

**እኔ የዋህ በልቤም ትሑት ነኝና፥**

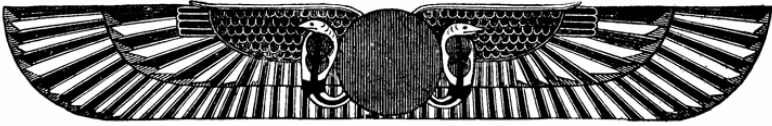
**ማቴዎስ ወገንል ፲፩ ፡፳፱**



**ለአባታችንና ለገዢው ነገሥታችን ለቀዳማዊ  
ኃይለ ሥላሴ ዘመነ መንግሥት፥  
በመድኃኒታችን በኢየሱስ ክርስቶስ በጌቶች  
ጌታችን ክቡር ስም ታላቅ ምስጋናችንን  
እናቀርባለን።**

We present our many thanks to Our God-Father  
and to Our King of Kings, to His Imperial  
Majesty, HAILE SELASSIE I's Kingdome in the  
Glorious name of *Iyesus Kristos*, Our Saviour –  
Our Lord of Lords.

AMEN AND AMEN.



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*Our mission is to bring good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that saith to Zion, Thy God reigneth. – Isaiah 52:7*

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**NAM ET IPSA SCIENTIA POTESTAS EST<sup>1</sup>**

**«አውቀትም ደግሞ በራሱ ሥልጣን ሆኖ»<sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Often, translated as “Knowledge is power,” an aphorism borrowed and much repeated, based upon Francis Bacon’s original, “*for Knowledge too is itself power.*”

<sup>2</sup> Ras Iadonis Tafari’s accurate rendering, and translation into the AMHARIC, of the LATIN phrase favoured and quoted above by Sir Bacon.





בְּ.מִדְבָּר.

# BAMIDBAR

HEBREW BOOK OF THE

# NUMBERS:

TORAH PORTION VOL.4,

*Introduction & compilation*

*by*

*Ras Iadonis Tafari*





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## INTRODUCTORY NOTES

WE, THE BLACK JEWS of the world, along with the progressive Rastafari and collectively, the “Ethiopian-Hebrews,” i.e. *the Beta-Israel (or, Falashas<sup>3</sup>) of the West*, for more than a two to three millennia prior to the other “Jews”, the other ‘Israel<sup>4</sup>’; also have a written testimony to our Divine Heritage, possessing our own ancient religious, metaphysical and spiritual literature that endeavours to explain, clarify and explicate the revealed word of scripture, the Holy Bible. Amongst the other “Israel,” or European converts called ‘Jews,’ these writings have been expanded upon and preserved in voluminous commentaries to the Torah, the Hebrew Bible, and thus further divided into various categories according to content. Overall, these traditional oral interpretations, scriptural ordinances, were compiled by certain Rabbis about A.D. 200; according to Orthodox Judaism, Judaic Studies and Yeshiva Schooling , i.e. **TALMUD, MISHNA, GEMARA, HAGGADAH, HALACHA**, and **THE KABBALAH**, inclusive of so-called **THE ZOHAR** and other like and similar ‘Extra-biblical’ and interlinear writings by distinguished (European) Jewish Rabbis.

THE FOLLOWING COMPILATIONS of each Book of the Hebrew Bible’s Weekly Torah Portions are intended as a basic and preliminary introduction to modern “JUDAISM”, as it presently, that is to say, the current form based predominantly upon the prevailing European-Jewish, i.e. Germanic-Polish tradition, commentaries, interpretations and related studies, that

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<sup>3</sup> *Falashas*, from the Ge’ez/Ethiopic root **ፈለሰ** *fellese* – meaning “to separate, go away, depart, emigrate, to secede, split off (from)”; **ፍልሰተ ባቢሎን** *filsete babilon*, the Babylonian exile; **ፈላስ** *felasi* – “an exile, alien, pilgrim.” The implication here, is that, namely the “lost sheep” in the Americas and the Caribbean are also “Falashas of the West,” or Exilist in the Trans-Ethiopic, falsely called “TransAtlantic,” Ocean Slave Trade of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>4</sup> Particularly, the Israelis, i.e. those who also call themselves ‘Jews,’ the ‘wild olive grafted in,’ (Romans 11:17, 24) namely the so-called Gypsies, Khazars or better known, ‘European Jews’ (Ashkenaz), et al, who history documents converted to a form of Judaism after 70 A.D. and the global dispersion and later captivity of the ethnically African, or ‘Black’ Hebrews; see Rudolph R. Winsor’s, *From Babylon to Timbuktu*.

collectively are derived from what is called the Babylonian Talmud. Also inclusive in these Wikipedia free encyclopedia references are certain Sephardic, or Spanish-Jewish alternative points-of-view to the Torah studies that are highly instructive, especially in our exploration of the wide diversity of possible interpretation that have, and greatly continues to define modern Judaism.

We, the BLACK JEWS, are very conscious and aware of the fact that certain Black Hebrews and Ethiopian Jews may rightly object to the preponderance of whitewashed art and images in this volume, the majority created by the “wild olive tree” (Romans 11:17, 24), European-Jews, Anglo-Europeans and Romanist/Catholic pseudonymous Christians, all that were grafted, over nearly 16 centuries, since the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., into our natural vine tree, i.e. the True and Ancient Judaism that was Black, Egyptian/Kamite or Ethiopic in its primary origination, racial ethnicity, linguistic composition and biblical revelation. This we hope to, and intend to, by the Almighty’s help, sufficiently prove in our related volumes containing our Ethiopian-Hebrew commentaries (Amos 9:7) and exegesis, mainly based upon the various writings and research, by authors such as Mr. Gerald Massey, and others, both past and present, Black and White, who wrote (or, whose works and documents were subsequently translated) in English. We, for our part, have also studied, translated and interpreted from many of the original documents and manuscripts in order to compose our own extensive research and reconstruction of the Ethiopic Torah (Orit) from several of the ancient Black Race’s biblical languages (i.e., Kamo-Semitic) of the antiquity: namely, Ancient Egyptian (Hieroglyphs), Ethiopic (Western Semitic), Ge’ez, Tigre, biblical Hebrew, Aramaic, Assyrian (Eastern Semitic), Sabaeen, Oromo (or, Galla) dialects and even archaic Amharic.

HOWEVER, we must be greater in spirit and broader in outlook and approach this sensitive subject matter by dealing with the facts on the ground and what is believed, or thought to be the case by the other Jews, and then present our case and the other side of this suppressed, neglected and avoided controversial story, our Black “Jewish” or African-based, and Ethiopian-

Hebrew story. **The views presented in this volume are not our own** and do not necessarily reflect the Ethiopian-Hebraic interpretation to the Old Testament, or Ethiopic Orit (Torah) in particular, but is being compiled into these five volumes: Bereishit, Shemot, Vayikra, Bamidbar, and Devarim (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) and printed separately, largely due to side per volume. Nevertheless, this study, and these volumes have been compiled by THE LION OF JUDAH SOCIETY, and are designed for the Brotherhood of the Rastafari disciples and Ethiopian-Hebrew faithful to get better acquainted with the primary and prevailing opinions on Judaism and the interpretations of the Hebrew Bible.

THE TORAH PORTIONS IN THE FOURTH BOOK, CALLED BAMIDBAR (Hebrew Numbers) are composed 10 portions, including the first portion, or self-named parsha of **Bamidbar • Naso • Behaalotecha • Shlach • Korach • Chukat • Balak • Pinchas • Matot • Masei**.

As ethnic, or “Black” Hebrews, and Afro-Israelities, we have several well-attested to, thoroughly researched and duly documented ancient Ethiopian books and manuscripts (MSS), that thankfully help serve as resource and reference materials, comprising what the present author and compiler has suitably named, the Ethiopic Talmud, many of these written in the Ge’ez language. These manuscripts assist us in forming our own Ethiopian-Hebrew and Black Jewish commentaries and exegeses, from a non-Eurocentric perspective. A few of the main Ethiopic Talmudic commentary source materials and titles are namely, but not strictly limited to, the following volumes:

*The Queen of Sheba and Her only son Menyelek (Kebra Nagast), The Book of Jubilees, or Little Genesis (Kufale), the Book of Enoch (Ethiopic Henok), Gadla Adam (Conflict of Adam), Ancient Egyptian Wisdom & Kamite Mysteries (Gerald Massey’s A Book of the Beginnings, Natural Genesis, Ancient Egypt: Light of the World, and Lectures), Lefafa Sedeq: Bandlet of Righteousness*, to only name a few of the many texts, that we, by the Grace of the Almighty, soon expect to compose our Ethiopian-Hebrew commentaries and

exegesis based upon both the “Wisdom of the Egyptians (or, Egypt)” (Acts 7:22) coupled with our Judeo-Christian Ethiopian “Divine Heritage”. Yet, this is still to come, and we hope and pray to the Most High for guidance, perseverance and life eternal. Amen.

ONE FINAL NOTE is in order here, namely: There are several smaller volumes, some books, many fragments and a host of rare manuscripts written in Ethiopic, some of them original compositions, and others allegedly based on, what foreign scholars consider to be, translations from *Coptic* (or, Sabaeen?), *Hebrew*, *Syretic* (i.e. Arabic) and early *Greek* (κοινε); thus, these are not listed and enumerated in detail here because of the numerous and contradictory names, codices and other cataloging systems used by various museums and libraries, namely in England, France, Germany and elsewhere that have arbitrarily assigned to these Ethiopic writings, dubiously misappropriated from Ethiopia (sometime referred to by Orientalists as ‘Abyssinia’) over the past four to five centuries, by conservative estimations. Due to the anonymity of these Ethiopic ancient, cultural, historical and biblical documents, coupled the lack of access, and therefore the availability, presently to verify and thus corroborate these records, we cannot confirm all of the details without further study, but will reference, and quote, where possible, from any and all available sources and resources in circulation.

RAS IADONIS TAFARI <sup>5</sup>

*Chairman, LOJS*

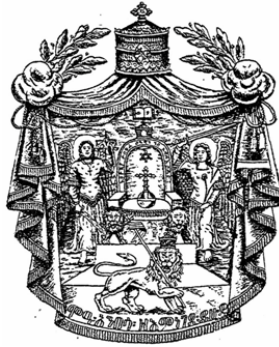
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*c. 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2011*

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<sup>5</sup> *Alius dictus, Debtera: Rasiadonis Tafari, A Sometime Scholar of LOJS' Black Christ College; H.I.M. HAILE SELASSIE I University in Exile [USA], An Ethiopian-Hebrew Scholar; and Keeper of the Department of Ethiopic & Amharic Antiquities in the Black Lion Museum, USA-ET.*





የሐገስ ራእይ ምዕራፍ ፩ ቁጥር ፩

«ከሽማግሌዎቹም አንዱ።

አታልቅሰኝ እነሆ፥ ከይሁዳ ነገድ የሆነው አገበሳ እርሱም  
የዳዊት ሥር መጽሐፉን ይዘረጋ ዘገድ ሰባቱንም ማጎተም  
ይፈታ ዘገድ ድል ነሥቶአል

አለኝ። »

REVELATION CHAPTER 5, VERSE 5

“And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the  
Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath  
prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals  
thereof.”



## Bamidbar (parsha)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Jump to: [navigation](#), [search](#)

**Bamidbar**, **Bemidbar**, **BeMidbar**, or **B'midbar** (בְּמִדְבָּר — [Hebrew](#) for "in the desert," the fifth word, and the first distinctive word, in the parshah) is the 34th [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the first in the [book of Numbers](#). It constitutes [Numbers 1:1–4:20](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) generally read it in May or early June.

The parshah tells of the [census](#) and the [priests'](#) duties.



"Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He added, "So shall your offspring be." [Gen. 15:5.](#)

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[\[edit\]](#)

## Summary

Relative Population of the Tribes				
	Rank by Population	Tribe	Population	Percentage
<a href="#">[edit]</a>	1	Judah	74,600	12.4
Census	2	Dan	62,700	10.4
us	3	Simeon	59,300	9.8
In the	4	Zebulun	57,400	9.5
<a href="#">wilder</a>	5	Issachar	54,400	9.0
<a href="#">ness,</a>	6	Naphtali	53,400	8.8
in the	7	Reuben	46,500	7.7
second	8	Gad	45,650	7.5
d	9	Asher	41,500	6.9
month	10	Ephraim	40,500	6.7
of in	11	Benjamin	35,400	5.9
the	12	Manasseh	32,200	5.3
second				
d year				

following [the Exodus](#) from [Egypt](#), [God](#) directed [Moses](#) to take a

census of the [Israelite](#) men age 20 years and up, "all those in [Israel](#) who are able to bear arms." ([Numbers 1:1–3.](#)) The census showed the following populations by [tribe](#) ([Numbers 1:20–46](#)):

- [Reuben](#): 46,500
- [Simeon](#): 59,300
- [Gad](#): 45,650
- [Judah](#): 74,600
- [Issachar](#): 54,400
- [Zebulun](#): 57,400
- [Ephraim](#): 40,500
- [Manasseh](#): 32,200
- [Benjamin](#): 35,400
- [Dan](#): 62,700
- [Asher](#): 41,500
- [Naphtali](#): 53,400

totaling 603,550 in all. God told Moses not to enroll the [Levites](#), but to put them in charge of carrying, assembling, tending to, and guarding the [Tabernacle](#) and its furnishings. ([Numbers 1:47–53.](#)) Any outsider who encroached on the Tabernacle was to be put to death. ([Numbers 1:51.](#))

The Encampment of the Israelites						
			<i>North</i>			
		<b>Asher</b>	<b>DAN</b>	<b>Naphtali</b>		
	<b>Benjamin</b>		Merari		<b>Issachar</b>	
<i>West</i>	<b>EPHRAIM</b>	Gershon	<b>THE TABERNACLE</b>	Priests	<b>JUDAH</b>	<i>East</i>
	<b>Manasseh</b>		Kohath		<b>Zebulun</b>	
		<b>Gad</b>	<b>REUBEN</b>	<b>Simeon</b>		
			<i>South</i>			

God told Moses that the Israelites were to encamp by tribe as follows ([Numbers 1:52–2:34](#)):

- around the Tabernacle: Levi
- on the front, or east side: Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun
- on the south: Reuben, Simeon, and Gad
- on the west: Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin
- on the north: Dan, Asher, and Naphtali.





PIEST



HIGH PRIEST



LEVITE

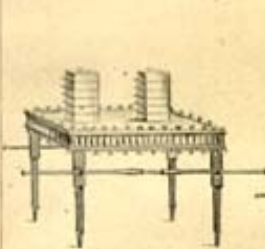


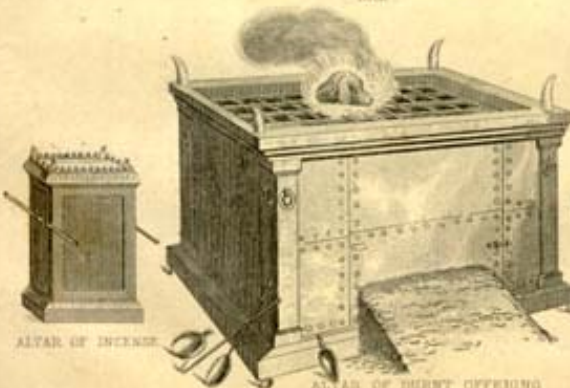
TABLE OF SHOW BREAD



ARK



GOLDEN CANDLESTICK



ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING



ALTAR OF INCENSE



LAVEN

Scale of Feet. 16 Inches being taken as equal to 1 foot

Drawn & Engraved by Robert Smith

[edit] Priestly duties

God instructed Moses to place the Levites in attendance upon [Aaron](#) to serve him and the priests. ([Numbers 3:5–8.](#)) God took the Levites in place of all the firstborn among the Israelites, whom God consecrated when God [smote the firstborn](#) in Egypt. ([Numbers 3:11–13.](#)) God then told Moses to record by ancestral house and by clan the Levite men from the age of one month up, and he did so. ([Numbers 3:14–16.](#)) The Levites divided by their ancestral houses, based on the sons of Levi: [Gershon](#), [Kohath](#), and [Merari](#). ([Numbers 3:17.](#))

•  
T  
h

Relative Population of the Levite Divisions

Rank by Population	Division	Population	Percentage
1 <sub>e</sub>	Kohathites	8,600	38.6
2	Gershonites	7,500	33.6
3G	Merarites	6,200	27.8
e	Total	22,300	100.0
r			

shonites, numbered 7,500, camped behind the Tabernacle, to the west, and had charge of the Tabernacle, the tent, its covering, the screen for the entrance of the tent, the hangings of the enclosure, the screen for the entrance of the enclosure that surrounded the Tabernacle, and the altar. ([Numbers 3:21–26.](#))

- The Kohathites, numbered 8,600, camped along the south side of the Tabernacle, and had charge of the [ark](#), the table, the lampstand, the altars, the sacred utensils, and the screen. ([Numbers 3:27–31.](#))
- The Merarites, numbered 6,200, camped along the north side of the Tabernacle, and had charge of the planks of the Tabernacle, its bars, posts, sockets, and furnishings, and the posts around the enclosure and their sockets, pegs, and cords. ([Numbers 3:33–37.](#))
- Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's sons camped in front of the Tabernacle, on the east. ([Numbers 3:38.](#))








Carrying the Ark of the Covenant (illustration from a Bible card published circa 1896–1913 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

The total number of the Levites came to 22,000. ([Numbers 3:39.](#)) God instructed Moses to record every firstborn male of the Israelites one month old and up, and they came to 22,273. ([Numbers 3:40–43.](#)) God told Moses to take the Levites for God in place of all the firstborn among the Israelites, and the Levites' cattle in place of the Israelites' cattle. ([Numbers 3:44–45.](#)) And to redeem the 273 Israelite firstborn over and above the number of the Levites, God instructed Moses to take five shekels a head and give the money to the priests. ([Numbers 3:46–51.](#))

God then directed Moses and Aaron to take a separate census of the Kohathites between the ages of 30 and 50, who were to perform tasks for the Tent of Meeting. ([Numbers 4:1–3.](#)) The Kohathites had responsibility for the most sacred objects. ([Numbers 4:4.](#)) At the breaking of camp, Aaron and his sons were to take down the Ark, the table of display, the lampstand, and the service vessels, and cover them all with cloths and skins. ([Numbers 4:5–14.](#)) Only when Aaron and his sons had finished covering the sacred objects would the Kohathites come and lift them. ([Numbers 4:15.](#)) Aaron's son [Eleazar](#) had responsibility for the lighting oil, the aromatic incense, the regular meal offering, the anointing oil, and all the consecrated things in the Tabernacle. ([Numbers 4:16.](#)) God charged Moses and Aaron to take care not

Order of the Tribes												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<a href="#">Numbers 1:1–5</a> 	Reuben	Simeon	Judah	Issachar	Zebulun	Ephraim	Manasseh	Benjamin	Dan	Asher	Gad	Naphtali
<a href="#">Numbers 1:20–43</a> 	Reuben	Simeon	Gad	Judah	Issachar	Zebulun	Ephraim	Manasseh	Benjamin	Dan	Asher	Naphtali
<a href="#">Numbers 2:3–31</a> 	Judah	Issachar	Zebulun	Reuben	Simeon	Gad	Ephraim	Manasseh	Benjamin	Dan	Asher	Naphtali

to let the Kohathites die because they went inside and witnessed the dismantling of the sanctuary. ([Numbers 4:17–20](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) In inner-biblical interpretation

Three times in this parshah the Torah lists the tribes, and each time the Torah lists the tribes in a different order:

## [\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 1

The Rabbis discussed why God spoke to Moses "in wilderness." ([Numbers 1:1](#).) [Raba](#) taught that when people open themselves to everyone like a wilderness, God gives them the Torah. ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 55a](#).) Similarly, a [midrash](#) taught that those who do not throw themselves open to all like a

wilderness cannot acquire wisdom and Torah. The Sages inferred from [Numbers 1:1](#) that the Torah was given to the accompaniment of fire, water, and wilderness. And the giving of the Torah was marked by these three features to show that as these are free to all people, so are the words of the Torah; as [Isaiah 55:1](#) states, "everyone who thirsts, come for water." ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 1:7.) Another midrash taught that if the Torah had been given to the Israelites in the [land of Israel](#), the tribe in whose territory it was given would have said that it had a prior claim to the Torah, so God gave it in the wilderness, so that all should have an equal claim to it. Another midrash taught that as people neither sow nor till the wilderness, so those who accept the yoke of the Torah are relieved of the yoke of earning a living; and as the wilderness does not yield any taxes from crops, so scholars are free in this world. And another midrash taught that the Torah was given in the wilderness because they preserve the Torah who keep themselves separate like a wilderness. ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 19:26.)

The [Gemara](#) noted that [Numbers 1:1](#) happened in "the *second* month, in the second year," while [Numbers 9:1](#) happened "in the *first* month of the second year," and asked why the Torah presented the chapters beginning at [Numbers 1](#) before [Numbers 9](#), out of chronological order. Rav Menasia bar Tahlifa said in [Rab's](#) name that this proved that there is no chronological order in the Torah. ([Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 6b.](#))

[Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak](#) noted that both [Numbers 1:1](#) and [Numbers 9:1](#) begin, "And the Lord spoke to Moses in the

wilderness of Sinai," and deduced that just as [Numbers 1:1](#) happened (in the words of that verse) "on the first day of the second month," so too [Numbers 9:1](#) happened at the beginning of the month. And as [Numbers 9:1](#) addressed the [Passover](#) offering, which the Israelites were to bring on the 14th of the month, the Gemara concluded that one should expound the laws of a holiday two weeks before the holiday. ([Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 6b.](#))



Esther (1878 painting by [Edwin Long](#))

A midrash taught that when God is about to make Israel great, God explicitly states the place, the day, the month, the year, and the era, as [Numbers 1:1](#) says, “in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt.” The

midrash continued that God then said to the Israelites (rereading [Numbers 1:2](#)): “Raise to greatness all the congregation of the children of Israel.” (Interpreting “raise the head” — **וְאִנָּתָהּ** — **וְאִנָּתָהּ** — to mean “raise to greatness.”) (Numbers Rabbah 1:1.)

A midrash explained the specificity of [Numbers 1:1](#) with a parable. A king married a wife and did not give her a legal marriage contract. He then sent her away without giving her a bill of divorce. He did the same to a second wife and a third, giving them neither a marriage contract nor a bill of divorce. Then he saw a poor, well-born orphan girl whom he desired to marry. He told his best man (*shoshbin*) not to deal with her as with the previous ones, as she was well-born, modest in her actions and worthy. The king directed that his aide draw up a marriage contract for her, stating the period of seven years, the year, the month, the day of the month, and the region, in the same way that [Esther 2:16](#) writes about [Esther](#), “So Esther was taken to king [Ahasuerus](#) into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month [Tevet](#), in the seventh year of his reign.” So God did not state when God created the generation of the Flood and did not state when God removed them from the world, except insofar as [Genesis 7:11](#) reports, “on the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up.” The same fate befell the generation of the Dispersal after the [Tower of Babel](#) and the generation of Egypt; Scripture does not indicate when God created them or when they passed away. But when Israel appeared, God told Moses that God would not act towards them as God did towards those earlier generations, as they were



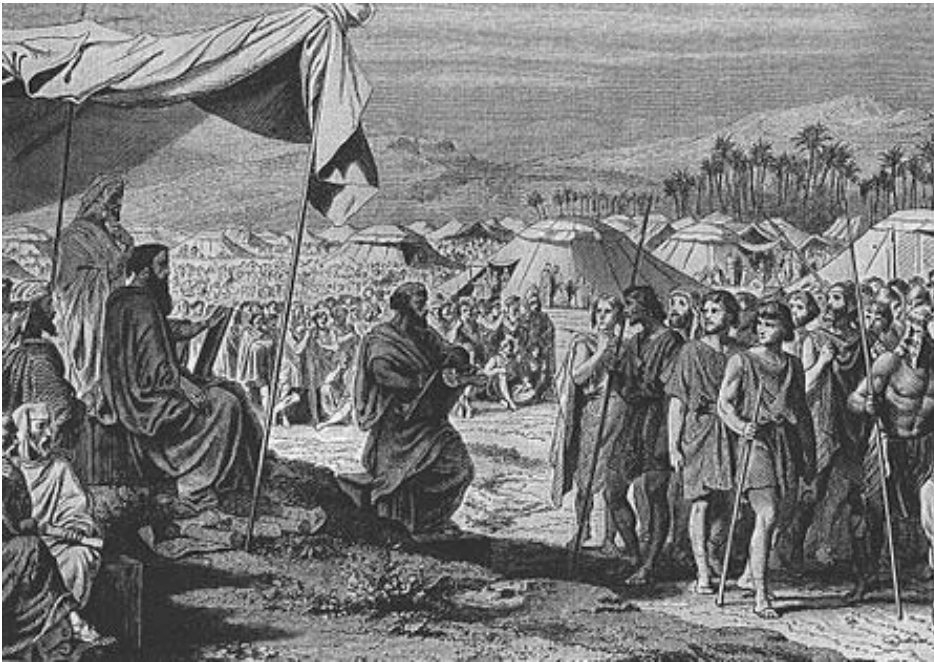
descendants of [Abraham](#), [Isaac](#), and [Jacob](#). God instructed that Moses record for them the precise month, day of the month, year, region, and city in which God lifted them up. Therefore [Numbers 1:1](#) says: “And the Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai,” indicating the region; “in the tent of meeting,” indicating the province; “in the second year,” indicating the precise year; “in the second month,” indicating the precise month; “on the first day of the month,” indicating the precise day of the month; and “after they were come out of Egypt,” indicating the era. (Numbers Rabbah 1:5.)



Joseph Interpreting the Chief Butler’s and the Chief Baker’s Dreams (illustration from a Bible card published 1907 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

Rabbi Phinehas the son of Idi noted that [Numbers 1:2](#) says, “Lift up the head of all the congregation of the children of Israel,” not “Exalt the head” or “Magnify the head,” but “Lift up the head,”

like a man who says to the executioner, “Take off the head of So-and-So.” Thus [Numbers 1:2](#) conveys a hidden message with the expression “Lift up the head.” If the Israelites were worthy, they would rise to greatness, with the words “Lift up” having the same meaning as in [Genesis 40:13](#) when it says (as [Joseph](#) interpreted the chief butler’s dream), “Pharaoh shall lift up your head, and restore you to your office.” If they were not worthy, they would all die, with the words “Lift up” having the same meaning as in [Genesis 40:19](#) when it says (as Joseph interpreted the chief baker’s dream), “Pharaoh shall lift up your head from of you, and shall hang you on a tree.” (Gen. XL, 19).



The Numbering of the Israelites (engraving by [Henri Félix Emmanuel Philippoteaux](#))

A midrash taught that the Israelites were counted on ten occasions: (1) when they went down to Egypt ([Deuteronomy 10:22](#)); (2) when they went up out of Egypt ([Exodus 12:37](#)); (3) at the first census in Numbers ([Numbers 1:1–46](#)); (4) at the second census in Numbers ([Numbers 26:1–65](#)); (5) once for the banners; (6) once in the time of [Joshua](#) for the division of the land of Israel; (7) once by [Saul](#) ([1 Samuel 11:8](#)); (8) a second time by Saul ([1 Samuel 15:4](#)); (9) once by [David](#) ([2 Samuel 24:9](#)); and once in the time of [Ezra](#) ([Ezra 2:64](#)). (Midrash [Tanhuma](#), Ki Sisa 9.)

Rav Aha bar Jacob taught that for the purposes of numbering fighting men (as in [Numbers 1:1–3](#)), a man over 60 years of age was excluded just as was one under 20 years of age. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 121b](#).)

The Gemara deduced from the words "by their families, by their fathers' houses" in [Numbers 1:2](#) that the Torah identifies families by the father's line. ([Babylonian Talmud Nazir 49a](#), [Bava Batra 109b](#), [Bekhorot 47a](#).)

The [Mekhilta](#) found support in the words "they declared their pedigrees after their families, by their fathers' houses" in [Numbers 1:18](#) for Rabbi Eliezer ha-Kappar's proposition that the Israelites displayed virtue by not changing their names. (Mekhilta Pisha 5.)

Rabbi Judah ben Shalom taught that [Numbers 1:49](#) excluded the Levites from being numbered with the rest of the Israelites for

their own benefit, for as [Numbers 14:29](#) reports, "all that were numbered" died in the wilderness, but because the Levites were numbered separately, they entered the land of Israel. (Numbers Rabbah 3:7; see also Numbers Rabbah 1:11–12.) A midrash offered another explanation for why the Levites were not numbered with the Israelites: The Levites were the palace-guard and it would not have been consonant with the dignity of a king that his own legion should be numbered with the other legions. (Numbers Rabbah 1:12.)

The Rabbis taught in a [Baraita](#) that when the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, the Levitical camp established in [Numbers 1:50](#) served as the place of refuge to which manslayers could flee. ([Babylonian Talmud Makkot 12b.](#))



Hillel (sculpture at the [Knesset](#) Menorah, Jerusalem)

Building upon the prohibition of approaching the holy place in [Numbers 1:51](#), the Gemara taught that a person who unwittingly entered the [Temple](#) court without atonement was liable to bring a

sin-offering, but a person who entered deliberately incurred the penalty of being cut off from the Jewish people, or *karet*.

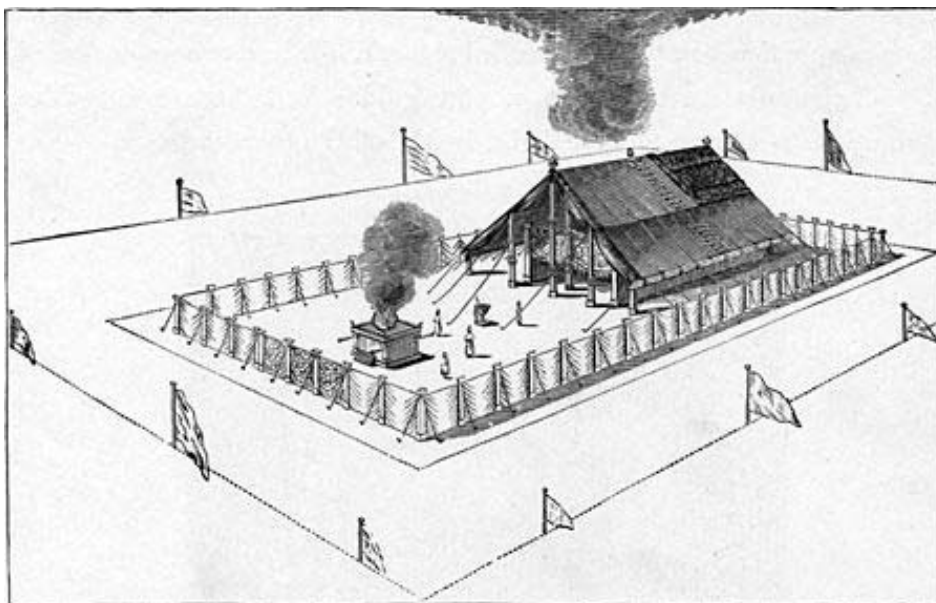
([Babylonian Talmud Menachot 28b.](#))

A non-Jew asked [Shammai](#) to [convert](#) him to Judaism on condition that Shammai appoint him [High Priest](#). Shammai pushed him away with a builder's ruler. The non-Jew then went to [Hillel](#), who converted him. The convert then read Torah, and when he came to the injunction of [Numbers 1:51, 3:10](#), and [18:7](#) that "the common man who draws near shall be put to death," he asked Hillel to whom the injunction applied. Hillel answered that it applied even to David, King of Israel, who had not been a priest. Thereupon the convert reasoned *a fortiori* that if the injunction applied to all (non-priestly) Israelites, whom in [Exodus 4:22](#) God had called "my firstborn," how much more so would the injunction apply to a mere convert, who came among the Israelites with just his staff and bag. Then the convert returned to Shammai, quoted the injunction, and remarked on how absurd it had been for him to ask Shammai to appoint him High Priest.

([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 31a.](#))

The Gemara relates that once Rabban [Gamaliel](#), Rabbi [Eleazar ben Azariah](#), Rabbi [Joshua](#), and Rabbi [Akiba](#) went to [Jerusalem](#) after the destruction of the Temple, and just as they came to [Mount Scopus](#), they saw a fox emerging from the [Holy of Holies](#). The first three Rabbis began to cry, but Akiba smiled. The three asked him why he smiled, but Akiba asked them why they wept. Quoting [Numbers 1:51](#), they told him that they wept because a place of which it was once said, "And the common man that

draws near shall be put to death," had become the haunt of foxes. Akiba replied that he smiled because this fulfilled the prophecy of Uriah the priest, who prophesied (along with Micah, as reported in [Jeremiah 26:18–20](#)) that "Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the House as the high places of a forest." And [Isaiah 8:2](#) linked Uriah's prophecy with [Zechariah's](#). And [Zechariah 8:4](#) prophesied that "[t]here shall yet old men and old women sit in the broad places of Jerusalem." So the fulfillment of Uriah's prophecy gave Akiba certainty that Zechariah's hopeful prophecy would also find fulfillment. The others then told Akiba that he had comforted them. ([Babylonian Talmud Makkot 24b.](#))



The Tabernacle that the Israelites Built (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)

## [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 2

Rabbi Eliezer in the name of Rabbi Jose ben Zimra taught that whenever the Israelites were numbered for a proper purpose, they lost no numbers; but whenever they were numbered without a proper purpose, they suffered a diminution. Rabbi Eliezer taught that they were numbered for a proper purpose in connection with the standards (as reported in [Numbers 2:2](#)) and the division of the land, but were numbered without a proper purpose (as reported in [2 Samuel 24](#)) in the days of David. (Numbers Rabbah 2:17.)

Of the banners (*degeḇ*) in [Numbers 2:2](#), a midrash taught that each tribe had a distinctive flag and a different color corresponding to the precious stones on Aaron's breastplate, and that it was from these banners that governments learned to provide themselves with flags of various colors. (Numbers Rabbah 2:7.) And another midrash cited the words "his standard over me is love" in [Song of Songs 2:4](#) to teach that it was with a sign of great love that God organized the Israelites under standards like the ministering angels. (Numbers Rabbah 2:3.)

A midrash used the words "at a distance" in [Numbers 2:2](#) to help define the distance that one may travel on the Sabbath, for the Israelites would need to be close enough to approach the ark on the Sabbath. (Numbers Rabbah 2:9.)





Jacob, Ephraim, and Manasseh (17th century painting by [Guercino](#))

The Gemara cited [Numbers 2:18–21](#) to help examine the consequences of Jacob's blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh in [Genesis 48:5–6](#). Rav Aha bar Jacob taught that a tribe that had an inheritance of land was called a "congregation," but a tribe that had no possession was not a "congregation." Thus Rav Aha bar Jacob taught that the tribe of Levi was not called a "congregation." The Gemara questioned Rav Aha's teaching, asking whether there would then be fewer than 12 tribes. [Abaye](#) replied quoting Jacob's words in [Genesis 48:5](#): "Ephraim and Manasseh, even as Reuben and Simeon, shall be mine." But [Rava](#) interpreted the words "They shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance" in [Genesis 48:6](#) to show that Ephraim and Manasseh were thereafter regarded as comparable to other tribes only in regard to their inheritance of the land, not in any other respect. The Gemara challenged Rava's



interpretation, noting that [Numbers 2:18–21](#) mentions Ephraim and Manasseh separately as tribes in connection with their assembling around the camp by their banners. The Gemara replied to its own challenge by positing that their campings were like their possessions, in order to show respect to their banners. The Gemara persisted in arguing that Ephraim and Manasseh were treated separately by noting that they were also separated with regard to their princes. The Gemara responded that this was done in order to show honor to the princes and to avoid having to choose the prince of one tribe to rule over the other. [1 Kings 8:65](#) indicates that Solomon celebrated seven days of dedication of the [Temple in Jerusalem](#), and Moses celebrated twelve days of dedication of the [Tabernacle](#) instead of seven in order to show honor to the princes and to avoid having to choose the prince of one tribe over the other. ([Babylonian Talmud Horayot 6b.](#))

### **[[edit](#)] Numbers chapter 3**

Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani taught in [Rabbi Jonathan's](#) name that [Numbers 3:1–2](#) referred to Aaron's sons as descendants of Aaron and Moses because Moses taught them, showing that Scripture ascribes merit to one who teaches Torah to a neighbor's child as if the teacher had begotten the child. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 19b.](#))



Priest, High Priest, and Levite (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

The [Mishnah](#) taught that as the Levites exempted the Israelites' firstborn in the wilderness, it followed *a fortiori* that they should exempt their own animals from the requirement to offer the firstborn. (Mishnah Bekhorot 1:1; [Babylonian Talmud Bekhorot 3b.](#)) The Gemara questioned whether [Numbers 3:45](#) taught that the Levites' animals exempted the Israelites' animals. Abaye read the Mishnah to mean that if the Levites' animals released the Israelites' animals, it followed *a fortiori* that the Levites' animals should release their own firstborn. But Raba countered that the Mishnah meant that the Levites themselves exempted the Israelites' firstborn. ([Babylonian Talmud Bekhorot 4a.](#))

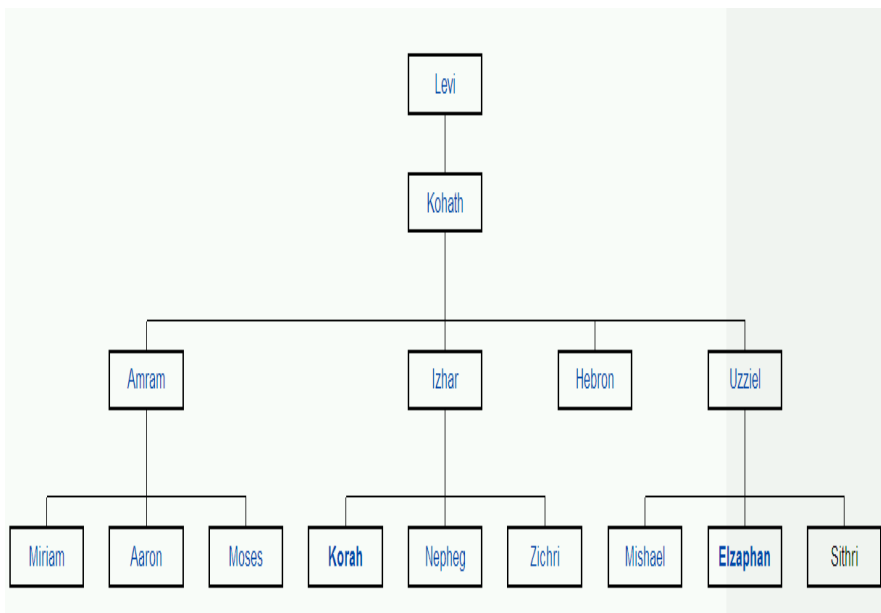
Tractate [Bekhorot](#) in the Mishnah, [Tosefta](#), and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of the firstborn in [Numbers 3:11–13](#). (Mishnah Bekhorot 1:1–9:8; Tosefta Bekhorot 1:1–7:15; [Babylonian Talmud Bekhorot 2a–61a.](#))



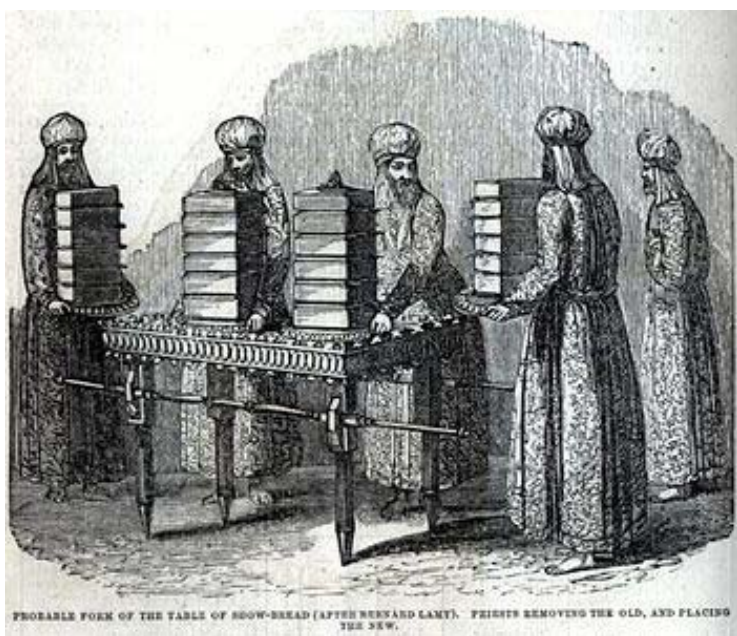
the lampstand, the responsibility of the Kohathites

A midrash taught that the Levites camped on the four sides of the Tabernacle in accordance with their duties. The midrash explained that from the west came snow, hail, cold, and heat, and thus God placed the Gershonites on the west, as [Numbers 3:25](#) indicates that their service was "the tent, the covering thereof, and the screen for the door of the tent of meeting," which could shield against snow, hail, cold, and heat. The midrash explained that from the south came the dew and rain that bring blessing to the world, and there God placed the Kohathites, who bore the ark that carried the Torah, for as [Leviticus 26:3–4](#) and [15–19](#) teach, the rains depend on the observance of the Torah. The midrash explained that from the north came darkness, and thus the Merarites camped there, as [Numbers 4:31](#) indicates that their service was the carrying of wood ("the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and the sockets thereof") which [Jeremiah 10:8](#) teaches counteract idolatrous influences when it says, "The chastisement of vanities is wood." And the midrash explained that from the east comes light, and thus Moses, Aaron, and his sons camped there, because they were

scholars and men of pious deeds, bringing atonement by their prayer and sacrifices. (Numbers Rabbah 3:12.)



A midrash taught that Korah took issue with Moses in [Numbers 16:1](#) because Moses had (as [Numbers 3:30](#) reports) appointed [Elizaphan](#) the son of [Uzziel](#) as prince of the [Kohathites](#), and Korah was (as [Exodus 6:21](#) reports) son of Uzziel's older brother [Izhar](#), and thus had a claim to leadership prior to Elizaphan. (Midrash [Tanhuma](#) Korah 1.)



Priests replacing the showbread, the table for which was the responsibility of the Kohathites (19th century illustration)

#### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 4

A midrash noted that God ordered the Kohathites counted first in [Numbers 4:1](#) and only thereafter ordered the Gershonites counted in [Numbers 4:21](#), even though Gershon was the firstborn and Scripture generally honors the firstborn. The midrash taught that Scripture gives Kohath precedence over Gershon because the Kohathites bore the ark that carried the Torah. (Numbers Rabbah 6:1.) Similarly, another midrash taught that God ordered the Kohathites counted first because Kohath was most holy, for Aaron the priest — who was most holy —

descended from Kohath, while Gershon was only holy. But the midrash taught that Gershon did not forfeit his status as firstborn, because Scripture uses the same language, "Lift up the head of the sons of," with regard to Kohath in [Numbers 4:2](#) and with regard to Gershon in [Numbers 4:22](#). And [Numbers 4:22](#) says "they also" with regard to the Gershonites so that one should not suppose that the Gershonites were numbered second because they were inferior to the Kohathites; rather [Numbers 4:22](#) says "they also" to indicate that the Gershonites were also like the Kohathites in every respect, and the Kohathites were placed first in this connection as a mark of respect to the Torah. In other places (for example, [Genesis 46:11](#), [Exodus 6:16](#), [Numbers 3:17](#) and [26:57](#), and [1 Chronicles 6:1](#) and [23:6](#)), however, Scripture places Gershon before Kohath. (Numbers Rabbah 6:2.)

A midrash noted that in [Numbers 4:1](#) "the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron" to direct them to count the Kohathites and in [Numbers 4:21](#) "the Lord spoke to Moses" to direct him to count the Gershonites, but [Numbers 4:29](#) does not report that "the Lord spoke" to direct them to count the Merarites. The midrash deduced that [Numbers 4:29](#) employed the words "the Lord spoke" so as to give honor to Gershon as the firstborn, and to give him the same status as Kohath. The midrash then noted that [Numbers 4:1](#) reported that God spoke "to Aaron" with regard to the Kohathites but [Numbers 4:21](#) did not report communication to Aaron with regard to the Gershonites. The midrash taught that God excluded Aaron from all Divine communications to Moses

and that passages that mention Aaron do not report that God spoke to Aaron, but include Aaron's name in sections that concern Aaron to indicate that God spoke to Moses so that he might repeat what he heard to Aaron. Thus [Numbers 4:1](#) mentions Aaron regarding the Kohathites because Aaron and his sons assigned the Kohathites their duties, since (as [Numbers 4:15](#) relates) the Kohathites were not permitted to touch the ark or any of the vessels until Aaron and his sons had covered them. In the case of the Gershonites, however, the midrash finds no evidence that Aaron personally interfered with them, as Ithamar supervised their tasks, and thus [Numbers 4:21](#) does not mention Aaron in connection with the Gershonites. (Numbers Rabbah 6:5.)

A midrash noted that in [Numbers 4:2](#) and [Numbers 4:22](#), God used the expression "lift up the head" to direct counting the Kohathites and Gershonites, but in [Numbers 4:29](#), God does not use that expression to direct counting the Merarites. The midrash deduced that God honored the Kohathites on account of the honor of the ark and the Gershonites because Gershon was a firstborn. But since the Merarites neither cared for the ark nor descended from a firstborn, God did not use the expression "lift up the head." (Numbers Rabbah 6:4.)

A midrash noted that [Numbers 4:3](#), [23](#), [30](#), [35](#), [39](#), [43](#), and [47](#) say that Levites "30 years old and upward" did service in the tent of meeting, while [Numbers 8:24](#) says, "from 25 years old and upward they shall go in to perform the service in the work of the tent of meeting." The midrash deduced that the difference teaches that all those five years, from the age of 25 to the age of

30, Levites served apprenticeships, and from that time onward they were allowed to draw near to do service. The midrash concluded that a Levite could not enter the Temple courtyard to do service unless he had served an apprenticeship of five years. And the midrash inferred from this that students who see no sign of success in their studies within a period of five years will never see any. Rabbi Jose said that students had to see success within three years, basing his position on the words "that they should be nourished three years" in [Daniel 1:5](#). (Numbers Rabbah 6:3.)

Rav [Hamnuna](#) taught that God's decree that the generation of the spies would die in the wilderness did not apply to the Levites, for [Numbers 14:29](#) says, "your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness, and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from 20 years old and upward," and this implies that those who were numbered from 20 years old and upward came under the decree, while the tribe of Levi — which [Numbers 4:3, 23, 30, 35, 39, 43](#), and [47](#) say was numbered from 30 years old and upward — was excluded from the decree. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 121b](#).)

The Mishnah taught that one who stole one of the sacred vessels (*keisvoṭ*) described in [Exodus 25:29](#) and [Numbers 4:7](#) was struck down by zealots on the spot. (Mishnah Sanhedrin 9:6; [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 81b](#).)

The [Jerusalem Talmud](#) found support in [Numbers 4:18–20](#) for the proposition in a Baraita that one who dies before age 50 has died a death of *karet*, of being cut off from the Jewish people. The Gemara there noted that [Numbers 4:18–19](#) spoke of what



the Kohathites should avoid doing so "that they may live, and not die." And [Numbers 4:20](#) enjoined that "they shall not go in to see the holy things as they are being covered, lest they die." And since [Numbers 8:25](#) indicates that the Kohathites ceased working near the holy things at age 50, these deaths of *karet* would have to have occurred before the age of 50. (Jerusalem Talmud Bikkurim 11b.) The Babylonian Talmud reports that [Rabbah](#) said that deaths between the ages of 50 and 60 are also deaths by *karet*. ([Babylonian Talmud Moed Katan 28a.](#))

## [\[edit\]](#) Commandments



[Hosea](#) (painting from [Siena](#)'s Duomo)

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are no [commandments](#) in the parshah. ([Maimonides](#). [Mishneh Torah](#). [Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The*

*Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvoth of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 2 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 4:3. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1988. [ISBN 0-87306-457-7](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

### [\[edit\]](#) Generally

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [Hosea 2:1–22](#). Both the parshah and the haftarah recount Israel's numbers, the parshah in the census (in [Numbers 1:1–2:34](#)), and the haftarah in reference to numbers "like that of the sands of the sea." ([Hosea 2:1](#)). Both the parshah and the haftarah place Israel in the wilderness (*midbar*). ([Numbers 1:1](#); [Hosea 2:5](#), [16](#).)

### [\[edit\]](#) On Shabbat Machar Chodesh

When parshah Bamidbar coincides with Shabbat Machar Chodesh (as it did in 2009), the parshah is [1 Samuel 20:18–42](#).

## [\[edit\]](#) The Weekly Maqam

In [the Weekly Maqam](#), [Sephardi Jews](#) each week base the songs of the services on the content of that week's parshah. For parshah Bamidbar, Sephardi Jews apply Maqam Rast, the maqam that shows a beginning or an initiation of something. This is appropriate because the parshah initiates the Book of Numbers. In the very common case where this parshah precedes the holiday

of [Shavuot](#), then the maqam that is applied is Hoseni, the maqam that symbolizes the beauty of receiving the Torah.

