, having just been commanded to prepare to fight against Midyan, a census of men of military age is necessary. Third and most significantly, it is these people who will fight for Eretz Yisrael, and it is to these people that the Land will be apportioned (but based on the original post-Exodus census).

SDT: Moav was the partner of Midyan and should have been included in this avenging war. Some explain that Moav was spared this battle in the merit of the future Ruth. Other commentaries explain that there was a significant difference between Moav and Midyan. Moav was afraid of Israel. They feared that their land would be conquered by them (us). That is why they wanted to fight against us. Midyan agreed to help Moav because of their desire to destroy the Jewish People. They went as far as using their women to seduce the Israelites to immoral and idolatrous behavior. G-d's command of revenge is directed at the latter type of enemy.

Levi - Second Aliya - 47 p'sukim - 26:5-51

Longest 2nd-Aliya in the Torah, tied with Ki Tisa's. Both are tied for 3rd place for all Aliyot in the Torah. There are three different whole sedras with fewer p'sukim than this aliya.

In preparation for conscripting an army to fight Midyan, a new census is taken. The Torah lists each of the tribes, their family sub-units, and the number of males of military age.

In addition to this information, it is interesting to note the "extra" material mentioned in this portion - such as...

Under Reuven, the Torah tells us about Datan and Aviram who, with Korach, were swallowed up by the ground. The Torah then makes a point of telling us that Korach's sons did not die. Korach was from Levi. The inclusion of the sons of Korach at this point is not of census value, but does teach us the power of T'shuva. Korach's sons did not follow in their father's ways. They were (semi-) righteous.

Generally, the family units of a tribe are based on the sons of the sons of Yaakov. In Reuven's case, we have Chanoch, Palu, Chetzron, and Karmi, giving Reuven a total of 43,730. Palu's son, Eliav, is mentioned because his sons were N'mu'el, Datan and Aviram.

One more observation...

Reuven is often called B'CHOR YISRAEL. This is noteworthy in light

of the fact that Reuven "lost" the status of firstborn to three younger brothers. The Kehuna went to Levi, the kingship was destined to go the Yehuda, and the double portion of the B'chor went to Yosef. Yet the Torah repeatedly calls Reuven the B'chor of Yisrael.

Reuven's count dropped 2770 since the first counting in the Midbar. (To be expected, because of their involvement in the Korach rebellion.)

[S> 26:12 (3)] Shimon: note the relatively small number. Members of the tribe of Shimon were the main victims of the plague that followed the Zimri (one of the leaders of Shimon) affair. Shimon: 22,200. Down 37,100!

Shimon's family units are from N'mu'el (a different one), Yamin, Yachin, Zerach, and Sha'ul.

[S> 26:15 (4)] Gad: 40,500. Down 5150. The families from Gad's sons are Tz'fon, Chagi, Shuni, Ozni, Eiri, Arodi, Ar'eili.

[S> 26:19 (4)] Yehuda: 76,500. Up 1900. Yehuda's families are from sons Sheila, Peretz, Zerach. From Peretz come the families of Chetzron and Chamul. Yehuda's first two sons Er and Onan, who died childless, are mentioned at this point in the Torah.

[S> 26:23 (3)] Yissachar:

One of his sons is identified as Yashuv. Commentaries say that he is Yov, as recorded in Vayigash. Yov

was an inappropriate name (of pagan origin). The extra SHIN that was added to his name is symbolically taken from his father's name - spelled with two S(H)INs but pronounced as if there is only one.

The families of Yissachar are Tola, Puva (family name is Puni), Yashuv, and Shimron. Yissachar: 64,300. Up 9900.

[S> 26:26 (2)] Zevulun: 60,500. Up 3100. Families are from sons Sered, Eilon, and Yachl'eil.

[S> 26:28 (7)] Notice that the sons of Yosef are listed as Menashe and Efrayim - in that order. Although this is birth order, it is unusual to find Menashe mentioned first.

Also note the great increase in the population of Menashe, and the decrease in the population of Efrayim. The increase in Menashe is considered to be related to the fact that their tribe was given land on both sides of the Jordan. They were not the ones who asked to settle on the east side of the Jordan -- that was Reuven and Gad. Menashe was sent along, so to speak, to keep an eye on the other two tribes. It would therefore be unfair to give them a smaller portion of Eretz Yisrael (west of the Jordan). Their increase in population got them a "regular" share on the west side in addition to their territory on the east bank.

Menashe: here we are introduced to the five daughters of Tz'lofchad. We will hear more from them shortly. Menashe: 52,700. Increase of 20,500. By the way, Efrayim was mentioned before Menashe in that earlier census. Menashe's sons (family units) are Machir, Machir's son Gil'ad, Gil'ad's sons I'ezer, Cheilek, Asri'el, Shechem, Sh'mida, Cheifer, and Cheifer's son Tz'lofchad.