## [\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

### [\[edit\]](#) Ancient

- Shu-ilishu. [Ur](#), 20th Century BCE. Reprinted in, e.g., Douglas Frayne. "Shu-ilishu." In *The Context of Scripture, Volume II: Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World*. Edited by [William W. Hallo](#). New York: Brill, 2000. [ISBN 90-04-10618-9](#). (standards).

### [\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Exodus 6:23](#) (Nahshon son of Amminadab); [13:1–2](#) (firstborn); [13:12–13](#) (firstborn); [22:28–29](#) (firstborn); [30:11–16](#) (shekel of atonement).
- [Numbers 18:15–18](#) (firstborn); [26:1–65](#) (census).
- [Deuteronomy 15:19–23](#) (firstborn); [33:6](#) (Reuben's numbers).
- [2 Samuel 24:1–25](#).
- [Jeremiah 2:2](#) (in the wilderness); [31:8](#) (firstborn).
- [Ezekiel Ezekiel](#) (on four sides).

- [Hosea 2:16](#) (wilderness).
- [Psalms 60:9](#) (Manasseh, Ephraim, Judah); [78:67–68](#) (Ephraim, Judah); [68:28](#) (Benjamin, Judah, Zebulun, Naphtali); [80:3](#) (Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh); [119:6](#) (obeying commandments); [141:2](#) (incense); [144:1](#) (able to go to war).
- [Ruth 4:18–21](#). (Nahshon son of Amminadab).
- [1 Chronicles 27:1–24](#).



Josephus

## **[[edit](#)] Early nonrabbinic**

- [Philo](#). *Who Is the Heir of Divine Things?* 24:124. [Alexandria](#), Egypt, early 1st Century CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [Charles Duke Yonge](#), 286. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Pub., 1993. [ISBN 0-943575-93-1](#).
- [Josephus](#), *Antiquities of the Jews* 3:12:4. Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and*

*Unabridged, New Updated Edition.* Translated by [William Whiston](#), 98. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).

## **[[edit](#)] Classical rabbinic**

- [Mishnah](#): Sanhedrin 9:6; Zevachim 14:4; Menachot 11:5; Bekhorot 1:1–9:8. Land of Israel, circa 200 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 604, 731, 757, 788, 790. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- [Tosefta](#): Megillah 3:22; Sotah 7:17, 11:20; Bekhorot 1:1. Land of Israel, circa 300 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:538, 650, 864, 882; 2:1469. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).
- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Bikkurim 11b; Yoma 31a. Land of Israel, circa 400 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 12, 21. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2007–2011.
- [Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael](#) Pisha 3, 5; Amalek 4; Bahodesh 1. Land of Israel, late 4th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Mekhilta According to Rabbi Ishmael*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:22, 30; 2:36, 41. Atlanta: Scholars Press,

1988. [ISBN 1-55540-237-2](#). And *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*. Translated by Jacob Z. Lauterbach, 1:18, 25; 2:289–90. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1933, reissued 2004. [ISBN 0-8276-0678-8](#).

- [Mekhilta of Rabbi Simeon](#) 16:1; 19:2; 47:2; 48:1; 57:1, 3; 76:4; 83:1. Land of Israel, 5th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai*. Translated by W. David Nelson, 54, 75, 211–12, 255, 258, 355, 375. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2006. [ISBN 0-8276-0799-7](#).
- [Genesis Rabbah](#) 7:2; 53:13; 55:6; 64:8; 94:9; 97 (NV); 97 (MSV); 97:5. Land of Israel, 5th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, 1:50, 472, 486; 2:578, 876, 898, 934, 942. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).



## Talmud

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[Zevachim 55a, 61b, 116b, 119b; Menachot 28b, 37b, 95a, 96a; Chullin 69b; Bekhorot 2a, 3b–5a, 13a, 47a, 49a, 51a; Arakhin 11b, 18b; Tamid 26a.](#) Babylonia, 6th Century.

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## [\[edit\]](#) External links

### [\[edit\]](#) Texts

- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)
- [Hear the parshah read in Hebrew](#)

### [\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, California](#)
- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)

- [Aish.com](http://Aish.com)
- [American Jewish University](http://AmericanJewishUniversity.com)
- [Anshe Emes Synagogue, Los Angeles](http://AnsheEmesSynagogue.com)
- [Bar-Ilan University](http://Bar-IlanUniversity.com)
- [Chabad.org](http://Chabad.org)
- [eparsha.com](http://eparsha.com)
- [G-dcast](http://G-dcast.com)
- [The Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash](http://TheIsraelKoschitzkyVirtualBeitMidrash.com)
- [Jewish Agency for Israel](http://JewishAgencyforIsrael.com)
- [Jewish Theological Seminary](http://JewishTheologicalSeminary.com)
- [MyJewishLearning.com](http://MyJewishLearning.com)
- [Ohr Sameach](http://OhrSameach.com)
- [Orthodox Union](http://OrthodoxUnion.com)
- [OzTorah, Torah from Australia](http://OzTorah.com)
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- [Torah.org](#)
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## Naso (parsha)

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**Naso** or **Nasso** (נָסֹא — [Hebrew](#) for "lift up," the sixth word, and the first distinctive word, in the parshah) is the 35th [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the second in the [book of Numbers](#). It constitutes [Numbers 4:21–7:89](#). Naso is the longest of the 54 weekly Torah portions, with 176 verses. [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) generally read it in late May or June.



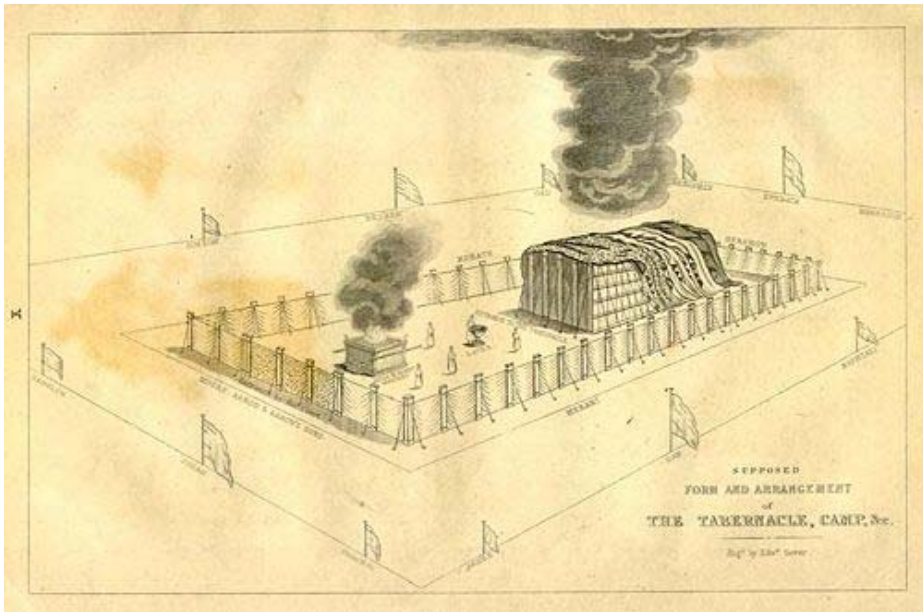
Hanukkah menorah

As the parshah includes the story of the consecration of the [Tabernacle](#), Jews also read parts of the parshah as Torah readings on the eight days of [Hanukkah](#), which commemorates the reconsecration of the [Temple in Jerusalem](#). [Numbers 7:1–17](#) is



the Torah reading for the first day; [Numbers 7:18–29](#) is the Torah reading for the second day; [Numbers 7:24–35](#) is the Torah reading for the third day; [Numbers 7:30–41](#) is the Torah reading for the fourth day; [Numbers 7:36–47](#) is the Torah reading for the fifth day; [Numbers 7:42–47](#) is the second Torah reading for the sixth day of Hanukkah, which, because it falls on [Rosh Chodesh](#), has [Numbers 28:1–15](#) as its first reading; [Numbers 7:48–59](#) is the Torah reading for the seventh day when it does not fall on Rosh Chodesh; and [Numbers 7:48–53](#) is the second Torah reading for the seventh day when it does fall on Rosh Chodesh, in which case [Numbers 28:1–15](#) is the first reading; and [Numbers 7:54–8:4](#) is the Torah reading for the eighth day. When a day of Hanukkah falls on a Sabbath, however, the regular weekly Torah reading for that Sabbath is the first Torah reading for that day, and the following readings from Parshah Naso are the [maftir](#) Torah readings: [Numbers 7:1–17](#) is the maftir Torah reading for the first day; [Numbers 7:18–23](#) is the maftir Torah reading for the second day; [Numbers 7:24–29](#) is the maftir Torah reading for the third day; [Numbers 7:30–35](#) is the maftir Torah reading for the fourth day; [Numbers 7:36–41](#) is the maftir Torah reading for the fifth day; [Numbers 7:42–47](#) is the maftir Torah reading for the sixth day of Hanukkah, which, because it falls on Rosh Chodesh, has [Numbers 28:9–15](#) as its sixth [aliyah](#); [Numbers 7:48–53](#) is the maftir Torah reading for the seventh day; and [Numbers 7:54–8:4](#) is the maftir Torah reading for the eighth day.

The parshah addresses [priestly](#) duties, purifying the camp, the wife accused of unfaithfulness (*sotah*), the [nazirite](#), the [priestly blessing](#), and consecrating the Tabernacle.



## The Tabernacle and the Camp

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## [\[edit\]](#) Summary

### [\[edit\]](#) Priestly duties

[God](#) told [Moses](#) to take a [census](#) of the [Gershonites](#) between 30 and 50 years old, who were subject to service for the Tabernacle. ([Numbers 4:21–23](#).) The Gershonites had the duty, under the direction of [Aaron](#)'s son [Ithamar](#), to carry the cloths of the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting with its covering, the covering of *tachash* skin on top of it, the screen for the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, the hangings of the enclosure, the screen at the entrance of the gate of the enclosure surrounding the Tabernacle, the cords thereof, the [altar](#), and all their service equipment and accessories. ([Numbers 4:24–28](#).)

Moses was also to take a census of the [Merarites](#) between 30 and 50 years old. ([Numbers 4:29–30](#).) The Merarites had responsibility, under the direction of Ithamar, for the planks, the bars, the posts, and the sockets of the Tabernacle, and the posts around the enclosure and their sockets, pegs, and cords.

(from [Numbers 3:22–34](#) and [4:34–39](#))

Relative Population and Adult Population of the Levite Divisions  <b>Division</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Share Rank of by Total Pop.</b>		<b>Adults</b>	<b>Share Rank of by Total Adults</b>		<b>Adult Share of Division</b>
Kohathites	8,600	38.6	1	2,750	32.1	2	32.0
Gershonites	7,500	33.6	2	2,630	30.6	3	35.1
Merarites	6,200	27.8	3	3,200	37.3	1	51.6
Total	22,300	100.0		8,580	100.0		38.5

([Numbers 4:31–33](#).)

Moses, [Aaron](#), and the chieftains thus recorded the Levites age 30 to 50 as follows:

- [Kohathites](#): 2,750,
- Gershonites: 2,630, and
- Merarites: 3,200,

for a total of 8,580. ([Numbers 4:34–39](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) Purifying the camp

God directed the [Israelites](#) to remove from camp anyone with an eruption or a discharge and anyone defiled by a corpse, so that they would not defile the camp. ([Numbers 5:1–4.](#))

God told Moses to direct the Israelites that when one wronged a fellow Israelite, thus breaking faith with God, and realized his guilt, he was to confess the wrong and make restitution to the one wronged in the principal amount plus one-fifth. ([Numbers 5:5–7.](#)) If the one wronged had no kinsman to whom restitution could be made, the amount repaid was to go to the priest, along with a [ram](#) of expiation. ([Numbers 5:8.](#)) Similarly, any gift among the sacred donations that the Israelites [offered](#) was to be the priest's to keep. ([Numbers 5:9–10.](#))

## [\[edit\]](#) The wife accused of unfaithfulness

God told Moses to instruct the Israelites about the test where a husband, in a fit of jealousy, accused his wife of being unfaithful — the ritual of the *sotah*. ([Numbers 5:11–14.](#)) The man was to bring his wife to the priest, along with [barley flour](#) as a meal offering of jealousy. ([Numbers 5:15.](#)) The priest was to dissolve some earth from the floor of the Tabernacle into some sacral water in an earthen vessel. ([Numbers 5:17.](#)) The priest was to bare the woman's head, place the meal offering on her hands, and adjure the woman: if innocent, to be immune to harm from the water of bitterness, but if guilty, to be cursed to have her thigh sag and belly distend. ([Numbers 5:18–21.](#)) And the woman was to say, "[Amen](#), amen!" ([Numbers 5:22.](#)) The priest was to write

these curses down, rub the writing off into the water of bitterness, and make the woman drink the water. ([Numbers 5:23–24](#).) The priest was to elevate the meal offering, present it on the altar, and burn a token part of it on the altar. ([Numbers 5:25–26](#).) If she had broken faith with her husband, the water would cause her belly to distend and her thigh to sag, and the woman was to become a curse among her people, but if the woman was innocent, she would remain unharmed and be able to bear children. ([Numbers 5:27–29](#).)



turtledove (illustration circa 1832–1837 by [John](#) and [Elizabeth Gould](#))



grapes, forbidden to the nazirite

### [\[edit\]](#) The nazirite

God told Moses to instruct the Israelites about the vows of a nazirite (*nazir*), should one wish to set himself or herself apart for God. ([Numbers 6:1–2.](#)) The nazirite was to abstain from [wine](#), intoxicants, [vinegar](#), [grapes](#), [raisins](#), or anything obtained from the grapevine. ([Numbers 6:3–4.](#)) No [razor](#) was to touch the nazirite's head until the completion of the nazirite term. ([Numbers 6:5.](#)) And the nazirite was not to go near a dead person, even a father, mother, brother, or sister. ([Numbers 6:6–8.](#))

If a person died suddenly near a nazirite, the nazirite was to shave his or her head on the seventh day. ([Numbers 6:9.](#)) On the eighth day, the nazirite was to bring two turtledoves or two pigeons to the priest, who was to offer one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering. ([Numbers 6:10–11.](#)) That same day, the nazirite was to reconsecrate his or her head, rededicate the Nazirite term,



and bring a [lamb](#) in its first year as a penalty offering. ([Numbers 6:11–12.](#))

On the day that a nazirite completed his or her term, the nazirite was to be brought to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting and present a male lamb in its first year for a burnt offering, a ewe lamb in its first year for a sin offering, a ram for an offering of well-being, a basket of unleavened cakes, unleavened wafers spread with oil, and meal offerings. ([Numbers 6:13–15.](#)) The priest was to present the offerings, and the nazirite was to shave his or her consecrated hair and put the hair on the fire under the sacrifice of well-being. ([Numbers 6:16–18.](#))



the positioning of the fingers of the Kohanim during the Priestly Blessing

### [\[edit\]](#) The priestly blessing

God told Moses to instruct Aaron and his sons that they should bless the Israelites with this blessing: "The Lord bless you and protect you! The Lord deal kindly and graciously with you! The

Lord bestow His favor upon you and grant you peace!"

([Numbers 6:22–27.](#))

### [\[edit\]](#) Consecrating the Tabernacle

Moses finished setting up the Tabernacle, and anointed and consecrated it, its furnishings, the altar, and its utensils. ([Numbers 7:1.](#)) The chieftains of the tribes then brought their offerings — 6 draught carts and 12 oxen — and God told Moses to accept them for use by the Levites in the service of the Tent of Meeting.

([Numbers 7:2–5.](#)) The chieftains then each on successive days brought the same dedication offerings for the altar: a silver bowl and silver basin filled with flour mixed with oil, a gold ladle filled with incense, a bull, 2 oxen, 5 rams, 5 goats, and 5 lambs.

([Numbers 7:10–88.](#))

When Moses went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with God, Moses would hear the Voice addressing him from above the cover that was on top of the [Ark](#) between the two cherubim, and thus God spoke to him. ([Numbers 7:88.](#))

### [\[edit\]](#) In inner-Biblical interpretation

#### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 5

#### [\[edit\]](#) Corpse contamination

In [Numbers 5:1–4](#), God instructed Moses to command the Israelites to put out of the camp every person defiled by contact with the dead, so that they would not defile their camps, in the

midst of which God dwelt. This is one of a series of passages setting out the teaching that contact with the dead is antithetical to purity.

In [Leviticus 21:1–5](#), God instructed Moses to direct the priests not to allow themselves to become defiled by contact with the dead, except for a mother, father, son, daughter, brother, or unmarried sister. And the priests were not to engage in mourning rituals of making baldness upon their heads, shaving off the corners of their beards, or cutting their flesh.

[Numbers 19](#) sets out a procedure for a red cow mixture for decontamination from corpse contamination.

In its profession associated with tithing, [Deuteronomy 26:13–14](#) instructed Israelites to aver that they had not eaten from the tithe in mourning, nor put away any of it while unclean, nor given any of it to the dead.

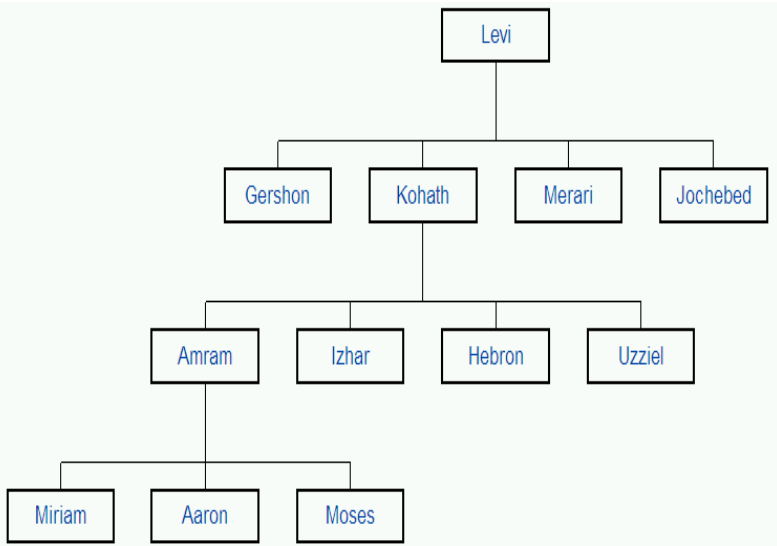
In [Ezekiel 43:6–9](#), the [prophet Ezekiel](#) cites the burial of kings within the [Temple](#) as one of the practices that defiled the Temple and cause God to abandon it.

[Numbers 5:1–4](#) and [6:6–7](#) associate death with uncleanness, as do [Leviticus 11:8](#), [11: 21:1–4](#), [11](#); and [Numbers 19:11–16](#). Perhaps similarly, [Leviticus 12](#) associates uncleanness with childbirth and [Leviticus 13–14](#) associates it with skin disease. [Leviticus 15](#) associates it with various sexuality-related events. And [Jeremiah 2:7](#), [23](#); [3:2](#); and [7:30](#); and [Hosea 6:10](#) associate it with contact with the worship of alien gods.

## [\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 4

A [midrash](#) noted that God ordered the Kohathites counted first in [Numbers 4:1](#) and only thereafter ordered the Gershonites counted in [Numbers 4:21](#), even though Gershon was the firstborn and Scripture generally honors the firstborn. The midrash taught that Scripture gives Kohath precedence over Gershon because the Kohathites bore the ark that carried the Torah. ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 6:1.) Similarly, another midrash taught that God ordered the Kohathites counted first because Kohath was most holy, for Aaron the priest — who was most holy — descended from Kohath, while Gershon was only holy. But the midrash taught that Gershon did not forfeit his status as firstborn, because Scripture uses the same language, "Lift up the head of the sons of," with regard to Kohath in [Numbers 4:2](#) and with regard to Gershon in [Numbers 4:22](#). And [Numbers 4:22](#) says "they also" with regard to the Gershonites so that one should not suppose that the Gershonites were numbered second because they were inferior to the Kohathites; rather [Numbers 4:22](#) says "they also" to indicate that the Gershonites were also like the Kohathites in every respect, and the Kohathites were placed first in this connection as a mark of respect to the Torah. In other places (for example, [Genesis 46:11](#), [Exodus 6:16](#), [Numbers 3:17](#) and [26:57](#), and [1 Chronicles 6:1](#) and [23:6](#)), however, Scripture places Gershon before Kohath. ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 6:2.)



A midrash noted that in [Numbers 4:1](#) "the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron" to direct them to count the Kohathites and in [Numbers 4:21](#) "the Lord spoke to Moses" to direct him to count the Gershonites, but [Numbers 4:29](#) does not report that "the Lord spoke" to direct them to count the Merarites. The midrash deduced that [Numbers 4:21](#) employed the words "the Lord spoke" so as to give honor to Gershon as the firstborn, and to give him the same status as Kohath. The midrash then noted that [Numbers 4:1](#) reported that God spoke "to Aaron" with regard to the Kohathites but [Numbers 4:21](#) did not report communication to Aaron with regard to the Gershonites. The midrash taught that God excluded Aaron from all Divine communications to Moses and that passages that mention Aaron do not report that God spoke to Aaron, but include Aaron's name in sections that concern Aaron to indicate that God spoke to Moses so that he might repeat what he heard to Aaron. Thus [Numbers 4:1](#) mentions Aaron regarding the Kohathites because Aaron and his

sons assigned the Kohathites their duties, since (as [Numbers 4:15](#) relates) the Kohathites were not permitted to touch the ark or any of the vessels until Aaron and his sons had covered them. In the case of the Gershonites, however, the midrash finds no evidence that Aaron personally interfered with them, as Ithamar supervised their tasks, and thus [Numbers 4:21](#) does not mention Aaron in connection with the Gershonites. (Numbers Rabbah 6:5.)

A midrash noted that in [Numbers 4:2](#) and [Numbers 4:22](#), God used the expression "lift up the head" to direct counting the Kohathites and Gershonites, but in [Numbers 4:29](#), God does not use that expression to direct counting the Merarites. The midrash deduced that God honored the Kohathites on account of the honor of the ark and the Gershonites because Gershon was a firstborn. But since the Merarites neither cared for the ark nor descended from a firstborn, God did not use the expression "lift up the

		The Encampment of the Levites			
(Numbers Rabbah 6:4.)			North		
			Merari		
A midrash taught that the Levites camped on	West	Gershon	THE TABERNACLE	Priests	East
			Kohath		
			South		

the four sides of the Tabernacle in accordance with their duties. The midrash explained that from the west came snow, hail, cold, and heat, and thus God placed the Gershonites on the west, as

[Numbers 3:25](#) indicates that their service was "the tent, the covering thereof, and the screen for the door of the tent of meeting," which could shield against snow, hail, cold, and heat. The midrash explained that from the south came the dew and rain that bring blessing to the world, and there God placed the Kohathites, who bore the ark that carried the Torah, for as [Leviticus 26:3–4](#) and [15–19](#) teach, the rains depend on the observance of the Torah. The midrash explained that from the north came darkness, and thus the Merarites camped there, as [Numbers 4:31](#) indicates that their service was the carrying of wood ("the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and the sockets thereof") which [Jeremiah 10:8](#) teaches counteract idolatrous influences when it says, "The chastisement of vanities is wood." And the midrash explained that from the east comes light, and thus Moses, Aaron, and his sons camped there, because they were scholars and men of pious deeds, bringing atonement by their prayer and sacrifices. (Numbers Rabbah 3:12.)

A midrash noted that in [Numbers 4:2](#) and [Numbers 4:29](#), for the Kohathites and the Merarites, the sequence is "by their families, by their fathers houses," whereas in [Numbers 4:22](#), for the Gershonites, "their fathers' houses" precedes "their families." The midrash deduced that this is so because the importance of the Gershonites comes from their fathers' house, as Gershon was the firstborn. (Numbers Rabbah 6:4.)

In a dispute with Rabbi Judah, [Rabbi Jose](#) cited [Numbers 4:26](#) for Rabbi Jose's view that as the tabernacle was 10 [cubits](#) high

(roughly 15 feet or 4.6 meters high), so the altar was 10 cubits high. ([Babylonian Talmud Zevachim 59b.](#))

Rav [Hamnuna](#) taught that God's decree that the generation of the spies would die in the wilderness did not apply to the Levites, for [Numbers 14:29](#) says, "your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness, and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from 20 years old and upward," and this implies that those who were numbered from 20 years old and upward came under the decree, while the tribe of Levi — which [Numbers 4:3, 23, 30, 35, 39, 43](#), and [47](#) say was numbered from 30 years old and upward — was excluded from the decree. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 121b.](#))

The [Tosefta](#) noted that [Numbers 4:3, 23, 30, 35, 39, 43](#), and [47](#) say that Levites "30 years old and upward" did service in the tent of meeting, while [Numbers 8:24](#) says, "from 25 years old and upward they shall go in to perform the service in the work of the tent of meeting." The Tosefta deduced that the difference teaches that all those five years, from the age of 25 to the age of 30, Levites studied, serving apprenticeships, and from that time onward they were allowed to draw near to do service. The Tosefta concluded that a Levite could not enter the Temple courtyard to do service unless he had served an apprenticeship of five years. And the Tosefta inferred from this that students who see no sign of success in their studies within a period of five years will never see any. Rabbi Jose said that students had to see success within three years, basing his position on the words "that



they should be nourished three years" in [Daniel 1:5](#). (Tosefta Shekalim 3:26; Numbers Rabbah 6:3.)

A midrash inferred from the words "from 30 years old . . . every one that entered upon the service" in [Numbers 4:35](#) that a man attains his full strength at age 30. (Numbers Rabbah 6:7; see also [Mishnah Avot 5:21](#).)

Belvati in the name of [Rabbi Johanan](#) derived the Levite's obligation to sing songs while offering sacrifices from the words of [Numbers 4:47](#), "to do the work of service." Belvati reasoned that the work that requires service is the song. ([Babylonian Talmud Arakhin 11a](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 5

Rabi Levi taught that the discussion of how to purify the camp in [Numbers 5:1–4](#) was one of eight passages given to Moses on the day that the Tabernacle was erected (because the people needed to study them immediately). ([Babylonian Talmud Gittin 60a](#).)

The Mishnah interpreted the requirements of [Numbers 5:8](#) regarding restitution where the victim died without kin to apply as well to where a proselyte victim died. The wrongdoer would have to pay the priests the principal plus 20 percent and bring a trespass offering to the altar. If the wrongdoer died bringing the money and the offering to Jerusalem, the money was to go to the wrongdoer's heirs, and the offering was to be kept on the pasture until it became blemished, when it was to be sold and the proceeds were to go to the fund for freewill offerings. But if the wrongdoer had already given the money to the priest and then

died, the heirs could not retrieve the funds, for [Numbers 5:10](#) provides that "whatever any man gives to the priest shall be his." (Mishnah Bava Kamma 9:11–12; [Babylonian Talmud Bava Kamma 110a](#); see also Tosefta Bava Kamma 10:17–18 (attributing to [Rabbi Akiba](#)).)

Tractate [Sotah](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, [Jerusalem Talmud](#), and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of the woman accused of being unfaithful (*sotah*) in [Numbers 5:11–31](#). ([Mishnah Sotah 1:1–9:15](#); Tosefta Sotah 1:1–15:15; Jerusalem Talmud Sotah 1a–; [Babylonian Talmud Sotah 2a–49b](#).)

The Mishnah taught that before a husband could accuse his wife pursuant to the procedure of [Numbers 5:11–31](#), he had to warn her not to associate with a certain man. [Rabbi Eliezer](#) said that he warned her on the testimony of two witnesses, and made her drink the bitter water on the testimony of one witness or his own testimony. [Rabbi Joshua](#) said that he warned her on the testimony of two witnesses and made her drink on the testimony of two witnesses. ([Mishnah Sotah 1:1](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sotah 2a](#).)

The Mishnah taught that it was not sufficient for the husband simply to say to his wife (in the presence of two witnesses) not to converse with a man. And if she nonetheless conversed with him, she was still permitted to her husband and (if a daughter of a Kohen) still permitted to eat from sacrifices. If, however, she entered a private place with the man and stayed with him long enough to have committed misconduct, she was forbidden to her husband and forbidden to eat from sacrifices, and if her husband died, she was required to perform the ceremony of [halizah](#) and

could not contract a [levirate marriage](#). ([Mishnah Sotah 1:2](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sotah 2a](#).)

The Mishnah deduced from the two uses of the words "they shall enter" in [Numbers 5:22](#) and [27](#) that just as the bitter water tested the suspected wife, so it tested the suspected paramour, punishing him as well as her if they were guilty. ([Mishnah Sotah 5:1](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sotah 27b](#).)

Reading the report of [Exodus 32:20](#) that Moses "took the calf . . . ground it to powder, and sprinkled it on the water, and made the children of Israel drink it," the Sages interpreted that Moses meant to test the Israelites much as the procedure of [Numbers 5:11–31](#) tested a wife accused of adultery (*sotah*). ([Babylonian Talmud Avodah Zarah 44a](#).)

A midrash taught that there is nothing greater before God than the "amen" that Israel answers. Rabbi Judah ben Sima taught that the word "amen" contains three kinds of solemn declarations: oath, consent, and confirmation. [Numbers 5:21–22](#) demonstrates oath when it says, "Then the priest shall cause the woman to swear . . . and the woman shall say: 'Amen, Amen.'" [Deuteronomy 27:26](#) demonstrates consent when it says "And all the people shall say: 'Amen.'" And [1 Kings 1:36](#) demonstrates confirmation when it says, "And [Benaiah](#) the son of [Jehoiada](#) answered the king, and said: 'Amen; so say the Lord.'" ([Deuteronomy Rabbah 7:1](#).)

[Deuteronomy 27:26](#) demonstrates consent when it says "And all the people shall say: 'Amen.'" And [1 Kings 1:36](#) demonstrates confirmation when it says, "And [Benaiah](#) the son of [Jehoiada](#) answered the king, and said: 'Amen; so say the Lord.'" ([Deuteronomy Rabbah 7:1](#).)

The Mishnah taught that when adulterers multiplied, Rabban [Johanan ben Zakkai](#) discontinued the sotah ceremony of

[Numbers 5:11–31](#), as [Hosea 4:14](#) says, "I will not punish your daughters when they commit harlotry, nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery; for they themselves consort with lewd women, and they sacrifice with harlots; and the people that is without understanding is distraught." ([Mishnah Sotah 9:9](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sotah 47a.](#))

## [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 6

Tractate [Nazir](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of the nazirite (*nazir*) in [Numbers 6:1–21](#). ([Mishnah Nazir 1:1–9:5](#); Tosefta Nazir 1:1–6:6; Jerusalem Talmud Nazir 1a–; [Babylonian Talmud Nazir 2a–66b.](#))



Samson and Delilah (1615 painting by [Gerard van Honthorst](#))

The Mishnah interpreted the "nazirite's vow" of [Numbers 6:2](#). The Mishnah taught that all substitutes for a nazirite vow functioned just like a nazirite vow. A person who said, "I shall be one," became a nazirite. A person who said, "I shall be comely," "a nazirite," "a nazik," "a naziah," or "a paziah," became a nazirite. A person who said, "I intend to be like this," or "I intend to curl my hair," or "I mean to tend my hair," or "I undertake to develop tresses," became a nazirite. [Rabbi Meir](#) said that a person who said, "I take upon myself an obligation involving birds," became a nazirite," but the sages said that the person did not become a nazirite. (Mishnah Nazir 1:1; [Babylonian Talmud Nazir 2a.](#))

A person who said, "I declare myself a nazirite to abstain from pressed grapes," or "from grape stones," or "from cutting my hair," or "from contracting ritual defilement," became a nazirite subject to all the regulations of naziriteship. (Mishnah Nazir 1:2; [Babylonian Talmud Nazir 3b.](#)) But a person who said, "I vow to be like [Samson](#)," "the son of [Manoah](#)," "the husband of [Delilah](#)," or "the one who plucked up the gates of [Gaza](#)," or "the one whose eyes the [Philistines](#) put out," became a nazirite like Samson. The difference between nazirites like Samson and a life-nazirites was that life-nazirites could thin their hair with a razor and then offer three animal sacrifices, while should they be ritually defiled, they had to offer the sacrifice prescribed for defilement. Nazirites like Samson were not permitted to thin their hair, and if ritually defiled, they did not offer the sacrifice

prescribed for defilement. (Mishnah Nazir 1:2; [Babylonian Talmud Nazir 4a.](#))

A nazirite vow of unspecified duration remained in force 30 days. (Mishnah Nazir 1:3, 6:3; [Babylonian Talmud Nazir 5a, 39a.](#)) A person who said, "I intend to be a nazirite for one long period," or "I intend to be a nazirite for one short period," became a nazirite for 30 days, even if the person added, "for as long as it takes to go from here to the end of the earth." A person who said, "I intend to be a nazirite, plus one day," or "I intend to be a nazirite, plus an hour," or "I intend to be a nazirite, once and a half," became a nazirite for two 30-day periods. (Mishnah Nazir 1:3; [Babylonian Talmud Nazir 7a.](#)) A person who said, "I intend to be a nazirite for 30 days plus an hour," became a nazirite for 31 days, as there was no naziriteship for a period of hours. (Mishnah Nazir 1:3; [Babylonian Talmud Nazir 7b.](#))

People who said, "I intend to be a nazirite as the hairs of my head," or "the dust of the earth," or "the sands of the sea," became life-nazirites, cutting their hair every 30 days. [Rabbi](#) said that such nazirites did not cut their hair every 30 days. Rabbi said that the nazirites who cut their hair every 30 days were the ones who said, "I *undertake naziriteships* as the hair on my head," or "the dust of the earth," or "the sands of the sea." (Mishnah Nazir 1:4; [Babylonian Talmud Nazir 8a.](#))

They interrogated people who said, "I intend to be a nazirite a house full," or "a basket full," to determine their intent. A person who said, "I vowed one long period of naziriteship," became a nazirite for 30 days. But a person who said, "I vowed without

attaching any precise meaning to the statement," became a nazirite for life, as the Rabbis regarded the basket as though it were full of mustard seed. (Mishnah Nazir 1:5; [Babylonian Talmud Nazir 8a.](#))

If a person said, "I intend to be a nazirite, as from here to such and such a place," they estimated the number of days that it took to get to the place mentioned. If the journey would take fewer than 30 days, then the nazirite becomes a nazirite for 30 days; otherwise the nazirite became a nazirite for that number of days. (Mishnah Nazir 1:6; [Babylonian Talmud Nazir 8a.](#))

A person who said, "I intend to be a nazirite, as the number of days in a solar year," would be a nazirite for 365 terms. Rabbi Judah said that such a case once occurred, and when the nazirite completed the 365 terms, the nazirite died. (Mishnah Nazir 1:7; [Babylonian Talmud Nazir 8a.](#))





Rabbi Akiva (illustration from the 1568 Mantua Haggadah)

Rabbi [Simeon the Just](#) was so skeptical of the reasons for which nazirites might have interrupted their status that he found only one that he really trusted. He said that only once in his life had he eaten of the trespass-offering brought by a defiled tear in connection with an interrupted nazirite vow. On that occasion a nazirite came from the South country, and Simeon the Just saw that he had beautiful eyes, was of handsome appearance, and with thick locks of hair symmetrically arranged. Simeon the Just asked him what reason the nazirite had seen to destroy this beautiful hair by shaving it for the nazirite vow. The nazirite replied that he was a shepherd for his father and once he went to draw water from a well and gazed upon his reflection in the water, and his evil desires rushed upon him and sought to drive him from the world through sin. But the shepherd swore that day that he would shave his beautiful hair off for the sake of Heaven. Simeon the Just immediately arose and kissed the nazirite's head, praying that there would be many nazirites such as him in Israel. And Simeon the Just said that it was of this nazirite that [Numbers 6:2](#) says, "When either a man or a woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a nazirite, to separate themselves unto the Lord . . . ." ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 9b.](#))





Numbers 6:3–10 in Hebrew alternating with the [Aramaic Targum Onkelos](#) in a 12th century manuscript from the [British Library](#)

The Mishnah taught that [Numbers 6:2–8](#) forbade a nazirite three things: ritual defilement, cutting of hair, and products of the vine. (Mishnah Nazir 6:1, 5; [Babylonian Talmud Nazir 34a–b, 44a.](#))

The Mishnah taught that all products of the vine could be

measured together, and that there was no penalty for violation of the nazirite's vow unless the nazirite ate an olive's bulk of grapes or drank a quarter of a log of wine. Rabbi Akiba said that there was a penalty even if the nazirite soaked bread in wine and enough was absorbed to make up an olive's bulk. (Mishnah Nazir 6:1; [Babylonian Talmud Nazir 34a–b.](#))

The Mishnah taught that there was a separate penalty for wine, for grapes, for grape seeds, and for grape skins. But Rabbi [Eleazar ben Azariah](#) said that there was no penalty for grape seeds or grape skins unless the nazirite ate at least two grape seeds and one grape skin. (Mishnah Nazir 6:2; [Babylonian Talmud Nazir 34b.](#))

If nazirites cut their hair or had their hair cut by bandits, 30 days of their nazirite term were rendered void. Nazirites who cut their own hair incurred a penalty, no matter whether they used scissors or a razor, or no matter how little they trimmed their hair.

(Mishnah Nazir 6:3; [Babylonian Talmud Nazir 39a.](#)) Nazirites were allowed to clean their hair or part it with their fingers, but they were not allowed to comb it. [Rabbi Ishmael](#) said that they were not allowed to clean their hair with earth, because it causes the hair to fall out. (Mishnah Nazir 6:3; [Babylonian Talmud Nazir 42a.](#))

A nazirite who drank wine all day long incurred only a single penalty. If the nazirite was repeatedly warned not to drink and then drank anyway, the nazirite incurred a penalty for each warning. Similarly, nazirites who cut their hair all day long incurred only one penalty, but if they were repeatedly warned not

to cut and then cut anyway, they incurred a penalty for each warning. And similarly, nazirites who defile themselves by contact with the dead all day long incurred only one penalty, but if they were repeatedly warned not to defile themselves and then defiled themselves anyway, they incurred a penalty for each warning. (Mishnah Nazir 6:4; [Babylonian Talmud Nazir 42a.](#))

The Mishnah taught that defilement and cutting of hair had a stringency that products of the vine did not, as defilement and cutting of hair rendered void the previous period of nazirite observance, while consuming products of the vine did not. Products of the vine had a stringency that defilement or cutting of hair did not, as the prohibition of products of the vine had no exception, while the law allowed exceptions for where cutting of hair was a religious duty or where there was an abandoned corpse. Defilement also had a stringency that cutting of hair did not, as defilement rendered void the whole of the preceding period and entails the offering of a sacrifice, while cutting of hair renders voided only 30 days and did not entail a sacrifice. (Mishnah Nazir 6:5; [Babylonian Talmud Nazir 44a.](#))

The Mishnah employed the prohibition of [Numbers 6:6](#) to imagine how one could with one action violate up to nine separate commandments. One could (1) plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together (in violation of [Deuteronomy 22:10](#)) (2 and 3) that are two animals dedicated to the sanctuary, (4) plowing mixed seeds sown in a vineyard (in violation of [Deuteronomy 22:9](#)), (5) during a [Sabbatical year](#) (in violation of [Leviticus 25:4](#)), (6) on a Festival-day (in violation of, for example,

[Leviticus 23:7](#)), (7) when the plower is a priest (in violation of [Leviticus 21:1](#)) and (8) a Nazirite (in violation of [Numbers 6:6](#)) plowing in a contaminated place. [Chananya ben Chachinai](#) said that the plower also may have been wearing a garment of wool and linen (in violation of [Leviticus 19:19](#) and [Deuteronomy 22:11](#)). They said to him that this would not be in the same category as the other violations. He replied that neither is the Nazirite in the same category as the other violations. ([Mishnah Makkot 3:9](#); [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 21b](#).)

Tractate [Kinnim](#) in the Mishnah interpreted the laws of pairs of sacrificial pigeons and doves in [Leviticus 1:14](#), [5:7](#), [12:6–8](#), [14:22](#), and [15:29](#); and [Numbers 6:10](#). ([Kinnim 1:1–3:6](#).)



God the Father with His Right Hand Raised in Blessing (16th century drawing by [Girolamo dai Libri](#))

Rabbi Eleazar ha-Kappar taught that [Numbers 6:11](#) required priests to "make atonement for" nazirites because the nazirites denied themselves wine. Rabbi Eleazar ha-Kappar thus reasoned that if nazirites were considered sinners because they denied

themselves wine, then those who fast voluntarily are sinners, too. But Rabbi Eleazar said that the nazirite was termed "holy," as [Numbers 6:5](#) says, "he shall be holy, he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow long." Rabbi Eleazar thus reasoned that if nazirites were considered holy because they denied themselves just wine, then those who fast voluntarily are holy, too.

([Babylonian Talmud Taanit 11a.](#))

Rav Havivi (or some say [Rav Assi](#)) of Hozna'ah said to [Rav Ashi](#) that a [Tanna](#) taught that Aaron first said the priestly blessing of [Numbers 6:22–27](#) on "the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month" ([Exodus 40:17](#), the first of [Nisan](#)), the same day that Moses erected the Tabernacle (as reported in [Numbers 7:1](#)), and the same day that the princes brought their first offerings (as reported in [Numbers 7:2–3](#)). A Tanna taught that the first of Nisan took ten crowns of distinction by virtue of the ten momentous events that occurred on that day. The first of Nisan was: (1) the first day of the Creation (as reported in [Genesis 1:1–5](#)), (2) the first day of the princes' offerings (as reported in [Numbers 7:10–17](#)), (3) the first day for the priesthood to make the sacrificial offerings (as reported in [Leviticus 9:1–21](#)), (4) the first day for public sacrifice, (5) the first day for the descent of fire from Heaven (as reported in [Leviticus 9:24](#)), (6) the first for the priests' eating of sacred food in the sacred area, (7) the first for the dwelling of the Shechinah in Israel (as implied by [Exodus 25:8](#)), (8) the first for the Priestly Blessing of Israel (as reported in [Leviticus 9:22](#), employing the blessing prescribed by [Numbers 6:22–27](#)), (9) the first for the prohibition of the [high](#)

[places](#) (as stated in [Leviticus 17:3–4](#)), and (10) the first of the months of the year (as instructed in [Exodus 12:2](#)). ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 87b.](#))

## **[[edit](#)] Numbers chapter 7**

Noting the similarity of language between "This is the sacrifice of Aaron" in [Leviticus 6:13](#) and "This is the sacrifice of Nahshon the son of Amminadab" and each of the other princes of the 12 tribes in [Numbers 7:17–83](#), the Rabbis concluded that Aaron's sacrifice was as beloved to God as the sacrifices of the princes of the 12 tribes. ([Leviticus Rabbah](#) 8:3.)

A midrash taught that the length of the Tabernacle courtyard reported in [Exodus 27:18](#) at 100 cubits added to the length of the Tabernacle — 30 cubits — to total 130 cubits. And the midrash taught that this number was alluded to when (as [Numbers 7:37](#) reports) the prince of the [Tribe of Simeon](#) brought an offering of "one silver dish, the weight of which was 130 shekels." The midrash taught that the dish was in allusion to the court that encompassed the Tabernacle as the sea encompasses the world. ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 13:19.)

Rabbi [Phinehas ben Yair](#) taught that the 60 rams, 60 goats, and 60 lambs that [Numbers 7:88](#) reports that the Israelites sacrificed as a dedication-offering of the altar symbolized (among other things) the 60 cities of the region of Argob that [Deuteronomy 3:4](#) reports the Israelites conquered. ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 16:18.)

Rabbi Azariah in the name of Rabbi Judah ben Rabbi Simon taught that the mode of conversation between God and Moses in

the the tent of meeting reported in [Numbers 7:89](#) reflected that Israel had outgrown the infancy of its nationhood. Rabbi Azariah in the name of Rabbi Judah ben Rabbi Simon explained in a parable. A mortal king had a daughter whom he loved exceedingly. So long as his daughter was small, he would speak with her in public or in the courtyard. When she grew up and reached puberty, the king determined that it no longer befitted his daughter's dignity for him to converse with her in public. So he directed that a pavilion be made for her so that he could speak with his daughter inside the pavilion. In the same way, when God saw the Israelites in Egypt, they were in the childhood of their nationhood, as [Hosea 11:1](#) says, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son." When God saw the Israelites at Sinai, God spoke with them as [Deuteronomy 5:4](#) says, "The Lord spoke with you face to face." As soon as they received the Torah, became God's nation, and said (as reported in [Exodus 24:7](#)), "All that the Lord has spoken will we do, and obey," God observed that it was no longer in keeping with the dignity of God's children that God should converse with them in the open. So God instructed the Israelites to make a Tabernacle, and when God needed to communicate with the Israelites, God did so from the Tabernacle. And thus [Numbers 7:89](#) bears this out when it says, "And when Moses went into the tent of meeting that He might speak with him." (Numbers Rabbah 12:4; see also [Pesikta de-Rav Kahana](#) 1:2, attributing the parable to Rabbi [Judah bar Ilai](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are 7 positive and 11 negative [commandments](#) in the parshah.

- To send the impure from the [Temple](#) ([Numbers 5:2.](#))
- Impure people must not enter the Temple. ([Numbers 5:3.](#))
- To repent and confess wrongdoings ([Numbers 5:7.](#))
- To fulfill the laws of the *sotah* ([Numbers 5:11–15.](#))
- Not to put oil on the *sotah's* meal offering ([Numbers 5:15.](#))
- Not to put [frankincense](#) on the *sotah's* meal offering ([Numbers 5:15.](#))
- The nazirite must not drink wine, wine mixtures, or wine vinegar. ([Numbers 6:3.](#))
- The nazirite must not eat fresh grapes. ([Numbers 6:3.](#))
- The nazirite must not eat raisins. ([Numbers 6:3.](#))
- The nazirite must not eat grape seeds. ([Numbers 6:4.](#))
- The nazirite must not eat grape skins. ([Numbers 6:4.](#))
- The nazirite must not cut his or her hair. ([Numbers 6:5.](#))



- The nazirite must let his or her hair grow. ([Numbers 6:5.](#))
- The nazirite must not be under the same roof as a corpse. ([Numbers 6:6.](#))
- The nazirite must not come into contact with the dead. ([Numbers 6:7.](#))
- The nazirite must shave after bringing sacrifices upon completion of the nazirite period. ([Numbers 6:9.](#))
- The Kohanim must bless the Jewish nation daily. ([Numbers 6:23.](#))
- The Levites must transport the ark on their shoulders. ([Numbers 7:9.](#))

(*Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 4:2–79. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1988. [ISBN 0-87306-457-7.](#))

## [\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [Judges 13:2–25](#), the story of the birth of Samson, the nazirite.



The Offer of Manoah (1641 painting by [Rembrandt](#))

### [\[edit\]](#) Summary

Manoah's wife was barren, but an angel appeared and told her that she would bear a son. ([Judges 13:2–3.](#)) The angel warned her not to drink wine or strong drink or eat any unclean thing, and foretold that no razor would come upon her son's head, for he would be nazirite from birth and would begin to save Israel from the Philistines. ([Judges 13:4–5.](#))



Manoah and wife sacrifice to God (painting from the 1250 [Morgan Bible](#))

Manoah's wife told Manoah what happened, and Manoah entreated God to let the man of God come again and teach them what to do. ([Judges 13:6–8.](#)) God heeded Manoah and sent the angel to the woman as she sat alone in the field. ([Judges 13:9.](#)) Manoah's wife ran and told Manoah, and he followed her to the angel, and asked him whether he was the one who had spoken to his wife, and he said that he was. ([Judges 13:10–11.](#)) Manoah asked the angel how they should raise the child, and the angel told him that they should do what he had told Manoah's wife: She was not to eat any product of the grapevine, drink wine or strong drink, or eat any unclean thing. ([Judges 13:13–14.](#))

Manoah asked the angel to stay so that they could serve him a meal. ([Judges 13:15.](#)) But the angel told Manoah that even if he stayed, he would not eat, and if they wanted to make a burnt-offering, they should offer it to God. ([Judges 13:16.](#)) Manoah did

not recognize that he was an angel, and asked him for his name so that when his prophecy proved true, they could honor him. ([Judges 13:16–17.](#)) But the angel asked why Manoah asked for his name, as it was hidden. ([Judges 13:18.](#))

So Manoah offered to God a young goat and a meal-offering, and as the flame went up off the altar toward heaven, the angel ascended in the flame and disappeared, and Manoah and his wife fell on their faces, as Manoah realized that he was an angel. ([Judges 13:19–21.](#)) Manoah told his wife that they would surely die, as they had seen God, but she replied that if God had wanted to kill them, God would not have received the burnt-offering or shown them what God did. ([Judges 13:22–23.](#))



Samson Slays a Thousand Men (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

And the woman bore a son and called him Samson, and the child grew, and God blessed him, and the God's spirit began to move him in Mahaneh-dan, between [Zorah](#) and [Eshtaol](#). ([Judges 13:24–25](#).)



Samson killed a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

### **[[edit](#)] Connection to the Parshah**

Both the parshah (in [Numbers 6:1–21](#)) and the haftarah relate to the nazirite status.

Both the parshah and the haftarah speak of abstention from "wine and strong drink." ([Numbers 6:3](#); [Judges 13:4](#).) And both the parshah and the haftarah note that "no razor shall come upon his head." ([Numbers 6:5](#); [Judges 13:5](#).)

The parshah and the haftarah do differ, however, about some aspects of the nazirite status. While the parshah (in [Numbers 6:2](#)) addresses one voluntarily becoming a nazirite, the haftarah (in [Judges 13:5](#)) speaks of one committed by another to nazirite

status from birth. And while the parshah (in [Numbers 6:13](#)) contemplates the nazirite period coming to a close, the haftarah (in [Judges 13:7](#)) envisions a lifetime commitment.

In his career after the haftarah, Samson proceeded to violate each of the three nazirite prohibitions. He apparently consumed intoxicants (see [Judges 14:10](#)), frequently came in contact with the dead (see [Judges 14:8–9](#); [15:8](#), [15](#)), and ultimately allowed his hair to be cut. (See [Judges 16:17–19](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) In the liturgy

Many Jews recite the Priestly Blessing, [Numbers 6:24–26](#), as the first section of the Torah to which they turn after reciting the Blessings of the Torah in the morning. (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for Weekdays with an Interlinear Translation*, 20. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-686-8](#).) And the Priestly Blessing is reflected in the closing prayer for peace of the [Amidah](#) prayer in each of the three [prayer services](#). ([Reuven Hammer](#). *Or Hadasb: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 9. New York: The [Rabbinical Assembly](#), 2003. [ISBN 0-916219-20-8](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:





## Hammurabi

### [\[edit\]](#) Ancient

- [Code of Hammurabi ¶ 132](#). Babylonia, Circa 1780 BCE.  
Reprinted in e.g. [Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament](#). Edited by [James B. Pritchard](#), 163, 171.  
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969. [ISBN 0-691-03503-2](#). (ordeal of suspected wife).
- [The Priestly Benediction on a silver amulet](#). Jerusalem, Late 7th century BCE.

### [\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Judges 13:2–25](#) (Samson the nazirite); [16:17](#) (Samson the nazirite).
- [1 Samuel 1](#) (Samuel the nazirite).
- [Ezekiel 1:5–14](#) (cherubim); [2:9–3:3](#) (symbolic consumption of the written word); [10:1–22](#) (cherubim).
- [Amos 2:11–12](#) (nazirites).



- [Psalms 18:11](#) (cherubim); [20:4](#) (burnt offerings); [21:7](#) (blessing of God's presence); [37:5–6](#) (God vindicates the just cause); [40:7](#) (sacrifices); [50:3–23](#) (sacrifices of thanksgiving); [51:16–19](#) (sacrifices); [66:13–15](#) (burnt offerings); [67:2](#) (God be gracious; God's face to shine); [76:3](#) (God's dwelling); [80:4](#) (God's face to shine); [85:11](#) (peace); [99:1](#) (cherubim); [109:18](#) (curse entering body like water); [121:7](#) (the Lord keep you); [134:3](#) (the Lord bless you); [141:2](#) (incense).

### **[[edit](#)] Early nonrabbinic**

- [Philo. \*Allegorical Interpretation 1\*](#): 7:17; *Allegorical Interpretation 3*: 3:8, 51:148; *On the Cherubim* 5:14, 17; *On the Unchangableness of God* 19:87, 89; *On Husbandry* 40:174; *Concerning Noah's Work as a Planter* 25:108; *Who Is the Heir of Divine Things?* 41:195; *On Mating with the Preliminary Studies* 21:114; *On Dreams, That They Are God-Sent* 2:4:25; *The Special Laws* 1:46:254. [Alexandria](#), Egypt, early 1st century CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [Charles Duke Yonge](#), 26, 51, 67, 81, 165, 189, 200, 292, 314, 389, 558. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Pub., 1993. [ISBN 0-943575-93-1](#).





## Josephus

- [Josephus](#), *Antiquities of the Jews* 3:11:1, [3, 6](#); [4:4:4](#). Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 96–97, 106–07. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).
- [Gospel of James 16](#) (circa 150 CE). ([Mary](#) as sotah).

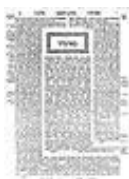
## [[edit](#)] Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): Challah 1:6, 4:11; [Orlah 1:7–8](#); [Megillah 3:6, 4:10](#); [Moed Katan 3:1](#); [Nazir 1:1–9:5](#); [Sotah 1:1–9:15](#); [Bava Kamma 9:11–12](#); [Makkot 3:7–10](#); [Avodah Zarah 5:9](#); [Avot 5:21](#); [Menachot 3:5–6, 5:3, 5:6, 6:1, 6:5](#); Chullin 13:10; Meilah 3:2; Tamid 7:2; Middot 2:5; [Kinnim 1:1–3:6](#); Negaim 14:4; Parah 1:4. Land of Israel, circa 200 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 75, 149, 158, 160, 321, 324, 327, 430–66, 525, 618, 672, 739, 742–44, 764, 855–56, 871, 876, 883–89, 1010, 1014. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).

- [Tosefta](#): Demai 2:7; Maaser Sheni 3:11; Challah 2:8; Pisha (Pesachim) 8:9; Shekalim 3:26; Nedarim 1:1; Nazir 1:1–6:6; Sotah 1:1–15:15; Gittin 2:7; Bava Kamma 10:17–18; Makkot 3:5; Negaim 1:12; 4:12. Land of Israel, circa 300 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:85, 313, 339, 510, 538, 785, 807–93, 901; 2:1013, 1207, 1712, 1725. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).
- [Sifre](#) to Numbers 1–58. Land of Israel, circa 250–350 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Sifré to Numbers: An American Translation and Explanation*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:47–230. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986. [ISBN 1-55540-008-6](#).
- [Sifra](#) 45:1; 46:1; 47:1; 50:1; 51:2; 55:1; 63:2; 66:1; 77:1; 79:1; 81:1; 85:1; 87:1; 95:1; 101:1; 105:1; 188:3; 213:1; 230:1. Land of Israel, 4th century CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Sifra: An Analytical Translation*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:255, 259, 265, 273, 277, 292, 318, 332; 2:29, 37, 43–44, 57–58, 63, 97, 145, 158–59; 3:55, 175, 237. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988. Vol. 1 [ISBN 1-55540-205-4](#). Vol. 2 [ISBN 1-55540-206-2](#). Vol. 3 [ISBN 1-55540-207-0](#).
- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Demai 55b; Orlah 14b, 28a; Yoma 4b–5a, 50b; Sukkah 3b; Nazir 1a–; Sotah 1a–. Land of Israel, circa 400 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*.

Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 4, 12, 21–22. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2007–2011.

- [Mekhilta of Rabbi Simeon](#) 10:1; 58:1; 83:1. Land of Israel, 5th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai*. Translated by W. David Nelson, 29, 259, 375. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2006. [ISBN 0-8276-0799-7](#).



## Talmud

- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 15b, 19a–b, 20b, 31b, 40b, 63a; Shabbat 13a, 28a, 50b, 71b, 87b, 92a, 116a, 118b, 132a, 139a; Eruvin 13a–b, 26b, 58a, 104b; Pesachim 19a, 23a, 31a, 35a, 41b, 43a–b, 45a, 66b–67a, 79a, 80b, 81b, 95b, 110a; Yoma 4b, 16a, 37a–b, 47a, 61b, 76b; Sukkah 6a, 28a, 42a, 53b; Beitzah 20a, 35b; Rosh Hashanah 17b; Taanit 11a, 17a, 21b, 26b; Megillah 3b, 8b, 18a, 20b, 23a–b, 25a, 28b, 29b, 30b–31a; Moed Katan 9a, 13b, 15a, 17b, 18b, 19b, 25b; Chagigah 6a, 9a, 10a, 16a, 23b–24a; Yevamot 5a, 7a, 11a–b, 38b, 46a, 49b, 55b, 56b, 58a, 61b, 84b–85b, 95a–b, 100b; Ketubot 9a, 15b, 19a, 24b, 45b, 51b, 71a, 72a, 74a, 81a, 82a; Nedarim 3a, 4a, 9b–10a, 18a,](#)

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**[[edit](#)] Medieval**

- [Solomon ibn Gabirol](#). *A Crown for the King*, [21:257–58](#). Spain, 11th century. Translated by David R. Slavitt, 34–35. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. [ISBN 0-19-511962-2](#).
- [Rashi](#). *Commentary*. [Numbers 4–7](#). [Troyes](#), France, late 11th century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 4:35–85. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1997. [ISBN 0-89906-029-3](#).
- [Judah Halevi](#). *Kuzari*. [2:26](#); [3:53](#). [Toledo](#), Spain, 1130–1140. Reprinted in, e.g., Jehuda Halevi. *Kuzari: An Argument for the Faith of Israel*. Intro. by Henry Slonimsky, 105, 181. New York: Schocken, 1964. [ISBN 0-8052-0075-4](#).



- [Numbers Rabbah](#) 1:1; 2:10; 3:12; 4:19–20; 6:1–14:22; 15:3, 5, 8; 18:3, 20–21; 20:19; 21:12; 22:4. 12th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Numbers*. Translated by Judah J. Slotki, 5:8, 36, 90, 119, 124, 138, 157–484; 6:485–641, 644, 646, 649, 710, 732, 735, 810, 838, 856. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Maimonides](#). *The Guide for the Perplexed*, [1:37](#), [61](#); [3:33](#), [46](#), [47](#), [48](#). [Cairo](#), Egypt, 1190. Reprinted in, e.g., Moses Maimonides. *The Guide for the Perplexed*. Translated by [Michael Friedländer](#), 53, 90–91, 327, 364, 366, 370, 372. New York: Dover Publications, 1956. [ISBN 0-486-20351-4](#).
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Friedman](#), 69–75. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press,  
1981. [ISBN 0-520-09637-1](#).
- Jacob Milgrom. "The Chieftain's Gifts: Numbers,  
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## [\[edit\]](#) External links

### [\[edit\]](#) Texts

- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)
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### [\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, California](#)
- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)
- [Aish.com](#)

- [American Jewish University](#)
- [Anshe Emes Synagogue, Los Angeles](#)
- [Bar-Ilan University](#)
- [Chabad.org](#)
- [eparsha.com](#)
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- [The Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash](#)
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# Behaalotecha

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**Behaalotecha**, **Beha'alotecha**, **Beha'alothekha**, or

**Behaaloscha** (בהעלותך — [Hebrew](#) for "when you step up," the 11th word, and the first distinctive word, in the parshah) is the 36th [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the third in the [book of Numbers](#). It constitutes [Numbers 8:1–12:16](#). [Jews](#) generally read it in late May or in June.

The parshah tells of the [lampstand](#) in the [Tabernacle](#), the consecration of the [Levites](#), the [Second Passover](#), how a cloud and fire led the [Israelites](#), the silver [trumpets](#), how the Israelites set out on their journeys, complaining by the Israelites, and how [Miriam](#) and [Aaron](#) questioned [Moses](#).

As the parshah sets out some of the laws of [Passover](#), Jews also read part of the parshah, [Numbers 9:1–14](#), as the initial Torah reading for the fourth intermediate day (*[Chol HaMoed](#)*) of Passover.



Blowing the Trumpet at the Feast of the New Moon (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

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- [4.5 Numbers chapter 12](#)
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## [\[edit\]](#) Summary





the lampstand, or menorah portrayed on the [Arch of Titus](#)

### [\[edit\]](#) The lampstand

[God](#) told Moses to tell Aaron to mount the seven lamps so as to give light to the front of the lampstand in the Tabernacle, and Aaron did so. ([Numbers 8:1–3.](#))

### [\[edit\]](#) Consecration of the Levites

God told Moses to cleanse the Levites by sprinkling on them [water](#) of purification, and making them [shave](#) their whole bodies and wash their [clothes](#). ([Numbers 8:5–7.](#)) Moses was to assemble the Israelites around the Levites and cause the Israelites to [lay their hands](#) upon the Levites. ([Numbers 8:9–10.](#)) Aaron was to designate the Levites as an elevation [offering](#) from the Israelites. ([Numbers 8:11.](#)) The Levites were then to lay their hands in turn upon the heads of two [bulls](#), one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, to make expiation for the Levites. ([Numbers 8:12.](#)) Thereafter, the Levites were qualified for the service of the Tent of Meeting, in place of the firstborn of the Israelites. ([Numbers 8:15–16.](#)) God told Moses that Levites aged 25 to 50 were to work in the service of the Tent of Meeting, but after age 50 they were to retire and could stand guard but not perform labor. ([Numbers 8:23–26.](#))

## [\[edit\]](#) Second Passover

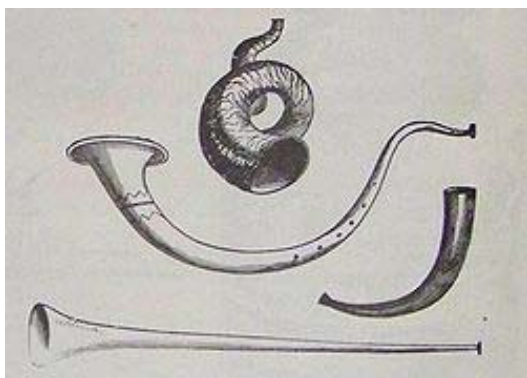
At the beginning of the second year following [the Exodus](#) from [Egypt](#), God told Moses to have the Israelites celebrate [Passover](#) at its set time. ([Numbers 9:1–3](#).) But some men were unclean because they had had contact with a corpse and could not offer the Passover sacrifice on the set day. ([Numbers 9:6](#).) They asked Moses and Aaron how they could participate in Passover, and Moses told them to stand by while he listened for God's instructions. ([Numbers 9:7–8](#).) God told Moses that whenever Israelites were defiled by a corpse or on a long journey on Passover, they were to offer the Passover offering on the 14th day of the second month — a month after Passover — otherwise in strict accord with the law of the Passover sacrifice. ([Numbers 9:9–12](#).) But if a man who was clean and not on a journey refrained from offering the Passover sacrifice, he was to be cut off from his kin. ([Numbers 9:13](#).)



Feast of Trumpets (illustration from the 1894 *Treasures of the Bible*)

## [\[edit\]](#) Cloud and fire

Starting the day that the Tabernacle was set up, a [cloud](#) covered the Tabernacle by day, and a [fire](#) rested on it by night. ([Numbers 9:15–16.](#)) Whenever the cloud lifted from the Tent, the Israelites would follow it until the cloud settled, and there the Israelites would make camp and stay as long as the cloud lingered. ([Numbers 9:17–23.](#))



Trumpets (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

## [\[edit\]](#) Silver trumpets

God told Moses to have two silver trumpets made to summon the community and to set it in motion. ([Numbers 10:1–2.](#)) Upon long blasts of the two horns, the whole community was to assemble before the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. ([Numbers 10:3.](#)) Upon the blast of one, the chieftains were to assemble. ([Numbers 10:4.](#)) Short blasts directed the divisions encamped on the east to move forward, and a second set of short blasts directed those on the south to move forward. ([Numbers 10:5–6.](#))

As well, short blasts were to be sounded when the Israelites were at [war](#) against an aggressor who attacked them, and the trumpets were to be sounded on joyous occasions, festivals, new moons, burnt offerings, and sacrifices of well-being. ([Numbers 10:9–10.](#))

## [\[edit\]](#) Journeys

In the second month of the second year, the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle and the Israelites set out on their journeys from the [wilderness](#) of [Sinai](#) to the wilderness of [Paran](#). ([Numbers 10:11–12.](#)) Moses asked his father-in-law (here called [Hobab son of Reuel](#) the [Midianite](#)) to come with the Israelites, promising to be generous with him, but he replied that he would return to his native land. ([Numbers 10:29–30.](#)) Moses pressed him again, noting that he could serve as the Israelites' guide. ([Numbers 10:31–32.](#))



A Plague Inflicted on Israel While Eating the Quail (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

They marched three days distance from [Mount Sinai](#), with the [Ark of the Covenant](#) in front of them, and God's cloud above them by day. ([Numbers 10:33–34.](#)) When the Ark was to set out, Moses would say: “Advance, O Lord! May Your enemies be scattered, and may Your foes flee before You!” ([Numbers 10:35.](#))

And when it halted, he would say: “Return, O Lord, You who are Israel’s myriads of thousands!” ([Numbers 10:36.](#))

### [\[edit\]](#) Complaining

The people took to complaining bitterly before God, and God ravaging the outskirts of the camp with fire until Moses prayed to God, and then the fire died down. ([Numbers 11:1–2.](#))

The riffraff in their midst (Hebrew “*asafsuf*” — compare the “mixed multitude,” Hebrew “*erev rav*” of [Ex. 12:38](#)) felt a gluttonous craving and the Israelites complained, “If only we had [meat](#) to eat! ([Numbers 11:4.](#)) Moses in turn complained to God, “Why have You . . . laid the burden of all this people upon me? ([Numbers 11:11.](#)) God told Moses to gather 70 elders, so that God could come down and put some of the spirit that rested on Moses upon them, so that they might share the burden of the people. ([Numbers 11:16–17.](#)) And God told Moses to tell the people to purify themselves, for the next day they would eat meat. ([Numbers 11:18.](#)) But Moses questioned how enough flocks, herds, or fish could be found to feed 600,000. ([Numbers 11:21–22.](#)) God answered: “Is there a limit to the Lord’s power?” ([Numbers 11:23.](#))

Moses gathered the 70 elders, and God came down in a cloud, spoke to Moses, and drew upon the spirit that was on Moses and put it upon the elders. ([Numbers 11:24–25.](#)) When the spirit rested upon them, they spoke in ecstasy, but did not continue. ([Numbers 11:25.](#)) [Eldad and Medad](#) had remained in camp, yet the spirit rested upon them, and they spoke in ecstasy in the

camp. ([Numbers 11:26.](#)) When a youth reported to Moses that Eldad and Medad were acting the [prophet](#) in the camp, [Joshua](#) called on Moses to restrain them. ([Numbers 11:27–28.](#)) But Moses told Joshua: “Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord put His spirit upon them!” ([Numbers 11:29.](#))



Miriam and Aaron complain against Moses (illustration from the 1908 *The Bible and Its Story Taught by One Thousand Picture Lessons*)

A [wind](#) from God then swept [quail](#) from the [sea](#) and strewed them all around the camp, and the people gathered quail for two days. ([Numbers 11:31–32.](#)) While the meat was still between their teeth, God struck the people with a plague. ([Numbers 11:33.](#))



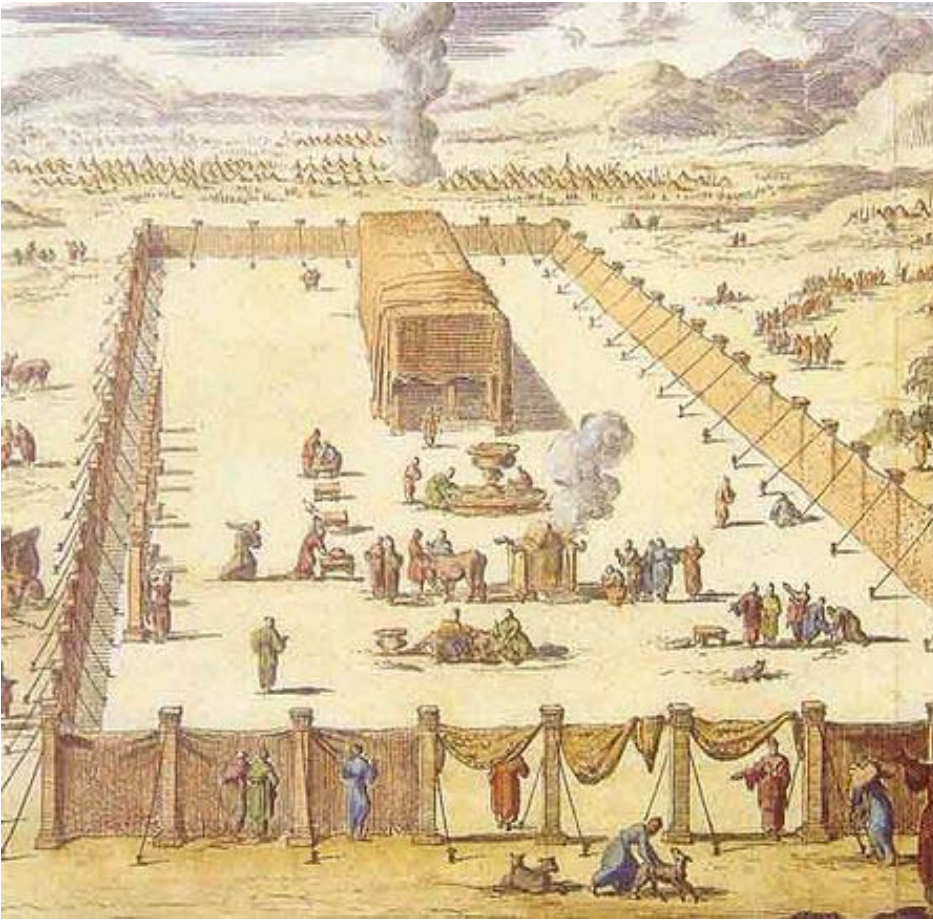
## [\[edit\]](#) Miriam and Aaron question Moses

Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses, saying: “He married a [Cushite](#) woman!” and “Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?” ([Numbers 12:1–2](#).) God heard and called Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to come to the Tent of Meeting. ([Numbers 12:2–4](#).) God came down in cloud and called out to Aaron and Miriam: “When a prophet of the Lord arises among you, I make Myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a [dream](#). Not so with My servant Moses; he is trusted throughout My household. With him I speak [mouth](#) to mouth, plainly and not in riddles, and he beholds the likeness of the Lord. How then did you not shrink from speaking against My servant Moses!” ([Numbers 12:5–8](#).) As the cloud withdrew, Miriam was stricken with snow-white scales. ([Numbers 12:10](#).) Moses cried out to God, “O God, pray heal her!” ([Numbers 12:13](#).) But God said to Moses, “If her father spat in her face, would she not bear her shame for seven days? Let her be shut out of camp for seven days.” ([Numbers 12:14](#).) And the people waited until she rejoined the camp. ([Numbers 12:15](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) In inner-Biblical interpretation

### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 8

This is the pattern of instruction and construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings:



The Tabernacle

Item	Instruction		Construction	
	Order	Verses	Order	Verses
The Sabbath	16	<a href="#">Exodus 31:12–17</a>	1	<a href="#">Exodus 35:1–3</a>
Contributions	1	<a href="#">Exodus 25:1–9</a>	2	<a href="#">Exodus 35:4–29</a>

<b>Craftspeople</b>	15	<a href="#">Exodus 31:1–11</a>	3	<a href="#">Exodus 35:30–36:7</a>
<b>Tabernacle</b>	5	<a href="#">Exodus 26:1–37</a>	4	<a href="#">Exodus 36:8–38</a>
<b>Ark</b>	2	<a href="#">Exodus 25:10–22</a>	5	<a href="#">Exodus 37:1–9</a>
<b>Table</b>	3	<a href="#">Exodus 25:23–30</a>	6	<a href="#">Exodus 37:10–16</a>
<b>Menorah</b>	4	<a href="#">Exodus 25:31–40</a>	7	<a href="#">Exodus 37:17–24</a>
<b>Altar of Incense</b>	11	<a href="#">Exodus 30:1–10</a>	8	<a href="#">Exodus 37:25–28</a>
<b>Anointing Oil</b>	13	<a href="#">Exodus 30:22–33</a>	9	<a href="#">Exodus 37:29</a>
<b>Incense</b>	14	<a href="#">Exodus 30:34–38</a>	10	<a href="#">Exodus 37:29</a>
<b>Altar of Sacrifice</b>	6	<a href="#">Exodus 27:1–8</a>	11	<a href="#">Exodus 38:1–7</a>
<b>Laver</b>	12	<a href="#">Exodus 30:17–21</a>	12	<a href="#">Exodus 38:8</a>
<b>Tabernacle Court</b>	7	<a href="#">Exodus 27:9–19</a>	13	<a href="#">Exodus 38:9–20</a>
<b>Priestly Garments</b>	9	<a href="#">Exodus 28:1–43</a>	14	<a href="#">Exodus 39:1–31</a>
<b>Ordination Ritual</b>	10	<a href="#">Exodus 29:1–46</a>	15	<a href="#">Leviticus 8:1–9:24</a>
<b>Lamp</b>	8	<a href="#">Exodus 27:20–21</a>	16	<a href="#">Numbers 8:1–4</a>

## [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 9

### [\[edit\]](#) Passover



The Search for Leaven (illustration circa 1733–1739 by [Bernard Picart](#))

([Numbers 9:1–14](#) refers to the [Festival](#) of Passover. In the [Hebrew Bible](#), Passover is called:

- “Passover” (*Pesach*, פֶּסַח) ([Exodus 12:11, 21, 27, 43, 48; 34:25; Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 9:2, 4–6, 10, 12–14; 28:16; 33:3; Deuteronomy 16:1–2, 5–6; Joshua 5:10–11; 2 Kings 23:21–23; Ezekiel 45:21; Ezra 6:19–20; 2 Chronicles 30:1–2, 5, 15, 17–18; 35:1, 6–9, 11, 13, 16–19](#));
- “The Feast of Unleavened Bread” (*Chag haMatzot*, חַג הַמַּצּוֹת) ([Exodus 12:17; 23:15; 34:18; Leviticus 23:6;](#)

[Deuteronomy 16:16](#); [Ezekiel 45:21](#); [Ezra 6:22](#);  
[2 Chronicles 8:13](#); [30:13](#), [21](#); [35:17](#)); and

- “A holy convocation” or “a solemn assembly” (*mikrah kodesh*, מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ) ([Exodus 12:16](#); [Leviticus 23:7–8](#); [Numbers 28:18](#), [25](#)).

Some explain the double nomenclature of “Passover” and “Feast of Unleavened Bread” as referring to two separate feasts that the Israelites combined sometime between the Exodus and when the Biblical text became settled. (See, e.g., [W. Gunther Plaut](#), *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, 456. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981. [ISBN 0-8074-0055-6](#).) [Exodus 34:18–20](#) and [Deuteronomy 15:19–16:8](#) indicate that the dedication of the firstborn also became associated with the festival.



The Passover Seder of the Portuguese Jews (illustration circa 1733–1739 by Bernard Picart)

Some believe that the “Feast of Unleavened Bread” was an agricultural festival at which the Israelites celebrated the beginning of the grain harvest. Moses may have had this festival in mind when in [Exodus 5:1](#) and [10:9](#) he petitioned Pharaoh to let the Israelites go to celebrate a feast in the wilderness. (Plaut, at 464.)

“Passover,” on the other hand, was associated with a thanksgiving sacrifice of a lamb, also called “the Passover,” “the Passover lamb,” or “the Passover offering.” ([Exodus 12:11, 21, 27, 43, 48](#); [Deuteronomy 16:2, 5–6](#); [Ezra 6:20](#); [2 Chronicles 30:15, 17–18](#); [35:1, 6–9, 11, 13](#).)

[Exodus 12:5–6](#), [Leviticus 23:5](#), and [Numbers 9:3](#) and [5](#), and [28:16](#) direct “Passover” to take place on the evening of the fourteenth of [Aviv](#) ([Nisan](#) in the [Hebrew calendar](#) after the [Babylonian captivity](#)). [Joshua 5:10](#), [Ezekiel 45:21](#), [Ezra 6:19](#), and [2 Chronicles 35:1](#) confirm that practice. [Exodus 12:18–19, 23:15](#), and [34:18](#), [Leviticus 23:6](#), and [Ezekiel 45:21](#) direct the “Feast of Unleavened Bread” to take place over seven days and [Leviticus 23:6](#) and [Ezekiel 45:21](#) direct that it begin on the fifteenth of the month. Some believe that the propinquity of the dates of the two festivals led to their confusion and merger. (Plaut, at 464.)

[Exodus 12:23](#) and [27](#) link the word “Passover” (*Pesach*, פֶּסַח) to God’s act to “pass over” (*pasach*, פָּסַח) the Israelites’ houses in the [plague](#) of the firstborn. In the Torah, the consolidated Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread thus commemorate the Israelites’ liberation from [Egypt](#). ([Exodus 12:42; 23:15; 34:18](#); [Numbers 33:3](#); [Deuteronomy 16:1, 3, 6](#).)

The Hebrew Bible frequently notes the Israelites' observance of Passover at turning points in their history. [Numbers 9:1–5](#) reports God's direction to the Israelites to observe Passover in the wilderness of [Sinai](#) on the anniversary of their liberation from Egypt. [Joshua 5:10–11](#) reports that upon entering the [Promised Land](#), the Israelites kept the Passover on the plains of [Jericho](#) and ate unleavened cakes and parched corn, produce of the land, the next day. [2 Kings 23:21–23](#) reports that King [Josiah](#) commanded the Israelites to keep the Passover in [Jerusalem](#) as part of Josiah's reforms, but also notes that the Israelites had not kept such a Passover from the days of the [Biblical judges](#) nor in all the days of the [kings of Israel](#) or the [kings of Judah](#), calling into question the observance of even Kings [David](#) and [Solomon](#). The more reverent [2 Chronicles 8:12–13](#), however, reports that Solomon offered sacrifices on the festivals, including the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And [2 Chronicles 30:1–27](#) reports King [Hezekiah](#)'s observance of a second Passover anew, as sufficient numbers of neither the priests nor the people were prepared to do so before then. And [Ezra 6:19–22](#) reports that the Israelites returned from the Babylonian captivity observed Passover, ate the Passover lamb, and kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy.

## [\[edit\]](#) In inner-biblical interpretation

### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 12

The [Hebrew Bible](#) reports skin disease (*tzara'at*, [צָרַעַת](#)) and a person affected by skin disease (*metzora*, [מִצְרָע](#)) at several places, often (and sometimes incorrectly) translated as “leprosy” and “a leper.” In [Exodus 4:6](#), to help Moses to convince others that God had sent him, God instructed Moses to put his hand into his bosom, and when he took it out, his hand was “leprous (*m'tzora'at*, [מִצְרָעַת](#)), as white as snow.” In [Leviticus 13–14](#), the Torah sets out regulations for skin disease (*tzara'at*, [צָרַעַת](#)) and a person affected by skin disease (*metzora*, [מִצְרָע](#)). In [Numbers 12:10](#), after Miriam spoke against Moses, God’s cloud removed from the Tent of Meeting and “Miriam was leprous (*m'tzora'at*, [מִצְרָעַת](#)), as white as snow.” In [Deuteronomy 24:8–9](#), Moses warned the Israelites in the case of skin disease (*tzara'at*, [צָרַעַת](#)) diligently to observe all that the priests would teach them, remembering what God did to Miriam. In [2 Kings 5:1–19](#), part of the [haftarah](#) for parshah [Tazria](#), the prophet [Elisha](#) cures [Naaman](#), the commander of the army of the king of [Aram](#), who was a “leper” (*metzora*, [מִצְרָע](#)). In [2 Kings 7:3–20](#), part of the [haftarah](#) for parshah [Metzora](#), the story is told of four “leprous men” (*m'tzora'im*, [מִצְרָעִים](#)) at the gate during the [Arameans'](#) siege of [Samaria](#). And in [2 Chronicles 26:19](#), after King [Uzziah](#) tried to burn incense in the [Temple in Jerusalem](#), “leprosy (*tzara'at*, [צָרַעַת](#)) broke forth on his forehead.”



## [\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation



the menorah

## [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 8

A [Baraita](#) interpreted the expression “beaten work of gold” in [Numbers 8:4](#) to require that if the craftsmen made the menorah out of gold, then they had to beat it out of one single piece of gold. The [Gemara](#) then reasoned that [Numbers 8:4](#) used the expression “beaten work” a second time to differentiate the requirements for crafting the menorah from the requirements for crafting the trumpets in [Numbers 10:2](#), which used the expression “beaten work” only once. The Gemara concluded that the verse required the craftsmen to beat the menorah from a single piece of metal, but not so the trumpets. ([Babylonian Talmud Menachot 28a.](#))

A [midrash](#) deduced from [Numbers 8:4](#) that the work of the candlestick was one of four things that God had to show Moses with God’s finger because Moses was puzzled by them. ([Exodus Rabbah](#) 15:28.)

A midrash explained why the consecration of the Levites in [Numbers 8:5–26](#) followed the lighting of the menorah in [Numbers 8:1–4](#). The midrash noted that while the twelve tribes presented offerings at the dedication of the altar, the tribe of Levi did not offer anything. The Levites thus complained that they had been held back from bringing an offering for the dedication of the altar. The midrash compared this to the case of a king who held a feast and invited various craftsmen, but did not invite a friend of whom the king was quite fond. The friend was distressed, thinking that perhaps the king harbored some grievance against him. But when the feast was over, the king called the friend and told him that while the king had made a feast for all the citizens of the province, the king would make a special feast with the friend alone, because of his friendship. So it was with God, who accepted the offerings of the twelve tribes in [Numbers 7:5](#), and then turned to the tribe of Levi, addressing Aaron in [Numbers 8:2](#) and directing the consecration of the Levites in [Numbers 8:6](#) and after. ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 15:3.)

The [Mishnah](#) interpreted [Numbers 8:7](#) to command the Levites to cut off all their hair with a razor, and not leave so much as two hairs remaining. (Mishnah Negaim 14:4.)

Rabbi [Jose the Galilean](#) cited the use of “second” in [Numbers 8:8](#) to rule that bulls brought for sacrifices had to be no more than two years old. But the Sages ruled that bulls could be as many as three years old, and [Rabbi Meir](#) ruled that even those that are four or five years old were valid, but old animals were not brought out of respect. (Mishnah Parah 1:2.)

A midrash interpreted God's words "the Levites shall be Mine" in [Numbers 8:14](#) to indicate a relationship that will never cease, either in this world or in the World to Come. ([Leviticus Rabbah 2:2](#).)

The Mishnah deduced from [Numbers 8:16](#) that before Moses set up the Tabernacle, the firstborn performed sacrifices, but after Moses set up the Tabernacle, priests performed the sacrifices. (Mishnah Zevachim 14:4; [Babylonian Talmud Zevachim 112b](#).)

Rabbi Judan considered God's five mentions of "Israel" in [Numbers 8:19](#) to demonstrate how much God loves Israel. ([Leviticus Rabbah 2:4](#).)

A midrash noted that [Numbers 8:24](#) says, "from 25 years old and upward they shall go in to perform the service in the work of the tent of meeting," while [Numbers 4:3](#), [23](#), [30](#), [35](#), [39](#), [43](#), and [47](#) say that Levites "30 years old and upward" did service in the tent of meeting. The midrash deduced that the difference teaches that all those five years, from the age of 25 to the age of 30, Levites served apprenticeships, and from that time onward they were allowed to draw near to do service. The midrash concluded that a Levite could not enter the Temple courtyard to do service unless he had served an apprenticeship of five years. And the midrash inferred from this that students who see no sign of success in their studies within a period of five years will never see any. Rabbi Jose said that students had to see success within three years, basing his position on the words "that they should be nourished three years" in [Daniel 1:5](#). ([Numbers Rabbah 6:3](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 9

The Gemara noted that the events beginning in [Numbers 9:1](#), set "in the *first* month of the second year", occurred before the events at the beginning of the book of Numbers, which [Numbers 1:1](#) reports began in "the *second* month, in the second year". Rav Menasia bar Tahlifa said in [Rab's](#) name that this proved that there is no chronological order in the Torah. ([Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 6b.](#))

The [Sifre](#) concluded that [Numbers 9:1–5](#) records the disgrace of the Israelites, as [Numbers 9:1–5](#) reports the only Passover that the Israelites observed in the wilderness. (Sifre 67:1.)

[Rav Nahman bar Isaac](#) noted that both [Numbers 1:1](#) and [Numbers 9:1](#) begin, "And the Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai", and deduced that just as [Numbers 1:1](#) happened (in the words of that verse) "on the first day of the second month", so too [Numbers 9:1](#) happened at the beginning of the month. And as [Numbers 9:1](#) addressed the Passover offering, which the Israelites were to bring on the 14th of the month, the Gemara concluded that one should expound the laws of a holiday two weeks before the holiday. ([Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 6b.](#))

Chapter 9 of Tractate [Pesachim](#) in the Mishnah and Babylonian Talmud and chapter 8 of Tractate Pisha (Pesachim) in the [Tosefta](#) interpreted the laws of the second Passover in [Numbers 9:1–14](#). (Mishnah Pesachim 9:1–4; Tosefta Pisha (Pesachim) 8:1–10; [Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 92b–96b.](#)) And tractate Pesachim

in the Mishnah, [Tosefta](#), [Jerusalem Talmud](#), and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of the Passover generally in [Exodus 12:3–27, 43–49; 13:6–10; 34:25; Leviticus 23:4–8; Numbers 9:1–14; 28:16–25; and Deuteronomy 16:1–8](#). ([Mishnah Pesachim 1:1–10:9](#); [Tosefta Pisha 1:1–10:13](#); [Jerusalem Talmud Pesachim 1a](#)–; [Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 2a–121b](#).)



The Dead Bodies Carried Away (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

Tractate [Beitzah](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws common to all of the Festivals in [Exodus 12:3–27, 43–49; 13:6–10; 23:16; 34:18–23; Leviticus 16; 23:4–43; Numbers 9:1–14; 28:16–30:1; and Deuteronomy 16:1–17; 31:10–13](#). ([Mishnah Beitzah 1:1–5:7](#); [Tosefta Yom Tov \(Beitzah\) 1:1–4:11](#); [Jerusalem Talmud Beitzah 1a](#)–; [Babylonian Talmud Beitzah 2a–40b](#).)

The Gemara asked who were the “certain men” who [Numbers 9:6](#) reported “were unclean by the dead body of a man, so that they could not keep the Passover.” Rabbi Jose the Galilean said that they were the ones who bore the coffin of Joseph (carrying out Joseph’s request of [Genesis 50:24–25](#)). [Rabbi Akiba](#) said that they were [Mishael and Elzaphan](#) who were occupied with the remains of [Nadab and Abihu](#) (as reported in [Leviticus 10:1–5](#)). Rabbi Isaac argued, however, that if they were those who bore the coffin of Joseph or if they were Mishael and Elzaphan, they would have had time to cleanse themselves before Passover. Rather, Rabbi Isaac identified the men as some who were occupied with the obligation to bury an abandoned corpse (*met mitzvah*). ([Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 25b](#).)

The Mishnah counted the sin of failing to observe the Passover enumerated in [Numbers 9:13](#) as one of 36 sins punishable by the penalty of being cut off from the Israelite people. (Mishnah Keritot 1:1; [Babylonian Talmud Keritot 2a](#).)

[Abaye](#) deduced from the words “And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up” in [Numbers 9:15](#) that the Israelites erected the Tabernacle only during the daytime, not at night, and thus that the building of the Temple could not take place at night. ([Babylonian Talmud Shevuot 15b](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 10

The Sifre deduced from the words “And the cloud of the Lord was over them by day” in [Numbers 10:34](#) that God’s cloud hovered over the people with disabilities and illnesses —

including those afflicted with emissions and skins diseases that removed them from the camp proper — protecting those with special needs. (Sifre 83:2.)

Our Rabbis taught that inverted *nuns* ( ן ) bracket the verses [Numbers 10:35–36](#), about how the Ark would move, to teach that the verses are not in their proper place. But [Rabbi](#) said that the *nuns* do not appear there on that account, but because [Numbers 10:35–36](#) constitute a separate book. It thus follows according to Rabbi that there are seven books of the Torah, and this accords with the interpretation that Rabbi [Samuel bar Nahmani](#) made in the name of [Rabbi Jonathan](#) of [Proverbs 9:1](#), when it says, “She [Wisdom] has hewn out her seven pillars,” referring to seven Books of the Law. Rabban [Simeon ben Gamaliel](#), however, taught that [Numbers 10:35–36](#) were written where they are to provide a break between two accounts of Israel’s transgressions. The first account appears in [Numbers 10:33](#), “they set forward from the mount of the Lord three days’ journey,” which Rabbi Hama ben Hanina said meant that the Israelites turned away from following the Lord within three short days, and the second account appears in [Numbers 11:1](#), which reports the Israelites’ murmurings. [Rav Ashi](#) taught that [Numbers 10:35–36](#) more properly belong in [Numbers 2](#), which reports how the Tabernacle would move. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 115b–16a.](#))



The Gathering of the Manna (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)







Gathering Manna (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)

## [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 11

Rab and [Samuel](#) debated how to interpret the report of [Numbers 11:5](#) that the Israelites complained: “We remember the fish, which we ate in Egypt for free.” One read “fish” literally, while the other read “fish” to mean the illicit intercourse that they were “free” to have when they were in Egypt, before the commandments of Sinai. [Rabbi Ammi](#) and [Rabbi Assi](#) disputed the meaning of the report of [Numbers 11:5](#) that the Israelites remembered the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic of Egypt. One said that manna had the taste of every kind of food except these five; while the other said that manna had both the taste and the substance of all foods except these, for which manna had only the taste without the substance. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 75a.](#))

The Gemara asked how one could reconcile [Numbers 11:9](#), which reported that manna fell “upon the camp,” with [Numbers 11:8](#), which reported that “people went about and gathered it,” implying that they had to leave the camp to get it. The Gemara concluded that the manna fell at different places for different classes of people: For the righteous, it fell in front of their homes; for average folk, it fell just outside the camp, and they went out and gathered; and for the wicked, it fell at some distance, and

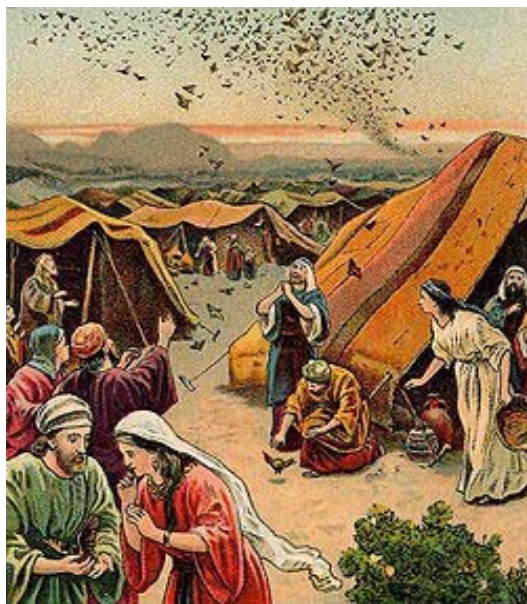
they had to go about to gather it. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 75a.](#))

The Gemara asked how one could reconcile [Exodus 16:4](#), which reported that manna fell as “bread from heaven”; with [Numbers 11:8](#), which reported that people “made cakes of it,” implying that it required baking; with [Numbers 11:8](#), which reported that people “ground it in mills,” implying that it required grinding. The Gemara concluded that the manna fell in different forms for different classes of people: For the righteous, it fell as bread; for average folk, it fell as cakes that required baking; and for the wicked, it fell as kernels that required grinding. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 75a.](#))

[Rab Judah](#) said in the name of Rab (or others say Rabbi Hama ben Hanina) that the words “ground it in mortars” in [Numbers 11:8](#) taught that with the manna came down women’s cosmetics, which were also ground in mortars. Rabbi Hama interpreted the words “seethed it in pots” in [Numbers 11:8](#) to teach that with the manna came down the ingredients or seasonings for a cooked dish. Rabbi [Abbahu](#) interpreted the words “the taste of it was as the taste of a cake (*leshad*) baked with oil” in [Numbers 11:8](#) to teach that just as infants find many flavors in the milk of their mother’s breast (*shad*), so the Israelites found many tastes in the manna. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 75a.](#)) The Gemara asked how one could reconcile [Numbers 11:8](#), which reported that “the taste of it was as the taste of a cake baked with oil,” with [Exodus 16:31](#), which reported that “the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.” Rabbi Jose ben Hanina said that the manna tasted

differently for different classes of people: It tasted like honey for infants, bread for youths, and oil for the aged. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 75b.](#))

[Rabbi Eleazar](#), on the authority of Rabbi [Simlai](#), noted that [Deuteronomy 1:16](#) says, “And I charged your judges at that time,” while [Deuteronomy 1:18](#) similarly says, “I charged you [the Israelites] at that time.” Rabbi Eleazar deduced that [Deuteronomy 1:18](#) meant to warn the Congregation to revere their judges, and [Deuteronomy 1:16](#) meant to warn the judges to be patient with the Congregation. Rabbi Hanan (or some say Rabbi Shabatai) said that this meant that judges must be as patient as Moses, who [Numbers 11:12](#) reports acted “as the nursing father carries the sucking child.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 8a.](#))



The Giving of the Manna and Quail (Bible card published 1901 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

The Mishnah deduced from [Numbers 11:16](#) that the Great [Sanhedrin](#) consisted of 71 members, because God instructed Moses to gather 70 elders of Israel, and Moses at their head made 71. [Rabbi Judah](#) said that it consisted only of 70. ([Mishnah Sanhedrin 1:6](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 2a.](#))

The Gemara asked how one could reconcile [Numbers 11:20](#), which reported God's promise that the Israelites would eat meat "a whole month," with [Numbers 11:33](#), which reported that "while the flesh was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, . . . the Lord smote the people." The Gemara concluded that God's punishment came at different speeds for different classes of people: Average people died immediately; while the wicked suffered over a month before they died. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 75b.](#))

Reading God's criticism of Moses in [Numbers 20:12](#), "Because you did not believe in me," a midrash asked whether Moses had not previously said worse when in [Numbers 11:22](#), he showed a greater lack of faith and questioned God's powers asking: "If flocks and herds be slain for them, will they suffice them? Or if all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, will they suffice them?" The midrash explained by relating the case of a king who had a friend who displayed arrogance towards the king privately, using harsh words. The king did not, however, lose his temper with his friend. Later, the friend displayed his arrogance in the presence of the king's legions, and the king sentenced his

friend to death. So also God told Moses that the first offense that Moses committed (in [Numbers 11:22](#)) was a private matter between Moses and God. But now that Moses had committed a second offense against God in public, it was impossible for God to overlook it, and God had to react, as [Numbers 20:12](#) reports, “To sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel.” (Numbers Rabbah 19:10.)

The Gemara explained how Moses selected the members of the Sanhedrin in [Numbers 11:24](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 17a.](#))

[Rabbi Simeon](#) expounded on the report in [Numbers 11:26](#) that Eldad and Medad remained in the camp. When God ordered Moses in [Numbers 11:16](#) to gather 70 of the elders of Israel, Eldad and Medad protested that they were not worthy of that dignity. In reward for their humility, God added yet more greatness to their greatness; so while the other elders’ prophesying ceased, Eldad’s and Medad’s prophesying continued. Rabbi Simeon taught that Eldad and Medad prophesied that Moses would die and Joshua would bring Israel into the [Land of Israel](#). Abba Hanin taught in the name of [Rabbi Eliezer](#) that Eldad and Medad prophesied concerning the matter of the quails in [Numbers 11](#), calling on the quail to arise. [Rav Nahman](#) read [Ezekiel 38:17](#) to teach that they prophesied concerning [Gog and Magog](#). The Gemara found support for Rabbi Simeon’s assertion that while the other elders’ prophesying ceased, Eldad’s and Medad’s prophesying continued in the use by [Numbers 11:25](#) of the past tense, “and they prophesied,” to describe the other

elders, whereas [Numbers 11:27](#) uses the present tense with regard to Eldad and Medad. The Gemara taught that if Eldad and Medad prophesied that Moses would die, then that explains why Joshua in [Numbers 11:28](#) requested Moses to forbid them. The Gemara reasoned that if Eldad and Medad prophesied about the quail or Gog and Magog, then Joshua asked Moses to forbid them because their behavior did not appear seemly, like a student who issues legal rulings in the presence of his teacher. The Gemara further reasoned that according to those who said that Eldad and Medad prophesied about the quail or Gog and Magog, Moses' response in [Numbers 11:28](#), "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets," made sense. But if Eldad and Medad prophesied that Moses would die, the Gemara wondered why Moses expressed pleasure with that in [Numbers 11:28](#). The Gemara explained that Moses must not have heard their entire prophecy. And the Gemara interpreted Joshua's request in [Numbers 11:28](#) for Moses to "forbid them" to mean that Moses should give Eldad and Medad public burdens that would cause them to cease their prophesying. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 17a](#).)



Moses at the Burning Bush (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)

### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 12

In [Deuteronomy 18:15](#), Moses foretold that “A prophet will the Lord your God raise up for you . . . *like me*,” and [Rabbi Johanan](#) thus taught that prophets would have to be, like Moses, strong, wealthy, wise, and meek. Strong, for [Exodus 40:19](#) says of Moses, “he spread the tent over the tabernacle,” and a Master taught that Moses himself spread it, and [Exodus 26:16](#) reports, “Ten [cubits](#) shall be the length of a board.” Similarly, the strength of Moses can be derived from [Deuteronomy 9:17](#), in which Moses reports, “And I took the two tablets, and cast them out of my two hands, and broke them,” and it was taught that the tablets were six handbreadths in length, six in breadth, and three in thickness.