[S> 26:35 (3)] Efrayim: 32,500. Down 8000. Efrayim's families are from Shutelach, Becher, Tachan. And Shutelach's son Eiran. The Torah then says again that these two (Menashe and Efrayim) are the children of Yosef.

[S> 26:38 (4)] Binyamin: Families from sons Bela, Ashbel, Achiram, Sh'fufam, Chupam. Bela's sons Ard and Naaman. Binyamin: 45,600. Up 10,200. Note: Back in Vayigash, Binyamin is recorded as having 10 sons: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Geira, Naaman, Eichi, Rosh, Mupim, Chupim, and Ard.

[S> 26:42 (2)] Dan: One son, Shucham, family name Shuchami. Previously, Dan's son is called Chushim. Dan: 64,400. Up 1700.

Note that Binyamin's ten sons produced a smaller tribe than the one son of Dan. This is considered as a(nother) lesson that we cannot second-guess G-d. He has an agenda, we do what we do, but He "calls the shots".

[S> 26:44 (4)] Asher: Note the rare

inclusion of a daughter - Serach bat Asher. Great longevity is attributed to her, and she is considered the bridge between Yaakov and his sons on the one hand, and the new nation of Israel that emerged from Egyptian slavery. Serach was alive throughout the entire Egyptian experience, and then some. Asher's total: 53,400. Up 11,900, comes from sons Yimna, Yishvi, B'ri'a. B'ri'a's sons Chever and Malki'el.

[S> 26:48 (4)] Naftali: Yachtz'eil, Guni, Yeitzer, Shileim. 45,400. Down 8000.

And, within this Naftali parsha we are presented with the total for Bnei Yisrael: 601,730. Down 1820 from the 603,550 following the Exodus.

Here's a summary table (this census, the first census in Parshat Bamidbar, gain or loss, percentage gain/loss:

Reuven

46,500 / 43,730 / -2770 / -6.0%

Shimon

59,300 / 22,200 / -37,100 / -62.6%

Yehuda

74,600 / 76,500 / 1,900 / 2.5

Yissachar

54,400 / 64,300 / 9900 / 18.2

Zevulun

57,400 / 60,500 / 3100 / 5.4

Dan

62,700 / 64,400 / 1700 / 2.7

Naftali

53,400 / 45,400 / -8000 / -15.0

Gad

45,650 / 40,500 / -5150 / -11.3

Asher

41,500 / 53,400 / 11,900 / 28.7

Efrayim

40,500 / 32,500 / -8000 / -19.8

Menashe

32,200 / 52,700 / 20,500 / 63.7

Binyamin

35,400 / 45,600 / 10200 / 28.8

total:

603,550 / 601,730 / -1,820 / -0.3

Shlishi - Third Aliya 19 p'sukim - 26:52-27:5

[P> 26:52 (5)] It is to these people that the Land will be apportioned. The actual distribution of land will be done by (Divine) lottery and will involve this census and the earlier one.

[S> 26:57 (9)] The Torah next details the family tree of Levi (whose Tribe does not receive land). Specific attention is paid to Amram's family - namely, his wife Yocheved (daughter of Levi), Moshe, Aharon and his sons, and daughter/sister Miriam.

The Torah next states that no one in this national census was in the previous census except for Kalev and Yehoshua.

[S> 27:1 (5)] The daughters of Tz'lofchad (identified here as 6th generation from Yosef, an unusually long ancestry to present) approach Moshe, Elazar HaKohen, the leaders of the Tribes, and the People, and

petition for property in the Land of Israel for themselves because their father had no sons. They emphasize that their father was not part of Korach's rebellion but died for his own sins.

Tradition tells us that Tz'lofchad was the "wood-gatherer" who was executed for public desecration of the Shabbat. Had he been part of Korach's rebellion, he would have been considered a MOREID B'MALCHUT, one who rebels against the king, and would have forfeited any claim to land. But in his situation, his property still goes to his heirs.

Moshe appeals to G-d for a decision in their case. (Commentaries say that the details of the laws of inheritance momentarily escapes Moshe's memory, either as punishment for an inappropriate comment he had made, or to give honor to these "lovers of the Land" - Tz'lofchad's daughters - by having the laws of inheritance presented "to them"... or both.

Or - that Moshe knew the details but wanted to honor the petitioners by letting HaShem answer.)

To clarify: The laws of inheritance - as all of the Torah's mitzvot - were taught by G-d to Moshe to transmit to Bnei Yisrael, during the 40 days and 40 nights following the day of Revelation at Sinai, the day of Matan Torah. They were subsequently taught to the People by Moshe, in the

course of the wandering period in the Midbar.