Wealthy, as [Exodus 34:1](#) reports God's instruction to Moses, "Carve yourself two tablets of stone," and the Rabbis interpreted the verse to teach that the chips would belong to Moses. Wise, for [Rav](#) and Samuel both said that 50 gates of understanding were created in the world, and all but one were given to Moses, for [Psalm 8:6](#) said of Moses, "You have made him a little lower than God." Meek, for [Numbers 12:3](#) reports, "Now the man Moses was very meek." ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 38a.](#))



Miriam waiting for the baby Moses in the Nile (19th Century illustration by [Hippolyte Delaroche](#))

A Baraita taught in the name of Rabbi Joshua ben Korhah that God told Moses that when God wanted to be seen at the [burning bush](#), Moses did not want to see God's face; Moses hid his face in [Exodus 3:6](#), for he was afraid to look upon God. And then in [Exodus 33:18](#), when Moses wanted to see God, God did not want to be seen; in [Exodus 33:20](#), God said, "You cannot see My



face.” But Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani said in the name of Rabbi Jonathan that in compensation for three pious acts that Moses did at the burning bush, he was privileged to obtain three rewards. In reward for hiding his face in [Exodus 3:6](#), his face shone in [Exodus 34:29](#). In reward for his fear of God in [Exodus 3:6](#), the Israelites were afraid to come near him in [Exodus 34:30](#). In reward for his reticence “to look upon God,” he beheld the similitude of God in [Numbers 12:8](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 7a](#).)

The Mishnah cited [Numbers 12:15](#) for the proposition that [Providence](#) treats a person measure for measure as that person treats others. And so because, as [Exodus 2:4](#) relates, Miriam waited for the baby Moses in the [Nile](#), so the Israelites waited seven days for Miriam in the wilderness in [Numbers 12:15](#). ([Mishnah Sotah 1:7–9](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sotah 9b](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to both [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are 3 positive and 2 negative [commandments](#) in the parshah.

- To slaughter the second Passover [lamb](#) ([Numbers 9:11](#).)



Maimonides

- To eat the second Passover lamb in accordance with the Passover rituals ([Numbers 9:11.](#))
- Not to leave the second Passover meat over until morning ([Numbers 9:12.](#))
- Not to break any bones from the second Passover offering ([Numbers 9:12.](#))
- To sound alarm in times of catastrophe ([Numbers 10:9.](#))

(Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#), [Positive Commandments 57, 58, 59; Negative Commandments 119 & 122. Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvoth of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 1:67–71; 2:111, 113. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 4:79–93. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1988. [ISBN 0-87306-457-7.](#))



[Zechariah](#) (painting by [Michelangelo](#))

## [\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [Zechariah 2:14–4:7](#).

## [\[edit\]](#) Connection to the Parshah

Both the parshah and the haftarah discuss the lampstand (*menorah*). ([Numbers 8:1–4](#); [Zechariah 4:2–3](#)). Text of Zechariah shortly after that of the haftarah explains that the lights of the lampstand symbolize God’s eyes, keeping watch on the earth. ([Zechariah 4:10](#).) And in the haftarah, God’s [angel](#) explains the message of [Zechariah’s](#) vision of the lampstand: “Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, says the Lord of hosts.” ([Zechariah 4:6](#).) Both the parshah and the haftarah also discuss the purification of priests and their clothes, the parshah in the purification of the Levites ([Numbers 8:6–7](#)) and the haftarah in the purification of the [High Priest Joshua](#). ([Zechariah 3:3–5](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) In the liturgy

Some Jews read “at 50 years old one offers counsel,” reflecting the retirement age for Levites in [Numbers 8:25](#), as they study *Pirkei Avot* [chapter 6](#) on a Sabbath between Passover and [Rosh Hashanah](#). (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals with an Interlinear Translation*, 580. Brooklyn: [Mesorah Publications](#), 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-697-3](#).)



A page from a 14th century German Haggadah

The laws of the Passover offering in [Numbers 9:2](#) provide an application of the second of the Thirteen Rules for interpreting the Torah in the [Baraita of Rabbi Ishmael](#) that many Jews read as part of the readings before the [Pesukei d’Zimrah prayer service](#). The second rule provides that similar words in different contexts invite the reader to find a connection between the two topics. The words “in its proper time” (*bemoado*, כִּי־מוֹעֵדוֹ) in [Numbers 28:2](#) indicate that the priests needed to bring the daily offering “in its proper time,” even on a Sabbath. Applying the second rule, the same words in [Numbers 9:2](#) mean that the priests needed to bring the Passover offering “in its proper time,” even on a Sabbath. (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 243.)

The Passover [Haggadah](#), in the *korech* section of the [Seder](#), quotes the words “they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs” from [Numbers 9:11](#) to support [Hillel’s](#) practice of combining [matzah](#) and [maror](#) together in a sandwich. (Menachem

Davis. *The Interlinear Haggadah: The Passover Haggadah, with an Interlinear Translation, Instructions and Comments*, 68. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2005. [ISBN 1-57819-064-9](#). Joseph Tabory. *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, 104. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008. [ISBN 978-0-8276-0858-0](#).)

Jews sing the words “at the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses” (*al pi Adonai b'yad Moshe*, עַל־פִּי יְהוָה בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה, [Numbers 9:23](#) while looking at the raised Torah during the lifting of the Torah (*Hagbahah*) after the Torah reading. (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 377, 485.)





In the [Yigdal](#) hymn, the eighth verse, “God gave His people a Torah of truth, by means of His prophet, the most trusted of His household,” reflects [Numbers 12:7–8](#). (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for Weekdays with an Interlinear Translation*, 16–17. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-686-8](#).)

The 16th Century [Safed](#) Rabbi Eliezer Azikri quoted the words of the prayer of Moses “Please God” (*El nah*, אֵלֵּהּ, אֵלֵּהּ) in [Numbers 12:13](#) in his [kabbalistic](#) poem *Yedid Nefesh* (“Soul’s Beloved”), which in turn many congregations chant just before the Kabbalat Shabbat prayer service. (Hammer, at 14.)

The prayer of Moses for Miriam’s health in [Numbers 12:13](#), “Heal her now, O God, I beseech You” (*El, nah r’fah nah lab*, אֵלֵּהּ נָא רַפֵּא נָא לָהּ) — just five simple words in Hebrew — demonstrates that it is not the length of a prayer that matters. (Reuven Hammer. *Entering Jewish Prayer: A Guide to Personal Devotion and the Worship Service*, 6. New York: Schocken, 1995. [ISBN 0-8052-1022-9](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

### [\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Exodus 12:3–27, 43–49](#) (Passover); [13:6–10](#) (Passover); [25:31–37](#) (lampstand); [34:25](#) (Passover); [40:24–25](#) (lampstand).

- [Leviticus 23:4–8](#) (Passover); [24:10–16](#) (inquiry of God on the law).
- [Numbers 15:32–36](#) (inquiry of God on the law); [27:1–11](#) (inquiry of God on the law); [28:16–25](#) (Passover).
- [Deuteronomy 9:22](#) (Kibroth-hattaavah); [16:1–8](#) (Passover).
- [Psalms 22:23](#) (congregation); [25:14](#) (hearing God’s counsel); [26:6](#) (cleansing); [35:18](#) (congregation); [40:10–11](#) (congregation); [48:15](#) (God as guide); [68:2–3](#) (let God arise, enemies be scattered); [73:24](#) (God as guide); [76:9](#) (God’s voice); [78:14](#), [26](#), [30](#) (cloud; wind from God; food still in their mouths); [80:2](#) (God as guide; enthroned on cherubim); [81:4](#) (blowing the horn); [85:9](#) (hearing what God says); [88:4–7](#) (like one dead); [94:9](#) (God hears); [105:26](#) (Moses, God’s servant); [106:4](#), [42](#) (remember for salvation; enemies who oppressed); [107:7](#) (God as guide); [122:1](#) (going to God’s house); [132:8](#) (arise, God).



Philo



## [\[edit\]](#) Early nonrabbinic

- [The War Scroll](#). [Dead Sea scroll](#) 1QM 10:1–8a. Land of Israel, 1st Century BCE. Reprinted in, e.g., [Géza Vermes](#). *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 161, 173. New York: Penguin Press, 1997. [ISBN 0-7139-9131-3](#).
- [Philo](#). [Allegorical Interpretation 1](#): 24:76; [2](#): 17:66; [3](#): 33:103, 59:169, 72:204; [On the Birth of Abel and the Sacrifices Offered by Him and by His Brother Cain](#) 18:66; 22:77; 26:86; [That the Worse Is Wont To Attack the Better](#) 19:63; [On the Giants](#) 6:24; [On Drunkenness](#) 10:39; [On the Prayers and Curses Uttered by Noah When He Became Sober](#) 4:19; [On the Migration of Abraham](#) 28:155; [Who Is the Heir of Divine Things?](#) 5:20; 15:80; 52:262; [On the Change of Names](#) 39:232; [On Dreams, That They Are God-Sent](#) 2:7:49; [On the Life of Moses](#) 2:42:230; [The Special Laws](#) 4:24:128–30; [Questions and Answers on Genesis](#) 1:91. [Alexandria](#), Egypt, early 1st Century CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [Charles Duke Yonge](#), 33, 45, 62, 69, 73, 102, 104–05, 119, 153, 210, 229, 268, 277, 282, 299, 361, 391, 511, 629, 810. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1993. [ISBN 0-943575-93-1](#).



## Josephus

- [Josephus](#), *Antiquities of the Jews* 3:12:5– 13:1. Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 98–99. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).
- [John 19:36](#) (“Not one of his bones will be broken”) 90–100 CE.

## [\[edit\]](#) Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): [Pesachim 1:1–10:9](#); [Beitzah 1:1–5:7](#); [Sotah 1:7–9](#); [Sanhedrin 1:6](#); Zevachim 14:4; Keritot 1:1; Negaim 14:4; Parah 1:2. Land of Israel, circa 200 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 246, 449, 584, 731, 836, 1010, 1013. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- [Tosefta](#): Bikkurim 1:2; Pisha (Pesachim) 4:14; 8:1, 3; Shekalim 3:26; Sotah 4:2–4; 6:7–8; 7:18; Keritot 1:1; Parah 1:1–3; Yadayim 2:10. Land of Israel, circa 300 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:345, 493, 508–09, 538, 845, 857–58, 865; 2:1551, 1745–46, 1907. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).

- [Sifre](#) to Numbers 59:1–106:3. Land of Israel, circa 250–350 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Sifré to Numbers: An American Translation and Explanation*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 2:1–132. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986. [ISBN 1-55540-010-8](#).
- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Berakhot 45a; Bikkurim 4b, 11b; Pesachim 1a–; Sukkah 31a; Beitzah 1a–. Land of Israel, circa 400 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 1, 12, 22. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2005–2009.
- [Mekhilta of Rabbi Simeon](#) 5:2; 12:3; 16:2; 20:5; 22:2–23:1; 29:1; 37:1–2; 40:1–2; 43:1; 44:2; 47:2. Land of Israel, 5th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai*. Translated by W. David Nelson, 14, 41, 55, 85, 98, 100, 102, 131, 159, 162, 170–72, 182, 186, 209. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2006. [ISBN 0-8276-0799-7](#).



Talmud

- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 7a, 32a, 34a, 54b, 55b, 63b; Shabbat 31b, 87a, 115b–16a, 130a; Eruvin 2a, 40a;](#)

[Pesachim 6b, 28b, 36a, 59a, 64a, 66a–67a, 69a–b, 77a, 79a, 80a, 85a, 90a–b, 91b, 92b–96b, 115a, 120a; Yoma 3b, 7a, 28b, 51a, 66a, 75a–76a; Sukkah 25a–b, 47b, 53a–54a, 55a; Rosh Hashanah 3a, 5a, 18a, 26b–27a, 32a, 34a; Taanit 7a, 29a, 30b; Megillah 5a, 21b, 31a; Moed Katan 5a, 15b, 16a–b; Chagigah 5b, 18b, 25b; Yevamot 63b, 103b; Ketubot 57b; Nedarim 38a, 64b; Nazir 5a, 15b, 40a, 63a; Sotah 9b, 33b; Gittin 60a–b; Kiddushin 32b, 37b, 76b; Bava Kamma 25a, 83a; Bava Metzia 86b; Bava Batra 91a, 111a, 121b; Sanhedrin 2a, 3b, 8a, 17a, 36b, 47a, 110a; Makkot 10a, 13b, 14b, 17a, 21a; Shevuot 15b, 16b; Avodah Zarah 5a, 24b; Horayot 4b, 5b; Zevachim 9b, 10b, 22b, 55a, 69b, 79a, 89b, 101b, 106b; Menachot 28a–b, 29a, 65b, 83b, 95a, 98b; Chullin 7b, 17a, 24a, 27b, 29a, 30a, 105a, 129b; Bekhorot 4b, 33a; Arakhin 10a, 11a–b, 15b; Keritot 2a, 7b.](#) Babylonia, 6th Century.

Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

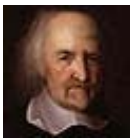
## [\[edit\]](#) Medieval



Rashi

- [Saadia Gaon](#). *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, 2:10–11; 3:8–9; 5:3, 7; 9:8. Baghdad, Babylonia, 933. Translated by Samuel Rosenblatt, 116, 119, 127, 165, 170, 214, 230, 349. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1948. [ISBN 0-300-04490-9](#).
- [Rashi](#). *Commentary. Numbers 8–12. Troyes*, France, late 11th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 4:87–145. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1997. [ISBN 0-89906-029-3](#).
- [Solomon ibn Gabirol](#). *A Crown for the King*, [33:421](#). Spain, 11th Century. Translated by David R. Slavitt, 56–57. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. [ISBN 0-19-511962-2](#). (“mixed multitude” (*asafsuff*)).
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# Shlach

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**Shlach**, **Shelach**, **Sh'lah**, **Shlach Lecha**, or **Sh'lah L'kha** (שלח or שלח לך — [Hebrew](#) for "send", "send to you", or "send for yourself" ) is the 37th [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the fourth in the book of [Numbers](#). It constitutes [Numbers 13:1–15:41](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) generally read it in June. Its name comes from the first distinctive words in the parshah, in [Numbers 13:2](#). Shelach is the sixth and Lecha the seventh word in the parsha.

The parshah tells the story of the scouts who discouraged the [Israelites](#), commandments about offerings, the story of the [Sabbath](#) violator, and the commandment of the fringes.



Moses and the Messengers from Canaan (painting by [Giovanni Lanfranco](#))

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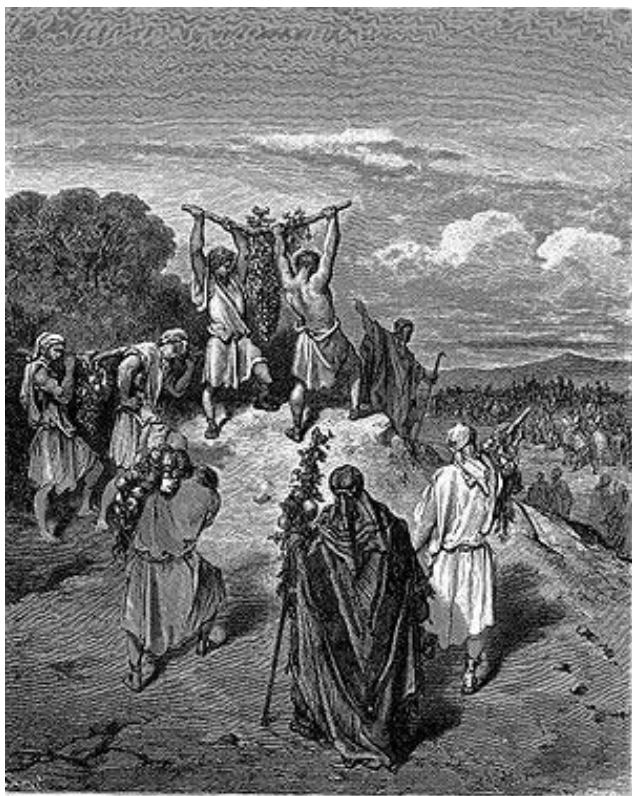


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## Summary



The Spies Showing the Fertility of Canaan (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)



Return of the Spies from the Land of Promise (engraving by [Gustave Doré](#))

### The scouts

[God](#) told [Moses](#) to send one [chieftain](#) from each of the 12 tribes of Israel to scout the land of [Canaan](#), and Moses sent them out from the [wilderness of Paran](#). ([Numbers 13:1–2](#).) Among the scouts were [Caleb](#) son of [Jephunneh](#) from the [Tribe of Judah](#) and Hosea son of [Nun](#) from the [Tribe of Ephraim](#). ([Numbers 13:6–8](#).) Moses changed Hosea's name to [Joshua](#). ([Numbers 13:16](#).)

They scouted the land as far as [Hebron](#). ([Numbers 13:21–22](#).) At the wadi Eshcol, they cut down a branch with a single cluster of [grapes](#) so large that it had to be borne on a carrying frame by two of them, as well as some [pomegranates](#) and [figs](#). ([Numbers 13:23](#).)

At the end of 40 days, they returned and reported to Moses, [Aaron](#), and the whole Israelite community at [Kadesh](#) saying that the land did indeed flow with [milk](#) and [honey](#), but that the people who inhabited it were powerful, the cities were fortified and very large, and that they saw the [Anakites](#) there. ([Numbers 13:25–28](#).) Caleb hushed the people and urged the people to go up and take the land. ([Numbers 13:30](#).) But the other scouts spread calumnies about the land, calling it “one that devours its settlers.” ([Numbers 13:32](#).) They reported that the land’s people were [giants](#) and stronger than the Israelites. ([Numbers 13:31–32](#).) The whole community broke into crying, railed against Moses and Aaron, and shouted: “If only we might die in this wilderness!” ([Numbers 14:1–2](#).)

Moses and Aaron fell on their faces, and Joshua and Caleb rent their clothes and exhorted the Israelites not to fear, and not to rebel against God. ([Numbers 14:5–9](#).) Just as the community threatened to pelt them with stones, God’s Presence appeared in the [Tabernacle](#). ([Numbers 14:10](#).) God complained to Moses: “How long will this people spurn Me,” and threatened to strike them with pestilence and make of Moses a nation more numerous than they. ([Numbers 14:11–12](#).) But Moses told God to think of what the [Egyptians](#) would think when they heard the

news, and how they would think God powerless to bring the Israelites to the [Promised Land](#). ([Numbers 14:13–16](#).) Moses asked God to forbear, quoting God’s self-description as “slow to anger and abounding in kindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression.” ([Numbers 14:17–18](#).) In response, God pardoned, but also swore that none of the men who had seen God’s signs would see the Promised Land, except Caleb and Joshua, and that all the rest 20 years old and up would die in the wilderness. ([Numbers 14:20–30](#).) God said that the Israelites’ children would enter the Promised Land after roaming the wilderness, suffering for the faithlessness of the present generation, for 40 years, corresponding to the number of days that the scouts scouted the land. ([Numbers 14:32–34](#).) The scouts other than Caleb and Joshua died of plague. ([Numbers 14:36–38](#).)





Israel Driven Back into the Desert (illustration by B. Barnards from the 1908 *Bible and Its Story Taught by One Thousand Picture Lessons*)

Early the next morning, the Israelites set out to the Promised Land, but Moses told them that they would not succeed without God in their midst. ([Numbers 14:40–42.](#)) But they marched forward anyway, and the [Amalekites](#) and the Canaanites dealt them a shattering blow at [Hormah](#). ([Numbers 14:44–45.](#))

## Offerings

God told Moses to tell Israelites that when they entered the Promised Land and would present an [offering](#) to God, the person presenting the offering was also to bring [flour](#) mixed with [oil](#) and [wine](#). ([Numbers 15:1–13.](#)) And when a resident alien wanted to present an offering, the same law would apply. ([Numbers 15:14–16.](#)) When the Israelites ate [bread](#) of the land, they were to set the first loaf aside as a gift to God. ([Numbers 15:17–21.](#))





The Sabbath-Breaker Stoned (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

If the community unwittingly failed to observe any [commandment](#), the community was to present one [bull](#) as a burnt offering with its proper meal offering and wine, and one he-[goat](#) as a [sin](#) offering, and the [priest](#) would make expiation for the whole community and they would be forgiven. ([Numbers 15:22–26](#).) And if an individual sinned unwittingly, the individual was to offer a she-goat in its first year as a sin offering, and the priest would make expiation that the individual might be forgiven. ([Numbers 15:27–29](#).) But the person who violated a commandment defiantly was to be cut off from among his people. ([Numbers 15:30–31](#).)

### **The Sabbath violator**

Once the Israelites came upon a man gathering [wood](#) on the Sabbath day, and they brought him before Moses, Aaron, and the community and placed him in custody. ([Numbers 15:32–34](#).) God told Moses that the whole community was to [pelt him with stones](#) outside the camp, so they did so. ([Numbers 15:35–36](#).)

### **The fringes**

God told Moses to instruct the Israelites to make for themselves [fringes](#) (in Hebrew, תצ"ט or *tzitzit*) on each of the corners of their garments. ([Numbers 15:37–38](#).) They were to look at the fringes,

recall the commandments, and observe them. ([Numbers 15:39–40.](#))

## In inner-biblical interpretation



The Return of the Israelite Spies (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)

## Numbers chapter 13

[Numbers 13:1–14:45](#) and [Deuteronomy 1:19–45](#) both tell the story of the spies. Whereas [Numbers 13:1–2](#) says that God told Moses to send men to spy out the land of Canaan, in [Deuteronomy 1:22–23](#), Moses recounted that all the Israelites asked him to send men to search the land, and the idea pleased him.



## In classical rabbinic interpretation



Joshua and Caleb

### Numbers chapter 13

[Resh Lakish](#) interpreted the words “Send you” in [Numbers 13:2](#) to indicate that God gave Moses discretion over whether to send the spies. Resh Lakish read Moses’ recollection of the matter in [Deuteronomy 1:23](#) that “the thing pleased me well” to mean that agreeing to send the spies pleased Moses well but not God.

([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 34b.](#))

Rabbi Isaac said that the spies’ names betrayed their lack of faith, and that Sethur’s name (in [Numbers 13:13](#)) meant that he undermined (*sathar*) the works of God. And [Rabbi Johanan](#) said that the name of Nahbi the son of Vophsi (in [Numbers 13:14](#)) meant that he hid (*bikbi*) God’s words. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 34b.](#))



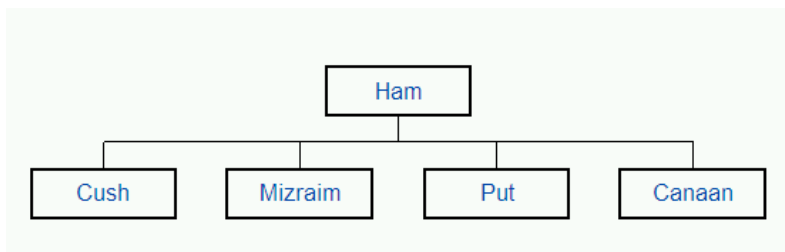


The Grapes of Canaan (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[Raba](#) noted that [Numbers 13:22](#) literally reads “*they* went up into the South, and *he* came to Hebron,” and deduced from the change in the number of the pronoun that Caleb separated himself from the spies’ plan and prostrated himself in prayer on the graves of the [patriarchs](#) in Hebron. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 34b.](#))

Interpreting the names [Ahiman](#), [Sheshai](#), and [Talmai](#) in [Numbers 13:22](#), a [Baraita](#) taught that Ahiman was the most skilful of the brothers, Sheshai turned the ground on which he stepped into pits, and Talmai turned the ground into ridges when he walked. It was also taught that Ahiman built Anath, Sheshai built [Alush](#), and Talmai built Talbush. They were called “the children of Anak”

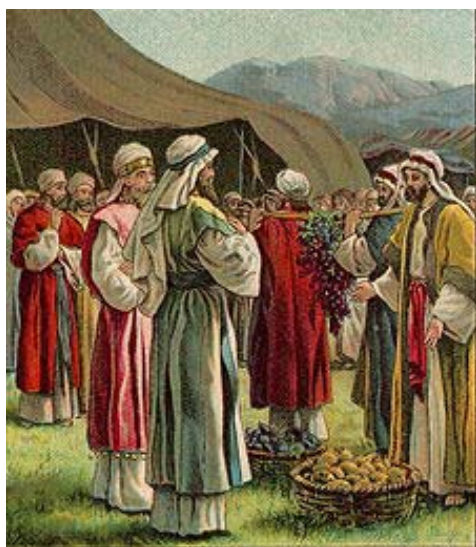
(the giant) because they seemed so tall that they would reach the sun. (Babylonian Talmud Yoma 10a.)



A Baraita interpreted the words “and Hebron was built seven years before [Zoan](#) in [Egypt](#)” in [Numbers 13:22](#) to mean that Hebron was seven times as fertile as Zoan. The Baraita rejected the plain meaning of “built,” reasoning that [Ham](#) would not build a house for his younger son [Canaan](#) (in whose land was Hebron) before he built one for his elder son [Mizraim](#) (in whose land was Zoan, and [Genesis 10:6](#) lists (presumably in order of birth) “the sons of Ham: [Cush](#), and Mizraim, and [Put](#), and Canaan.” The Baraita also taught that among all the nations, there was none more fertile than Egypt, for [Genesis 13:10](#) says, “Like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt.” And there was no more fertile spot in Egypt than Zoan, where kings lived, for [Isaiah 30:4](#) says of [Pharaoh](#), “his princes are at Zoan.” And in all of Israel, there was no more rocky ground than that at Hebron, which is why the Patriarchs buried their dead there, as reported in [Genesis 49:31](#). But rocky Hebron was still seven times as fertile as lush Zoan. ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 112a](#).)



The Spies Return (illustration by Wilhelm Ebbinghaus from the 1908 *Bible and Its Story Taught by One Thousand Picture Lessons*)





The Two Reports of the Spies (illustration from Bible card published 1907 by Providence Lithograph Company)

The [Gemara](#) interpreted the words “between two” in [Numbers 13:23](#) to teach that the scouts carried the large cluster of grape on two staffs. Rabbi Isaac said that the scouts carried the grapes with a series of balancing poles. The Gemara explained that eight spies carried the grape-cluster, one carried a pomegranate, one carried a fig, and Joshua and Caleb did not carry anything, either because they were the most distinguished of them, or because they did not share in the plan to discourage the Israelites. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 34a.](#))

Rabbi Johanan said in the name of Rabbi [Simeon ben Yohai](#) that the words “And they went and came to Moses” in [Numbers 13:26](#) equated the going with the coming back, indicating that just as they came back with an evil design, they had set out with an evil design. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 35a.](#))

The Gemara reported a number of Rabbis’ reports of how the Land of Israel did indeed flow with “milk and honey,” as described in [Exodus 3:8](#) and [17, 13:5](#), and [33:3, Leviticus 20:24, Numbers 13:27](#) and [14:8](#), and [Deuteronomy 6:3, 11:9, 26:9](#) and [15, 27:3](#), and [31:20](#). Once when Rami bar Ezekiel visited [Bnei Brak](#), he saw goats grazing under fig trees while honey was flowing from the figs, and milk dripped from the goats mingling with the fig honey, causing him to remark that it was indeed a land flowing with milk and honey. Rabbi Jacob ben Dostai said

that it is about three miles from [Lod](#) to [Ono](#), and once he rose up early in the morning and waded all that way up to his ankles in fig honey. Resh Lakish said that he saw the flow of the milk and honey of [Sepphoris](#) extend over an area of sixteen miles by sixteen miles. Rabbah bar Bar Hana said that he saw the flow of the milk and honey in all the Land of Israel and the total area was equal to an area of twenty-two [parasangs](#) by six parasangs. ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 111b–12a.](#))

Rabbi Johanan said in the name of [Rabbi Meir](#) that the spies began with a true report in [Numbers 13:27](#) and then spoke ill in [Numbers 13:28](#), because any piece of slander needs some truth in the beginning to be heard through to the end. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 35a.](#))

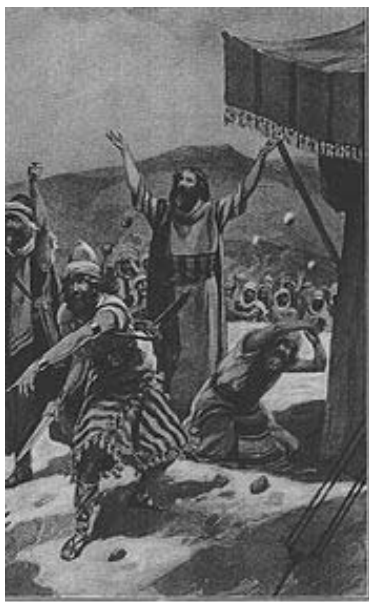


The Spies Return from Canaan Carrying a Large Bunch of Grapes (miniature on vellum by a follower of [Simon Bening](#) from a 1500–1525 Southern Netherlands [Book of Hours](#))

[Rabbah](#) interpreted [Numbers 13:30](#) to report that Caleb won the people over with his words, for he saw that when Joshua began to address them, they disparaged Joshua for failing to have

children. So Caleb took a different tack and asked, “Is this all that [Amram](#)'s son [Moses] has done to us?” And as they thought that Caleb was about to disparage Moses, they fell silent. Then Caleb said, “He brought us out of Egypt, divided the sea, and fed us manna. If he were to ask us to get ladders and climb to heaven, should we not obey? And then Caleb said the words reported in [Numbers 13:30](#), “We should go up at once, and possess the land, for we are well able to overcome it.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 35a](#).)

Rabbi [Hanina bar Papa](#) read the spies to say in [Numbers 13:31](#) not “they are stronger than *we*” but “they are stronger than *He*,” questioning God’s power. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 35a](#), Arakhin 15a.)



Joshua Saved (illustration by John Steeple Davis from the 1908 *Bible and Its Story Taught by One Thousand Picture Lessons*)

The [Mishnah](#) noted that the evil report of the scouts in [Numbers 13:32](#) caused God to seal the decree against the Israelites in the wilderness in [Numbers 14:22–23](#). The Mishnah thus deduced that one who speaks suffers more than one who acts. (Mishnah Arakhin 3:5; Babylonian Talmud Arakhin 15a.)

Rav Mesharsheya said that [Numbers 13:33](#) proved that the spies were liars, for though they might well have known that they saw themselves as grasshoppers, they had no way of knowing how the inhabitants of the land saw them. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 35a.](#))

## **Numbers chapter 14**

A Baraita taught that when Moses ascended to receive the Torah from God, Moses found God writing “longsuffering” among the words with which [Exodus 34:8](#) describes God. Moses asked God whether God meant longsuffering with the righteous, to which God replied that God is longsuffering even with the wicked. Moses exclaimed that God could let the wicked perish, but God cautioned Moses that Moses would come to desire God’s longsuffering for the wicked. Later, when the Israelites sinned at the incident of the spies, God reminded Moses that he had suggested that God be longsuffering only with the righteous, to which Moses recounted that God had promised to be longsuffering even with the wicked. And that is why Moses in

[Numbers 14:17–18](#) cited to God that God is “slow to anger.”  
([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 111a–b.](#))

Rabbi Simeon son of Rabbi Ishmael interpreted the term “the Tabernacle of the testimony” in [Exodus 38:21](#) to mean that the Tabernacle was God’s testimony to the whole world that God had in [Numbers 14:20](#) forgiven Israel for having made the [Golden Calf](#). Rabbi Isaac explained with a parable. A king took a wife whom he dearly loved. He became angry with her and left her, and her neighbors taunted her, saying that he would not return. Then the king sent her a message asking her to prepare the king’s palace and make the beds therein, for he was coming back to her on such-and-such a day. On that day, the king returned to her and became reconciled to her, entering her chamber and eating and drinking with her. Her neighbors at first did not believe it, but when they smelled the fragrant spices, they knew that the king had returned. Similarly, God loved Israel, bringing the Israelites to Mount Sinai, and giving them the Torah, but after only 40 days, they sinned with the Golden Calf. The heathen nations then said that God would not be reconciled with the Israelites. But when Moses pleaded for mercy on their behalf, God forgave them, as [Numbers 14:20](#) reports, “And the Lord said: ‘I have pardoned according to your word.’” Moses then told God that even though he personally was quite satisfied that God had forgiven Israel, he asked that God might announce that fact to the nations. God replied that God would cause God’s [Shechinah](#) to dwell in their midst, and thus [Exodus 25:8](#) says, “And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among



them.” And by that sign, God intended that all nations might know that God had forgiven the Israelites. And thus [Exodus 38:21](#) calls it “the Tabernacle of the testimony,” because the Tabernacle was a testimony that God had pardoned the Israelites’ sins. ([Exodus Rabbah](#) 51:4.)

The Mishnah deduced from [Numbers 14:22](#) that the Israelites in the wilderness inflicted ten trials on God, one of which was the incident of the spies. (Mishnah Avot 5:4; see also Babylonian Talmud Arakhin 15a.) And the Mishnah deduced further from [Numbers 14:22](#) that those who speak ill suffer more than those who commit physical acts, and thus that God sealed the judgment against the Israelites in the wilderness only because of their evil words at the incident of the spies. (Mishnah Arakhin 3:5; Babylonian Talmud Arakhin 15a.)

Because with regard to the ten spies in [Numbers 14:27](#), God asked, “How long shall I bear with this evil *congregation*?” the Mishnah deduced that a “congregation” consists of no fewer than ten people. ([Mishnah Sanhedrin 1:6](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 2a.](#)) Expounding on the same word “congregation,” Rabbi [Halafta](#) of Kefar Hanania deduced from the words “God stands in the congregation of God” in [Psalms 82:1](#) that the [Shekhinah](#) abides among ten who sit together and study Torah. (Mishnah Avot 3:6.)

Noting that in the incident of the spies, God did not punish those below the age of 20 (see [Numbers 14:29](#)), whom [Deuteronomy 1:39](#) described as “children that . . . have no knowledge of good or evil,” Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani taught in [Rabbi Jonathan’s](#)

name that God does not punish for the actions people take in their first 20 years. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 89b.](#))

Rav [Hamnuna](#) taught that God's decree that the generation of the spies would die in the wilderness did not apply to the Levites, for [Numbers 14:29](#) says, "your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness, and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from 20 years old and upward," and this implies that those who were numbered from 20 years old and upward came under the decree, while the tribe of Levi — which [Numbers 4:3, 23, 30, 35, 39, 43,](#) and [47](#) say was numbered from 30 years old and upward — was excluded from the decree. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 121b.](#))

A Baraita taught that because of God's displeasure with the Israelites, the north wind did not blow on them in any of the 40 years during which they wandered in the wilderness. The [Tosafot](#) attributed God's displeasure to the incident of the spies, although [Rashi](#) attributed it to the [Golden Calf](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 72a.](#))

[Rabbi Akiba](#) interpreted [Numbers 14:35](#) to teach that the generation of the wilderness have no share in the world to come and will not stand at the last judgment. [Rabbi Eliezer](#) said that it was concerning them that [Psalm 50:5](#) said, "Gather my saints together to me; those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 110b.](#))

The Mishnah deduced from [Numbers 14:37](#) that the spies have no portion in the world to come, as the words "those men . . .

died” in [Numbers 14:37](#) indicated that they died in this world, and the words “by the plague” indicated that they died in the world to come. (Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:3; [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108a.](#))

Rabbah in the name of Resh Lakish deduced from [Numbers 14:37](#) that the spies who brought an evil report against the land died by the plague, and died because of the evil report that they had brought. (Babylonian Talmud Arakhin 15a.)

## Numbers chapter 15

The Mishnah exempted the meal-offering that accompanied the drink-offering in [Numbers 15:4–5](#) from the penalty associated with eating *piggul*, offerings invalidated for improper intent. (Mishnah Zevachim 4:3; Babylonian Talmud Zevachim 43a.) And the Mishnah ruled that these meal-offerings required oil but not frankincense. (Mishnah Menachot 5:3; Babylonian Talmud Menachot 59a.)





the beginning of the Shema prayer in the [Siddur](#)



tzitzit on the corner of a [tallit](#)

Tractate [Challah](#) in the Mishnah, [Tosefta](#), and [Jerusalem Talmud](#) interpreted the laws of separating a portion of bread for the priests in [Numbers 15:17–21](#). (Mishnah Challah 1:1–4:11; Tosefta Challah 1:1–2:12; Jerusalem Talmud Challah 1a–49b.)

The Mishnah instructed that there is a section break in the [Shema](#) between reciting [Deuteronomy 11:13–21](#) and reciting [Numbers 15:37–41](#) during which one may give and return greetings out of respect. And similarly, there is a section break between reciting [Numbers 15:37–41](#) and reciting *emet veyatziv*. But [Rabbi Judah](#) said that one may not interrupt between reciting [Numbers 15:37–41](#) and reciting *emet veyatziv*. The Mishnah taught that the reciting of [Deuteronomy 11:13–21](#) precedes the reciting of [Numbers 15:37–41](#) in the Shema because the obligation of [Deuteronomy 11:13–21](#) applies day and night, while the obligation of [Numbers 15:37–](#)

[41](#) to wear *tzitzit* applies only during the day. ([Mishnah Berakhot 2:2](#); [Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 13a.](#))

The School of Rabbi Ishmael taught that whenever Scripture uses the word “command (*tzav*)” (as [Numbers 15:23](#) does), it denotes exhortation to obedience immediately and for all time. A Baraita deduced exhortation to immediate obedience from the use of the word “command” in [Deuteronomy 3:28](#), which says, “charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him.” And the Baraita deduced exhortation to obedience for all time from the use of the word “command” in [Numbers 15:23](#), which says, “even all that the Lord has commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day that the Lord gave the commandment, and onward throughout your generations.” (Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 29a.)

[Rav Hisda](#) taught that one walking in a dirty alleyway should not recite the Shema, and one reciting the Shema who comes upon a dirty alleyway should stop reciting. Of one who would not stop reciting, Rav [Adda bar Ahavah](#) quoted [Numbers 15:31](#) to say: “he has despised the word of the Lord.” And of one who does stop reciting, Rabbi [Abbahu](#) taught that [Deuteronomy 32:47](#) says: “through this word you shall prolong your days.” ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 24b.](#))

In [Numbers 15:39](#), the heart lusts. A midrash catalogued the wide range of additional capabilities of the heart reported in the Hebrew Bible. The heart speaks ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), sees ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), hears ([1 Kings 3:9](#)), walks ([2 Kings 5:26](#)), falls ([1 Samuel 17:32](#)), stands ([Ezekiel 22:14](#)), rejoices ([Psalm 16:9](#)),

cries ([Lamentations 2:18](#)), is comforted ([Isaiah 40:2](#)), is troubled ([Deuteronomy 15:10](#)), becomes hardened ([Exodus 9:12](#)), grows faint ([Deuteronomy 20:3](#)), grieves ([Genesis 6:6](#)), fears ([Deuteronomy 28:67](#)), can be broken ([Psalm 51:19](#)), becomes proud ([Deuteronomy 8:14](#)), rebels ([Jeremiah 5:23](#)), invents ([1 Kings 12:33](#)), cavils ([Deuteronomy 29:18](#)), overflows ([Psalm 45:2](#)), devises ([Proverbs 19:21](#)), desires ([Psalm 21:3](#)), goes astray ([Proverbs 7:25](#)), is refreshed ([Genesis 18:5](#)), can be stolen ([Genesis 31:20](#)), is humbled ([Leviticus 26:41](#)), is enticed ([Genesis 34:3](#)), errs ([Isaiah 21:4](#)), trembles ([1 Samuel 4:13](#)), is awakened ([Song of Songs 5:2](#)), loves ([Deuteronomy 6:5](#)), hates ([Leviticus 19:17](#)), envies ([Proverbs 23:17](#)), is searched ([Jeremiah 17:10](#)), is rent ([Book of Joel 2:13](#)), meditates ([Psalm 49:4](#)), is like a fire ([Jeremiah 20:9](#)), is like a stone ([Ezekiel 36:26](#)), turns in repentance ([2 Kings 23:25](#)), becomes hot ([Deuteronomy 19:6](#)), dies ([1 Samuel 25:37](#)), melts ([Joshua 7:5](#)), takes in words ([Deuteronomy 6:6](#)), is susceptible to fear ([Jeremiah 32:40](#)), gives thanks ([Psalm 111:1](#)), covets ([Proverbs 6:25](#)), becomes hard ([Proverbs 28:14](#)), makes merry ([Judges 16:25](#)), acts deceitfully ([Proverbs 12:20](#)), speaks from out of itself ([1 Samuel 1:13](#)), loves bribes ([Jeremiah 22:17](#)), writes words ([Proverbs 3:3](#)), plans ([Proverbs 6:18](#)), receives commandments ([Proverbs 10:8](#)), acts with pride ([Obadiah 1:3](#)), makes arrangements ([Proverbs 16:1](#)), and aggrandizes itself ([2 Chronicles 25:19](#)). ([Ecclesiastes Rabbah](#) 1:36.)



Moses Maimonides

## Commandments

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are 2 positive and 1 negative [commandments](#) in the parshah.

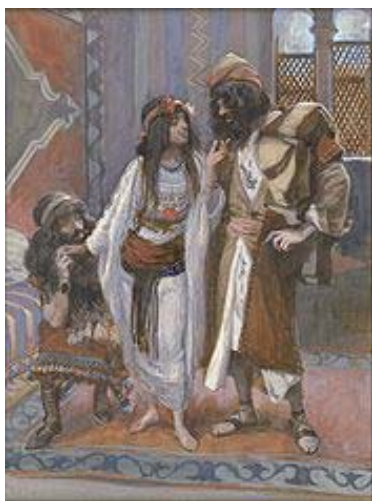
- To set aside a portion of [dough](#) for a Kohen ([Numbers 15:20.](#))
- To have [tzitzit](#) on four-cornered garments ([Numbers 15:38.](#))
- Not to stray after the whims of one's [heart](#) or temptations one sees with his [eyes](#) ([Numbers 15:39.](#))

(Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#), [Positive Commandments 14](#), [133](#), [Negative Commandment 47](#). [Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 1:21–22, 140–41; 2:46–47. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles

Wengrov, 4:94–119. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1988. [ISBN 0-87306-457-7](#).)



Rahab Receives and Conceals the Spies (19th century illustration by [Frederick Richard Pickersgill](#))



The Harlot of Jericho and the Two Spies (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)



## Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [Joshua 2:1–24](#).

### Summary

Joshua secretly dispatched two spies from [Shittim](#), instructing them to view the land and [Jericho](#), and they went to the house of a [harlot](#) named [Rahab](#). ([Joshua 2:1](#).) That night, the king of Jericho received word that Israelite men had come to search out the land, and the king sent a demand to Rahab to deliver the men who had come to her house. ([Joshua 2:2–3](#).) But Rahab hid the men among stalks of flax on her roof, saying that when it was dark the men had left, and she did not know where they went. ([Joshua 2:4–6](#).) The king's men left the city in pursuit of the spies on the road to the [Jordan River](#), and the people of the city shut the city gate after them. ([Joshua 2:7](#).)



The Flight of the Spies (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

Rahab promptly went up to the spies on the roof and told them that she knew that God had given the Israelites the land, and that the people lived in terror of the Israelites, having heard how God

dried up the [Red Sea](#) before them and how the Israelites had destroyed the forces of [Sihon](#) and [Og](#). ([Joshua 2:8–11](#).) So Rahab asked the spies to swear by God, since she had dealt kindly with them, that they would also deal kindly with her father's house and give her a token to save her family from the coming invasion. ([Joshua 2:12–13](#).) The spies told her that if she would not tell of their doings, then when God gave the Israelites the land, they would deal kindly with her. ([Joshua 2:14](#).) She let them down by a cord through her window, as her house was on the city wall. ([Joshua 2:15](#).) She told them to hide in the mountain for three days. ([Joshua 2:16](#).) They told her that when the Israelites came to the land, she was to bind in her window the scarlet rope by which she let the spies down and gather her family into her house for safety, as all who ventured out of the doors of her house would die. ([Joshua 2:17–19](#).) She agreed, sent them on their way, and bound the scarlet line in her window. ([Joshua 2:21](#).)

The spies hid in the mountain for three days, and the pursuers did not find them. ([Joshua 2:22](#).) The spies returned to the Israelite camp and told Joshua all that had happened, saying that surely God had delivered the land into their hands and the inhabitants would melt away before them. ([Joshua 2:23–24](#).)



Escape from Rahab's House (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)

## Connection to the Parshah

Both the parshah and the haftarah deal with spies sent to scout out the land of Israel, the parshah in connection with the ten scouts sent to reconnoiter the whole land ([Numbers 13](#)), and the haftarah in connection with the two spies sent to reconnoiter Jericho. ([Joshua 2](#)) Joshua participated in both ventures, as a scout in the parshah ([Numbers 13:8, 16](#)), and as the leader who sent the spies in the haftarah. ([Joshua 2:1](#)) In the parshah, God complained about how the Israelites did not believe the “signs” (*’otot*) that God had sent ([Numbers 14:11](#)), and in the haftarah, Rahab asked the spies for a true “sign” (*’ot*) so that she might believe them. ([Joshua 2:12](#))

Whereas in the parshah, the spies were well-known men ([Numbers 13:2–3](#)), in the haftarah, Joshua dispatched the spies

secretly. ([Joshua 2:1](#)) Whereas in the parshah, Moses sent a large number of 12 spies ([Numbers 13:2–16](#)), in the haftarah, Joshua sent just 2 spies. ([Joshua 2:1](#)) Whereas in the parshah, many of the spies cowered before the Canaanites ([Numbers 13:31–33](#)), in the haftarah, the spies reported that the Canaanites would melt before the Israelites. ([Joshua 2:24](#)) Whereas in the parshah, the spies reported their findings publicly ([Numbers 13:26](#)), in the haftarah, the spies reported directly to Joshua. ([Joshua 2:23–24](#))

## In the liturgy

The rebellious generation and their Wilderness death foretold in [Numbers 14:35](#) are reflected in [Psalm 95:10–11](#), which is in turn the first of the six Psalms recited at the beginning of the Kabbalat Shabbat [prayer service](#). (Reuven Hammer. *Or Hadash: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 15. New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2003. [ISBN 0-916219-20-8](#).)

[Numbers 15:37–41](#) is the third of three blocks of verses in the [Shema](#), a central prayer in Jewish prayer services. Jews combine [Deuteronomy 6:4–9](#), [Deuteronomy 11:13–21](#), and [Numbers 15:37–41](#) to form the core of *K'riat Shema*, recited in the evening (*Ma'ariv*) and morning (*Shacharit*) prayer services. (*Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 30–31, 112–13, 282–83. New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2007. [ISBN 0-916219-13-5](#).)

## The Weekly Maqam

In [the Weekly Maqam](#), [Sephardi Jews](#) each week base the songs of the services on the content of that week's parshah. For

parshah Shlach, Sephardi Jews apply Maqam Hijaz, the maqam that expresses mourning and sadness. This maqam is appropriate in this parshah because it is the parshah that contains the episode of the spies and the punishment on Israel.

## Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

### Biblical

- [Genesis 6:1–4](#) (Nephilim).
- [Exodus 6:8](#) (God lifted up God's hand); [13:21–22](#) (pillar of fire); [14:24](#) (pillar of fire); [20:4](#) (20:5 in JPS) (punishing children for fathers' sin); [34:7](#) (punishing children for fathers' sin).
- [Leviticus 24:10–16](#) (inquiry of God on the law).
- [Numbers 9:1–14](#) (inquiry of God on the law); [27:1–11](#) (inquiry of God on the law).
- [Deuteronomy 1:19–45](#) (the scouts); [5:8](#) (5:9 in JPS) (punishing children for fathers' sin); [9:23](#) (rebellion).



[Ezekiel](#)

- [Jeremiah 31:28–29](#) (31:29–30 in NJPS) (*not* punishing children for fathers' sin).
- [Ezekiel 18:1–4](#) (*not* punishing children for fathers' sin); [20:5](#) (God lifted up God's hand).
- [Nehemiah 9:12](#) (pillar of fire); [9:15](#) (God lifted up God's hand); [9:19](#) (pillar of fire).
- [Psalms 19:13](#) (God clears from hidden faults); [22:9](#) (God's delight); [25:13](#) (his seed shall inherit the land); [37:11](#) (shall inherit the land); [44:2–4](#) (not by their own sword did they get the land); [72:19](#) (earth filled with God's glory); [78:12, 22](#) (Zoan; they didn't believe); [95:9–11](#) (that generation should not enter); [103:8](#) (God full of compassion, gracious, slow to anger, plenteous in mercy); [106:24–27, 39](#) (spurning the desirable land; they went astray); [107:40](#) (God causes princes to wander in the waste); [118:8–12](#) (with God's help, victory over the nations); [145:8](#) (God gracious, full of compassion; slow to anger, of great mercy); [147:10–11](#) (God's delight).



Philo

## Early nonrabbinic

- [Philo](#). [\*Allegorical Interpretation\*](#) 3:61:175; [\*On the Birth of Abel and the Sacrifices Offered by Him and by His Brother Cain\*](#) 33:107; [\*On the Posterity of Cain and His Exile\*](#) 17:60; 35:122; [\*On the Giants\*](#) 11:48; [\*On the Migration of Abraham\*](#) 12:68; 21:122; [\*On the Change of Names\*](#) 21:123; 46:265; [\*On Dreams, That They Are God-Sent\*](#) 2:25:170; [\*On the Virtues\*](#) 32:171; [\*Questions and Answers on Genesis\*](#) 1:100. [Alexandria](#), Egypt, early 1st Century C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [Charles Duke Yonge](#), 70, 107, 137, 144, 155, 259, 265, 351, 360, 364, 400, 657, 813. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1993. [ISBN 0-943575-93-1](#).
- [Pseudo-Philo](#) 15:1–7; 57:2. 1st Century C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Edited by [James H. Charlesworth](#), 2:322–23, 371. New York: Doubleday, 1985. [ISBN 0-385-18813-7](#).



## Josephus

- [Josephus](#), [\*Antiquities of the Jews\*](#) 1:8:3; 3:14:1–15:3; 4:1:1–3. Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated



by [William Whiston](#), 39, 99–102. Peabody, Mass.:  
Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).

## Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): [Berakhot 2:2](#); Challah 1:1–4:11; [Sanhedrin 1:6](#), 10:3; Eduyot 1:2; Avot 3:6; 5:4; Horayot 1:4; 2:6; Zevachim 4:3; 12:5; Menachot 3:5; 4:1; 5:3; 9:1; Arakhin 3:5; Keritot 1:1–2; Tamid 5:1. Land of Israel, circa 200 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 5, 147–58, 585, 605, 640, 679, 685, 691, 694, 705, 726, 739–40, 742, 751, 813, 836–37, 869. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- [Tosefta](#): Challah 1:1–2:12; Sotah 4:13–14; 7:18; 9:2; Sanhedrin 13:9–10; Eduyot 1:1; Horayot 1:4; Bekhorot 3:12; Arakhin 2:11. Land of Israel, circa 300 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:331–40, 848–49, 865, 873; 2:1190–91, 1245, 1296, 1479, 1500. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).
- [Sifre](#) to Numbers 107:1–115:5. Land of Israel, circa 250–350 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Sifré to Numbers: An American Translation and Explanation*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 2:133–84. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986. [ISBN 1-55540-010-8](#).

- [Sifra](#) 34:4. Land of Israel, 4th Century C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Sifra: An Analytical Translation*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:214. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988. [ISBN 1-55540-205-4](#).
- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Berakhot 10a; 12b–13a; 20b, 24b, 75b; Peah 8a; Maaser Sheni 57b; Challah 1a–49b; Orlah 5b, 41b. Land of Israel, circa 400 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 1–3, 10–12. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2005–2009.
- [Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael](#) Pisha 1, 5; Beshallah 1–2; Vayassa 3; Amalek 1–3; Bahodesh 9. Land of Israel, late 4th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Mekhilta According to Rabbi Ishmael*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:6, 30, 126, 131, 137, 247; 2:6, 16, 22, 92. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988. [ISBN 1-55540-237-2](#). And *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*. Translated by Jacob Z. Lauterbach, 1:2–3, 26, 117–18, 124, 129, 237; 2:255, 266–67, 273, 341. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1933, reissued 2004. [ISBN 0-8276-0678-8](#).
- [Mekhilta of Rabbi Simeon](#) 12:3; 20:1, 5; 37:1; 44:1; 45:1; 54:2. Land of Israel, 5th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai*. Translated by W. David Nelson, 40, 81, 85, 160, 184, 193, 248. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2006. [ISBN 0-8276-0799-7](#).



## Talmud

- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 11b, 12b, 24a–b, 32a;](#) [Shabbat 9b, 15a, 20b, 22a, 23b, 27b, 32a–b, 68b, 89a–b,](#) [96b, 132a, 137a, 153b;](#) [Eruvin 83a, 92b;](#) [Pesachim 6a,](#) [37a, 38a, 50b, 77a, 93b, 101a, 119b;](#) [Yoma 7a, 10a, 15b,](#) [26b, 36b, 44a, 57a, 61b;](#) [Sukkah 9a, 35a–b, 41b–42a;](#) [Beitzah 12b, 21a;](#) [Taanit 22a, 24a, 29a;](#) [Megillah 7b, 31b;](#) [Moed Katan 9a, 19a;](#) [Chagigah 5b, 9b, 14b;](#) [Yevamot 4b,](#) [5b, 9a, 46b, 72a, 90b;](#) [Ketubot 6b, 16b, 25a, 72a, 111b–](#) [12a;](#) [Nedarim 12a, 20b, 25a;](#) [Nazir 58a;](#) [Sotah 11b, 17a,](#) [22a, 30a, 32b, 34a–35a, 46b;](#) [Gittin 46a, 61a;](#) [Kiddushin](#) [29a, 33b, 37a–b, 46b, 53a, 73a;](#) [Bava Kamma 2a, 13a,](#) [71a, 92b, 94a, 110b, 114b, 119b;](#) [Bava Metzia 61b;](#) [Bava](#) [Batra 4a, 15a, 73b–74a, 117b, 118b–19a, 121a–b;](#) [Sanhedrin 6b, 8a, 12a, 19b, 41a, 43a, 61b, 64b, 78b, 88b,](#) [90b, 99a–b, 104b, 107a, 108a, 109b–10b, 111b, 112b;](#) [Makkot 13b, 17b, 18b, 23b;](#) [Shevuot 7b, 10a, 11b, 13a,](#) [22a, 26b, 29a, 39a;](#) [Horayot 2a, 3b, 4b–5b, 7a–9a, 13a;](#) [Zevachim 8b, 18b, 39b, 41a, 45a, 47a, 78a, 90b, 91b,](#) [111a;](#) [Menachot 5b–6a, 9b, 12b, 14a, 15b, 18b, 20a, 27a,](#) [28a, 38a, 39b, 40b, 41b–43a, 44a–45a, 51a, 53b, 59a, 66a,](#) [67a, 70b, 73b–74a, 77b, 79a, 90b–92a, 104a, 107a, 109a;](#)

Chullin 2b, 14a, 23a, 89a, 95b, 104a, 135b–36a; Bekhorot 12b, 30b; Arakhin 11b, 15a; Temurah 3a; Keritot 2a, 3a–b, 7b, 8b–9a, 25b; Meilah 10b, 15b; [Niddah 47a](#).

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Ibn Gabirol

## Medieval

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## External links

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- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
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## Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, California](#)
- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)
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- [RabbiShimon.com](http://RabbiShimon.com)
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## Korach (parsha)

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**Korach** or **Korah** (קֹרַח — [Hebrew](#) for the [name](#) "[Korah](#)," which in turn means "[baldness](#), [ice](#), [hail](#), or [frost](#)," the second word, and the first distinctive word, in the parshah) is the 38th [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the fifth in the book of [Numbers](#). It constitutes [Numbers 16:1–18:32](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) generally read it in June or early July.



Detail of the punishment of Korah (from the [Punishment of the Rebels](#) by [Sandro Botticelli](#) (1480-1482), [Sistine Chapel](#)).

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## [\[edit\]](#) Summary



The Death of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (1865 etching by [Gustave Doré](#))



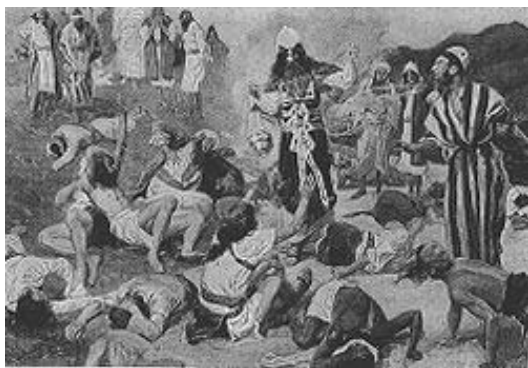


Destruction of Korah Dathan and Abiram (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

### **[[edit](#)] Korah's rebellion**

The [Levite](#) Korah son of [Izhar](#) joined with the [Reubenites](#) [Dathan](#) and [Abiram](#) sons of Eliab and On son of Peleth and 250 [chieftains](#) of the [Israelite](#) community to rise up against [Moses](#). ([Numbers 16:1–2](#).) Moses told Korah and his band to take their [fire pans](#) and put fire and [incense](#) on them before [God](#). ([Numbers 16:6–7](#).) Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram, but they refused to come. ([Numbers 16:12](#).) The next day, Korah and his band took their fire pans and gathered the whole community against Moses and [Aaron](#) at the entrance of the [Tabernacle](#). ([Numbers 16:18–19](#).) The Presence of the Lord appeared to the whole community, and God told Moses and Aaron to stand back so that God could annihilate the others. ([Numbers 16:20–21](#).) Moses and Aaron fell on their faces and implored God not to

punish the whole community. ([Numbers 16:22.](#)) God told Moses to instruct the community to move away from the [tents](#) of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and they did so, while Dathan, Abiram, and their families stood at the entrance of their tents. ([Numbers 16:23–27.](#)) Moses told the Israelites that if these men were to die of natural causes, then God did not send Moses, but if God caused the earth to swallow them up, then these men had spurned God. ([Numbers 16:28–30.](#)) Just as Moses finished speaking, the earth opened and swallowed them, their households, and all Korah’s people, and the Israelites fled in terror. ([Numbers 16:31–34.](#))



The Fire of Atonement (1865 watercolor by [James Tissot](#))

And a fire consumed the 250 men offering the incense.

([Numbers 16:35.](#)) God told Moses to order [Eleazar](#) the [priest](#) to remove the fire pans — as they had become sacred — and have them made into plating for the [altar](#) to remind the Israelites that no one other than Aaron’s offspring should presume to offer incense to God. ([Numbers 17:1–5.](#))

## [\[edit\]](#) A plague upon rebels

The next day, the whole Israelite community railed against Moses and Aaron for bringing death upon God's people. ([Numbers 17:6.](#)) A cloud covered the Tabernacle and the God's Presence appeared. ([Numbers 17:6.](#)) God told Moses to remove himself and Aaron from the community, so that God might annihilate them, and they fell on their faces. ([Numbers 17:8–10.](#)) Moses told Aaron to take the fire pan, put fire from the altar and incense on it, and take it to the community to make expiation for them and to stop a plague that had begun, and Aaron did so. ([Numbers 17:11–12.](#)) Aaron stood between the dead and the living and halted the plague, but not before 14,700 had died. ([Numbers 17:13–14.](#))



Aaron's Rod that Budded (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

## [\[edit\]](#) Aaron's budding staff



Aaron's Rod Budding (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

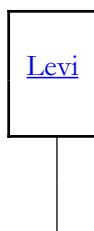
God told Moses to collect a staff from the chieftain of each of the 12 tribes, inscribe each man's name on his staff, inscribe Aaron's name on the staff of Levi, and deposit the staffs in the Tent of Meeting. ([Numbers 17:16–19.](#)) The next day, Moses entered the Tent and Aaron's staff had sprouted, blossomed, and borne [almonds](#). ([Numbers 17:23.](#)) God instructed Moses to put [Aaron's staff](#) before the [Ark of the Covenant](#) to be kept as a lesson to rebels to end their mutterings against God. ([Numbers 17:25.](#)) But the Israelites cried to Moses, “We are doomed to perish!” ([Numbers 17:27–28.](#))

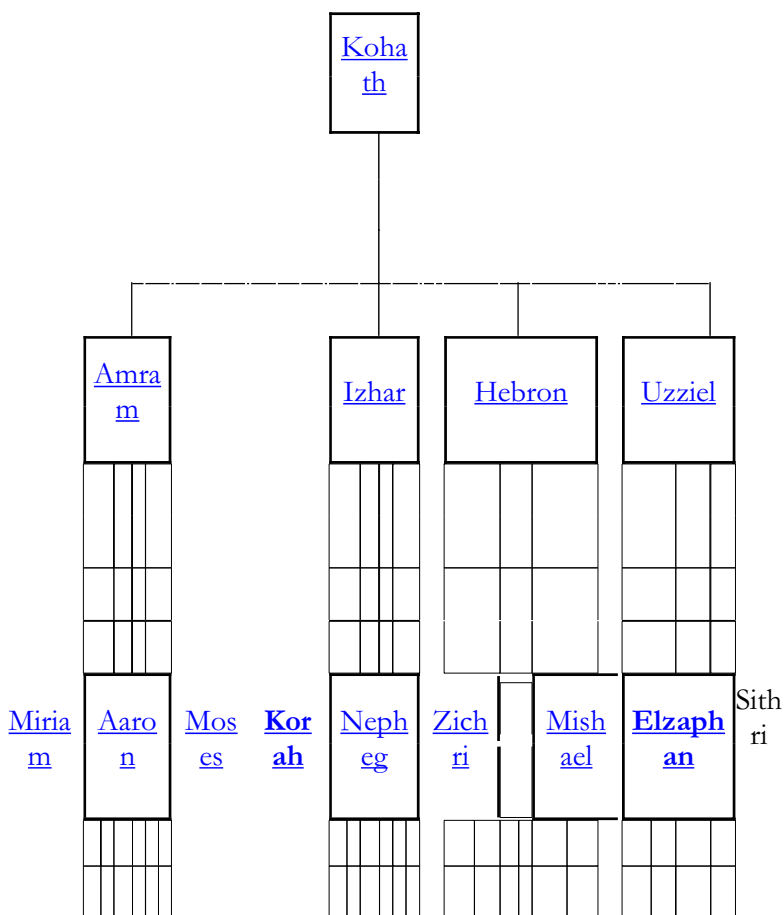
## [\[edit\]](#) Duties of priests and Levites

God assigned the Levites to Aaron to aid in the duties of the Tent of Meeting. ([Numbers 18:2–6.](#)) God prohibited any outsider from intruding on the priests as they discharged the duties connected with the Shrine, on pain of death. ([Numbers 18:7.](#)) And God gave Aaron and the priests all the sacred [donations](#) and first fruits as a perquisite for all time for them and their families to eat. ([Numbers 18:8–13.](#)) And God gave them the [oil](#), [wine](#), [grain](#), and [money](#) that the Israelites brought. ([Numbers 18:12–16.](#)) But God told Aaron that the priests would have no territorial share among the Israelites, as God was their portion and their share. ([Numbers 18:20.](#)) God gave the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their share in return for the services of the Tent of Meeting, but they too would have no territorial share among the Israelites. ([Numbers 18:21–24.](#)) God told Moses to instruct the Levites to set aside one-tenth of the tithes they received as a gift to God. ([Numbers 18:26–29.](#))

## [\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 16





A midrash taught that Korah took issue with Moses in [Numbers 16:1](#) because Moses had (as [Numbers 3:30](#) reports) appointed [Elizaphan](#) the son of [Uzziel](#) as prince of the [Kohathites](#), and Korah was (as [Exodus 6:21](#) reports) son of Uzziel's older brother [Izhar](#), and thus had a claim to leadership prior to Elizaphan. (Midrash [Tanhuma](#) Korah 1.)



Datan and Abiram Devoured by the Earth (illumination by  
Hesdin of Amiens from a circa 1450–1455 "[Biblia pauperum](#)"  
(Bible of the Poor))



The Punishment of Korah's Congregation (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)

[Resh Lakish](#) interpreted the words “Korah . . . took” in [Numbers 16:1](#) to teach that Korah took a bad bargain for himself. As the three Hebrew consonants that spell Korah's name also spell the Hebrew word for “bald” (*kereach*), the [Gemara](#) deduced that he was called Korah because he caused a bald spot to be formed among the Israelites when the earth swallowed his followers. As the name Izhar in [Numbers 16:1](#) derived from the same Hebrew root as the word “noon” (*tzohorayim*), the Gemara deduced from “son of Izhar” that Korah was a son who brought upon himself anger hot as the noon sun. As the name Kohath in [Numbers 16:1](#) derived from the same Hebrew root as the word for “set on edge” (*bikah*), the Gemara deduced from “son of Kohath” that Korah was a son who set his ancestors' teeth on edge. The



Gemara deduced from the words “son of Levi” in [Numbers 16:1](#) that Korah was a son who was escorted to [Gehenna](#). The Gemara asked why [Numbers 16:1](#) did not say “the son of Jacob,” and Rabbi Samuel bar Isaac answered that Jacob had prayed not to be listed amongst Korah's ancestors in [Genesis 49:6](#), where it is written, “Let my soul not come into their council; unto their assembly let my glory not be united.” “Let my soul not come into their council” referred to the spies, and “unto their assembly let my glory not be united” referred to Korah’s assembly. As the name Dathan in [Numbers 16:1](#) derived from the same Hebrew root as the word “law” (*dath*), the Gemara deduced from Dathan’s name that he violated God’s law. The Gemara related the name Abiram in [Numbers 16:1](#) to the Hebrew word for “strengthened” (*iber*) and deduced from Abiram’s name that he stoutly refused to repent. The Gemara related the name On in [Numbers 16:1](#) to the Hebrew word for “mourning” (*aninut*) and deduced from On’s name that he sat in lamentations. The Gemara related the name Peleth in [Numbers 16:1](#) to the Hebrew word for “miracles” (*pelaot*) and deduced from Peleth’s name that God performed wonders for him. And as the name Reuben derived from the Hebrew words “see” (*ren*) and “understand” (*ma’in*), the Gemara deduced from the reference to On as a “son of Reuben” in [Numbers 16:1](#) that On was a son who saw and understood. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 109b.](#))

[Numbers 16:1–2](#) reports that the Reubenite On son of Peleth joined Korah’s conspiracy, but the text does not mention On again. [Rab](#) explained that On’s wife saved him, arguing to him

that no matter whether Moses or Korah prevailed, On would remain just a disciple. On replied that he had sworn to participate. So On's wife got him drunk with wine, and laid him down in their tent. Then she sat at the entrance of their tent and loosened her hair, so that whoever came to summon him saw her and retreated at the sight of her immodestly loosened hair. The Gemara taught that [Proverbs 14:1](#) refers to On's wife when it says: "Every wise woman builds her house." ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 109b–10a.](#))

The [Mishnah](#) in [Pirkei Avot](#) deduced that the controversy of Korah and his followers was not for the sake of Heaven, and thus was destined not to result in permanent change. The Mishnah contrasted Korah's argument to those between [Hillel](#) and [Shammai](#), which the Mishnah taught were controversies for the sake of Heaven, destined to result in something permanent. ([Mishnah Avot 5:17.](#))





Rabbi Akiba (illustration from the 1568 [Mantua](#) Haggadah)

Rabbi Levi taught that God told Moses “enough!” in [Deuteronomy 3:26](#) to repay Moses measure for measure for when Moses told Korah “enough!” in [Numbers 16:3](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 13b.](#))

Rav Adda bar Abahah taught that a person praying alone does not say the Sanctification (*Kedushah*) prayer (which includes the words from [Isaiah 6:3](#): מְלֵא הִנֵּה צְבָאוֹת; מְלֵא כָל-קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ ה' הִנֵּה צְבָאוֹת; מְלֵא הָאָרֶץ, הָאֵלֹהִים, *Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh, Adonai Tz'vaot melo kol haaretz kevodo*, “Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord of Hosts, the entire world is filled with God’s Glory”), because [Leviticus 22:32](#) says: “I will be hallowed among the children of Israel,” and thus sanctification requires ten people (a *minyan*). Rabinai the brother of Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba taught that we derive this by drawing an analogy between the two occurrences of the word “among” (תּוֹךְ, *toch*) in [Leviticus 22:32](#) (“I will be hallowed *among* the children of Israel”) and in [Numbers 16:21](#), in which God tells Moses and Aaron: “Separate yourselves from *among* this congregation,” referring to Korah and his followers. Just as [Numbers 16:21](#), which refers to a congregation, implies a number of at least ten, so [Leviticus 22:32](#) implies at least ten. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 21b.](#))

The Mishnah in Pirkei Avot taught that the opening of the earth’s mouth in [Numbers 16:32](#) was one of ten miracles that God created at the end of the first week of creation at the eve of the Sabbath at twilight. ([Mishnah Avot 5:6.](#))

[Rabbi Akiba](#) interpreted [Numbers 16:33](#) to teach that Korah's assembly will have no portion in the world to come, as the words "the earth closed upon them" reported that they died in this world, and the words "they perished from among the assembly" implied that they died in the next world, as well. But Rabbi Eliezer disagreed, reading [1 Samuel 2:6](#) to speak of Korah's assembly when it said: "The Lord kills, and makes alive; He brings down to the grave, and brings up." The Gemara cited a [Tanna](#) who concurred with Rabbi Eliezer's position: Rabbi [Judah ben Bathyra](#) likened Korah's assembly to a lost article, which one seeks, as [Psalm 119:176](#) said: "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant." (Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:3; [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 108a, 109b.](#))

A Tanna in the name of [Rabbi](#) deduced from the words "the sons of Korah did not die" in [Numbers 26:11](#) that Providence set up a special place for them to stand on high in [Gehinnom](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 14a, Sanhedrin 110a.](#)) There, Korah's sons sat and sang praises to God. [Rabbah bar bar Hana](#) told that once when he was travelling, an Arab showed him where the earth swallowed Korah's congregation. Rabbah bar bar Hana saw two cracks in the ground from which smoke issued. He took a piece of wool, soaked it in water, attached it to the point of his spear, and passed it over the cracks, and the wool was singed. The Arab told Rabbah bar bar Hana to listen, and he heard them saying, "Moses and his Torah are true, but Korah's company are liars." The Arab told Rabbah bar bar Hana that every 30 days Gehinnom caused them to return for judgment, as

if they were being stirred like meat in a pot, and every 30 days they said those same words. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 110a–b.](#))



Budding of Aaron's Staff (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)

### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 17

Rabbi [Joshua ben Levi](#) explained how, as [Numbers 17:11–13](#) reports, Moses knew what to tell Aaron what to do to make atonement for the people, to stand between the dead and the living, and to check the plague. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi taught that when Moses ascended on high (as [Exodus 19:20](#) reports), the ministering angels asked God what business one born of woman had among them. God told them that Moses had come to receive the Torah. The angels questioned why God was giving to flesh

and blood the secret treasure that God had hidden for 974 generations before God created the world. The angels asked, in the words of [Psalm 8:8](#), “What is man, that You are mindful of him, and the son of man, that You think of him?” God told Moses to answer the angels. Moses asked God what was written in the Torah. In [Exodus 20:2](#), God said, “I am the Lord your God, Who brought you out of the Land of Egypt.” So Moses asked the angels whether the angels had gone down to Egypt or were enslaved to Pharaoh. As the angels had not, Moses asked them why then God should give them the Torah. Again, [Exodus 20:3](#) says, “You shall have no other gods,” so Moses asked the angels whether they lived among peoples that engage in idol worship. Again, [Exodus 20:7](#) (20:8 in the NJPS) says, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” so Moses asked the angels whether they performed work from which they needed to rest. Again, [Exodus 20:6](#) (20:7 in the NJPS) says, “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain,” so Moses asked the angels whether there were any business dealings among them in which they might swear oaths. Again, [Exodus 20:11](#) (20:12 in the NJPS) says, “Honor your father and your mother,” so Moses asked the angels whether they had fathers and mothers. Again, [Exodus 20:12](#) (20:13 in the NJPS) says, “You shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal,” so Moses asked the angels whether there was jealousy among them and whether the Evil Tempter was among them. Immediately, the angels conceded that God’s plan was correct, and each angel felt moved to love Moses and give him gifts. Even the Angel of Death confided his secret to Moses, and that is how Moses knew

what to do when, as [Numbers 17:11–13](#) reports, Moses told Aaron what to do to make atonement for the people, to stand between the dead and the living, and to check the plague.

([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 88b–89a.](#))

A [Baraita](#) taught that [Josiah](#) hid the Ark, the bottle containing the [manna](#) (see [Exodus 16:33–34](#)), Aaron’s staff with its almonds and blossoms (see [Numbers 17:25](#)), and the chest that the [Philistines](#) sent as a gift (see [1 Samuel 6:8](#)), because Josiah read in [Deuteronomy 28:36](#): “The Lord will bring you, and your king whom you shall set over you, to a nation that you have not known.” Therefore he hid these things, as [2 Chronicles 35:3](#) reports: “And he said to the Levites, that taught all Israel, that were holy to the Lord: ‘Put the holy ark into the house that [Solomon](#), the son of [David](#), King of Israel built. There shall no more be a burden upon your shoulders now.’” ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 52b.](#))



Hillel (sculpture at the [Knesset Menorah](#), Jerusalem)

[[edit](#)] Numbers chapter 18



closeup of Torah scroll showing portions of [Numbers 18:27–30](#) regarding tithes

A non-Jew asked [Shammai](#) to [convert](#) him to Judaism on condition that Shammai appoint him [High Priest](#). Shammai pushed him away with a builder's ruler. The non-Jew then went to Hillel, who converted him. The convert then read Torah, and when he came to the injunction of [Numbers 1:51](#), [3:10](#), and [18:7](#) that “the common man who draws near shall be put to death,” he asked Hillel to whom the injunction applied. Hillel answered that it applied even to David, King of Israel, who had not been a priest. Thereupon the convert reasoned *a fortiori* that if the injunction applied to all (non-priestly) Israelites, whom in [Exodus 4:22](#) God had called “my firstborn,” how much more so would



the injunction apply to a mere convert, who came among the Israelites with just his staff and bag. Then the convert returned to Shammai, quoted the injunction, and remarked on how absurd it had been for him to ask Shammai to appoint him High Priest. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 31a.](#))

Tractate [Terumot](#) in the Mishnah, [Tosefta](#), and [Jerusalem Talmud](#) interpreted the laws of the portion of the crop that was to be given to the priests in [Numbers 18:8–13](#). (Mishnah Terumot 1:1–11:10; Tosefta Terumot 1:1–10:18; Jerusalem Talmud Terumot 1a–.)

Tractate [Bikkurim](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Jerusalem Talmud interpreted the laws of the first fruits in [Exodus 23:19](#), [Numbers 18:13](#), and [Deuteronomy 12:17–18](#) and [26:1–11](#). (Mishnah Bikkurim 1:1–3:12; Tosefta Bikkurim 1:1–2:16; Jerusalem Talmud Bikkurim 1a–26b.)

Tractate [Demai](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Jerusalem Talmud, interpreted the laws related to produce where one is not sure if it has been properly [tithed](#) in accordance with [Numbers 18:21–28](#). ([Mishnah Demai 1:1–7:8](#); Tosefta Demai 1:1–8:24; Jerusalem Talmud Demai 1a–.)

## **[[edit](#)] Commandments**

According to [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are 5 positive and 4 negative [commandments](#) in the parshah.

- To guard the [Temple](#) area ([Numbers 18:2](#))

- No Levite must do another's work of either a Kohen or a Levite ([Numbers 18:3](#))
- One who is not a Kohen must not serve in the sanctuary ([Numbers 18:4](#))
- Not to leave the Temple unguarded ([Numbers 18:5](#))
- To [redeem the firstborn sons](#) and give the money to a Kohen ([Numbers 18:15](#))
- Not to redeem the firstborn of a kosher domestic animal ([Numbers 18:17](#))
- The Levites must work in the Temple ([Numbers 18:23](#))
- To set aside a tithe each planting year and give it to a Levite ([Numbers 18:24](#))
- The Levite must set aside a tenth of his tithe ([Numbers 18:26](#))

## [\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [1 Samuel 11:14–12:22](#).

When the parshah coincides with Shabbat Rosh Chodesh (as it does in 2010, 2013, and 2017), the haftarah is [Isaiah 66:1–24](#).

## [\[edit\]](#) In the liturgy

Some Jews read about how the earth swallowed Korah up in [Numbers 16:32](#) and how the controversy of Korah and his

followers in [Numbers 16](#) was not for the sake of Heaven as they study Pirkei Avot [chapter 5](#) on a Sabbath between [Passover](#) and [Rosh Hashanah](#). (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals with an Interlinear Translation*, 571, 577. Brooklyn: [Mesorah Publications](#), 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-697-3](#).)

And similarly, some Jews refer to the 24 priestly gifts deduced from [Leviticus 21](#) and [Numbers 18](#) as they study [chapter 6](#) of Pirkei Avot on another Sabbath between Passover and Rosh Hashanah. (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 587.)

## **[[edit](#)] Further reading**

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

### **[[edit](#)] Biblical**

- [Exodus 13:1–2](#) (firstborn); [13:12–13](#) (firstborn); [22:28–29](#) (firstborn).
- [Numbers 3:11–13](#) (firstborn); [26:9–11](#) (Korach, Dathan, Abiram).
- [Deuteronomy 15:19–23](#) (firstborn).
- [1 Samuel 12:3](#) (not having taken a donkey).
- [Jeremiah 31:8](#) (firstborn).
- [Ezekiel 7:10](#) (rod blossomed); [8:9–12](#) (elders burning incense).

- [Psalms 16:5](#) (God as inheritance); [55:16](#) (go down alive into the nether-world); [105:26](#) (Moses as God's chosen); [106:16–18](#), [29–30](#) (rebellion and earth swallowing; plague as God's punishment).



Josephus

### **[edit]** Early nonrabbinic

- [Pseudo-Philo 16:1–17:4](#).
- [Josephus](#), *Antiquities of the Jews* [4:2:1–4](#), [3:1–4](#), [4:1–2](#), [4](#). Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 102–07. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).
- [Jude 1:11](#) (Korah's rebellion).
- [Pausanias](#). *Description of Greece*, [2:31:10](#). Greece, 2nd Century C.E. (After [Heracles](#) leaned his club against the image of [Hermes](#), the club took root and grew.).
- [Qur'an](#): [28:76–82](#); [29:39](#); [40:24–25](#). (In the Qur'an, Korah is named Qarun or Qaaron; see [Biblical narratives and the Qur'an](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): [Demai 1:1–7:8](#); Terumot 1:1–11:10; Challah 1:3; 4:9; Bikkurim 1:1–3:12; Chagigah 1:4; Sanhedrin 9:6; 10:3; [Avot 5:6, 17](#); Bekhorot 8:8. Land of Israel, circa 200 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 93–120, 148, 157, 329, 604–05, 686, 688, 806. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- [Tosefta](#): Demai 1:1–8:24; Terumot 1:1–10:18; Maaser Sheni 3:11; Challah 2:7, 9; Shabbat 15:7; Chagigah 3:19; Sotah 7:4; Sanhedrin 13:9; Bekhorot 1:5. Land of Israel, circa 300 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:77–202, 313, 339, 414, 677, 861; 2:1190, 1469. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).
- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Demai 1a–77b; Terumot 1a–; Maaser Sheni 4a, 5a, 53b–54a; Challah 9b, 23b, 29a, 33a; Orlah 18a, 20a; Bikkurim 1a–26b. Land of Israel, circa 400 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 4, 10–12. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2006–2009.



## Talmud

- Babylonian Talmud: [Berakhot 21b, 45a, 47a–b](#); [Shabbat 25a, 26a, 89a, 127b, 135b](#); [Eruvin 19a, 31b](#); [Pesachim 23a, 34a, 35b, 54a, 64b, 73a, 121b](#); [Yoma 24a, 27a, 44a, 45b, 52b, 74b](#); [Sukkah 9a](#); [Beitzah 3b, 12b–13b](#); [Rosh Hashanah 12b](#); [Megillah 9b, 23b](#); [Moed Katan 5a–b, 12a, 13a, 16a, 18b, 28a](#); [Chagigah 7b, 10b, 11b](#); [Yevamot 74a, 85b–86b, 89b, 99b](#); [Ketubot 8b, 72a, 102a](#); [Nedarim 7b, 12b, 18b, 38a, 39b, 64b](#); [Nazir 4b](#); [Sotah 2a, 13b, 15a](#); [Gittin 11b, 23b, 25a, 30b, 52a](#); [Kiddushin 11b, 17a, 29a, 46b, 52b–53a](#); [Bava Kamma 11b, 13a, 67a, 69b, 78a, 79a, 80a, 110b, 114a, 115b](#); [Bava Metzia 6b, 22a, 56a, 71b, 88b, 102b](#); [Bava Batra 74a, 84b, 112a, 118b, 143a](#); [Sanhedrin 17a, 37b, 52a–b, 74b, 82b–84a, 90b, 108a, 109b–10a](#); [Makkot 4a, 12a, 13a, 14b, 17a–b, 19a–b, 23b](#); [Shevuot 4b, 17b, 39a](#); [Avodah Zarah 15a, 24b](#); [Horayot 12a](#); [Zevachim 16a, 28a, 32a, 37a, 44b–45a, 49b, 57a, 60b, 63a, 73a, 81a, 88b, 91a, 97b, 102b](#); [Menachot 9a, 19b, 21b, 23a, 37a, 54b, 58a, 73a, 77b, 83a, 84b, 99a](#); [Chullin 68a, 99a, 120b, 130a, 131a–32b, 133b, 134b, 135b–36a](#); [Bekhorot 3b–4b, 5b, 6b–7a, 10b, 11b–12b, 17a, 26b, 27b, 31b–33a, 34a, 47b, 49a, 50a, 51a–b, 53b](#),

[54b, 56b, 58b–59a, 60a](#); [Arakhin 4a, 11b, 16a, 28b–29a](#); [Temurah 3a, 4b–5b, 8a, 21a–b, 24a](#); [Keritot 4a, 5b](#); [Meilah 8b](#); [Tamid 26b](#); [Niddah 26a, 29a](#). Babylonia, 6th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

## [\[edit\]](#) Medieval



### Rashi

- [Avot of Rabbi Natan](#), 36:3. Circa 700–900 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*. Translated by Judah Goldin, 149. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1955. [ISBN 0-300-00497-4](#). *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan: An Analytical Translation and Explanation*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 217. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986. [ISBN 1-55540-073-6](#).
- [Tanna Devei Eliyahu](#). Seder Eliyahu Rabbah 67, 77, 83, 106, 117. 10th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Tanna Debe Eliyahu: The Lore of the School of Elijah*. Translated by William G. Braude and Israel J. Kapstein, 150, 172, 183,

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[ISBN 0-8276-0634-6](#).

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Hobbes

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## [\[edit\]](#) Modern

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EH 1:3.1994. Reprinted in *Responsa: 1991–2000: The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement*. Edited by Kassel Abelson and David J. Fine, 461, 497. New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2002. [ISBN 0-916219-19-4](#). (implications of the law of the firstborn son for deciding whether a child born from a donated egg is Jewish).

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### [\[edit\]](#) Texts

- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)

## [\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, California](#)
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# Chukat

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**Chukat**, **Hukath**, or **Chukkas** ([Hebrew](#): חֻקַּת, “decree,” — the ninth word, and the first distinctive word, in the parshah) is the 39th [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the sixth in the [book of Numbers](#). It constitutes [Numbers 19:1–22:1](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) generally read it in late June or July.

The [lunisolar Hebrew calendar](#) contains up to 55 [weeks](#), the exact number varying among years. In most years (for example, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017), parshah Chukat is read separately. In some years (for example, 2009), parshah Chukat is combined with the subsequent parshah, [Balak](#), to help achieve the needed number of weekly readings.

Jews also read the first part of the parshah, [Numbers 19:1–22](#), in addition to the regular weekly Torah portion, on the Sabbath after [Purim](#), called [Shabbat Parah](#). On Shabbat Parah, a reader chants the regular weekly Torah portion first, and then a reader chants the chapter of the [red cow](#) (*parah adumah*). Shabbat Parah occurs shortly before [Passover](#), and [Numbers 19:1–22](#) sets out the procedure by which the Israelites could purify themselves from the contamination caused by a corpse, and so prepare for the pilgrimage festival of Passover.



*Moses Striking Water from the Rock* (painting circa 1633–1635 by [Nicolas Poussin](#))



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## [\[edit\]](#) Summary



*The World Cow* (1913 painting by [Franz Marc](#))

## [\[edit\]](#) The red heifer

[God](#) told [Moses](#) and [Aaron](#) to instruct the [Israelites](#) the [ritual law](#) of the [red heifer](#) ([פרֹּה אֲדֹמָה](#), *parah aduma*) used to create [water](#) of lustration. ([Numbers 19:1–2](#).) The heifer (a cow that has not yet born any calf) had to be without blemish, have no defect, and not have borne a [yoke](#). ([Numbers 19:2](#).) [Eleazar](#) the [priest](#) was to take it outside the camp, observe its slaughter, and take some of its [blood](#) with his [finger](#) and sprinkle it seven times toward the [Tabernacle](#). ([Numbers 19:3–4](#).) The cow was to be burned in its entirety along with [cedar](#) wood, [hyssop](#), and [crimson](#) stuff. ([Numbers 19:5–6](#).) The priest and the one whom burned the cow were both to wash their garments, bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. ([Numbers 19:7–8](#).) The ashes of the cow were to be used to create the water of lustration. ([Numbers 19:9](#).)

One who touched the corpse of any human being was to be unclean for seven days. ([Numbers 19:10–11](#).) On the third and seventh days, the person who had touched the corpse was to cleanse with the water of lustration and then be clean. ([Numbers 19:12](#).) One who failed to do so would remain unclean, would defile the Tabernacle, and would be cut off from Israel. ([Numbers 19:12–13](#).)

When a person died in a tent, whoever entered the tent was to be unclean seven days, and every open vessel in the tent was to be unclean. ([Numbers 19:14–15](#).) In the open, anyone who touched a corpse, bone, or a grave was to be unclean seven days. ([Numbers 19:16](#).)



Moses Brings Water Out of the Rock (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

A person who was clean was to add fresh water to ashes of the red cow, dip hyssop it in the water, and sprinkle the water on the tent, the vessels, and people who had become unclean. ([Numbers 19:17–18.](#)) The person who sprinkled the water was then to wash his clothes, bathe in water, and be clean at nightfall. ([Numbers 19:19.](#))

Anyone who became unclean and failed to cleanse himself was to be cut off from the congregation. ([Numbers 19:20.](#)) The person who sprinkled the water of lustration was to wash his clothes, and whoever touched the water of lustration, whatever he touched, and whoever touched him were to be unclean until evening. ([Numbers 19:21–22.](#))

### [\[edit\]](#) Miriam's death

The Israelites arrived at [Kadesh](#) in the wilderness of Zin, and [Miriam](#) died and was buried there. ([Numbers 20:1.](#))



Moses Brings Forth Water out of the Rock (1304 fresco by [Giotto di Bondone](#) at the [Scrovegni Chapel](#), Padua)

### [\[edit\]](#) Water from a rock

The people were without water, and they complained against Moses and Aaron. ([Numbers 20:2–5.](#)) Moses and Aaron fell on their faces at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and the Presence of God appeared to them, telling them to take the rod and order the rock to yield its water. ([Numbers 20:6–8.](#)) Moses

took the rod, assembled the congregation in front of the rock, and said to them: “Listen, you rebels, shall we get water for you out of this rock?” ([Numbers 20:9–10.](#)) Then Moses struck the rock twice with his rod, out came water, and the community and their animals drank. ([Numbers 20:11.](#)) But God told Moses and Aaron: “Because you did not trust Me enough to affirm My sanctity in the sight of the Israelite people, therefore you shall not lead this congregation into the land that I have given them.” ([Numbers 20:12.](#))

### **[[edit](#)] Emissary to Edom**

Moses sent messengers to the king of [Edom](#) asking him to allow the Israelites to cross Edom, without passing through fields or vineyards, and without drinking water from wells. ([Numbers 20:14–17.](#)) But the Edomites would not let the Israelites pass through, and turned out in heavy force to block their way, and the Israelites turned away. ([Numbers 20:18–21.](#))





The Brazen Serpent (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))



The Brazen Serpent (1790 painting by [Benjamin West](#))

### [\[edit\]](#) Aaron's death

At [Mount Hor](#), God told Moses and Aaron: “Let Aaron be gathered to his kin: he is not to enter the land that I have assigned to the Israelite people, because you disobeyed my command about the waters of [Meribah](#).” ([Numbers 20:23–24](#).) Moses took Aaron and his son [Eleazar](#) up on Mount Hor, and there he stripped Aaron of his vestments and put them on Eleazar, and Aaron died there. ([Numbers 20:25–28](#).) The Israelites mourned Aaron 30 days. ([Numbers 20:29](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) Victory over Arad

The king of Arad engaged the Israelites in battle and took some of them captive. ([Numbers 21:1.](#)) The Israelites vowed that if God gave them victory, they would destroy Arad. ([Numbers 21:2.](#)) God delivered up the Canaanites, and the Israelites killed them and destroyed their cities, calling the place [Hormah](#). ([Numbers 21:3.](#))

## [\[edit\]](#) Serpents

The people grew restive and spoke against God and Moses, so God let loose serpents that killed many of the Israelites. ([Numbers 21:4–6.](#)) The people came to Moses, admitted their sin by speaking against God, and asked Moses to intercede with God to take away the serpents, and Moses did so. ([Numbers 21:7.](#)) God told Moses to mount a serpent figure on a standard, saying: “If anyone who is bitten looks at it, he shall recover.” ([Numbers 21:8.](#))





The Conquest of the Amorites (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)



Destruction of the Army of the Amorites (engraving by [Gustave Doré](#) from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

### [\[edit\]](#) Victories over Sihon and Og

The Israelites traveled on, and sent messengers to [Sihon](#), king of the [Amorites](#), asking that he allow them to pass through his country, without entering the fields or vineyards, and without drinking water from wells. ([Numbers 21:21–22](#).) But Sihon would not let Israel pass through his territory and engaged the Israelites in battle. ([Numbers 21:23](#).) The Israelites defeated the Amorites and took possession of their land and towns. ([Numbers 21:24–25](#).)

Then the Israelites marched on, and King [Og](#) of [Bashan](#) engaged them in battle. ([Numbers 21:33](#).) The Israelites defeated his

forces and took possession of his country. ([Numbers 21:35](#).) The Israelites then marched to the steppes of [Moab](#), across the [Jordan River](#) from [Jericho](#). ([Numbers 22:1](#).)

## **[[edit](#)] In classical rabbinic interpretation**

### **[[edit](#)] Numbers chapter 19**

Tractate [Parah](#) in the [Mishnah](#) and [Tosefta](#) interpreted the laws of the red cow in [Numbers 19:1–22](#). (Mishnah Parah 1:1–12:11; Tosefta Parah 1:1–12:19.)

Rabbi Tanhum son of Rabbi Hannilai taught that [Numbers 19](#) was one of two sections in the Torah (along with [Leviticus 21](#), on corpse contamination) that Moses gave the Israelites in writing that are both pure, dealing with the law of purity. Rabbi Tanhum taught that they were given on account of the [tribe of Levi](#), of whom it is written (in [Malachi 3:3](#)), “he [God’s messenger] shall purify the sons of [Levi](#) and purge them.” ([Leviticus Rabbah](#) 26:3.)

Rabbi Joshua of Siknin taught in the name of Rabbi Levi that the Evil Inclination criticizes four laws as without logical basis, and Scripture uses the expression “statute” (*chuk*) in connection with each: the laws of (1) a [brother’s wife](#) (in [Deuteronomy 25:5–10](#)), (2) [mingled kinds](#) (in [Leviticus 19:19](#) and [Deuteronomy 22:11](#)), (3) the [scapegoat](#) (in [Leviticus 16](#)), and (4) the red cow (in [Numbers 19](#)). In connection with the red cow, the Mishnah noted the paradox that the garments of all those who took any part in the preparation of the red cow became defiled, but the cow itself made garments ritually clean. (Mishnah Parah 4:4.) And

[Numbers 19:1](#) applies the term “statute” to the red cow.

([Numbers Rabbah](#) 19:5.)

Similarly, a [midrash](#) taught that an idolater once asked Rabbi [Johanan ben Zakkai](#) about the red cow, likening its procedures to [witchcraft](#). Rabbi Johanan asked the idolater what he had seen done for a man possessed by a demon of madness. The idolater explained how in such a case, they would bring roots, make them smoke under the madman, sprinkle water on the man, and the demon would flee. Rabbi Johanan told him that the red cow dealt similarly with the spirit of uncleanness, as [Zechariah 13:2](#) says: “And also I will cause the prophets and the [unclean spirit](#) to pass out of the land.” Rabbi Johanan told him that when they sprinkled the water of purification on the unclean, the spirit of uncleanness fled. But when the idolater had gone, Rabbi Johanan’s disciples told Rabbi Johanan that they saw that he had put off the idolater with a mere makeshift, and asked him what explanation Rabbi Johanan would give them. Rabbi Johanan told his disciples that the dead did not defile nor the water purify; God had merely laid down a statute, issued a decree, and commanded that we not transgress the decree, as [Numbers 19:2](#) says: “This is the statute of the law.” ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 19:8.)

Expounding upon the commandment of the red cow in [Numbers 19:2](#), Rabbi Jose ben Hanina taught that God told Moses the reason for the commandment, but to everyone else it would remain merely a statute. ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 19:6.)

All other communal sacrifices were of male animals, but the red cow was of a female animal. Rabbi Aibu explained the difference

with a parable: When a handmaiden's boy polluted a king's palace, the king called on the boy's mother to clear away the filth. In the same way, God called on the red cow to come and atone for the incident of the golden calf. (Numbers Rabbah 19:8.)

[Rabbi Eliezer](#) ruled that a red cow that was pregnant was nonetheless valid, but the Sages ruled it invalid. Rabbi Eliezer ruled that the red cow could not be purchased from [Gentiles](#), but the Sages ruled that such cow could be valid. (Mishnah Parah 2:1.) If the horns or the hoofs of the red cow were black, they were chopped off, and the red cow was then valid. The cow's eye, teeth, and tongue could cause no invalidity. And a dwarf-like cow was nonetheless valid. If the red cow had a [sebaceous cyst](#) and they cut it off, [Rabbi Judah](#) ruled the cow invalid, but Rabbi Simeon ruled it invalid only if no red hair grew in its place. (Mishnah Parah 2:2.) A red cow born by a [caesarean section](#), the hire of a harlot, or the price of a dog was invalid. Rabbi Eliezer ruled it valid, for [Deuteronomy 23:19](#) states, "You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the price of a dog into the house of the Lord your God," and the red cow was not brought into the [Temple](#). The Mishnah taught that all blemishes that caused consecrated animals to be invalid as sacrifices also caused the red cow to be invalid. If one had ridden on the cow, leaned on it, hung on its tail, crossed a river with its help, doubled up its leading rope, or put one's cloak on it, the cow was invalid. But if one had only fastened it by its leading rope or made for it a sandal to prevent it from slipping, or spread one's cloak on it because of flies, it remained valid. The general rule was that

wherever one did something for its own sake, the cow remained valid; but if one did something for the sake of another purpose, it invalidated the cow. (Mishnah Parah 2:3.) If a bird rested on the cow, it remained valid. If a bull mounted it, it became invalid; but Rabbi Judah ruled that if people brought the bull to mate with the cow, the cow became invalid, but if the bull did so on its own, the cow remained valid. (Mishnah Parah 2:4.) If a cow had two black or white hairs growing within one follicle, it was invalid. Rabbi Judah said even within one hollow. If the hairs grew within two adjacent follicles, the cow was invalid. [Rabbi Akiba](#) ruled that even if there were four or even five non-red hairs, if they were dispersed, they could be plucked out. Rabbi Eliezer ruled that even as many as 50 such hairs could be plucked. But Rabbi Joshua ben Bathyra ruled that even if it had only one non-red hair on its head and one on its tail, it was invalid. If the cow had two hairs in one follicle with their roots black and their tips red or with their roots red and their tips black, [Rabbi Meir](#) taught that what was visible determined validity; but the Sages ruled that validity followed the root. (Mishnah Parah 2:5.)



hyssop (1885 painting by [Otto Wilhelm Thomé](#))

[Rab Judah](#) reported in Samuel's name an account of the rarity of completely red cows: When they asked Rabbi Eliezer how far the honor of parents extended, he told of a heathen from [Ashkelon](#) named Dama son of Nethinah. The Sages offered Dama a profit of 600,000 gold [denarii](#) (or Rab Kahana said 800,000 denarii) in exchange for jewels that he had that the Sages could use in the [ephod](#), but as the key to the jewels lay under Dama's father's pillow, Dama declined the offer so as not to trouble his father. The next year, God rewarded Dama by causing a red heifer to be born in his herd. When the Sages went to buy it, Dama told them

that he knew that he could ask for all the money in the world and they would pay it, but he asked for only the money that he had lost in honoring his father. ([Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 31a.](#))

A midrash noted that God commanded the Israelites to perform certain precepts with similar material from trees: God commanded that the Israelites throw cedar wood and hyssop into the Red Heifer mixture of [Numbers 19:6](#) and use hyssop to sprinkle the resulting waters of lustration in [Numbers 19:18](#); God commanded that the Israelites use cedar wood and hyssop to purify those stricken with skin disease in [Leviticus 14:4–6](#); and in Egypt God commanded the Israelites to use the bunch of hyssop to strike the lintel and the two side-posts with blood in [Exodus 12:22](#). ([Exodus Rabbah](#) 17:1.)