The Laws of Inheritance were NOT an afterthought by G-d (no such thing) in answer to the challenge of the daughters of Tz'lofchad.

The Laws of Inheritance (DINEI N'CHALOT) are part of Torah MiSinai and were first introduced to the People at the point, following the census and the Torah's statement of LA-EILEH TEICHALEIK ET HAARETZ - to these (people) you will distribute the Land.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 18 p'sukim - 27:6-23

[P> 27:6 (6)] G-d's answer to the daughters of Tz'lofchad is in the affirmative - they will acquire both their father's share and part of their grandfather's share (specifically a double portion of Chefer's allotment, since Tz'lofchad was Chefer's b'chor. Note that both Chefer and Tz'lofchad were among those who left Egypt - males 20 and up, and therefore their heirs are to receive their allotments).

Furthermore, the laws of inheritance [400, A248 27:8] are hereby set down as follows:

A man's son(s) inherit from him. If there are no sons, his daughters inherit. (When a man has sons and daughters, his sons inherit and are responsible to support the daughters,

even if it means begging door-to-door to do so.) A man without children is inherited by his father, then his brothers (if his father is not alive), and if there are no brothers (or sisters), then his paternal uncles (or aunts), and then by the closest relatives along paternal lines.

Attempted clarification, but on the short side:

In addition to the Torah Law, there is a body of Rabbinic Law that can be summarized as Halachic Estate Planning. There are halachically acceptable ways to modify the distribution of one's estate. And there are ways to attempt to do it which are definitely forbidden by halacha. It is very complicated. One should consult an expert in both the halacha and the legal aspects of the laws of inheritance. A further complication is caused by the differences between halacha and the secular law of the location. Clear? Probably not. But at least you know that there are problems... and solutions.

[P> 27:12 (3)] G-d next tells Moshe to ascend Har HaAvarim and view the Land into which he (Moshe) will not go. Moshe is then to prepare for his death.

[S> 27:15 (9)] VAYDABEIR MOSHE EL HASHEM LEIMOR - "And Moshe spoke to G-d saying."

This unique variation of the most

common pasuk in the Torah (69 occurrences), creates a dramatic mood as we wait to hear what Moshe is about to say to G-d. Will he ask for his life? Will he ask to be permitted even a brief excursion into the beloved Land of Israel?

Moshe Rabeinu asks that a suitable leader be appointed to take his place.

A true leader is concerned first and foremost with his charges - this is part of the legacy of Moshe Rabeinu.

G-d's response to Moshe's request is immediate. Yehoshua is to be presented to the People as Moshe's successor and Moshe is to transfer to him some of his "majesty". Elazar has already taken over from Aharon, and it will be Yehoshua and Elazar who will lead the People into the Land.

Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 15 p'sukim - 28:1-15

[P> 28:1 (8)] This entire Aliya is the Torah reading of Rosh Chodesh when it falls on a weekday. The first part contains the mitzva of the Daily Sacrifices [401, A39 28:2], one male lamb, in its first year of life, blemish-free, in the morning and a second lamb before evening. Our t'filot of Shacharit and Mincha correspond to these T'midim.

[P> 28:9 (2)] Then comes Musaf for Shabbat - two lambs [402, A41 28:9]. Correspondingly, we daven Musaf

[P> 28:11 (5)] The Musaf of Rosh Chodesh [403, A42 28:9] consists of two bulls, one ram, and seven lambs. In addition to these "Olot", a goat was to be offered as a communal Sin Offering (CHATAT). Korbanot were accompanied by wine for libation (in varying amounts for the different animals) and fine flour & oil mixtures, known as Menachot.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 27 p'sukim - 28:16-29:11

[S> 28:16 (10)] Next the Torah presents the Musafim of the Holidays, beginning with Pesach. Note that each day of Pesach is a "carbon-copy" of the first day (as opposed to Sukkot - see further).

[S> 28:26 (6)] Then, Shavuot - here referred to as Yom HaBikurim. The Musaf of Shavuot is counted as a mitzva here [404, A45 28:26] - **that of Pesach and the other holidays have been counted already from Parshat Emor. In Emor, the korbanot that accompanied the Two Loaves offering on Shavuot are presented and Musaf is not mentioned until here in Pinchas.**

[P> 29:1 (6)] Next comes Rosh HaShana, called here YOM T'RUA. Its Musaf has also been counted as a mitzva previously (in Emor), but the mitzva of blowing Shofar is counted here [405, A170 29:1]. Since Rosh HaShana is also Rosh Chodesh Tishrei,

double musafim are brought.