Rabbi Isaac noted two red threads, one in connection with the red cow in [Numbers 19:6](#), and the other in connection with the scapegoat in the [Yom Kippur](#) service of [Leviticus 16:7–10](#) (which Mishnah Yoma 4:2 indicates was marked with a red thread).

Rabbi Isaac had heard that one required a definite size, while the other did not, but he did not know which was which. Rav Joseph reasoned that because (as Mishnah Yoma 6:6 explains) the red thread of the scapegoat was divided, that thread required a definite size, whereas that of the red cow, which did not need to be divided, did not require a definite size. [Rami bar Hama](#) objected that the thread of the red cow required a certain weight (to be cast into the flames, as described in [Numbers 19:6](#)). [Raba](#) said that the matter of this weight was disputed by [Tannaim](#) (as explained below). [Abaye](#) objected (based on Mishnah Parah 3:11)

that they wrapped the red thread together with the cedar wood and hyssop. Rabbi Hanin said in the name of [Rab](#) that if the cedar wood and the red thread were merely caught by the flame, they were used validly. They objected to Rabbi Hanin based on a [Baraita](#) which taught that if the thread caught fire in midair, they brought another thread to prepare the water of lustration. Abaye reconciled the two opinions by interpreting the Baraita to speak of a flame that blazed high above the cow, and interpreting Rabbi Hanin to speak of a subdued flame that consumed the thread near the burning cow. Raba explained the dispute among Tannaim about the weight of the red thread in connection with the red cow. [Rabbi](#) taught that they wrapped the cedar wood and hyssop together with the red thread so that they formed one bunch. Rabbi Eleazar the son of Rabbi Simeon said that they wrapped them together so that they had sufficient weight to fall into the midst of the burning cow. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 41b.](#))

When Rav Dimi came from the [Land of Israel](#), he said in the name of [Rabbi Johanan](#) that there were three red threads: one in connection with the red cow, the second in connection with the scapegoat, and the third in connection with the person with skin disease (the *m'tzora*) in [Leviticus 14:4](#). Rav Dimi reported that one weighed ten [zuz](#), another weighed two selas, and the third weighed a [shekel](#), but he could not say which was which. When Rabin came, he said in the name of Rabbi Jonathan that the thread in connection with the red cow weighed ten zuz, that of the scapegoat weighed two selas, and that of the person with skin



disease weighed a shekel. Rabbi Johanan said that Rabbi Simeon ben Halafta and the Sages disagreed about the thread of the red cow, one saying that it weighed ten shekels, the other that it weighed one shekel. Rabbi Jeremiah of Difti said to [Rabina](#) that they disagreed not about the thread of the red cow, but about that of the scapegoat. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 41b–42a.](#))

The Mishnah taught that seven days before the burning of the red cow, they removed the priest who was to burn the cow from his house to a room called the stone chamber facing the north-eastern corner of the Temple. The Mishnah taught that throughout the seven days, they sprinkled on the priest a mixture of all the sin-offerings that were there, but Rabbi Jose taught that they sprinkled only on the third and the seventh days. And Rabbi Hanina the deputy [high priest](#) taught that on the priest who was to burn the cow they sprinkled all the seven days, but on the one who was to perform the service on [Yom Kippur](#) they sprinkled only on the third and the seventh days. (Mishnah Parah 3:1.) To protect against defilement from contact with the dead, they built courtyards over bedrock, and left beneath them a hollow to serve as protection against a grave in the depths. They used to bring pregnant women there to give birth and rear their children in this ritually pure place. They placed doors on the backs of oxen and placed the children upon them with stone cups in their hands. When the children reached the pool of [Siloam](#), the children stepped down, filled the cups with water, and then climbed back up on the doors. Rabbi Jose said that each child used to let down his cup and fill it from on top of the oxen. (Mishnah Parah 3:2.)

When the children arrived at the Temple Mount with the water, they got down. Beneath the Temple Mount and the Temple courtyards was a hollow, which protected against contamination from a grave in the depths. At the entrance of the court of the women, they kept a jar of the ashes of the sin-offerings. (Mishnah Parah 3:3.) If they did not find the residue of the ashes of seven red cows, they performed the sprinkling with those of six, of five, of four, of three, of two or of one. (Mishnah Parah 3:5.)

Rabbi Meir taught that Moses prepared the first red cow ashes, [Ezra](#) prepared the second, and five were prepared since then. But the Sages taught that seven were prepared since Ezra. They said that [Simeon the Just](#) and Johanan the High Priest prepared two each, and Eliehoenai the son of Hakof, Hanamel the Egyptian, and Ishmael the son of Piabi each prepared one. (Mishnah Parah 3:5.)

The Mishnah taught that they bound the red cow with a [bast](#) rope and placed it on the pile with its head towards the south and its face towards the west. The priest stood on the east side facing west. He slaughtered the cow with his right hand and received the blood with his left hand. But Rabbi Judah said that he received the blood with his right hand, put it on his left hand, and then sprinkled with his right hand. He dipped his finger in the blood and sprinkled it towards the [Holy of Holies](#) seven times, dipping once for each sprinkling. When he had finished the sprinkling, he wiped his hand on the body of the cow, climbed down, and kindled the fire with wood chips. But Rabbi Akiba said that he kindled the fire with dry branches of palm trees. (Mishnah Parah

3:9.) When the cow's carcass burst in the fire, the priest took up a position outside the pit, took hold of the cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet wool, and said to the observers: "Is this cedar wood? Is this hyssop? Is this scarlet wool?" He repeated each question three times, and the observers answered "Yes" three times to each question. (Mishnah Parah 3:10.) The priest then wrapped the cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet wool together with the ends of the wool and cast them into the burning pyre. When the fire burned out, they beat the ashes with rods and then sifted them with sieves. They then divided the ashes into three parts: One part was deposited on the rampart, one on the [Mount of Olives](#), and one was divided among the courses of priests who performed the Temple services in turn. (Mishnah Parah 3:11.)

Rabbi Akiba interpreted the words "and the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean" in [Numbers 19:19](#) to teach that if the sprinkler sprinkled upon an unclean person, the person became clean, but if he sprinkled upon a clean person, the person became unclean. The [Gemara](#) explained that Rabbi Akiba's view hinged on the superfluous words "upon the unclean," which must have been put in [Numbers 19:19](#) to teach this. But the Sages held that these effects of sprinkling applied only in the case of things that were susceptible to uncleanness. The Gemara explained that the Rabbis' view could be deduced from the logical proposition that the greater includes the lesser: If sprinkling upon the unclean makes clean, how much more so should sprinkling upon the clean keep clean or make cleaner? And the Gemara said that it is with reference to Rabbi Akiba's position that [Solomon](#) said in

[Ecclesiastes 7:23](#): “I said, ‘I will get wisdom,’ but it is far from me.” That is, even Solomon could not explain it. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 14a.](#))

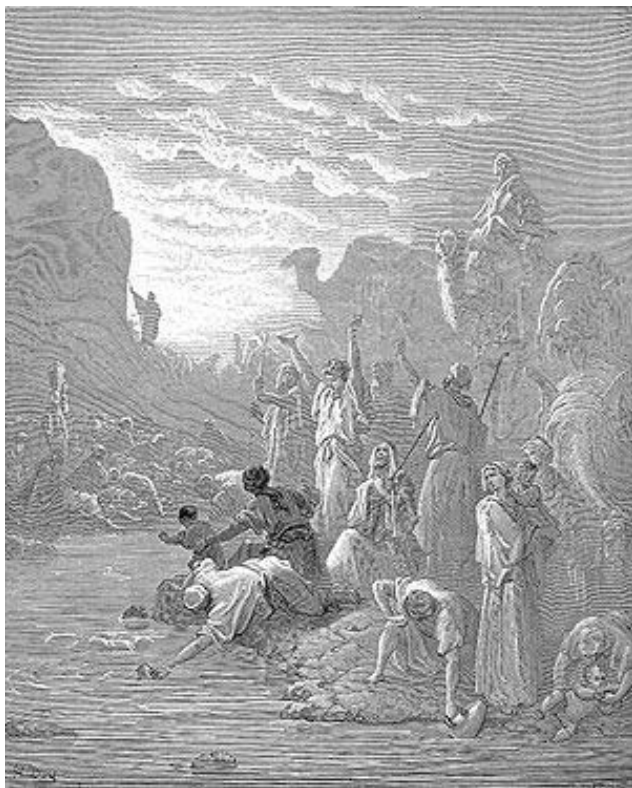


Moses Smites the Rock in the Desert (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 20

Rabbi Jose the son of Rabbi Judah taught that three good leaders arose for Israel — Moses, Aaron, and Miriam — and for their sake Providence conferred three good things on Israel — the well that accompanied the Israelites on their journeys for the merit of Miriam, the pillar of cloud for the merit of Aaron, and the [manna](#) for the merit of Moses. When Miriam died, the well disappeared, as [Numbers 20:1](#) reports, “And Miriam died there,” and immediately thereafter [Numbers 20:2](#) reports, “And there was no

water for the congregation.” The well returned for the merit of Moses and Aaron. When Moses died, the well, the pillar of cloud, and the manna all disappeared, as [Zechariah 11:8](#) reports, “And I cut off the three shepherds in one month.” ([Babylonian Talmud Taanit 9a.](#))



Moses Striking the Rock in Horeb (engraving by Gustave Doré from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

The Mishnah counted the well that accompanied the Israelites through the desert in the merit of Miriam, or others say, the well that Moses opened by striking the rock in [Numbers 20:11](#), among

ten miraculous things that God created at twilight on the eve of the first Sabbath. (Mishnah Avot 5:6.)

A midrash interpreted [Numbers 20:11](#) to teach that Moses struck the rock once and small quantities of water began to trickle from the rock, as [Psalm 78:20](#) says, “Behold, He smote the rock, that waters issued.” Then the people ridiculed Moses, asking if this was water for sucklings, or babes weaned from milk. So Moses lost his temper and struck the rock “twice; and water came forth abundantly” (in the words of [Numbers 20:11](#)), overwhelming all those who had railed at Moses, and as [Psalm 78:20](#) says, “And streams overflowed.” (Numbers Rabbah 19:9.)

Reading God’s criticism of Moses in [Numbers 20:12](#), “Because you did not believe in Me,” a midrash asked whether Moses had not previously said worse when in [Numbers 11:22](#), he showed a greater lack of faith and questioned God’s powers asking: “If flocks and herds be slain for them, will they suffice them? Or if all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, will they suffice them?” The midrash explained by relating the case of a king who had a friend who displayed arrogance towards the king privately, using harsh words. The king did not, however, lose his temper with his friend. Later, the friend displayed his arrogance in the presence of the king’s legions, and the king sentenced his friend to death. So also God told Moses that the first offense that Moses committed (in [Numbers 11:22](#)) was a private matter between Moses and God. But now that Moses had committed a second offense against God in public, it was impossible for God to overlook it, and God had to react, as [Numbers 20:12](#) reports,

“To sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel.” (Numbers Rabbah 19:10.)

Rabbi Simeon ben Eleazar taught that Moses and Aaron died because of their sin, as [Numbers 20:12](#) reports God told them, “Because you did not believe in Me . . . you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.” Rabbi Simeon ben Eleazar thus taught that had they believed in God, their time would not yet have come to depart from the world. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 55b.](#))

The Gemara implied that the sin of Moses in striking the rock at Meribah compared favorably to the sin of [David](#). The Gemara reported that Moses and David were two good leaders of Israel. Moses begged God that his sin be recorded, as it is in [Numbers 20:12](#), [20:23–24](#), and [27:13–14](#), and [Deuteronomy 32:51](#). David, however, begged that his sin be blotted out, as [Psalm 32:1](#) says, “Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is pardoned.” The Gemara compared the cases of Moses and David to the cases of two women whom the court sentenced to be lashed. One had committed an indecent act, while the other had eaten unripe figs of the seventh year in violation of [Leviticus 25:6](#). The woman who had eaten unripe figs begged the court to make known for what offense she was being flogged, lest people say that she was being punished for the same sin as the other woman. The court thus made known her sin, and the Torah repeatedly records the sin of Moses. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 86b.](#))

[Resh Lakish](#) taught that Providence punishes bodily those who unjustifiably suspect the innocent. In [Exodus 4:1](#), Moses said that

the Israelites “will not believe me,” but God knew that the Israelites would believe. God thus told Moses that the Israelites were believers and descendants of believers, while Moses would ultimately disbelieve. The Gemara explained that [Exodus 4:13](#) reports that “the people believed” and [Genesis 15:6](#) reports that the Israelites’ ancestor [Abraham](#) “believed in the Lord,” while [Numbers 20:12](#) reports that Moses “did not believe.” Thus, Moses was smitten when in [Exodus 4:6](#) God turned his hand white as snow. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 97a.](#))

A midrash employed a parable to explain why God held Aaron as well as Moses responsible when Moses struck the rock, as [Numbers 20:12](#) reports, “and the Lord said to Moses *and Aaron*: ‘Because you did not believe in Me.’” The midrash told how a creditor came to take away a debtor's granary and took both the debtor's granary and the debtor's neighbor's granary. The debtor asked the creditor what his neighbor had done to warrant such treatment. Similarly, Moses asked God what Aaron had done to be blamed when Moses lost his temper. The midrash taught that it on this account that [Deuteronomy 33:8](#) praises Aaron, saying, “And of Levi he said: ‘[Your Thummim and your Urim](#) be with your holy one, whom you proved at [Massah](#), with whom you strove at the waters of Meribah.’” (Numbers Rabbah 19:9.)





The Death of Aaron (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

A midrash interpreted the name “Mount Hor” (הַר הָהָר, *bor bahar*) in [Numbers 20:22](#) to mean a mountain on top of a mountain, like a small apple on top of a larger apple. The midrash taught that the Cloud went before the Israelites to level mountains and raise valleys so that the Israelites would not become exhausted, except that God left Mount Sinai for the Divine Presence, Mount Hor for the burial of Aaron, and Mount Nebo for the burial of Moses. (Midrash [Tanhuma](#) Chukas 14.)

A midrash noted the use of the verb “take” (קָח, *kach*) in [Numbers 20:25](#) and interpreted it to mean that God instructed Moses to *take* Aaron with comforting words. The midrash thus taught that Moses comforted Aaron by explaining to him that he would pass his crown on to his son, a fate that Moses himself

would not merit. (Midrash Tanhuma Chukas 17; Numbers Rabbah 19:19.)

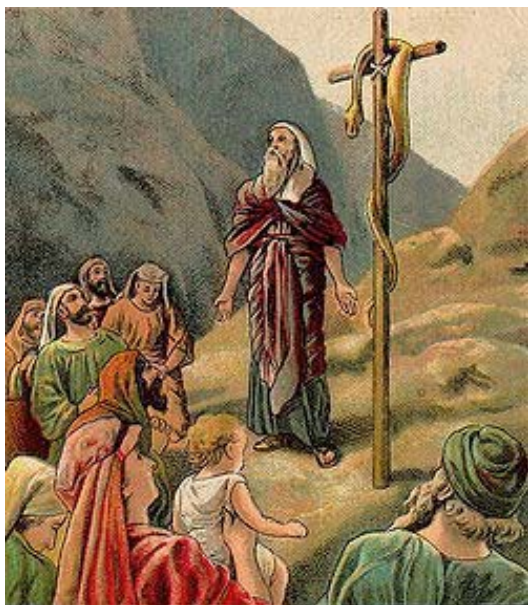
The [Sifre](#) taught that when Moses saw the merciful manner of Aaron's death, Moses concluded that he would want to die the same way. The Sifre taught that God told Aaron to go in a cave, to climb onto a bier, to spread his hands, to spread his legs, to close his mouth, and to close his eyes, and then Aaron died. At that moment, Moses concluded that one would be happy to die that way. And that is why God later told Moses in [Deuteronomy 32:50](#) that Moses would die "as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people," for that was the manner of death that Moses had wanted. (Sifre to Deuteronomy 339:3.)

A midrash interpreted the words "all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead" in [Numbers 20:29](#). The midrash taught that when Moses and Eleazar descended from the mountain without Aaron, all the congregation assembled against Moses and Eleazar and demanded to know where Aaron was. When Moses and Eleazar answered that Aaron had died, the congregation objected that surely the Angel of Death could not strike the one who had withstood the Angel of Death and had restrained him, as reported in [Numbers 17:13](#): "And he stood between the dead and the living and the plague was stayed." The congregation demanded that Moses and Eleazar bring Aaron back, or they would stone Moses and Eleazar. Moses prayed to God to deliver them from suspicion, and God immediately opened the cave and showed the congregation Aaron's body, as reflected by the words

of [Numbers 20:29](#) that “all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead.” (Numbers Rabbah 19:20.)



Moses Fixes the Brazen Serpent on a Pole (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)



The Brazen Serpent (illustration from a Bible card published 1907 by Providence Lithograph Company)

### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 21

The [Gemara](#) deduced that what the King of Arad heard in [Numbers 21:1](#) was that Aaron had died and that the clouds of glory had dispersed, as the previous verse, [Numbers 20:29](#), reports that “all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead.” The King thus concluded that he had received permission to fight the Israelites. ([Babylonian Talmud Rosh Hashanah 3a.](#))

A midrash explained that God punished the Israelites by means of serpents in [Numbers 21:6](#), because the serpent was the first to speak slander in [Genesis 3:4–5](#). God cursed the serpent, but the Israelites did not learn a lesson from the serpent’s fate, and

nonetheless spoke slander. God therefore sent the serpent, who was the first to introduce slander, to punish those who spoke slander. (Numbers Rabbah 19:22.)

The Mishnah taught that the brass serpent of [Numbers 21:8–9](#) effected its miraculous cure because when the Israelites directed their thoughts upward and turned their hearts to God they were healed, but otherwise they perished. (Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 3:8; [Babylonian Talmud Rosh Hashanah 29a.](#))

The [Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael](#) counted 10 songs in the [Tanakh](#): (1) the one that the Israelites recited at the first Passover in Egypt, as [Isaiah 30:29](#) says, “You shall have a song as in the night when a feast is hallowed”; (2) the [Song of the sea](#) in [Exodus 15](#); (3) the one that the Israelites sang at the well in the wilderness, as [Numbers 21:17](#) reports, “Then sang Israel this song: ‘Spring up, O well’”; (4) the one that Moses spoke in his last days, as [Deuteronomy 31:30](#) reports, “Moses spoke in the ears of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song”; (5) the one that Joshua recited, as [Joshua 10:12](#) reports, “Then spoke Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the [Amorites](#)”; (6) the one that [Deborah](#) and [Barak](#) sang, as [Judges 5:1](#) reports, “Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of [Abinoam](#)”; (7) the one that [David](#) spoke, as [2 Samuel 22:1](#) reports, “David spoke to the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of [Saul](#)”; (8) the one that [Solomon](#) recited, as [Psalm 30:1](#) reports, “a song at the Dedication of the [House of David](#)”; (9) the one that [Jehoshaphat](#) recited, as [2 Chronicles 20:21](#) reports: “when he had

taken counsel with the people, he appointed them that should sing to the Lord, and praise in the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and say, ‘Give thanks to the Lord, for His mercy endures for ever’”; and (10) the song that will be sung in the time to come, as [Isaiah 42:10](#) says, “Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise from the end of the earth,” and [Psalm 149:1](#) says, “Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise in the assembly of the saints.” (Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael Shirata 1:5.)

Even though in [Deuteronomy 2:9](#) and [2:19](#), God forbade the Israelites from occupying the territory of Ammon and Moab, [Rav Papa](#) taught that the land of Ammon and Moab that Sihon conquered (as reported in [Numbers 21:26](#)) became purified for acquisition by the Israelites through Sihon’s occupation of it (as discussed in [Judges 11:13–23](#)). ([Babylonian Talmud Gittin 38a](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) Commandments

### [\[edit\]](#) According to Maimonides

[Maimonides](#) cited a verse in the parshah for 1 positive [commandment](#):





Moses Maimonides

- To prepare a red heifer so that its ashes are ready  
([Numbers 19:9.](#))

(Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah, Positive Commandment 113.](#) Cairo, Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 1:125. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4.](#))

### **[edit]** According to Sefer ha-Chinuch

According to [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are 3 positive commandments in the parshah:

- The precept of the red heifer ([Numbers 19:2.](#))
- The precept of the ritual uncleanness of the dead  
([Numbers 19:14.](#))
- The precept of the lustral water, that it defiles a ritually clean person and purifies only one defined by the dead  
([Numbers 19:19.](#))

(*Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 4:159–71. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1988. [ISBN 0-87306-457-7.](#))



Jephtha's Daughter (engraving by Gustave Doré from the 1865  
*La Sainte Bible*)

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah





*The Return of Jephthah* (painting circa 1700–1725 by [Giovanni Antonio Pellegrini](#))

### [\[edit\]](#) Generally

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [Judges 11:1–33](#). Both the parshah and the haftarah involve diplomatic missions about land issues. In the parshah, Moses sent messengers and tried to negotiate passage over the lands of the Edomites and the Amorites of Sihon. ([Numbers 20:14–21](#); [21:21–22](#).) In the haftarah, [Jephthah](#) sent messengers to the Ammonites prior to hostilities over their land. ([Judges 11:12–27](#).) In the course of Jephthah's message to the Ammonites, he recounted the embassies described in the parshah. ([Judges 11:17–20](#); [Numbers 20:14–17](#); [21:21–22](#).) And Jephthah's also recounted the Israelites' victory over the Amorites described in the parshah. ([Judges 11:20–22](#); [Numbers 21:23–31](#).) Both the parshah and the haftarah involve vows. In the parshah, the Israelites vowed that if God delivered the Canaanites of Arad into their hands, then the Israelites would utterly destroy their cities. ([Numbers 21:1–2](#).) In the haftarah, Jephthah vowed that if God would deliver the Ammonites into his hand, then Jephthah would offer as a burnt-offering whatever first came forth out of his house to meet him when he returned. ([Judges 11:30–31](#).) The haftarah concludes just before the verses that report that Jephthah's daughter was first to greet him, proving his vow to have been improvident. ([Judges 11:34–35](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) For parshah Chukat–Balak

When parshah Chukat is combined with parshah Balak (as it is in 2009), the haftarah is the haftarah for Balak, [Micah 5:6–6:8](#).

## [\[edit\]](#) For Shabbat Rosh Chodesh

When parshah Chukat coincides with Shabbat [Rosh Chodesh](#) (as it does in 2011 and 2014), the haftarah is [Isaiah 66:1–24](#).

## [\[edit\]](#) In the liturgy

The people's murmuring and perhaps the rock that yielded water at Meribah of [Numbers 20:3–13](#) are reflected in [Psalm 95](#), which is in turn the first of the six Psalms recited at the beginning of the Kabbalat Shabbat [prayer service](#). (Reuven Hammer. *Or Hadash: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 15. New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2003. [ISBN 0-916219-20-8](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

### [\[edit\]](#) Ancient

- Ritual To Be Followed by the *Kalu*-Priest when Covering the Temple Kettle-Drum. Reprinted in [James B. Pritchard](#), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 334-38. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969. [ISBN 0-691-03503-2](#).

## [\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Exodus 17:2–6](#).
- [Leviticus 14:4–6](#), [49–52](#) (cedar wood, hyssop, and red stuff).
- [Deuteronomy 2:4–8](#), [2:24–3:11](#); [10:6](#).
- [2 Kings 18:4](#) (bronze serpent).
- [Psalm 51:9](#) (purge with hyssop); [78:15–16](#), [20](#), [35](#) (water from rock; they remembered that God was their Rock); [95:8–11](#) (Meribah); [105:2](#) (songs to God); [106:32–33](#) (Meribah); [135:10–12](#) (Sihon); [136:17–22](#) (Sihon).



Josephus

## [\[edit\]](#) Early nonrabbinic

- [Josephus](#), *Antiquities of the Jews* [4:4:5–7](#), [5:1–3](#). Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 107–08. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).

- [Hebrews 9:13–14](#) (red cow); [9:19](#) (scarlet wool and hyssop). Late 1st Century.
- [John 3:14–15](#) (serpent); [19:29](#) (hyssop).

### [\[edit\]](#) Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): Shekalim 4:2; Rosh Hashanah 3:8; Megillah 3:4; Avot 5:6; Zevachim 14:1; Keritot 1:1; Parah 1:1–12:11. Land of Israel, circa 200 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 256, 304, 321, 686, 729, 836, 1012–35. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Demai 31a; Kilayim 82a; Sheviit 47a. Land of Israel, circa 400 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 4–6b. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2006–2009.



Talmud

- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 19b, 23a, 28a, 54a, 58a, 63b](#); [Shabbat 16b, 28a, 48b, 51b–52a, 55b, 58b, 60b, 64a, 83b, 84b, 95b, 97a, 101b, 108a, 109a, 137a](#); [Eruvin 54a](#),

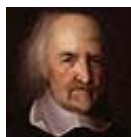
[58a, 64b, 67b; Pesachim 14b, 17b, 26b, 34b, 54a, 56a,](#)  
[65b, 67a, 68a, 70a, 78a, 79a, 92a; Yoma 2a, 4a, 6a, 8a–9a,](#)  
[14a, 41b–43b, 52b, 68a, 75b, 86b; Sukkah 6a, 21a, 25b,](#)  
[37a–b; Beitzah 32a; Rosh Hashanah 3a, 29a, 31a; Taanit](#)  
[9a, 13a; Megillah 6b, 20a, 29a; Moed Katan 5a–b, 7b,](#)  
[14a, 15b, 28a–b; Chagigah 3b, 4b, 11a, 22a–23a;](#)  
[Yevamot 61a, 71b, 72b–73a, 74a, 75a, 116b; Ketubot](#)  
[106a; Nedarim 37a, 55a; Nazir 6b, 19a, 44b–45a, 49b,](#)  
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[62a; Bava Kamma 2b, 25b, 82b, 98a, 101b, 105a; Bava](#)  
[Metzia 10b, 56b, 58a, 78b, 93a, 114b; Bava Batra 17a;](#)  
[Sanhedrin 4a, 5b, 43b, 47b, 77b, 101b, 110a; Makkot 8a,](#)  
[11a, 13a, 14b, 21b; Shevuot 6b, 7b, 11b, 16b, 19a;](#)  
[Avodah Zarah 5b, 23a–b, 29b, 32b, 37b, 44a, 46b;](#)  
[Horayot 9b; Zevachim 14b, 17b, 22b, 25b, 32b, 33b, 40a,](#)  
[43b, 68b, 78b, 80a, 93a–b, 105b, 112a, 113a, 118a;](#)  
[Menachot 6b, 7b, 19a, 27a–b, 51b, 76b; Chullin 2b, 9b,](#)  
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[81b–82a, 88b, 92a, 121a, 124b; Bekhorot 45a, 55a;](#)  
[Arakhin 3a; Temurah 12b; Keritot 2a, 25a; Niddah 5b,](#)  
[9a, 44a, 49a, 55a, 61a.](#) Babylonia, 6th Century. Reprinted  
 in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr,  
 Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols.  
 Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.



Rashi

## [[edit](#)] Medieval

- [Avot of Rabbi Natan](#), 12:1; 29:7; 34:6; 36:4. Circa 700–900 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*. Translated by Judah Goldin, 64, 120, 139, 150. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1955. [ISBN 0-300-00497-4](#). *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan: An Analytical Translation and Explanation*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 89, 179, 205, 217. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986. [ISBN 1-55540-073-6](#).
- [Rashi](#). *Commentary*. [Numbers 19–22](#). [Troyes](#), France, late 11th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 4:225–68. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1997. [ISBN 0-89906-029-3](#).
- [Judah Halevi](#). *Kuzari*. [3:53](#). [Toledo](#), Spain, 1130–1140. Reprinted in, e.g., Jehuda Halevi. *Kuzari: An Argument for the Faith of Israel*. Intro. by Henry Slonimsky, 181. New York: Schocken, 1964. [ISBN 0-8052-0075-4](#).



Hobbes

- [Numbers Rabbah](#) 19:1–33. 12th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Numbers*. Translated by Judah J. Slotki. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Ecclesiastes Rabbah](#) 7:23
- [Zohar 3:179a–184b](#). Spain, late 13th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Zohar*. Translated by Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon. 5 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1934.

### [[edit](#)] Modern

- [Thomas Hobbes](#). *Leviathan*, [3:33](#); [4:45](#). England, 1651. Reprint edited by [C. B. Macpherson](#), 417, 675–76. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1982. [ISBN 0140431950](#).



Hirsch

- [Samson Raphael Hirsch](#). *Horeb: A Philosophy of Jewish Laws and Observances*. Translated by Isidore Grunfeld, 514, 574, 582. London: Soncino Press, 1962. Reprinted 2002 [ISBN 0-900689-40-4](#). Originally published as *Horeb, Versuche über Jissroel's Pflichten in der Zerstreuung*. Germany, 1837.
- [Emily Dickinson](#). [Poem 168 \(If the foolish, call them "flowers" —\)](#). Circa 1860. [Poem 597 \(It always felt to me — a wrong\)](#). Circa 1862. In *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Edited by Thomas H. Johnson, 79–80, 293–94. New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1960. [ISBN 0-316-18414-4](#).
- [Jacob Milgrom](#). “Magic, Monotheism, and the Sin of Moses.” In *The Quest for the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of George E. Mendenhall*. Edited by H. B. Huffmon, F.A. Spina, A.R.W. Green, 251–265. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983. [ISBN 0931464153](#).
- Jacob Milgrom. *The JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, 157–84, 438–67. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990. [ISBN 0-8276-0329-0](#).



Dickinson



- [Mary Douglas](#). *In the Wilderness: The Doctrine of Defilement in the Book of Numbers*, xix, xxvi, 87, 100, 110, 112, 120–21, 123, 126, 130, 140–41, 147, 150, 159, 164, 166–67, 170, 188, 190–92, 199, 207–08, 211, 213, 215–16, 221, 226. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. Reprinted 2004. [ISBN 0-19-924541-X](#).
- Baruch A. Levine. *Numbers 1–20*, 4:455–95. New York: [Anchor Bible](#), 1993. [ISBN 0-385-15651-0](#).
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- William H.C. Propp. “Why Moses Could Not Enter The Promised Land.” [Bible Review](#). 14 (3) (June 1998).
- Baruch A. Levine. *Numbers 21–36*, 4A:77–133. New York: [Anchor Bible](#), 2000. [ISBN 0-385-41256-8](#).
- Suzanne A. Brody. “Listen You Rebels.” In *Dancing in the White Spaces: The Yearly Torah Cycle and More Poems*, 98. Shelbyville, Kentucky: Wasteland Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-60047-112-9](#).

- [Hershel Shanks](#). “The Mystery of the Nechushtan: Why Did King Hezekiah of Judah Destroy the Bronze Serpent that Moses Had Fashioned To Protect the Israelites.” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 33 (2) (Mar./Apr. 2007): 58–63.
- [Sara Paretsky](#). *Bleeding Kansas*. New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 2008. [ISBN 978-0-399-15405-8](#). (red heifer plot element).

## [\[edit\]](#) External links

### [\[edit\]](#) Texts

- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)

### [\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)
- [Aish.com](#)
- [American Jewish University](#)
- [Anshe Emes Synagogue, Los Angeles](#)

- [Chabad.org](http://Chabad.org)
- [Department for Jewish Zionist Education](http://Department for Jewish Zionist Education)
- [eparsha.com](http://eparsha.com)
- [Jewish Theological Seminary](http://Jewish Theological Seminary)
- [MyJewishLearning.com](http://MyJewishLearning.com)
- [Ohr Sameach](http://Ohr Sameach)
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- [OzTorah, Torah from Australia](http://OzTorah, Torah from Australia)
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## Balak (parsha)

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**Balak** (בָּלָק — [Hebrew](#) for “Balak,” a name, the second word, and the first distinctive word, in the parshah) is the 40th [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the seventh in the [book of Numbers](#). It constitutes [Numbers 22:2–25:9](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) generally read it in late June or July.

The [lunisolar Hebrew calendar](#) contains up to 55 [weeks](#), the exact number varying among years. In most years (for example, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015 ), parshah Balak is read separately. In some years (for example, 2009), parshah Balak is combined with the previous parshah, [Chukat](#), to help achieve the appropriate number of weekly readings.



Coastal Landscape with Balaam and the Ass (1636 painting by [Bartholomeus Breenbergh](#))

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## [\[edit\]](#) Summary



Balaam Receiving Balak's Messengers (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

## [\[edit\]](#) Balak's invitation to Balaam



Balaam and the Angel (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

[Balak](#) son of Zippor, [king](#) of [Moab](#), grew alarmed at the [Israelites'](#) military victories among the [Amorites](#). ([Numbers 22:2–4](#).) He consulted with the elders of [Midian](#) and sent elders of Moab and Midian to the land by the [Euphrates](#) to invite the [prophet Balaam](#) to come and curse the Israelites for him. ([Numbers 22:4–7](#).)

Balaam told them: “Spend the night here, and I shall reply to you as the Lord may instruct me.” ([Numbers 22:8](#).) [God](#) came to Balaam and said: “You must not curse that people, for they are blessed.” ([Numbers 22:9–12](#).) In the morning, Balaam asked Balak’s dignitaries to leave, as God would not let him go with them, and they left and reported Balaam’s answer to Balak. ([Numbers 22:13–14](#).) Then Balak sent more numerous and distinguished dignitaries, who offered Balaam rich rewards in return for damning the Israelites. ([Numbers 22:15–17](#).) But Balaam replied: “Though Balak were to give me his house full of

[silver](#) and [gold](#), I could not do anything, big or little, contrary to the command of the Lord my God.” ([Numbers 22:18.](#))

Nonetheless, Balaam invited the dignitaries to stay overnight to let Balaam find out what else God might say to him, and that night God told Balaam: “If these men have come to invite you, you may go with them.” ([Numbers 22:19–20.](#))



Balaam and the Ass (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))



Balaam and the Angel (1836 painting by Gustav Jaeger)

### **[[edit](#)] Balaam and the donkey**

In the morning, Balaam saddled his [donkey](#) and departed with the dignitaries, but God was incensed at his going and placed an [angel](#) in Balaam's way. ([Numbers 22:21–22.](#)) When the donkey saw the angel standing in the way holding his drawn [sword](#), the donkey swerved from the [road](#) into the fields, and Balaam beat the ass to turn her back onto the road. ([Numbers 22:23.](#)) The angel then stationed himself in a lane with a [fence](#) on either side. ([Numbers 22:24.](#)) Seeing the angel, the donkey pressed herself and Balaam's foot against the wall, so he beat her again. ([Numbers 22:25.](#)) The angel then stationed himself on a narrow spot that allowed no room to swerve right or left, and the donkey lay down under Balaam, and Balaam became furious and beat the ass with his stick. ([Numbers 22:26–27.](#)) Then God allowed the

donkey to speak, and she complained to Balaam. ([Numbers 22:28–30.](#)) And then God allowed Balaam to see the angel, and Balaam bowed down to the ground. ([Numbers 22:31.](#)) The angel questioned Balaam for beating his donkey, noting that she had saved Balaam’s life. ([Numbers 22:32–33.](#)) Balaam admitted his error and offered to turn back if the angel still disapproved. ([Numbers 22:34.](#)) But the angel told Balaam: “Go with the men. But you must say nothing except what I tell you.” So Balaam went on. ([Numbers 22:35.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) **Balaam’s blessing**



Balaam Blessing the Israelites (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

Balak went out to meet Balaam on the [Arnon](#) border, and asked him why he didn't come earlier. ([Numbers 22:36–37.](#)) But Balaam told Balak that he could utter only the words that God put into his mouth. ([Numbers 22:38.](#)) They went together to Kiriath-huzoth, where Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep, and they ate. ([Numbers 22:39–40.](#)) In the morning, Balak took Balaam up to [Bamoth-Baal](#), overlooking the Israelites. ([Numbers 22:41.](#)) Balaam had Balak build seven [altars](#), and they offered up a bull and a ram on each altar. ([Numbers 23:1–2.](#)) Then Balaam asked Balak to wait while Balaam went off alone to see if God would grant him a manifestation. ([Numbers 23:3.](#)) God appeared to Balaam and told him what to say. ([Numbers 23:4–5.](#))

Balaam returned and said: “How can I damn whom God has not damned, how doom when the Lord has not doomed? . . . Who can count the dust of Jacob, number the dust-cloud of Israel? May I die the death of the upright, may my fate be like theirs!” ([Numbers 23:6–10.](#)) Balak complained that he had brought Balaam to damn the Israelites, but instead Balaam blessed them. ([Numbers 23:11.](#)) Balaam replied that he could only repeat what God put in his mouth. ([Numbers 23:12.](#))



[Baal](#) (14th-12th century B.C.E. bronze figurine from [Ugarit](#))

Then Balak took Balaam to the summit of [Pisgah](#), once offered a bull and a ram on each of seven altars, and once again Balaam asked Balak to wait while Balaam went off alone to seek a manifestation, and once again God told him what to say.

([Numbers 23:13–16.](#)) Balaam returned and told Balak: “My message was to bless: When He blesses, I cannot reverse it. No harm is in sight for Jacob, no woe in view for Israel. The Lord their God is with them.” ([Numbers 23:17–21.](#)) Then Balak told Balaam at least not to bless them, but Balaam replied that he had to do whatever God directed. ([Numbers 23:25–26.](#))

Then Balak took Balaam to the peak of [Peor](#), and once offered a bull and a ram on each of seven altars. ([Numbers 23:27–30.](#))

Balaam, seeing that it pleased God to bless Israel, immediately

turned to the Israelites and blessed them: “How fair are your tents, O Jacob, your dwellings, O Israel! . . . They shall devour enemy nations, crush their bones, and smash their arrows. . . . Blessed are they who bless you, accursed they who curse you!” ([Numbers 24:1–9.](#)) Enraged, Balak complained and dismissed Balaam. ([Numbers 24:10–11.](#)) Balaam replied once again that he could not do contrary to God’s command, and blessed Israelites once again, saying: “A [scepter](#) comes forth from Israel; it smashes the brow of Moab.” ([Numbers 24:11–24.](#)) Then Balaam set out back home, and Balak went his way. ([Numbers 24:25.](#))

### **[[edit](#)] The sin of Baal-peor**

While the Israelites stayed at [Shittim](#), the people went whoring with the Moabite women and worshiped their god [Baal-peor](#), enraging God. ([Numbers 25:1–3.](#)) God told Moses to impale the ringleaders, and Moses directed Israel’s officials to slay those who had attached themselves to Baal-peor. ([Numbers 25:4–5.](#)) When one of the Israelites publicly brought a Midianite woman over to his companions, [Phinehas](#) son of [Eleazar](#) took a [spear](#), followed the Israelite into the chamber, and stabbed the Israelite and the woman through the belly. ([Numbers 25:6–8.](#)) Then the plague against the Israelites was checked, having killed 24,000. ([Numbers 25:8–9.](#))



## [\[edit\]](#) In inner-Biblical interpretation

### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 22

[Micah 6:5](#) says that Balak consulted Balaam and Balaam advised him.

### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 24

[Psalm 1:3](#) interprets the words “cedars beside the waters” in Balaam’s blessing in [Numbers 24:6](#). According to [Psalm 1:3](#), “a tree planted by streams of water” is one “that brings forth its fruit in its season, and whose leaf does not wither.”

### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 25

[Numbers 31:16](#) reports that Balaam counseled the Israelites to break faith with God in the sin of Baal-Peor.

[Joshua 13:22](#) states that the Israelites killed Balaam during war.

## [\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 22



Balaam and the Angel (illustration from the 1493 [Nuremberg Chronicle](#))

Classical Rabbinic interpretation viewed Balaam unfavorably. The [Mishnah](#) taught that Balaam was one of four commoners who have no portion in the world to come, along with [Doeg](#), [Ahitophel](#), and [Gehazi](#). ([Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:2](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 90a.](#)) Following the teaching of [Rabbi Joshua](#), the [Gemara](#) deduced from the Mishnah’s statement that the gentile Balaam would not enter the world to come that other gentiles would do so. The Gemara read Balaam’s name to demonstrate that he was “without a people” (*belo am*). Alternatively, the Gemara read Balaam’s name to demonstrate that he “confused a people” (*bilah am*), namely the Israelites. Noting the similarity of Balaam’s father name Beor to the

[Aramaic](#) word for “beast” (*be’ir*), the Gemara read the allusion to Balaam’s father in [Numbers 22:5](#) to demonstrate that Balaam committed bestiality. A [Tanna](#) taught that Beor was the same person as Cushan-rishathaim and [Laban](#). As *rishathaim* means “two evils,” the Tanna deduced from the name Cushan-rishathaim that Beor perpetrated two evils on Israel — one in pursuing Jacob in [Genesis 31:23-29](#) and the other by oppressing the Jews in [Judges 3:8](#). Noting that [Numbers 22:5](#) calls Balaam “the son of Beor” while [Numbers 24:3](#) says of Balaam “his son [was] Beor,” [Rabbi Johanan](#) deduced that Balaam’s father Beor was like his son (less able) in matters of prophecy. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 105a.](#))



Balaam and the Angel (illustration from the 13th Century [Psalter of Louis IX of France](#))

Interpreting the words, “And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed,” in [Numbers 22:7](#) a Tanna taught that there never was peace between Midian and Moab, comparing them to two dogs in a kernel that always fought each other. Then a wolf attacked one, and the other concluded that if he did not help the first, then the wolf would attack the second tomorrow. So they joined to fight the wolf. And [Rav Papa](#) likened the cooperation of Moab and Midian to the saying: “The weasel and cat had a feast on the fat of the luckless.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 105a.](#))

Noting that [Numbers 22:8](#) makes no mention of the princes of Midian, the Gemara deduced that they despaired as soon as Balaam told them (in [Numbers 22:8](#)) that he would listen to God’s instructions, for they reasoned that God would not curse Israel any more than a father would hate his son. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 105a.](#))

Noting that in [Numbers 22:12](#) God told Balaam, “You shall not go with them,” yet in [Numbers 22:20](#), after Balaam impudently asked God a second time, God told Balaam, “Rise up and go with them,” [Rav Nachman](#) concluded that impudence, even in the face of Heaven, sometimes brings results. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 105a.](#))



Balaam and the Ass (1626 painting by [Rembrandt](#))

The Rabbis taught that God appears to non-Jews only in dreams, as God appeared to Balaam “at night” in [Numbers 22:20](#), God appeared to [Abimelech](#) “in a dream of the night” in [Genesis 20:3](#), and God appeared to [Laban](#) the “in a dream of the night” in [Genesis 31:24](#). The Rabbis taught that God thus appeared more openly to the prophets of Israel than to those of other nations. The Rabbis compared God’s action to those of a king who has both a wife and a [concubine](#); to his wife he goes openly, but to his concubine he goes stealthily. ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 52:5.)

A Tanna taught in the name of Rabbi Simeon ben Eleazar that intense love and hate can cause one to disregard the perquisites of one's social position. The Tanna deduced that love may do so from Abraham, for [Genesis 22:3](#) reports that "Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his donkey," rather than allow his servant to do so. Similarly, the Tanna deduced that hate may do so from Balaam, for [Numbers 22:21](#) reports that "Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his donkey," rather than allow his servant to do so. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 105b.](#))

Expanding on [Numbers 22:30](#), the Gemara reported a conversation among Balak's emissaries, Balaam, and Balaam's donkey. Balak's emissaries asked Balaam, "Why didn't you ride your horse?"

Balaam replied, "I have put it out to pasture."

But Balaam's donkey asked Balaam (in the words of [Numbers 22:30](#)), "Am I not your donkey?"

Balaam replied, "Merely for carrying loads."

Balaam's donkey said (in the words of [Numbers 22:30](#)), "Upon which you have ridden."

Balaam replied, "That was only by chance."

Balaam's donkey insisted (in the words of [Numbers 22:30](#)), "Ever since I was yours until this day." ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 105b.](#))



Balaam and the Angel (illustration from a 14th century Spanish Bible (*Biblia romanceada escorialense*))

## [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 23

Rabbi Johanan deduced from the words “and he walked haltingly” in [Numbers 23:3](#) that Balaam was disabled in one leg. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 105a.](#))

Rabbi Johanan interpreted the words "And the Lord put a word (or 'a thing') in Balaam's mouth" in [Numbers 23:5](#) to indicate that God put a hook in Balaam's mouth, playing Balaam like a fish. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 105b.](#)) Similarly, a midrash taught that God controlled Balaam's mouth as a person who puts a bit into the mouth of a beast and makes it go in the direction the person pleases. (Numbers Rabbah 20:20.)

Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani interpreted the words “that the Lord your God shall keep for you” in [Deuteronomy 7:12](#), teaching that all the good that Israel enjoys in this world results from the blessings with which Balaam blessed Israel, but the blessings with

which the [Patriarchs](#) blessed Israel are reserved for the time to come, as signified by the words, “that the Lord your God shall keep for you.” ([Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 3:4.)

The Gemara interpreted the words “knowing the mind of the most High” in [Numbers 24:16](#) to mean that Balaam knew how to tell the exact moment when God was angry. The Gemara taught that this was related to what [Micah](#) meant (in [Micah 6:5](#), in the haftarah for the parshah) when he told the Israelites (quoting God): “O My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him; . . . that you may know the righteous acts of the Lord.” The Gemara taught that by the words “that you may know the righteous acts of the Lord,” God meant to say to the Israelites, “You should know how many acts of charity I performed for you, in that I did not become angry all that time, in the days of wicked Balaam; for had I become angry at that time, no Israelite would have remained alive or been spared.” And the Gemara indicated that this is why Balaam told Balak in [Numbers 23:8](#), “How can I curse whom God has not cursed? or how shall I become angry, when the Lord has not become angry?” For Balaam knew that God was not angry at the Israelites. The Gemara thus concluded that for all of the time of the Balaam story, God had not been angry. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 105b](#); see also [Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 7a](#) (attributing the interpretation of [Micah 6:5](#) to [Rabbi Eleazar](#).)

The Gemara interpreted Balaam’s words, “Let me die the death of the righteous,” in [Numbers 23:10](#) to foretell that he would not



enter the world to come. The Gemara interpreted those words to mean that if Balaam died a natural death like the righteous, then his end would be like that of the Jewish people, but if he died a violent death, then he would go to the same fate as the wicked. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 105a.](#))

### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 24

The Gemara deduced from the words “the man whose eye is open” in [Numbers 24:3](#), which refer to only one open eye, that Balaam was blind in one eye. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 105a.](#))



Moab Leads Israel into Sin (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 25

Rabbi Johanan taught that wherever Scripture uses the term “And he abode” (*vayeshev*), as it does in [Numbers 25:1](#), it presages trouble. Thus in [Numbers 25:1](#), “And Israel abode in Shittim” is followed by “and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.” In [Genesis 37:1](#), “And Jacob dwelt in

the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan,” is followed by [Genesis 37:3](#), “and Joseph brought to his father their evil report.” In [Genesis 47:27](#), “And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen,” is followed by [Genesis 47:29](#), “And the time drew near that Israel must die.” In [1 Kings 5:5](#), “And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree,” is followed by [1 Kings 11:14](#), “And the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was the king’s seed in Edom.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 106a.](#))

[Rabbah bar bar Hana](#) said in Rabbi Johanan's name that had Zimri withdrawn from Cozbi and Phinehas still killed him, Phinehas would have been liable to execution for murder, and had Zimri killed Phinehas in self-defense, he would not have been liable to execution for murder, as Phinehas was a pursuer seeking to take Zimri’s life. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 82a.](#))

The Gemara related what took place after, as [Numbers 25:5](#) reports, “Moses said to the judges of Israel: ‘Slay everyone his men who have joined themselves to the Baal of Peor.’” The tribe of Simeon went to Zimri complaining that capital punishment was being meted out while he sat silently. So Zimri assembled 24,000 Israelites and went to Cozbi and demanded that she surrender herself to him. She replied that she was a king’s daughter and her father had instructed her not to submit to any but to the greatest of men. Zimri replied that he was the prince of a tribe and that his tribe was greater than that of Moses, for [Simeon](#) was second in birth, while [Levi](#) was third. Zimri then

seized Cozbi by her hair and brought her before Moses. Zimri demanded that Moses rule whether Cozbi was forbidden or permitted to Zimri. Zimri continued that if Moses were to say that Cozbi was forbidden to Zimri, then who permitted Moses to marry the Midianite woman [Zipporah](#)? At that moment, Moses forgot the law governing intimacy with an idolatrous woman, and all the people burst into tears, as [Numbers 25:6](#) reports when it says, “they were weeping at the door of the tent of meeting.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 82a](#).)

Interpreting the words, “And Phineas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it,” in [Numbers 25:6](#), the Gemara asked what Phineas saw. [Rav](#) said that Phineas saw what was happening and remembered the law governing intimacy with an idolatrous woman, and asked Moses whether he had not taught that zealots may punish one who cohabits with an idolatrous woman. Moses replied that he who reads the letter should be the agent to carry out its instructions. Alternatively, [Samuel](#) said that Phineas saw that (in the words of [Proverbs 21:30](#)) “There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord,” which he interpreted to mean that whenever the Divine Name is being profaned, one may relax the general principle that one must defer to one's teacher — the giver of wisdom — and go ahead to make a legal decision in the presence of one's teacher. Rabbi Isaac said in Rabbi Eleazar's name that Phineas saw the Angel of Death wreaking destruction among the people, and (in the words of [Numbers 25:6](#)) “he rose up out of the midst of the congregation, and took a spear in his hand.” Thus, Phineas must not have had

his spear when he sat among the congregation, and from this we learn that one may not enter a house of learning with weapons.

[\(Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 82a.\)](#)

The Gemara taught that Phineas then removed the point of the spear and hid it in his clothes, and went along leaning upon the shaft of the spear as a walking stick. When he reached the tribe of Simeon, he asked why the tribe of Levi should not have the moral standards of the tribe of Simeon. Thereupon the Simeonites allowed him to pass through, saying that he had come to satisfy his lust. The Simeonites concluded that even the abstainers had then declared cohabiting with Midianite women permissible.

[\(Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 82a–b.\)](#)

Rabbi Johanan taught that Phineas was able to accomplish his act of zealotry only because God performed six miracles: First, upon hearing Phineas's warning, Zimri should have withdrawn from Cozbi and ended his transgression, but he did not. Second, Zimri should have cried out for help from his fellow [Simeonites](#), but he did not. Third, Phineas was able to drive his spear exactly through the sexual organs of Zimri and Cozbi as they were engaged in the act. Fourth, Zimri and Cozbi did not slip off the spear, but remained fixed so that others could witness their transgression. Fifth, an angel came and lifted up the lintel so that Phineas could exit holding the spear. And sixth, an angel came and sowed destruction among the people, distracting the Simeonites from killing Phineas. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 82b.](#))

The interpreters of Scripture by symbol taught that the deeds of Phinehas explained why [Deuteronomy 18:3](#) directed that the priests were to receive the foreleg, cheeks, and stomach of sacrifices. The foreleg represented the hand of Phinehas, as [Numbers 25:7](#) reports that Phinehas “took a spear in his hand.” The cheeks’ represent the prayer of Phinehas, as [Psalm 106:30](#) reports, “Then Phinehas stood up and prayed, and so the plague was stayed.” The stomach was to be taken in its literal sense, for [Numbers 25:8](#) reports that Phinehas “thrust . . . the woman through her belly.” ([Babylonian Talmud Chullin 134b](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) Commandments



Micah (18th century [Russian Orthodox icon](#) in the [Kizhi monastery](#), in [Karelia, Russia](#))

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are no [commandments](#) in the parshah. (Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#). [Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 2 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*.

Translated by Charles Wengrov, 4:171. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1988. [ISBN 0-87306-457-7](#).)

## **[[edit](#)] Haftarah**

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [Micah 5:6–6:8](#). When parshah Balak is combined with parshah Chukat, the haftarah remains the haftarah for Balak.

In the haftarah in [Micah 6:5](#), Micah quotes God’s admonition to the Israelites to recall the events of the parshah, to “remember now what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him.” The verb that the haftarah uses for “answer” (*‘anah*) in [Micah 6:5](#) is a variation of the same verb that the parshah uses to describe Balaam’s “answer” (*vaya’an*) to Balaak in the parshah in [Numbers 22:18](#) and [23:12](#). And the first words of Balaam’s blessing of Israel in [Numbers 24:5](#), “how goodly” (*ma tov*), are echoed in the haftarah’s admonition in [Micah 6:8](#) of “what is good” (*ma tov*) in God’s sight, namely “to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”

## [\[edit\]](#) In the liturgy



A page from a 14th century German Haggadah

Some Jews read about how the donkey opened its mouth to speak to Balaam in [Numbers 22:28](#) as they study [Pirkei Avot chapter 5](#) on a Sabbath between [Passover](#) and [Rosh Hashanah](#). (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals with an Interlinear Translation*, 571. Brooklyn: [Mesorah Publications](#), 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-697-3](#).)

The [Passover Haggadah](#), in the concluding *nirtzah* section of the [Seder](#), quotes the words “who can count them” from [Numbers 23:10](#) to invoke blessing on the Jewish people. (Menachem Davis. *The Interlinear Haggadah: The Passover Haggadah, with an Interlinear Translation, Instructions and Comments*, 107. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2005. [ISBN 1-57819-064-9](#).)

Balaam’s blessing of Israel in [Numbers 24:5](#) constitutes the first line of the [Ma Tovu](#) prayer often said upon entering a [synagogue](#) or at the beginning of morning services. These words are the only prayer in the [siddur](#) attributed to a non-Jew. ([Reuven Hammer](#).



*Or Hadasb: A Commentary on [Siddur Sim Shalom](#) for Shabbat and Festivals*, 61. New York: The [Rabbinical Assembly](#), 2003. [ISBN 0-916219-20-8](#). See also Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 192. Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for Weekdays with an Interlinear Translation*, 14. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-686-8](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) The Weekly Maqam

In [the Weekly Maqam](#), [Sephardi Jews](#) each week base the songs of the services on the content of that week's parshah. For parshah Balak, Sephardi Jews apply Maqam Mahour, the maqam that portrays emotional instability and anger. This maqam is similar to Maqam Rast in tune, except that it is higher in key. It is appropriate, because in this parshah, Balak became angered as the curses of Balaam were turning into blessings.

## [\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

### [\[edit\]](#) Ancient

- [Gildas Hamel, The Deir 'Alla Inscription](#). See also Jo Ann Hackett, *Balaam Text from [Deir 'Alla](#)*. Chico, Cal.: Scholars Press, 1984. And see also J. Hoftijzer & G. van der Kooij, *The Balaam Text from Deir `Alla Re-evaluated: Proceedings of the International Symposium Held at Leiden, 21–24 August 1989*. New York: E.J. Brill, 1991.

## [\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Genesis 3:1–14](#) (talking animal); [22:3](#) (rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him).
- [Exodus 32:1–35](#) (sacrifices to another god; zealots kill apostates; zealots rewarded with priestly standing; plague as punishment; leader makes atonement); [34:15–16](#) (foreign women and apostasy).
- [Numbers 31:6–18](#) (Balaam; Phinehas, war with Midian).



## Jeremiah

- [Deuteronomy 4:3](#) (Baal Peor); [23:4–7](#) (Balaam).
- [Joshua 13:22](#) (Balaam the son of Beor the sorcerer); [22:16–18](#) (Baal Peor); [24:9–10](#).
- [Jeremiah 30:18](#) (tents, dwellings).
- [Hosea 9:10](#) (Baal Peor).
- [Micah 6:5](#) (Balaam).
- [Nehemiah 13:1–2](#).

- [Psalms 1:3](#) (like a tree planted); [31:19](#) (lying lips be dumb); [33:10–11](#) (God brings the counsel of the nations to nothing); [49:17–18](#) (disregard for the wealth of this world); [78:2](#) (speaking a parable); [98:6](#) (shout); [106:28–31](#) (Baal Peor); [110:2](#) (rod out of Zion); [116:15](#) (precious to God the death of God’s servants).

### [[edit](#)] Early nonrabbinic

- [1 Maccabees chs. 1–16](#). (parallel to Phinehas).
- [4 Maccabees 18:12](#).
- Instruction for Catechumens, and A Prayer of Praise of God for His Greatness, and for His Appointment of Leaders for His People. In “Hellenistic Synagogal Prayers,” in [James H. Charlesworth](#). *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:687–88. New York: Doubleday, 1985. [ISBN 0-385-18813-7](#).



Josephus

- [Pseudo-Philo 18:1–14; 28:1–4](#).
- [Josephus](#), *Antiquities of the Jews* 6:1–7. Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and*

*Unabridged, New Updated Edition.* Translated by [William Whiston](#), 108–10. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).

- [Matthew 2:1–12](#). (See also R.E. Brown, “The Balaam Narrative,” *The Birth of the Messiah*, 190–96. Garden City, N.Y., 1977.)
- [2 Peter 2:15](#) (Balaam).
- [Jude 1:11](#) (Balaam).
- [Revelation 2:14](#) (Balaam).

#### **[[edit](#)] Classical rabbinic**

- [Mishnah](#): Sanhedrin 9:6; 10:2; Avot 5:6, 19. Land of Israel, circa 200 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 604, 686, 689. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).



#### **Talmud**

- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Maaser Sheni 44b. Land of Israel, circa 400 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*.

Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vol. 10. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006–2009.

- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 7a, 12b, 16a, 38a](#); [Shabbat 64a, 105a](#); [Pesachim 54a, 111a](#); [Rosh Hashanah 11a, 32b](#); [Ta'anit 20a](#); [Chagigah 2a](#); [Nedarim 32a, 81a](#); [Nazir 23b](#); [Sotah 10a, 11a, 14a, 41b, 43a, 46b, 47a](#); [Gittin 68b](#); [Kiddushin 4a](#); [Bava Kamma 38a](#); [Bava Batra 14b, 60a, 109b](#); [Sanhedrin 34b–35a, 39b, 40b, 44a, 56a, 64a, 82a, 92a, 93b, 105a–06a](#); [Makkot 10b](#); [Avodah Zarah 4b, 25a, 44b](#); [Horayot 10b](#); [Menachot 66b](#); [Chullin 19b, 35b, 134b](#); [Bekhorot 5b](#); [Keritot 22a](#); [Niddah 19b, 31a, 55b](#).  
Babylonia, 6th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*.  
Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

## [\[edit\]](#) Medieval



### Rashi

- [Solomon ibn Gabirol](#). *A Crown for the King*, [36:493](#). Spain, 11th century. Translated by David R. Slavitt, 66–67. New

York: Oxford University Press, 1998. [ISBN 0-19-511962-2](#).

- [Rashi](#). *Commentary*. [Numbers 22–25](#). Troyes, France, late 11th century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 4:269–317. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1997. [ISBN 0-89906-029-3](#).
- [Judah Halevi](#). *Kuzari*. [1:115](#). Toledo, Spain, 1130–1140. Reprinted in, e.g., Jehuda Halevi. *Kuzari: An Argument for the Faith of Israel*. Intro. by Henry Slonimsky, 80. New York: Schocken, 1964. [ISBN 0-8052-0075-4](#).
- [Numbers Rabbah](#) 20:1–25. 12th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Numbers*. Translated by Judah J. Slotki. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Zohar 3:184b–212b](#). Spain, late 13th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Zohar*. Translated by Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon. 5 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1934.



Hobbes

## **[edit] Modern**

- [Thomas Hobbes](#). [Leviathan](#), [Review & Conclusion](#).  
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**[[edit](#)] See also**

- [Balaam in Hellenistic literature](#)
- [Islamic view of Balaam](#)



## [\[edit\]](#) External links

### [\[edit\]](#) Texts

- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)

### [\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)
- [Aish.com](#)
- [American Jewish University](#)
- [Anshe Emes Synagogue, Los Angeles](#)
- [Chabad.org](#)
- [Department for Jewish Zionist Education](#)
- [eparsha.com](#)
- [Jewish Theological Seminary](#)
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- [Orthodox Union](#)
- [OzTorah, Torah from Australia](#)
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# Pinchas (parsha)

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*This article is about the weekly Torah portion. For other uses for **Pinhas**, see [Pinhas \(disambiguation\)](#).*

**Pinchas**, **Pinhas**, or **Pin'has** (פִּנְחָס — [Hebrew](#) for “[Phinehas](#),” a name, the sixth word, and the first distinctive word, in the parshah) is the 41st [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the eighth in the [book of Numbers](#). It constitutes [Numbers 25:10–30:1](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) generally read it in late June or July.

As the parshah sets out laws for the [Jewish holidays](#), Jews also read parts of the parshah as Torah readings for many Jewish holidays. [Numbers 28:1–15](#) is the Torah reading for [Rosh Chodesh](#) on a weekday (including when the sixth or seventh day of [Hanukkah](#) falls on Rosh Chodesh). [Numbers 28:9–15](#) is the [maftir](#) Torah reading for Shabbat Rosh Chodesh. [Numbers 28:16–25](#) is the maftir Torah reading for the first two days of [Passover](#). [Numbers 28:19–25](#) is the maftir Torah reading for the intermediate days (*chol hamoed*) and seventh and eighth days of Passover. [Numbers 28:26–31](#) is the maftir Torah reading for each day of [Shavuot](#). [Numbers 29:1–6](#) is the maftir Torah reading for each day of [Rosh Hashanah](#). [Numbers 29:7–11](#) is the maftir Torah reading for the [Yom Kippur](#) morning (*Shacharit*) service. [Numbers 29:12–16](#) is the maftir Torah reading for the first two

days of [Sukkot](#). [Numbers 29:17–25](#) is the Torah reading for the first intermediate day of Sukkot. [Numbers 29:20–28](#) is the Torah reading for the second intermediate day of Sukkot. [Numbers 29:23–31](#) is the Torah reading for the third intermediate day of Sukkot. [Numbers 29:26–34](#) is the Torah reading for the fourth intermediate day of Sukkot, as well as for [Hoshana Rabbah](#). And [Numbers 29:35–30:1](#) is the maftir Torah reading for both [Shemini Atzeret](#) and [Simchat Torah](#).



Moses Sees the Promised Land from Afar (watercolor circa  
1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))



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[[edit](#)] Summary

[[edit](#)] After the sin of Baal-Peor

[God](#) announced that because Phinehas had displayed his passion for God, God granted Phinehas God’s pact of friendship and [priesthood](#) for all time. ([Numbers 25:10–13](#).) God then told [Moses](#) to attack the [Midianites](#) to repay them for their trickery luring [Israelite](#) men to worship Baal-Peor. ([Numbers 25:16–18](#).)

[[edi](#)

Population Change Between the Two Censuses					
Ano ther cens us  God instr ucte d  Mos es and  <a href="#">Elea zar</a>  to take a	Tribe	<a href="#">Numbers 1</a>	<a href="#">Numbers 26</a>	Change	% Change
	Manasseh	32,200	52,700	+20,500	+63.7
	Benjamin	35,400	45,600	+10,200	+28.8
	Asher	41,500	53,400	+11,900	+28.7
	Issachar	54,400	64,300	+9,900	+18.2
	Zebulun	57,400	60,500	+3,100	+5.4
	Dan	62,700	64,400	+1,700	+2.7
	Judah	74,600	76,500	+1,900	+2.5
	Reuben	46,500	43,730	-2,770	-6.0
	Gad	45,650	40,500	-5,150	-11.3
<a href="#">Elea zar</a>  to take a	Naphtali	53,400	45,400	-8,000	-15.0
	Ephraim	40,500	32,500	-8,000	-19.8
	Simeon	59,300	22,200	-37,100	-62.6
Totals		603,550	601,730	-1,820	-0.3

[census](#) of Israelite men 20 years old and up, and Moses and Eleazar ordered it done. ([Numbers 26:1–4](#).) The census showed the following [populations](#) by [tribe](#) ([Numbers 26:4–51](#)):



The Numbering of the Israelites (19th century engraving by [Henri Félix Emmanuel Philippoteaux](#))

- [Reuben](#): 43,730
- [Simeon](#): 22,200
- [Gad](#): 40,500
- [Judah](#): 76,500
- [Issachar](#): 64,300
- [Zebulun](#): 60,500
- [Manasseh](#): 52,700
- [Ephraim](#): 32,500

- [Benjamin](#): 45,600
- [Dan](#): 64,400
- [Asher](#): 53,400
- [Naphtali](#): 45,400

totaling 601,730 in all.

The text notes parenthetically that when [Korah](#)'s band agitated against God, the earth swallowed them up with Korah, but Korah's sons did not die. ([Numbers 26:9–11.](#)) God told Moses to apportion shares of the land according to population among those counted, and by lot. ([Numbers 26:52–56.](#)) The [Levite](#) men aged a month old and up amounted to 23,000, and they were not included in the regular enrollment of Israelites, as they were not to have land assigned to them. ([Numbers 26:57–62.](#)) Among the persons whom Moses and Eleazar enrolled was not one of those enrolled in the first census at the [wilderness of Sinai](#), except [Caleb](#) and [Joshua](#). ([Numbers 26:63–65.](#))

### **[edit] The daughters of Zelophehad**

The [daughters of Zelophehad](#) approached Moses, Eleazar, the chieftains, and the assembly at the entrance of the [Tabernacle](#), saying that their father left no sons, and asking that they be given a land holding. ([Numbers 27:1–4.](#)) Moses brought their case before God, who told him that their plea was just and instructed him to transfer their father's share of land to them. ([Numbers 27:5–7.](#)) God further instructed that if a man died without leaving

a son, the Israelites were to transfer his property to his daughter, or failing a daughter to his brothers, or failing a brother to his father's brothers, or failing brothers of his father to the nearest relative. ([Numbers 27:8–11.](#))



Moses Views the Land of Israel (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)



Moses Names Joshua To Succeed Him (woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)

### [\[edit\]](#) Moses's successor

God told Moses to climb the heights of [Abarim](#) and view the [Land of Israel](#), saying that when he had seen it, he would die, because he disobeyed God's command to uphold God's sanctity in the people's sight when he brought water from the rock in the [wilderness of Zin](#). ([Numbers 27:12–14](#).) Moses asked God to appoint someone over the community, so that the Israelites would not be like [sheep](#) without a [shepherd](#). ([Numbers 27:13–17](#).) God told Moses to single out Joshua, lay his hand on him, and commission him before Eleazar and the whole community. ([Numbers 27:18–20](#).) Joshua was to present himself to Eleazar the priest, who was to seek the decision of the [Urim and Thummim](#) on whether to go out or come in. ([Numbers 27:21](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) Offerings

God told Moses to command the Israelites to be punctilious in presenting the [offerings](#) due God at stated times. ([Numbers 28:1–2.](#)) The text then details the offerings for regular days, the Sabbath, Rosh Chodesh, Passover, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and [Shmini Atzeret](#). ([Numbers 28:3–30:1.](#))

## [\[edit\]](#) In inner-biblical interpretation

### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 28

### [\[edit\]](#) Passover



The Search for Leaven (illustration circa 1733–1739 by [Bernard Picart](#))

[Numbers 28:16–25](#) refers to the [Festival](#) of Passover. In the Hebrew Bible, Passover is called:



- “Passover” (*Pesach*, פֶּסַח) ([Exodus 12:11, 21, 27, 43, 48; 34:25](#); [Leviticus 23:5](#); [Numbers 9:2, 4–6, 10, 12–14; 28:16; 33:3](#); [Deuteronomy 16:1–2, 5–6](#); [Joshua 5:10–11; 2 Kings 23:21–23](#); [Ezekiel 45:21](#); [Ezra 6:19–20](#); [2 Chronicles 30:1–2, 5, 15, 17–18; 35:1, 6–9, 11, 13, 16–19](#));
- “The Feast of Unleavened Bread” (*Chag haMatzot*, חַג הַמַּצּוֹת) ([Exodus 12:17; 23:15; 34:18](#); [Leviticus 23:6; Deuteronomy 16:16](#); [Ezekiel 45:21](#); [Ezra 6:22; 2 Chronicles 8:13; 30:13, 21; 35:17](#)); and
- “A holy convocation” or “a solemn assembly” (*mikrah kodesh*, מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ) ([Exodus 12:16](#); [Leviticus 23:7–8](#); [Numbers 28:18, 25](#)).

Some explain the double nomenclature of “Passover” and “Feast of Unleavened Bread” as referring to two separate feasts that the Israelites combined sometime between [the Exodus](#) and when the Biblical text became settled. (See, e.g., [W. Gunther Plaut](#). *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, 456. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981. [ISBN 0-8074-0055-6](#).) [Exodus 34:18–20](#) and [Deuteronomy 15:19–16:8](#) indicate that the dedication of the firstborn also became associated with the festival.



The Passover Seder of the Portuguese Jews (illustration circa 1733–1739 by Bernard Picart)

Some believe that the “Feast of Unleavened Bread” was an agricultural festival at which the Israelites celebrated the beginning of the grain harvest. Moses may have had this festival in mind when in [Exodus 5:1](#) and [10:9](#) he petitioned Pharaoh to let the Israelites go to celebrate a feast in the wilderness. (Plaut, at 464.)

“Passover,” on the other hand, was associated with a thanksgiving sacrifice of a lamb, also called “the Passover,” “the Passover lamb,” or “the Passover offering.” ([Exodus 12:11, 21, 27, 43, 48](#); [Deuteronomy 16:2, 5–6](#); [Ezra 6:20](#); [2 Chronicles 30:15, 17–18](#); [35:1, 6–9, 11, 13](#).)

[Exodus 12:5–6](#), [Leviticus 23:5](#), and [Numbers 9:3](#) and [5](#), and [28:16](#) direct “Passover” to take place on the evening of the fourteenth of [Aviv](#) ([Nisan](#) in the [Hebrew calendar](#) after the [Babylonian](#)

[captivity](#)). [Joshua 5:10](#), [Ezekiel 45:21](#), [Ezra 6:19](#), and [2 Chronicles 35:1](#) confirm that practice. [Exodus 12:18–19](#), [23:15](#), and [34:18](#), [Leviticus 23:6](#), and [Ezekiel 45:21](#) direct the “Feast of Unleavened Bread” to take place over seven days and [Leviticus 23:6](#) and [Ezekiel 45:21](#) direct that it begin on the fifteenth of the month. Some believe that the propinquity of the dates of the two festivals led to their confusion and merger. (Plaut, at 464.)

[Exodus 12:23](#) and [27](#) link the word “Passover” (*Pesach*, פֶּסַח) to God’s act to “pass over” (*pasach*, פָּסַח) the Israelites’ houses in the [plague](#) of the firstborn. In the Torah, the consolidated Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread thus commemorate the Israelites’ liberation from [Egypt](#). ([Exodus 12:42](#); [23:15](#); [34:18](#); [Numbers 33:3](#); [Deuteronomy 16:1](#), [3](#), [6](#).)

The [Hebrew Bible](#) frequently notes the Israelites’ observance of Passover at turning points in their history. [Numbers 9:1–5](#) reports God’s direction to the Israelites to observe Passover in the wilderness of [Sinai](#) on the anniversary of their liberation from Egypt. [Joshua 5:10–11](#) reports that upon entering the [Promised Land](#), the Israelites kept the Passover on the plains of [Jericho](#) and ate unleavened cakes and parched corn, produce of the land, the next day. [2 Kings 23:21–23](#) reports that King [Josiah](#) commanded the Israelites to keep the Passover in [Jerusalem](#) as part of Josiah’s reforms, but also notes that the Israelites had not kept such a Passover from the days of the [Biblical judges](#) nor in all the days of the [kings of Israel](#) or the [kings of Judah](#), calling into question the observance of even Kings [David](#) and [Solomon](#). The more reverent [2 Chronicles 8:12–13](#), however, reports that Solomon

offered sacrifices on the festivals, including the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And [2 Chronicles 30:1–27](#) reports King [Hezekiah](#)'s observance of a second Passover anew, as sufficient numbers of neither the priests nor the people were prepared to do so before then. And [Ezra 6:19–22](#) reports that the Israelites returned from the Babylonian captivity observed Passover, ate the Passover lamb, and kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy.



offering of first fruits (illustration from a Bible card published between 1896 and 1913 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

### **[[edit](#)] Shavuot**

[Numbers 28:26–31](#) refers to the Festival of Shavuot. In the Hebrew Bible, Shavuot is called:

- The Feast of Weeks (חג שבועות, *Chag Shavuot*) ([Exodus 34:22](#); [Deuteronomy 16:10](#); see also [2 Chronicles 8:13](#) (חג השבועות, *Chag haShavuot*));
- The Day of the First-fruits (יום הבכורים, *Yom haBikurim*) ([Numbers 28:26](#));
- The Feast of Harvest (חג הקציר, *Chag haKatzir*) ([Exodus 23:16](#)); and
- A holy convocation (מקרא קודש, *mikrah kodesh*) ([Leviticus 23:21](#); [Numbers 28:26](#))

[Exodus 34:22](#) associates Shavuot with the first-fruits (בִּכּוּרֵי, *bikurei*) of the wheat harvest. (See also [Exodus 23:16](#); [Leviticus 23:17](#); [Numbers 28:26](#).) In turn, [Deuteronomy 26:1–11](#) set out the ceremony for the bringing of the first fruits.

To arrive at the correct date, [Leviticus 23:15](#) instructs counting seven weeks from the day after the day of rest of Passover, the day that they brought the sheaf of barley for waving. Similarly, [Deuteronomy 16:9](#) directs counting seven weeks from when they first put the sickle to the standing barley.

[Leviticus 23:16–19](#) sets out a course of offerings for the fiftieth day, including a meal-offering of two loaves made from fine flour from the first-fruits of the harvest; burnt-offerings of seven lambs, one bull, and two rams; a sin-offering of a goat; and a peace-offering of two lambs. Similarly, [Numbers 28:26–30](#) sets out a course of offerings including a meal-offering; burnt-offerings of two bulls, one ram, and seven lambs; and one goat to

make atonement. [Deuteronomy 16:10](#) directs a freewill-offering in relation to God's blessing.

[Leviticus 23:21](#) and [Numbers 28:26](#) ordain a holy convocation in which the Israelites were not to work.

[2 Chronicles 8:13](#) reports that Solomon offered burnt-offerings on the Feast of Weeks.

[\[edit\]](#) **Numbers chapter 29**

[\[edit\]](#) **Sukkot**

And [Numbers 29:12–38](#) refers to the Festival of Sukkot. In the Hebrew Bible, Sukkot is called:

- “The Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths)” ([Leviticus 23:34](#); [Deuteronomy 16:13, 16](#); [31:10](#); [Zechariah 14:16, 18, 19](#); [Ezra 3:4](#); [2 Chronicles 8:13](#));



Eating in a [Sukkah](#) (1723 engraving by Bernard Picart)

- “The Feast of Ingathering” ([Exodus 23:16, 34:22](#));
- “The Feast” or “the festival” ([1 Kings 8:2, 65; 12:32; 2 Chronicles 5:3; 7:8](#));
- “The Feast of the Lord” ([Leviticus 23:39; Judges 21:19](#));
- “The festival of the seventh month” ([Ezekiel 45:25; Nehemiah 8:14](#)); and
- “A holy convocation” or “a sacred occasion” ([Numbers 29:12](#)).

Sukkot’s agricultural origin is evident from the name "The Feast of Ingathering," from the ceremonies accompanying it, and from the season and occasion of its celebration: "At the end of the year when you gather in your labors out of the field" ([Exodus 23:16](#)); "after you have gathered in from your threshing-floor and from your winepress." ([Deuteronomy 16:13](#).) It was a thanksgiving for the fruit harvest. (Compare [Judges 9:27](#).) And in what may explain the festival’s name, [Isaiah](#) reports that grape harvesters kept booths in their [vineyards](#). ([Isaiah 1:8](#).) Coming as it did at the completion of the harvest, Sukkot was regarded as a general thanksgiving for the bounty of nature in the year that had passed.

Sukkot became one of the most important feasts in Judaism, as indicated by its designation as “the Feast of the Lord” ([Leviticus 23:39; Judges 21:19](#)) or simply “the Feast.” ([1 Kings 8:2, 65; 12:32; 2 Chronicles 5:3; 7:8](#).) Perhaps because of its wide

attendance, Sukkot became the appropriate time for important state ceremonies. Moses instructed the children of Israel to gather for a reading of the Law during Sukkot every seventh year.

([Deuteronomy 31:10–11](#).) King Solomon dedicated the [Temple in Jerusalem](#) on Sukkot. ([1 Kings 8](#); [2 Chronicles 7](#).) And Sukkot was the first sacred occasion observed after the resumption of sacrifices in Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. ([Ezra 3:2–4](#).)



Celebrating Sukkot with the Four Species (congratulatory postcard from 1900)

In the time of [Nehemiah](#), after the Babylonian captivity, the Israelites celebrated Sukkot by making and dwelling in booths, a practice of which Nehemiah reports: “the Israelites had not done so from the days of Joshua.” ([Nehemiah 8:13–17](#).) In a practice related to that of the [Four Species](#), Nehemiah also reports that the Israelites found in the Law the commandment that they “go



out to the mountains and bring leafy branches of [olive](#) trees, [pine](#) trees, [myrtles](#), [palms](#) and [other] leafy trees to make booths.” ([Nehemiah 8:14–15](#).) In [Leviticus 23:40](#), God told Moses to command the people: “On the first day you shall take the product of *hadar* trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and [willows](#) of the brook,” and “You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths, in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.” ([Leviticus 23:42–43](#).) The book of Numbers, however, indicates that while in the wilderness, the Israelites dwelt in tents. ([Numbers 11:10; 16:27](#).) Some secular scholars consider [Leviticus 23:39–43](#) (the commandments regarding booths and the four species) to be an insertion by a late [redactor](#). (E.g., [Richard Elliott Friedman](#). *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 228–29. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003.)

[Jeroboam](#) son of Nebat, King of the northern [Kingdom of Israel](#), whom [1 Kings 13:33](#) describes as practicing “his evil way,” celebrated a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, one month after Sukkot, “in imitation of the festival in Judah.” ([1 Kings 12:32–33](#).) “While Jeroboam was standing on the [altar](#) to present the offering, the man of God, at the command of the Lord, cried out against the altar” in disapproval. ([1 Kings 13:1](#).) According to the prophet [Zechariah](#), in the messianic era, Sukkot will become a universal festival, and all nations will make pilgrimages annually to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast there. ([Zechariah 14:16–19](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 25

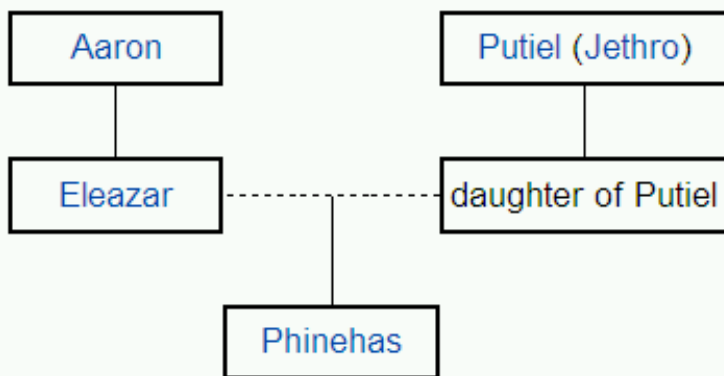


Moab Leads Israel into Sin (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

[Rabbi Johanan](#) taught that Phinehas was able to accomplish his act of zealotry only because God performed six miracles: First, upon hearing Phinehas's warning, [Zimri](#) should have withdrawn from [Cozbi](#) and ended his transgression, but he did not. Second, Zimri should have cried out for help from his fellow Simeonites, but he did not. Third, Phinehas was able to drive his spear exactly

through the sexual organs of Zimri and Cozbi as they were engaged in the act. Fourth, Zimri and Cozbi did not slip off the spear, but remained fixed so that others could witness their transgression. Fifth, an [angel](#) came and lifted up the lintel so that Phinehas could exit holding the spear. And sixth, an angel came and sowed destruction among the people, distracting the Simeonites from killing Phinehas. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 82b.](#))

[Rabbah bar bar Hana](#) said in Rabbi Johanan's name that had Zimri withdrawn from his mistress and Phinehas still killed him, Phinehas would have been liable to execution for murder, and had Zimri killed Phinehas in self-defense, he would not have been liable to execution for murder, as Phinehas was a pursuer seeking to take Zimri's life. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 82a.](#))



The [Gemara](#) told that after Phinehas killed Zimri and Cozbi, the Israelites began berating Phinehas for his presumption, as he himself was descended from a Midianite idolater, Jethro. The Israelites said: “See this son of Puti (Putiel, or Jethro) whose

maternal grandfather fattened (*pitem*) cattle for idols, and who has now slain the prince of a tribe of Israel (Zimri)!” To counter this attack, the Gemara explained, God detailed Phinehas’s descent from the peaceful Aaron the Priest in [Numbers 25:11](#). And then in [Numbers 25:12](#), God told Moses to be the first to extend a greeting of peace to Phinehas, so as to calm the crowd. And the Gemara explained [Numbers 25:13](#) to indicate that the atonement that Phinehas had made was worthy to atone permanently. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 82b](#).)

A [midrash](#) interpreted [Numbers 25:12](#), in which God gives Phinehas God’s “covenant of peace,” to teach that Phinehas, like [Elijah](#), continues to live to this day, applying to Phinehas the words of [Malachi 2:5](#), “My covenant was with him of life and peace, and I gave them to him, and of fear, and he feared Me, and was afraid of My name.” ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 21:3.)

Reading the words of [Numbers 25:13](#) that Phinehas “made atonement for the children of Israel,” a midrash taught that although he did not strictly offer a sacrifice to justify the expression “atonement,” his shedding the blood of the wicked was as though he had offered a sacrifice. ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 21:3.)

## [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 26

A midrash taught that the Israelites were counted on ten occasions: (1) when they went down to Egypt ([Deuteronomy 10:22](#)); (2) when they went up out of Egypt ([Exodus 12:37](#)); (3) at the first census in Numbers ([Numbers 1:1–46](#)); (4) at the second census in Numbers ([Numbers 26:1–65](#)); (5) once for the banners;

(6) once in the time of Joshua for the division of the land of Israel; (7) once by [Saul](#) ([1 Samuel 11:8](#)); (8) a second time by Saul ([1 Samuel 15:4](#)); (9) once by [David](#) ([2 Samuel 24:9](#)); and once in the time of [Ezra](#) ([Ezra 2:64](#)). (Midrash [Tanhuma](#) Ki Sisa 9.)

Noting that [Numbers 26:1](#) speaks of “after the plague” immediately before reporting that God ordered the census, a midrash concluded that whenever the Israelites were struck, they needed to be counted, as a shepherd will count the sheep after a wolf attacks. Alternatively, the midrash taught that God ordered Moses to count the Israelites as Moses neared death, much as a shepherd entrusted with a set number of sheep must count those that remain when the shepherd returns the sheep to their owner. (Midrash Tanhuma Pinchas 4.)



The Destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

[Rava](#) found support in [Numbers 26:8](#) for the proposition that sometimes texts refer to “sons” when they mean a single son. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 143b.](#))

A [Tanna](#) in the name of [Rabbi](#) deduced from the words “the sons of Korah did not die” in [Numbers 26:11](#) that Providence set up a special place for them to stand on high in [Gehinnom](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 14a, Sanhedrin 110a.](#)) There, Korah’s sons sat and sang praises to God. Rabbah bar bar Hana told that once when he was travelling, an Arab showed him where the earth swallowed Korah’s congregation. Rabbah bar bar Hana saw two cracks in the ground from which smoke issued. He took a piece of wool, soaked it in water, attached it to the point of his spear, and passed it over the cracks, and the wool was singed. The Arab told Rabbah bar bar Hana to listen, and he heard them saying, “Moses and his Torah are true, but Korah's company are liars.” The Arab told Rabbah bar bar Hana that every 30 days Gehinnom caused them to return for judgment, as if they were being stirred like meat in a pot, and every 30 days they said those same words. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 110a–b.](#))

Abba Halifa of Keruya asked Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba why [Genesis 46:27](#) reported that 70 people from Jacob’s household came to Egypt, while [Genesis 46:8–27](#) enumerated only 69 individuals. Rabbi Hiyya reported that Rabbi Hama bar Hanina taught that the seventieth person was the mother of Moses, [Jochebed](#), who was conceived on the way from Canaan to Egypt and born as Jacob’s family passed between the city walls as they entered

Egypt, for [Numbers 26:59](#) reported that Jochebed “was born to [Levi](#) in Egypt,” implying that her conception was not in Egypt. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 123b–24a.](#))

The Gemara taught that the use of the pronoun “he (*hu*)” in an introduction, as in the words “These are (*hu*) that [Dathan](#) and [Abiram](#)” in [Numbers 26:9](#), signifies that they were the same in their wickedness from the beginning to the end. Similar uses appear in [Genesis 36:43](#) to teach [Esau](#)’s enduring wickedness, in [2 Chronicles 28:22](#) to teach [Ahaz](#)’s enduring wickedness, in [Esther 1:1](#) to teach [Ahasuerus](#)’s enduring wickedness, in [1 Chronicles 1:27](#) to teach [Abraham](#)’s enduring righteousness, in [Exodus 6:26](#) to teach Moses and Aaron’s enduring righteousness, and in [1 Samuel 17:14](#) to teach David’s enduring humility. ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 11a.](#))

The Gemara asked why the [Tannaim](#) felt that the allocation of the Land of Israel “according to the names of the tribes of their fathers” in [Numbers 26:55](#) meant that the allocation was with reference to those who left Egypt; perhaps, the Gemara supposed, it might have meant the 12 tribes and that the Land was to be divided into 12 equal portions? The Gemara noted that in [Exodus 6:8](#), God told Moses to tell the Israelites who were about to leave Egypt, “And I will give it you for a heritage; I am the Lord,” and that meant that the Land was the inheritance from the fathers of those who left Egypt. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 117b.](#))



The Daughters of Zelophehad (illustration from the 1908 *Bible and Its Story Taught by One Thousand Picture Lessons*)

## **[[edit](#)] Numbers chapter 27**

Chapter 8 of tractate [Bava Batra](#) in the [Mishnah](#) and Babylonian Talmud and chapter 7 of tractate Bava Batra in the [Tosefta](#) interpreted the laws of inheritance in [Numbers 27:1–11](#) and [36:1–2](#). (Mishnah Bava Batra 8:1–8; Tosefta Bava Batra 7:1–18; [Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 108a–39b.](#))

[Rabbi Joshua](#) taught that Zelophehad's daughters' in [Numbers 27:2–4](#) petitioned first the assembly, then the chieftains, then Eleazar, and finally Moses, but Abba Hanan said in the name of [Rabbi Eliezer](#) taught that Zelophehad's daughters stood before all of them as they were sitting together. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 119b.](#))



Noting that the words “in the wilderness” appeared both in [Numbers 27:3](#) (where Zelophehad’s daughters noted that their father Zelophehad had not taken part in [Korah](#)’s rebellion) and in [Numbers 15:32](#) (which tells the story of the Sabbath violator), the Rabbis taught in a [Baraita](#) that Zelophehad was the man executed for gathering sticks on the Sabbath. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 96b.](#))

Rabbi [Hanina](#) (or some say [Rabbi Josiah](#)) taught that [Numbers 27:5](#), when Moses found himself unable to decide the case of the daughters of Zelophehad, reports the punishment of Moses for his arrogance when he told the judges in [Deuteronomy 1:17](#): “the cause that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it.” [Rav Nahman](#) objected to Rabbi Hanina’s interpretation, noting that Moses did not say that he would always have the answers, but merely that he would rule if he knew the answer or seek instruction if he did not. Rav Nahman cited a Baraita to explain the case of the daughters of Zelophehad: God had intended that Moses write the laws of inheritance, but found the daughters of Zelophehad worthy to have the section recorded on their account. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 8a.](#))



*David and [Bathsheba](#)*, by [Bernardino Mei](#), mid-17th century

A Baraita taught that Zelophehad's daughters were [wise](#), Torah [students](#), and [righteous](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 119b.](#))

And a Baraita taught that Zelophehad's daughters were equal in merit, and that is why the order of their names varies between [Numbers 27:1](#) and [Numbers 36:11](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 120a.](#)) According to the Gemara, they demonstrated their wisdom by raising their case in a timely fashion, just as Moses was expounding the [law](#) of [levirate marriage](#), or *yibbum*, and they argued for their inheritance by analogy to that law. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 119b.](#))



Moses Names Joshua To Succeed Him (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

The Gemara implied that the sin of Moses in striking the rock at [Meribah](#) compared favorably to the sin of David. The Gemara reported that Moses and David were two good leaders of Israel. Moses begged God that his sin be recorded, as it is in [Numbers 20:12](#), [20:23–24](#), and [27:13–14](#), and [Deuteronomy 32:51](#). David, however, begged that his sin be blotted out, as [Psalm 32:1](#) says, “Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is pardoned.” The Gemara compared the cases of Moses and David to the cases of two women whom the court sentenced to be

lashed. One had committed an indecent act, while the other had eaten unripe figs of the seventh year in violation of [Leviticus 25:6](#). The woman who had eaten unripe figs begged the court to make known for what offense she was being flogged, lest people say that she was being punished for the same sin as the other woman. The court thus made known her sin, and the Torah repeatedly records the sin of Moses. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 86b](#).)

Noting that Moses asked God to designate someone to succeed him in [Numbers 27:16](#), soon after the incident of Zelophehad's daughters, a midrash deduced that when the daughters of Zelophehad inherited from their father, Moses argued that it would surely be right for his sons to inherit his glory. God, however, replied (in the words of [Proverbs 27:18](#)) that "Whoever keeps the fig-tree shall eat its fruit; and whoever waits on the master shall be honored." The sons of Moses sat idly by and did not study Torah, but Joshua served Moses and showed him great honor, rose early in the morning and remained late at night at the House of Assembly, and arranged the benches and spread the mats. As he had served Moses with all his might, he was worthy to serve Israel, and thus God in [Numbers 27:18](#) directed Moses to "take Joshua the son of Nun" as his successor. (Numbers Rabbah 21:14.)

Offerings for the Festivals in [Numbers 28:9–29:38](#)

<b>Festivals</b>	<b>Verses</b>	<b>Bulls</b>	<b>Rams</b>	<b>Lambs</b>	<b>Goats</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>Sabbath</b>	<a href="#">Numbers 28:9–10</a>	0	0	2	0	<b>2</b>
<b>New Month</b>	<a href="#">Numbers 28:11–15</a>	2	1	7	1	<b>11</b>
<b>Passover (Daily)</b>	<a href="#">Numbers 28:16–25</a>	2	1	7	1	<b>11</b>
<b>Shavuot</b>	<a href="#">Numbers 28:26–31</a>	2	1	7	1	<b>11</b>
<b>Rosh Hashanah</b>	<a href="#">Numbers 29:1–6</a>	1	1	7	1	<b>10</b>
<b>Yom Kippur</b>	<a href="#">Numbers 29:7–11</a>	1	1	7	1	<b>10</b>
<b>Sukkot Day 1</b>	<a href="#">Numbers 29:12–16</a>	13	2	14	1	<b>30</b>
<b>Sukkot Day 2</b>	<a href="#">Numbers 29:17–19</a>	12	2	14	1	<b>29</b>
<b>Sukkot Day 3</b>	<a href="#">Numbers 29:20–22</a>	11	2	14	1	<b>28</b>
<b>Sukkot Day 4</b>	<a href="#">Numbers 29:23–25</a>	10	2	14	1	<b>27</b>
<b>Sukkot Day 5</b>	<a href="#">Numbers 29:26–28</a>	9	2	14	1	<b>26</b>
<b>Sukkot Day 6</b>	<a href="#">Numbers 29:29–31</a>	8	2	14	1	<b>25</b>
<b>Sukkot Day 7</b>	<a href="#">Numbers 29:32–34</a>	7	2	14	1	<b>24</b>
<b>Shemini Atzeret</b>	<a href="#">Numbers 29:35–38</a>	1	1	7	1	<b>10</b>
<b>Annual Totals+</b>	<a href="#">Numbers 28:9–29:38</a>	<b>113</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>543</b>

373

+Assuming 52 Sabbaths, 12 New Months, and 7 days of Passover per year

## [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 28

Tractate [Tamid](#) in the Mishnah and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of the regular offerings in [Numbers 28:3–10](#). (Mishnah Tamid 1:1–7:4; [Babylonian Talmud Tamid 2a–33b](#).)

The Gemara noted that in listing the several festivals in [Exodus 23:15](#), [Leviticus 23:5](#), [Numbers 28:16](#), and [Deuteronomy 16:1](#), the Torah always begins with Passover. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 2b](#).)

Tractate [Beitzah](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, [Jerusalem Talmud](#), and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws common to all of the [Festivals](#) in [Exodus 12:3–27](#), [43–49](#); [13:6–10](#); [23:16](#); [34:18–23](#); [Leviticus 16](#); [23:4–43](#); [Numbers 9:1–14](#); [28:16–30:1](#); and [Deuteronomy 16:1–17](#); [31:10–13](#). (Mishnah Beitzah 1:1–5:7; Tosefta Yom Tov (Beitzah) 1:1–4:11; Jerusalem Talmud Beitzah 1a–; [Babylonian Talmud Beitzah 2a–40b](#).)

Tractate [Pesachim](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of the Passover in [Exodus 12:3–27](#), [43–49](#); [13:6–10](#); [34:25](#); [Leviticus 23:4–8](#); [Numbers 9:1–14](#); [28:16–25](#); and [Deuteronomy 16:1–8](#). (Mishnah [Pesachim 1:1–10:9](#); Tosefta Pisha 1:1–10:13; Jerusalem Talmud Pesachim 1a–; [Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 2a–121b](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 29

Tractate [Rosh Hashanah](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of Rosh Hashanah in [Leviticus 23:23–25](#) and [Numbers 29:1–6](#). (Mishnah

[Rosh Hashanah 1:1–4:9](#); Tosefta Rosh Hashanah 1:1–2:18; Jerusalem Talmud Rosh Hashanah 1a–; [Babylonian Talmud Rosh Hashanah 2a–35a.](#))

Tractate [Yoma](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of Yom Kippur in [Leviticus 16](#) and [23:26–32](#) and [Numbers 29:7–11](#). ([Mishnah Yoma 1:1–8:9](#); Tosefta Kippurim (Yoma) 1:1–4:17; Jerusalem Talmud Yoma 1a–; [Babylonian Talmud Yoma 2a–88a.](#))

Tractate [Sukkah](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of Sukkot in [Exodus 23:16](#); [34:22](#); [Leviticus 23:33–43](#); [Numbers 29:12–34](#); and [Deuteronomy 16:13–17](#); [31:10–13](#). ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:1–5:8](#); Tosefta Sukkah 1:1–4:28; Jerusalem Talmud Sukkah 1a–33b; [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 2a–56b.](#))

The Mishnah taught that a sukkah can be no more than 20 [cubits](#) high. [Rabbi Judah](#), however, declared taller sukkot valid. The Mishnah taught that a sukkah must be at least 10 handbreadths high, have three walls, and have more shade than sun. ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:1](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 2a.](#)) The [House of Shammai](#) declared invalid a sukkah made 30 days or more before the festival, but the [House of Hillel](#) pronounced it valid. The Mishnah taught that if one made the sukkah for the purpose of the festival, even at the beginning of the year, it is valid. ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:1](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 9a.](#))

The Mishnah taught that a sukkah under a tree is as invalid as a sukkah within a house. If one sukkah is erected above another,

the upper one is valid, but the lower is invalid. Rabbi Judah said that if there are no occupants in the upper one, then the lower one is valid. ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:2](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 9b.](#))

It invalidates a sukkah to spread a sheet over the sukkah because of the sun, or beneath it because of falling leaves, or over the frame of a four-post bed. One may spread a sheet, however, over the frame of a two-post bed. ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:3](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 10a.](#))

It is not valid to train a vine, gourd, or ivy to cover a sukkah and then cover it with sukkah covering (*s'chach*). If, however, the sukkah-covering exceeds the vine, gourd, or ivy in quantity, or if the vine, gourd, or ivy is detached, it is valid. The general rule is that one may not use for sukkah-covering anything that is susceptible to ritual impurity (*tumah*) or that does not grow from the soil. But one may use for sukkah-covering anything not susceptible to ritual impurity that grows from the soil. ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:4](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 11a.](#))

Bundles of straw, wood, or brushwood may not serve as sukkah-covering. But any of them, if they are untied, are valid. All materials are valid for the walls. ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:5](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 12a.](#))



Rabbi Judah taught that one may use planks for the sukkah-covering, but <a href="#">Rabbi Meir</a> taught that one may not. The Mishnah taught that it is valid to place a plank four handbreadths wide over the sukkah, provided that one does not sleep under it. ( <a href="#">Mishnah Sukkah 1:6</a> ; <a href="#">Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 14a.</a> )	Bulls Offered on Sukkot		
	Day	Verse	Bulls
	Day 1	<a href="#">Numbers 29:13</a>	13
	Day 2	<a href="#">Numbers 29:17</a>	12
	Day 3	<a href="#">Numbers 29:20</a>	11
	Day 4	<a href="#">Numbers 29:23</a>	10
	Day 5	<a href="#">Numbers 29:26</a>	9
	Day 6	<a href="#">Numbers 29:29</a>	8
	Day 7	<a href="#">Numbers 29:32</a>	7
	Total	<a href="#">Numbers 29:12–34</a>	70

Noting that [Numbers 29:12–34](#) required the priests to offer 70 bulls over the seven days of Sukkot, Rabbi Eleazar taught that the 70 bulls correspond to the 70 nations of the world. And Rabbi Eleazar taught that the single bull that [Numbers 29:36](#) required the priests to offer on Shemini Atzeret corresponds to the unique nation of Israel. Rabbi Eleazar compared this to a mortal king who told his servants to prepare a great banquet, but on the last day told his beloved friend to prepare a simple meal so that the king might enjoy his friend’s company. ([Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 55b.](#)) Similarly, a midrash taught that on Sukkot, the Israelites offered God 70 bulls as an atonement for the 70 nations. The Israelites then complained to God that they had offered 70 bulls on behalf of the nations of the world, and they ought thus to love Israel, but they still hated the Jews. As [Psalm 109:4](#) says, “In return for my love they are my adversaries.” So in

[Numbers 29:36](#), God told Israel to offer a single bull as sacrifice on its own behalf. And the midrash compared this to the case of a king who made a banquet for seven days and invited all the people in the province. And when the seven days of the feast were over, he said to his friend that he had done his duty to all the people of the province, now the two of them would eat whatever the friend could find — a pound of meat, fish, or vegetables. (Numbers Rabbah 21:24.)