MITZVAnotes

The Torah does not say: YOU SHALL BLOW THE SHOFAR. (Not for Rosh HaShana, that is.) It tells us to have a **YOM T'RU'A** on the first of Tishrei. The Gemara teaches us what that means, using a G'ZEIRA SHAVA (parallel terminology) to Yovel. In B'har, there is a command to blow the Shofar on Yom Kippur of Yovel. The Oral Law teaches us a parallel between the T'RU'A of Tishrei (Yovel) and the T'RU'A of Tishrei (Rosh HaShana). Although the word SHOFAR does not appear in context of RH, it DOES appear in connection with the "other" Tishrei-T'ru'a. The Talmudic principle of G'ZEIRA SHAVA is used to define the Rosh HaShana T'ru'a requirement as Shofar. Shofar is one of a small list of mitzvot that the Torah commands in an indirect way.

It can also be suggested, that by the Torah's wording, we need to do more than 'just' hear the Shofar on Rosh HaShana - we need to transform that day into a T'RU'A day that combines the blasts of the Shofar with the special davening and with our mood, attitude, and behavior.

[S> 29:7 (5)] Next comes Yom Kippur's Musaf. All the Chagim are presented here and previously in Emor (in addition to other places).

Notice that there is brief reference to the requirement of fasting and the Shabbat-like prohibition of Melacha, and slight reference to the special Yom Kippur service (presented in detail back in Parshat Acharei). Here, in Parshat Pinchas, the main emphasis is on the Musaf korbanot of the Holy days, the other details seemly coming as a by-the-way.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 29 p'sukim - 29:12-30:1

[S> 29:12 (5)] Lastly, the musafim of Sukkot and Sh'mini Atzeret are presented. The numbers of animals on Sukkot vary day-to-day, with the bulls totalling 70, a symbolic universal number. Specifically, each day has 2 rams, 14 lambs, and a goat as a Chatat, but the bulls range from 13 down to 7 for the 7 days of Sukkot.

Note: Each day of Sukkot has an "identity" of its own. There IS a third day of Sukkot in the Torah. In contrast, there is no mention of a third day of Pesach - just KA-ELEH, like ditto marks. On the other hand, the counting of the Omer gives Pesach what Sukkot has from its Musafim - a counting dimension.

First day: 13 bulls, 2 rams, 14 lambs...

[S> 29:17 (3)] And on the second day... (12, 2, 14 +1)

[S> 29:20 (3)] And on the third day... (11, 2, 14 +1)

[S> 29:23 (3)] And on the fourth day... (10, 2, 14 +1)

[S> 29:26 (3)] And on the fifth day... (9, 2, 14 +1)

[S> 29:29 (3)] And on the sixth day... (8, 2, 14 +1)

[S> 29:32 (3)] And on the seventh day... (7, 2, 14 +1)

[S> 29:35 (6)] On the eighth day... (without "and", because Sh'mini Atzeret is its own holiday, in addition to being the 8th day of Sukkot, sort of)

These musaf passages for Chagim are the respective Maftirs of the Holidays.

The sedra ends with references to other korbanot in the Mikdash. And finally, a summary/divider pasuk - And Moshe told the people all that HaShem had commanded.

Rashi explains that Matot begins with Moshe speaking to the people, so the pasuk at the end of Pinchas has to restate that Moshe has been transmitting G-d's words all along, and not just from the portion of Nedarim at the beginning of Matot.

The last 6 p'sukim are reread for the Maftir.

Six p'sukim is the most for a regular maftir. Only one other sedra has a sixer - Nitzavim. Special maftirs range from 3 to 40 p'sukim. (When do we read a 40-pasuk maftir?)

Haftara - 22 p'sukim - Yirmiyahu 1:1-2:3

Pinchas has two haftarot, one for when it is during the 3 Weeks (majority of years) and one for when it falls before (rare-ish)...

The first of the three HAFTAROT OF TRAGEDY. When Matot and Mas'ei are combined (as they are this year), this is the haftara for Parshat Pinchas. When they are separated, it is the haftara for Matot. Furthermore, even when the Torah reading for Israel and Chutz LaAretz is still out of sync (not this year), the haftara is the same - the Shabbat after 17 Tamuz is Divrei Yirmiyahu.

The haftara consists of the opening words of the book of Yirmiyahu. Aside from the personal exchange between G-d and Yirmiyahu, we are told of his visions of an almond tree (which blooms early in the year, a sign that G-d's judgment is coming soon) and the "boiling pot", representing the enemy from the north (Bavel) who will come to destroy Jerusalem. This prophecy of destruction, because of idolatry and unfaithfulness, sets the tone for the Three Week mourning period for the Beit HaMikdash and for the main part of the book of Yirmiyahu.

The concluding p'sukim allow us to end the haftara on a high note: telling us of the promise that G-d will punish

those who rise against Israel, for Israel - despite its sins - is holy and special to HaShem.