Noting that the number of sacrifices in [Numbers 29:12–34](#) decreases each day of Sukkot, a midrash taught that the Torah thus teaches etiquette from the sacrifices. If a person stays as a friend's house, on the first day the host entertains generously and serves poultry, on the second day meat, on the third day fish, on the fourth day vegetables, and so the host continually reduces the fare until the host serves the guest beans. (Numbers Rabbah 21:25.)

## [\[edit\]](#) Commandments

[\[edit\]](#) According to Maimonides



Moses Maimonides

[Maimonides](#) cited verses in the parshah for 12 positive and 6 negative [commandments](#):

- To judge in cases of [inheritances](#) ([Numbers 27:8–11.](#)).
- To offer the continual sacrifices daily ([Numbers 28:3.](#)).
- To offer an additional sacrifice every Sabbath ([Numbers 28:9.](#))
- To offer an additional sacrifice at the beginning of each new month ([Numbers 28:11.](#))
- To rest on the seventh day of the Festival of Passover ([Exodus 12:16; Numbers 28:25.](#))

- Not to do work on the Festival of Shavuot ([Leviticus 23:21](#); [Numbers 28:26](#).)
- To offer an additional sacrifice on the Festival of Shavuot ([Numbers 28:26–27](#).)
- To hear the sound of the [shofar](#) on Rosh Hashanah ([Numbers 29:1](#).)
- Not to do work on Rosh Hashanah ([Leviticus 23:25](#); [Numbers 29:1](#).)
- To offer an additional sacrifice on Rosh Hashanah ([Numbers 29:1–2](#).)
- To offer an additional sacrifice on Yom Kippur ([Numbers 29:7](#).)
- To fast on Yom Kippur ([Leviticus 16:29](#); [Numbers 29:7](#).)
- Not to do work on Yom Kippur ([Leviticus 16:29](#); [23:28, 31](#); [Numbers 29:7](#).)
- Not to do work on the first day of Sukkot ([Leviticus 23:35](#); [Numbers 29:12](#).)
- To offer an additional sacrifice on the Festival of Sukkot ([Numbers 29:13](#).)
- To offer an additional sacrifice on the day of Shemini Atzeret, for this day is a pilgrimage festival in itself ([Numbers 29:35](#).)



blowing the shofar (by Alphonse Lévy)

- Not to do work on the eighth day of Sukkot ([Leviticus 23:36](#); [Numbers 29:35](#).)
- Not to transgress in matters that one has forbidden himself ([Numbers 30:3](#).)

(Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#), [Positive Commandments 39](#), [41](#), [42](#), [45](#), [47](#), [48](#), [50](#), [51](#), [160](#), [164](#), [170](#), [248](#); [Negative Commandments 157](#), [325](#), [326](#), [327](#), [328](#), [329](#). Cairo, Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 1:50–53, 55–60, 170–71, 173–74, 179–80, 256–57; 2:148–49, 298–301. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) According to Sefer ha-Chinuch

According to [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are six positive commandments in the parshah.

- The precept of the laws of inheritance ([Numbers 27:8.](#))
- The precept of the regular *olah* offering, sacrificed every day ([Numbers 28:3.](#))
- The precept of the *musaf* offering on the Sabbath ([Numbers 28:9.](#))
- The precept of the *musaf* offering on Rosh Chodesh ([Numbers 28:11.](#))
- The precept of the *musaf* offering on the Shavuot Festival ([Numbers 28:26.](#))
- The precept of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah ([Numbers 29:1.](#))

(*Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 4:171–203. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1988. [ISBN 0-87306-457-7.](#))

## [\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

When parshah Pinchas comes before the [Seventeenth of Tammuz](#), the [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [1 Kings 18:46–19:21.](#)

When the parshah falls after the Seventeenth of Tammuz, Jews

read for the haftarah the first of three readings of admonition leading up to [Tisha B'Av](#), [Jeremiah 1:1–2:3](#).



The Prophet Elijah (painting circa 1550–1560 by [Daniele da Volterra](#))

[\[edit\]](#) [1 Kings 18:46–19:21](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Summary

The haftarah in [1 Kings 18:46–19:21](#) tells the story of the prophet Elijah's flight from King [Ahab](#), his [theophany](#), and his anointing of [Elisha](#). God's hand was on Elijah, and he ran from King [Ahab](#) to [Jezreel](#). ([1 Kings 18:46](#).) Ahab told Queen [Jezebel](#) how Elijah had killed all the prophets of [Baal](#), and Jezebel sent a messenger to tell Elijah that she intended to have him killed by the next day in recompense. ([1 Kings 19:1–2](#).) So Elijah ran for his life to [Beersheba](#) in the [Kingdom of Judah](#), left his servant there, and went a day's journey into the wilderness. ([1 Kings 19:3–4](#).) Elijah

sat down under a [broom tree](#), asked God to take his life, and lay down and slept. ([1 Kings 19:4-5](#).) An angel touched Elijah and told him to arise and eat, and Elijah found at his head a cake and a jar of water, and so he ate, drank, and went back to sleep. ([1 Kings 19:5-6](#).) The angel again touched him again and told him to arise and eat, and he did and on the strength of that meal journeyed 40 days and 40 nights to [Mount Horeb](#), the mount of God. ([1 Kings 19:7-8](#).)



Elijah (1638 painting by [Jusepe de Ribera](#))

When he came to a cave and lodged there, God asked him what he was doing there. ([1 Kings 19:9](#).) Elijah said that he had been moved by zeal for God, as the Israelites had forsaken God's covenant, thrown down God's altars, and killed God's prophets, leaving only Elijah, and they sought to kill him, too. ([1 Kings 19:10](#).) God told Elijah to stand on the mount, and God passed



by. A great wind rent the mountains, and broke the rocks in pieces, but God was not in the wind. Then an earthquake came, but God was not in the earthquake. ([1 Kings 19:11.](#)) Then a fire came, but God was not in the fire. And then came a still small voice, which asked him what he was doing there. ([1 Kings 19:12–13.](#)) Elijah repeated that he had been moved by zeal for God, as the Israelites had forsaken God’s covenant, thrown down God’s altars, and killed God’s prophets, leaving only Elijah, and they sought to kill him, too. ([1 Kings 19:14.](#)) God told him to go to [Damascus](#) and anoint [Hazeal](#) to be king over [Aram](#), to anoint [Jehu](#) to be king over Israel, and to anoint Elisha to succeed Elijah as prophet. ([1 Kings 19:15–16.](#)) God foretold that any who escaped the sword of Hazeal would be killed by Jehu; any who escaped the sword of Jehu would be killed by Elisha; and God would leave alive in Israel only the 7 thousand who had not bowed to Baal. ([1 Kings 19:17–18.](#)) So Elijah found Elisha, who was plowing with one of his 12 yoke of oxen, and Elijah cast his mantle on Elisha. ([1 Kings 19:19.](#)) Elisha left the oxen, asked Elijah for permission to kiss his parents goodbye, killed the oxen and distributed their meat to the people, and went to follow Elijah. ([1 Kings 19:20–21.](#))

### **[[edit](#)] Connection to the parshah**

The parshah and haftarah both address protagonists who showed zeal on behalf of God against apostasy by the Israelites.

[Numbers 25:11](#) and [13](#) report that God laud’s Phinehas’s zeal for God (*be-kan’o ’et kin’ati* and *kinnei’ le-’lohav*), while in [1 Kings 19:10](#)

and [13](#) Elijah tells God of Elijah's zeal for God (*kanno' kinnei'ti la-YHVH*). Immediately before the parshah (in [Numbers 25:7–8](#)), Phinehas killed Zimri and Cozbi to stem the Israelites' following of Baal-Peor in the [Heresy of Peor](#), while immediately before the haftarah (in [1 Kings 18:40](#)), Elijah killed the prophets of Baal to stem the Israelites' following of Baal. [Targum Jonathan to Exodus 6:18](#) thus identified Phinehas with Elijah.



Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem (1630 painting by [Rembrandt](#))



Jeremiah (fresco circa 1508–1512 by [Michelangelo](#))

[\[edit\]](#) **Jeremiah 1:1–2:3**

[\[edit\]](#) **Summary**

The haftarah in [Jeremiah 1:1–2:3](#) begins by identifying its words as those of [Jeremiah](#) the son of [Hilkiah](#), a priest in [Anathoth](#) in the [land of Benjamin](#), to whom God's word came in the thirteenth year of the reign of [Josiah](#) the son of [Amon](#) as king of [Judah](#), in the reign of Josiah's son [Jehoiakim](#), and through the eleventh year of the reign of Josiah's son [Zedekiah](#), when [Jerusalem](#) was carried away captive. ([Jeremiah 1:1–3](#).)

God's word came to Jeremiah to say that before God formed him in the womb, God knew him, sanctified him, and appointed him a prophet to the nations. ([Jeremiah 1:4–5](#).) Jeremiah protested that he could not speak, for he was a child, but God told him not to fear, for he would go wherever God would send him, say

whatever God would command him to say, and God would be with him to deliver him. ([Jeremiah 1:6–8.](#)) Then God touched Jeremiah's mouth and said that God had put words in his mouth and set him over the nations to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant. ([Jeremiah 1:9–10.](#)) God asked Jeremiah what he saw, he replied that he saw the rod of an almond tree, and God said that he had seen well, for God watches over God's word to perform it. ([Jeremiah 1:11–12.](#))

God's word came to Jeremiah a second time to ask what he saw, he replied that he saw a seething pot tipping from the north, and God said that out of the north evil would break forth upon all Israel. ([Jeremiah 1:13–14.](#)) For God would call all the kingdoms of the north to come, and they would set their thrones at Jerusalem's gate, against its walls, and against the cities of Judah. ([Jeremiah 1:15.](#)) God would utter God's judgments against Judah, as its people had forsaken God and worshipped the work of their own hands. ([Jeremiah 1:16.](#)) God thus directed Jeremiah to gird his loins, arise, and speak to the Judean people all that God commanded, for God had made Jeremiah a fortified city, an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the land of Judah, its rulers, its priests, and its people. ([Jeremiah 1:17–18.](#)) They would fight against him, but they would not prevail, for God would be with him to deliver him. ([Jeremiah 1:19.](#))

God's word came to Jeremiah to tell him to go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem that God remembered the affection of her youth, her love as a bride, how she followed God in the wilderness. ([Jeremiah 2:1–2.](#)) Israel was God's hallowed portion and God's

first-fruits, and all that devoured Israel would be held guilty and evil would come upon them. ([Jeremiah 2:3](#).)

### **[[edit](#)] Connection to the special Sabbath**

The first of three readings of admonition leading up to Tisha B'Av, the haftarah admonishes Judah and Israel in [Jeremiah 1:13–19](#). And then in [Jeremiah 2:1–3](#), the haftarah concludes with consolation. The Gemara taught that Jeremiah wrote the [book of Lamentations](#) ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 15a](#)), and as Jews read Lamentations on Tisha B'Av, this probably accounts for why a selection from Jeremiah begins the series of haftarot of admonition. ([Michael Fishbane](#). *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarot*, 262. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2002. [ISBN 0-8276-0691-5](#).)

### **[[edit](#)] In the liturgy**

The *Mussaf* (“additional”) prayer commemorates the special communal offerings that [Numbers 28–29](#) instruct the priests to make on days of enhanced holiness. (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals with an Interlinear Translation*, 402. Brooklyn: [Mesorah Publications](#), 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-697-3](#).)

After the morning blessings, some Jews recite the description of the continual (תמיד, *Tamid*) offering in [Numbers 28:1–8](#) among other descriptions of offerings. (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 219–21.)

The laws of the daily offering in [Numbers 28:2](#) provide an application of the second of the Thirteen Rules for interpreting the Torah in the [Baraita of Rabbi Ishmael](#) that many Jews read as part of the readings before the [Pesukei d’Zimrah prayer service](#). The second rule provides that similar words in different contexts invite the reader to find a connection between the two topics. The words “in its proper time” (בְּמוֹעֵדוֹ, *bemoado*) in [Numbers 28:2](#) indicate that the priests needed to bring the daily offering “in its proper time,” even on a Sabbath. Applying the second rule, the same words in [Numbers 9:2](#) mean that the priests needed to bring the Passover offering “in its proper time,” even on a Sabbath. (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 243.)



A page from the Kaufmann Haggadah

Jews read the description of the additional (*Mussaf*) Sabbath offering in [Numbers 28:9–10](#) among the descriptions of offerings after the Sabbath morning blessings and again as part of the *Mussaf Amidah* prayer for the Sabbath. (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 233, 410.)

On [Rosh Chodesh](#) (the first of the month), Jews read the description of the Rosh Chodesh offering in [Numbers 28:11–15](#) among the descriptions of offerings after the morning blessings

and again on Shabbat Rosh Chodesh as part of the *Mussaf* Amidah prayer for the Sabbath. (Davis, *Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals*, at 234, 411.)

The Passover [Haggadah](#), in the concluding *nirtzah* section of the [Seder](#), perhaps in a reference to the listing of festivals in [Numbers 29](#), calls Passover “the first of all festivals.” (Joseph Tabory. *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, 125. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008. [ISBN 978-0-8276-0858-0](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) The Weekly Maqam

In [the Weekly Maqam](#), [Sephardi Jews](#) each week base the songs of the services on the content of that week's parshah. For parshah Pinchas, Sephardi Jews apply Maqam Saba, the maqam that symbolizes a covenant (*berit*). It is appropriate, because in the very opening of this parshah, God told Phinehas that due to his heroic acts, he was granted an eternal covenant of peace with God.

## [\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

### [\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Genesis 48:14](#) (laying on hands).
- [Exodus 6:24](#) (sons of Korah); [12:3–27](#), [43–49](#) (Passover); [13:6–10](#) (Passover); [23:14–19](#) (three pilgrim festivals);

[28:30](#) (Urim and Thummim); [29:1–42](#) (program of sacrifices); [32:1–35](#) (sacrifices to another god; zealots kill apostates; zealots rewarded with priestly standing; plague as punishment; leader makes atonement); [34:15–16](#) (foreign women and apostasy); [34:22–26](#) (three pilgrim festivals).

- [Leviticus 23:1–44](#) (holidays); [24:10–16](#) (inquiry of God on the law).
- [Numbers 1:1–46](#) (census); [3:32](#) (Eleazar's family in charge of the sanctuary); [8:10–12](#) (laying on hands); [8:19](#) (Levites make atonement so that there be no plague because of children of Israel coming near to the sanctuary); [9:1–14](#) (Passover, inquiry of God on the law); [15:32–36](#) (inquiry of God on the law); [18:22](#) (children of Israel not coming near to the sanctuary); [20:2–12](#); [25:6–9](#); [28:16–29:34](#) (holidays). [31:6–18](#) (Phinehas, war with Midian); [36:1–12](#) (daughters of Zelophehad)
- [Deuteronomy 3:21–22](#) (Joshua); [4:3](#) (Baal Peor); [7:3–4](#) (foreign women and apostasy); [16:1–17](#) (three pilgrim festivals); [31:10–13](#) (Sukkot).
- [Joshua 1:6–9](#); [17:3–6](#) (daughters of Zelophehad); [22:11–34](#) (Tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh; Baal Peor); [24:33](#).
- [Judges 20:28](#); [21:19](#) (Sukkot).



- [1 Samuel 28:6](#) (Urim).
- [1 Kings 2:26–27](#) (banishment of [Abiathar](#), competitor for the priesthood with [Zadok](#) of the line of Phinehas); [8:1–66](#) (Sukkot); [12:32](#) (northern feast like Sukkot).
- [Jeremiah 33:18–22](#) (permanent priesthood).
- [Ezekiel 45:13–46:24](#) (program of sacrifices); [45:25](#) (Sukkot).
- [Hosea 9:10](#) (Baal Peor).
- [Zechariah 14:16–19](#) (Sukkot).
- [Psalms 35:13](#) (I afflicted my soul with fasting); [47:6](#) (God amidst the sound of the horn); [106:17, 28–32](#) (Dathan and Abiram; Baal Peor; Meribah); [145:20](#) (God will destroy the wicked).
- [Ezra 3:4](#) (Sukkot); [7:5](#) (Phinehas); [8:2](#) (Phinehas).
- [Nehemiah 8:14–18](#) (Sukkot).
- [1 Chronicles 5:30–41](#) (the line of Phinehas); [6:35; 7:15; 9:20](#) (Phinehas as chief of the sanctuary guards).
- [2 Chronicles 5:3–14](#) (Sukkot); [7:8](#) (Sukkot); [8:12–13](#) (three Pilgrim festivals).



Josephus

### [[edit](#)] Early nonrabbinic

- [1 Maccabees chs. 1–16](#). (parallel to Phinehas).
- [4 Maccabees 18:12](#).
- [Josephus, \*Antiquities of the Jews\* 3:10:1–4; 4:6:12–13; 4:7:1–2](#). Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#). Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).
- Instruction for Catechumens, and A Prayer of Praise of God for His Greatness, and for His Appointment of Leaders for His People, in “Hellenistic Synagogal Prayers,” in [James H. Charlesworth](#). *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:687–88. New York: Doubleday, 1985. [ISBN 0-385-18813-7](#).
- [Pseudo-Philo 28:1–4](#).
- [John 7:1-53](#) (Sukkot).
- [Targum Jonathan to Exodus 6:18](#) (Phinehas was Elijah).

## [\[edit\]](#) Classical rabbinic

- Mishnah: [Pesachim 1:1–10:9](#); [Yoma 1:1–8:9](#); [Sukkah 1:1–5:8](#); [Beitzah 1:1–5:7](#); [Rosh Hashanah 1:1–4:9](#); Taanit 4:2; Megillah 3:5; Sotah 7:7; Bava Batra 8:1–8; Sanhedrin 9:6; [Shevuot 1:3](#); Zevachim 10:1; Menachot 4:2–3, 8:7–9:2; Tamid 1:1–7:4. Land of Israel, circa 200 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#). New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- Jerusalem Talmud: Berakhot 43b; Sheviit 5b; Orlah 2b; Pesachim 1a–; Yoma 1a–; Sukkah 1a–33b; Beitzah 1a–; Rosh Hashanah 1a–. Land of Israel, circa 400 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 1, 6a, 12, 22. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2005–2009.



## Talmud

- Babylonian Talmud: [Berakhot 54b](#); [Shabbat 21b](#), [24a–b](#), [36a](#), [64a](#), [80b](#), [97a](#), [103b](#), [131b](#), [133a](#); [Eruvin 40a](#), [63a–b](#); [Pesachim 2a–121b](#); [Yoma 2a–88a](#); [Sukkah 2a–56b](#); [Beitzah 2a–40b](#); [Rosh Hashanah 2a–35a](#); [Taanit 2b–3a](#),

[17b, 26a; Megillah 11a, 14a, 20b, 21b, 28a, 29b, 30b–31a;](#)  
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[Kamma 42b, 82b, 88b, 92b, 111a, 112a; Bava Metzia 52b;](#)  
[Bava Batra 75a, 106b, 108a–39b, 141a, 143b, 147a;](#)  
[Sanhedrin 8a, 11b, 13b, 16a, 34b–35a, 40b, 43b–44b, 64a,](#)  
[82a–b, 105b–06a, 110a; Makkot 7b, 12a; Shevuot 2a, 9a–](#)  
[11a; Avodah Zarah 8b, 19b, 44b; Horayot 6a, 10b, 12b;](#)  
[Zevachim 6b, 12a, 84a, 89a, 101b, 110b, 118a; Menachot](#)  
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[4a, 28b; Meilah 11b, 13b; Tamid 2a–33b; Niddah 26a.](#)

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Hobbes

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Hirsch

- [Emily Dickinson](#). [Poem 112 \(Where bells no more affright the morn —\)](#). Circa 1859. [Poem 168 \(If the foolish, call them "flowers" —\)](#). Circa 1860. [Poem 597 \(It always felt to me — a wrong\)](#). Circa 1862. In *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Edited by Thomas H. Johnson, 53, 79–80, 293–94. New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1960. [ISBN 0-316-18414-4](#).

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### [\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)
- [Aish.com](#)



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# Matot

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**Matot**, **Mattot**, **Mattoth**, or **Matos** (מטות — [Hebrew](#) for “tribes,” the fifth word, and the first distinctive word, in the parshah) is the 42nd [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the ninth in the book of [Numbers](#). It constitutes [Numbers 30:2–32:42](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) generally read it in July or early August.

The [lunisolar Hebrew calendar](#) contains up to 55 [weeks](#), the exact number varying between 50 in common years and 54 or 55 in leap years. In leap years (for example, 2011 and 2014), parshah Matot is read separately. In common years (for example, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2018), parshah Matot is combined with the next parshah, [Masei](#), to help achieve the number of weekly readings needed.



the hills of Gilead (current day Jal'ad, [Jordan](#))

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## [\[edit\]](#) Summary



Moses Ordering the Slaughter of the Midianites (1650 painting by [Claes Corneliszoon Moeyaert](#))

## [\[edit\]](#) Vows



Five Kings of Midian Slain by Israel (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

[Moses](#) told the heads of the [Israelite tribes](#) [God's commands](#) about [nedarim](#) (commitments commonly translated, or perhaps mistranslated, as "[vows](#)"). ([Numbers 30:2.](#)) If a man made a vow to God, he was to carry out all that he promised. ([Numbers 30:3.](#)) If a girl living in her father's household made a vow to God or assumed an obligation, and her father learned of it and did not object, her vow would stand. ([Numbers 30:4–5.](#)) But if her father objected on the day that he learned of it, her vow would not stand, and God would forgive her. ([Numbers 30:6.](#)) If she [married](#) while her vow was still in force, and her husband learned of it and did not object on the day that he found out, her vow



would stand. ([Numbers 30:7–8.](#)) But if her husband objected on the day that he learned of it, her vow would not stand, and God would forgive her. ([Numbers 30:9.](#)) The vow of a widow or divorced woman was binding. ([Numbers 30:10.](#)) If a married woman made a vow and her husband learned of it and did not object, then her vow would stand. ([Numbers 30:11–12.](#)) But if her husband objected on the day that he learned of it, her vow would not stand, and God would forgive her. ([Numbers 30:13.](#)) If her husband annulled one of her vows after the day that he learned of it, he would bear her guilt. ([Numbers 30:16.](#))

### **[[edit](#)] Vengeance on Midian**

God directed Moses to attack the [Midianites](#), after which he would die. ([Numbers 31:1–2.](#)) At Moses' direction, a thousand men from each tribe, with [Phinehas](#) son of [Eleazar](#) serving as [priest](#) on the campaign with the sacred utensils and [trumpets](#), attacked Midian and slew every man, including five [kings](#) of Midian and the [prophet Balaam](#). ([Numbers 31:3–8.](#)) The Israelites burned the Midianite towns, took the Midianite women and children captive, seized all their beasts and wealth as booty, and brought the captives and spoil to Moses, Eleazar, and the Israelite community at the steppes of [Moab](#). ([Numbers 31:9–12.](#)) Moses became angry with the army's commanders for sparing the women, as they were the ones who, at Balaam's bidding, had induced the Israelites to trespass against God in the [sin of Peor](#). ([Numbers 31:14–16.](#)) Moses then told the Israelites to kill every

boy and every woman who had had sexual relations, but to spare the virgin girls. ([Numbers 31:17–18.](#))



The Women of Midian Led Captive by the Hebrews (watercolor by [James Tissot](#))



The Oblation Out of the Spoils of the Midianites (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

### [\[edit\]](#) **Cleansing from battle**

Moses directed the troops to stay outside the camp for 7 days after that, directed everyone of them who had touched a corpse to cleanse himself on the third and seventh days, and directed them to cleanse everything made of [cloth](#), [hide](#), or [wood](#).

([Numbers 31:19–20](#).) Eleazar told the troops to take any article that could withstand [fire](#) — [gold](#), [silver](#), [copper](#), [iron](#), [tin](#), and [lead](#) — and pass them through fire to clean them, and to cleanse everything with water of lustration. ([Numbers 31:21–23](#).) Eleazar directed that on the seventh day they should wash their clothes and be clean, and thereafter be free to enter the camp. ([Numbers 31:24](#).)

### [\[edit\]](#) **Dividing the booty**

God told Moses to work with Eleazar and the family heads to inventory and divide the booty equally between the combatants and the rest of the community. ([Numbers 31:25–27](#).) God told them to exact a levy for God of one item in 500 of the warriors' captive persons and animals to be given to Eleazar, and one in every 50 of the other Israelites' captive persons and animals to be given to the [Levites](#). ([Numbers 31:28–30](#).) The total booty came to 675,000 sheep, 72,000 head of cattle, 61,000 asses, and 32,000 virgin women, which Moses and Eleazar divided as God had commanded. ([Numbers 31:31–47](#).)



In this [satellite](#) image, the [Jordan River](#) appears near the center as a vertical line connecting the [Sea of Galilee](#) on the north with the [Dead Sea](#) on the south.

The commanders of the troops told Moses that they had checked the warriors, and not one was missing, so they brought as an offering to God the gold that they came upon — armlets, bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and pendants — to make expiation for their persons before God. ([Numbers 31:48–50.](#)) Moses and Eleazar accepted from them 16,750 shekels of gold,

but the warriors in the ranks kept their booty for themselves.

([Numbers 31:51–54.](#))



Reuben and Gad Ask for Land (engraving by [Arthur Boyd Houghton](#))

### **[[edit](#)] Land for the Reubenites and Gadites**

The [Reubenites](#) and the [Gadites](#), who owned much [cattle](#), noted that the lands of Jazer and [Gilead](#) on the [east side](#) of the [Jordan River](#) suited cattle, and they approached Moses, Eleazar, and the [chieftains](#) and asked that those lands be given to them as a holding. ([Numbers 32:1–5.](#)) Moses asked them if the rest of the Israelites were to go to war while they stayed on the east bank, and would that not undermine the enthusiasm of the rest of the Israelites for crossing into the [Promised Land](#). ([Numbers 32:6–7.](#)) Moses likened their position to that of the [scouts](#) who surveyed the [land](#) and then turned the minds of the Israelites against invading, thus incensing God and causing God to swear that none of the adult Israelites (except [Caleb](#) and [Joshua](#)) would see

the land. ([Numbers 32:8–12.](#)) They replied that they would build their sheepfolds and towns east of the Jordan and leave their children there, but then serve as shock-troops in the van of the Israelites until the land was conquered and not seek a share of the land west of the Jordan. ([Numbers 32:16–19.](#)) Moses then said that if they would do this, and every shock-fighter among them crossed the Jordan, then they would be clear before God and Israel, and this land would be their holding. ([Numbers 32:20–22.](#)) But Moses continued, if they did not do as they promised, they would have sinned against God. ([Numbers 32:20–22.](#)) Moses instructed Eleazar, Joshua, and the family heads of the Israelite tribes to carry out the agreement. ([Numbers 32:28–30.](#)) So Moses assigned the Gadites, the Reubenites, and half the [tribe of Manasseh](#) lands on the east side of the Jordan. ([Numbers 32:33.](#))

## [\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation



Rabbi Akiba (illustration from the 1568 [Mantua](#) Haggadah)

## [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 30

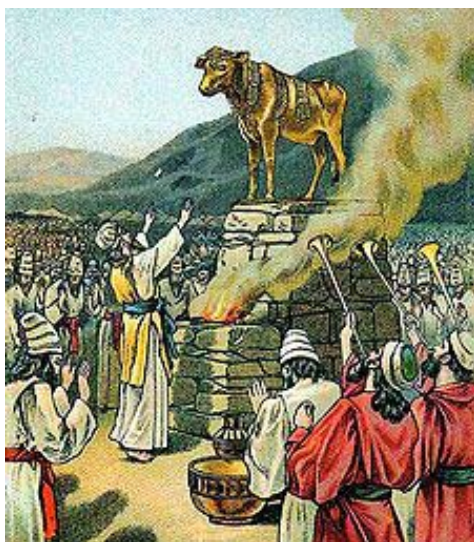
Tractates [Nedarim](#) and [Shevuot](#) in the [Mishnah](#), [Tosefta](#), [Jerusalem Talmud](#), and Babylonian [Talmud](#) interpreted the laws of vows in [Exodus 20:7](#), [Leviticus 5:1–10](#) and [19:12](#), [Numbers 30:2–17](#), and [Deuteronomy 23:24](#). ([Mishnah Nedarim 1:1–11:11](#); [Tosefta Nedarim 1:1–7:8](#); [Jerusalem Talmud Nedarim 1a](#)–; [Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 2a–91b](#); [Mishnah Shevuot 1:1–8:6](#); [Tosefta Shevuot 1:1–6:7](#); [Jerusalem Talmud Shevuot 1a](#)–; [Babylonian Talmud Shevuot 2a–49b](#).)

[Rabbi Akiba](#) taught that vows are a fence to self-restraint.

([Mishnah Avot 3:13](#).) But the Jerusalem Talmud asked whether it

was not enough that the Torah had forbidden us things that we should seek to forbid yet other things to ourselves. (Jerusalem Talmud Nedarim 9:1.) The [Gemara](#) discouraged vows. [Rabbi Nathan](#) taught that one who vows is as if he built a high place, and he who fulfils a vow is as if he sacrificed on that high place. And the Gemara deduced from Rabbi Nathan's teaching that is meritorious to seek absolution from vows. ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 22a, 59a.](#))

The Mishnah taught that the law of the dissolution of vows hovers in the air and has nothing on which to rest in the Biblical text. (Mishnah Chagigah 1:8; [Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 10a.](#)) [Rab Judah](#) said that Samuel found the Scriptural basis for the law of the dissolution of vows in the words of [Numbers 30:3](#), “*he* shall not break his word,” which teaches that “he” — the vower — may not break the vow, but *others* might dissolve it for him. ([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 10a.](#))







Worshipping the Golden Calf (illustration from a Bible card published 1901 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

[Rabbah bar bar Hana](#) told of how an Arab merchant took him to see Mount Sinai, where he saw scorpions surround it, and they stood like white donkeys. Rabbah bar bar Hana heard a Heavenly Voice expressing regret about making an oath and asking who would annul the oath. When Rabbah bar bar Hana came before the Rabbis, they told him that he should have annulled the oath. But Rabbah bar bar Hana thought that perhaps it was the oath in connection with the Flood, where in [Genesis 8:21](#), God promised never to destroy the world again with another flood. The Rabbis replied that if that had been the oath, the Heavenly Voice would not have expressed regret. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 74a.](#))

[Raba](#) employed [Numbers 30:3](#) to interpret [Exodus 32:11](#), which says: “And Moses besought (*va-yechal*) the Lord his God” in connection with the incident of the [Golden Calf](#). Raba noted that [Exodus 32:11](#) uses the term “besought” (*va-yechal*), while [Numbers 30:3](#) uses the similar term “break” (*yachel*) in connection with vows. Transferring the use of [Numbers 30:3](#) to [Exodus 32:11](#), Raba reasoned that [Exodus 32:11](#) meant that Moses stood in prayer before God until Moses annulled for God God’s vow to destroy Israel, for a master had taught that while people cannot break their vows, others may annul their vows for them. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 32a.](#)) Similarly, Rabbi Berekiah taught in the name of [Rabbi Helbo](#) in the name of Rabbi Isaac that Moses absolved God of God’s vow. When the

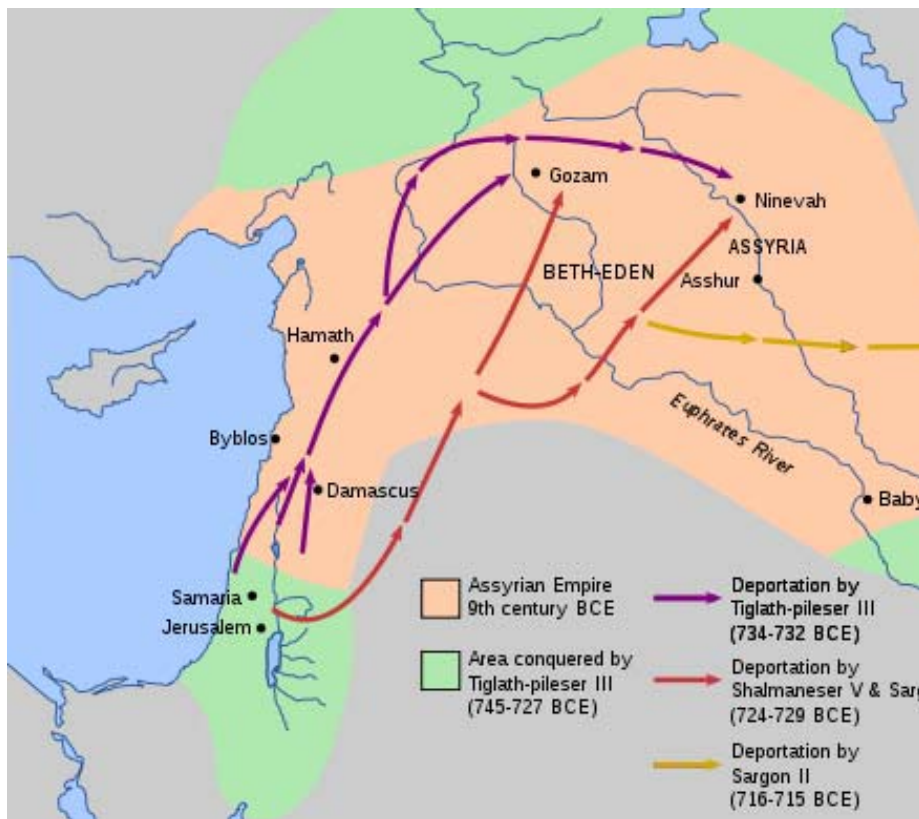
Israelites made the Golden Calf, Moses began to persuade God to forgive them, but God explained to Moses that God had already taken an oath in [Exodus 22:19](#) that “he who sacrifices to the gods . . . shall be utterly destroyed,” and God could not retract an oath. Moses responded by asking whether God had not granted Moses the power to annul oaths in [Numbers 30:3](#) by saying, “When a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind his soul with a bond, *he* shall not break his word,” implying that while he himself could not break his word, a scholar could absolve his vow. So Moses wrapped himself in his cloak and adopted the posture of a sage, and God stood before Moses as one asking for the annulment of a vow. ([Exodus Rabbah](#) 43:4.)

Rabbi [Simeon ben Yohai](#) taught that just as the texts “He shall not break his word” in [Numbers 30:3](#) and “Defer not to pay it” in [Ecclesiastes 5:3](#) apply to vows, so they also apply to valuations, and thus Moses exhorts the Israelites in [Leviticus 27:7](#): “When a man shall clearly utter a vow of persons to the Lord, according to your valuation . . . .” ([Leviticus Rabbah](#) 37:2.)

### **[[edit](#)] Numbers chapter 31**

A midrash deduced from the proximity of the report in [Numbers 31:9](#) that “the children of Israel took captive the women of Midian . . . and all their cattle” with the report of [Numbers 32:1](#) that “the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle” that God cast the Midianites down before Israel so that the Reubenites and Gadites might grow rich. The midrash cited this turn of events as proof of the words of

[Psalm 32:1](#) that “God is judge; He puts down one, and lifts up another.” ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 22:8.)



Assyrian Deportations of the Israelites

## [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 32

A midrash deduced from [Numbers 32:1](#) that the Reubenites and Gadites were rich, possessing large amounts of cattle, but they loved their possessions so much that they separated themselves

from their fellow Israelites and settled outside the Land of Israel. As a result, they became the first tribes to be taken away into exile, as [1 Chronicles 5:26](#) reports, “[Tillegath-pilneser](#) king of Assyria . . . carried . . . away . . . the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.” (Numbers Rabbah 22:7.)

Similarly, a midrash taught that the Reubenites and the Gadites cherished their property more than human life, putting their cattle before their children when they told Moses in [Numbers 32:16](#), “We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones.” Moses told them that their priorities were wrong and that they should rather do the more important things first, when Moses told them in [Numbers 32:24](#), “Build you cities for your little ones, and folds for your sheep.” The midrash saw in their different priorities application of the words of [Ecclesiastes 10:2](#), “A wise man's understanding is at his right hand” — applying to Moses — and “A fool's understanding at his left” — applying to the Reubenites and the Gadites. God told the Reubenites and the Gadites that as they showed greater love for their cattle than for human souls, there would be no blessing in it for them. The midrash thus saw in their fate application of the words of [Proverbs 20:21](#), “An estate may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed,” and the words of [Proverbs 23:4](#), “Do not weary yourself to be rich; cease from your own wisdom.” (Numbers Rabbah 22:9.)

In the Mishnah, [Rabbi Meir](#) noted that [Numbers 32:20](#) and [29](#) stated the same condition in both positive and negative formulations. [Numbers 32:29](#) states the condition in the positive:

“And Moses said to them, if the children of Gad and the children of Reuben will pass with you over the Jordan, . . . then you shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession.” And [Numbers 32:20](#) states the same condition in the negative: “But if they will not pass over with you armed, then they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan.” Rabbi Meir deduced that every stipulation must be stated in both the negative and positive formulations, like the condition of the children of Gad and the children of Reuben in [Numbers 32:20](#) and [29](#), or it is not a binding stipulation. Rabbi Hanina ben [Gamaliel II](#) maintained, however, that Moses stated the matter both ways because he needed to do so to be understood; otherwise one might have concluded that the Gadites and Reubenites would receive no inheritance even in the land of Canaan. ([Mishnah Kiddushin 3:4](#); [Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 61a](#).)

The Sages taught in a [Baraita](#) that they honored the memory of the family that baked the Temple [showbread](#), for they never allowed fine bread to be found in their children's hands. And the Sages honored the memory of the family that made the Temple incense, for they never allowed a bride of their house to go about perfumed. In both cases, the families did so to fulfill the command of [Numbers 32:22](#) that “you shall be clear before the Lord and before Israel” — meaning that people should act so as to avoid even the appearance of transgression. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 38a](#).)

## [\[edit\]](#) Commandments



Moses Maimonides

### [\[edit\]](#) According to Maimonides

[Maimonides](#) cited a verse in the parshah for one negative [commandment](#):

- Not to transgress in matters that one has forbidden oneself ([Numbers 30:3](#).)

(Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#), [Negative Commandment 157](#). Cairo, Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 2:148–49. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#).)

### [\[edit\]](#) According to Sefer ha-Chinuch

According to [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there is 1 positive and 1 negative commandment in the parshah.

- The precept of the law of nullifying vows ([Numbers 30:3](#).)
- That we should not break our word in vows that we make ([Numbers 30:3](#).)

(*Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 4:203–15. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1988. [ISBN 0-87306-457-7](#).)



[Rembrandt](#), *Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem*, c. 1630

## **[[edit](#)] Haftarah**

The [haftarah](#) for parshah Matot is [Jeremiah 1:1–2:3](#). The haftarah is the first of three readings of admonition leading up to [Tisha B'Av](#).

When parshah Matot is combined with parshah Masei (as it is in 2010, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016, and 2017), the haftarah is the haftarah for parshah Masei:

- for [Ashkenazi Jews](#): [Jeremiah 2:4–28](#) & [3:4](#).
- for [Sephardi Jews](#): [Jeremiah 2:4–28](#) & [4:1–2](#).



Jeremiah (fresco by [Michelangelo](#))

### [\[edit\]](#) Summary

The haftarah in [Jeremiah 1:1–2:3](#) begins by identifying its words as those of [Jeremiah](#) the son of [Hilkiah](#), a priest in [Anathoth](#) in the [land of Benjamin](#), to whom God's word came in the thirteenth year of the reign of [Josiah](#) the son of [Amon](#) as king of [Judah](#), in the reign of Josiah's son [Jehoiakim](#), and through the eleventh year of the reign of Josiah's son [Zedekiah](#), when [Jerusalem](#) was carried away captive. ([Jeremiah 1:1–3](#).)



God's word came to Jeremiah to say that before God formed him in the womb, God knew him, sanctified him, and appointed him a prophet to the nations. ([Jeremiah 1:4–5](#).) Jeremiah protested that he could not speak, for he was a child, but God told him not to fear, for he would go wherever God would send him, say whatever God would command him to say, and God would be with him to deliver him. ([Jeremiah 1:6–8](#).) Then God touched Jeremiah's mouth and said that God had put words in his mouth and set him over the nations to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant. ([Jeremiah 1:9–10](#).) God asked Jeremiah what he saw, he replied that he saw the rod of an almond tree, and God said that he had seen well, for God watches over God's word to perform it. ([Jeremiah 1:11–12](#).)

God's word came to Jeremiah a second time to ask what he saw, he replied that he saw a seething pot tipping from the north, and God said that out of the north evil would break forth upon all Israel. ([Jeremiah 1:13–14](#).) For God would call all the kingdoms of the north to come, and they would set their thrones at Jerusalem's gate, against its walls, and against the cities of Judah. ([Jeremiah 1:15](#).) God would utter God's judgments against Judah, as its people had forsaken God and worshipped the work of their own hands. ([Jeremiah 1:16](#).) God thus directed Jeremiah to gird his loins, arise, and speak to the Judean people all that God commanded, for God had made Jeremiah a fortified city, an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the land of Judah, its rulers, its priests, and its people. ([Jeremiah 1:17–18](#).) They would fight

against him, but they would not prevail, for God would be with him to deliver him. ([Jeremiah 1:19](#).)

God's word came to Jeremiah to tell him to go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem that God remembered the affection of her youth, her love as a bride, how she followed God in the wilderness. ([Jeremiah 2:1–2](#).) Israel was God's hallowed portion and God's first-fruits, and all that devoured Israel would be held guilty and evil would come upon them. ([Jeremiah 2:3](#).)

### **[[edit](#)] Connection to the special Sabbath**

The first of three readings of admonition leading up to Tisha B'Av, the haftarah admonishes Judah and Israel in [Jeremiah 1:13–19](#). And then in [Jeremiah 2:1–3](#), the haftarah concludes with consolation. The Gemara taught that Jeremiah wrote the [book of Lamentations](#) ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 15a](#)), and as Jews read Lamentations on Tisha B'Av, this probably accounts for why a selection from Jeremiah begins the series of haftarot of admonition. ([Michael Fishbane](#). *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarot*, 262. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2002. [ISBN 0-8276-0691-5](#).)

### **[[edit](#)] Further reading**

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

### **[[edit](#)] Biblical**

- [Genesis 28:20–22](#) (vow).

- [Exodus 20:7](#) (vows).
- [Leviticus 5:1–10](#) (vows); [19:12](#) (vows); [27:1–25](#) (valuation of vows).
- [Numbers 6:1–8](#) (vows); [10:1–10](#) (trumpets); [13:1–14:45](#) (the spies); [18:8–31](#) (sharing with the priests and Levites); [21:2](#) (vow); [25:16–18](#) (Midianites).
- [Deuteronomy 3:12–20](#) (Reubenites and Gadites); [23:22–24](#) (vows).
- [Joshua 1:12–18](#) (Reubenites and Gadites); [13:8–32](#); [22:1–34](#) (Reubenites and Gadites).
- [Judges 6:1–7:25](#) (Midianites).
- [1 Samuel 1:11](#) (vow); [30:21–25](#) (division of booty).
- [Psalms 9:13](#) (God avenges); [22:26](#) (paying vows); [37:29](#) (the righteous shall inherit the land); [49:12](#) (men call their lands after their own names); [50:14](#) (paying vows); [51:4](#) (washing); [66:13–14](#) (performing vows); [72:14](#) (value of lives); [94:1](#) (vengeance belongs to God); [106:28–31](#) (Peor); [116:15](#) (value of lives).
- [Ecclesiastes 5:3–6](#) (vows).





## Josephus

### [[edit](#)] Early nonrabbinic

- [Josephus](#), *Antiquities of the Jews* 4:7:1, 3. Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 113–14. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).
- [Matthew 5:33–37](#) (vows).
- [Qur'an](#): [2:224–226](#); [5:89](#); [9:12–13](#); [16:91–92](#), [94](#); [66:2](#) (vows).

### [[edit](#)] Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): [Nedarim 1:1–11:11](#); [Kiddushin 3:4](#); [Mishnah Shevuot 1:1–8:6](#). Land of Israel, circa 200 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 406–30, 492. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- [Tosefta](#): [Peah 4:15](#); [Terumot 5:8](#); [Nedarim 1:1–7:8](#); [Sotah 7:17](#); [Keritot 4:15](#). Land of Israel, circa 300 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:73, 161, 785–805, 864; 2:1571. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).



## Talmud

- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Bikkurim 6a. Land of Israel, circa 400 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vol. 12. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2008.
- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 8b, 24a, 32a](#); [Shabbat 16b, 58b, 60a, 63b–64a, 157a](#); [Eruvin 63a](#); [Pesachim 13a, 66b](#); [Yoma 38a, 63b](#); [Moed Katan 9a, 16a](#); [Chagigah 10a](#); [Yevamot 29b, 53a, 87a–b, 93a, 108a](#); [Ketubot 40b, 46b–47a, 49a, 52a, 57b, 59a–b, 60b–61a, 70a, 71a–b, 74a, 101a, 102b](#); [Nedarim 2a–91b](#); [Nazir 4b, 12b, 20b, 21b, 23a, 37b, 38b, 61a, 62b](#); [Sotah 3a, 13b, 43a](#); [Gittin 35b, 75a, 85a](#); [Kiddushin 3b, 61a, 78a, 81b](#); [Bava Kamma 25b, 61a](#); [Bava Metzia 94a, 96a](#); [Bava Batra 2b, 120b](#); [Sanhedrin 39a, 90a, 106a](#); [Makkot 11a, 16a](#); [Shevuot 20a–21a, 26a](#); [Avodah Zarah 67b, 75b](#); [Zevachim 97a, 113b](#); [Menachot 77b](#); [Chullin 25b](#); [Arakhin 20b](#); [Temurah 6b, 13a](#); [Keritot 6b](#); [Niddah 46a–b](#). Babylonia, 6th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.



Rashi

## [\[edit\]](#) Medieval

- [Rashi](#). *Commentary*. [Numbers 30–32](#). Troyes, France, late 11th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 4:369–401. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1997. [ISBN 0-89906-029-3](#).
- [Numbers Rabbah](#) 22:1–9. 12th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Numbers*. Translated by Judah J. Slotki. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Zohar 3:241b](#). Spain, late 13th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Zohar*. Translated by Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon. 5 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1934.

## [\[edit\]](#) Modern





## Hirsch

- [Samson Raphael Hirsch](#). *Horeb: A Philosophy of Jewish Laws and Observances*. Translated by Isidore Grunfeld, 276, 314–52. London: Soncino Press, 1962. Reprinted 2002 [ISBN 0-900689-40-4](#). Originally published as *Horeb, Versuche über Jissroel's Pflichten in der Zerstreuung*. Germany, 1837.
- Carol L. Meyers. “The Roots of Restriction: Women in Early Israel.” *Biblical Archaeologist*. 41 (3) (Sept. 1978).
- [Jacob Milgrom](#). *The JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, 250–77, 488–96. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990. [ISBN 0-8276-0329-0](#).
- [Mary Douglas](#). *In the Wilderness: The Doctrine of Defilement in the Book of Numbers*, xix, 60, 86, 100, 103, 106, 108–10, 112, 120–21, 123, 126, 135, 141, 147, 160, 170–71, 183, 185–86, 199, 218, 222, 242. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. Reprinted 2004. [ISBN 0-19-924541-X](#).
- Baruch A. Levine. *Numbers 21–36*, 4A:423–507. New York: Anchor Bible, 2000. [ISBN 0-385-41256-8](#).
- Suzanne A. Brody. “Gag Rule.” In *Dancing in the White Spaces: The Yearly Torah Cycle and More Poems*, 101. Shelbyville, Kentucky: Wasteland Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-60047-112-9](#).

## [\[edit\]](#) External links

### [\[edit\]](#) Texts

- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)

### [\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion](#)
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- [Orthodox Union](#)
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- [Oz Ve Shalom — Netivot Shalom](#)
- [Pardes from Jerusalem](#)
- [RabbiShimon.com](#)
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- [Reconstructionist Judaism](#)
- [Sephardic Institute](#)
- [Shiur.com](#)
- [613.org Jewish Torah Audio](#)
- [Tanach Study Center](#)
- [Teach613.org, Torah Education at Cherry Hill](#)
- [Torah from Dixie](#)
- [Torah.org](#)
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- [United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism](#)

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# Masei

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*"Masse" redirects here. For the surname, see [Massé](#). For the billiards technique, see [Massé](#).*

**Masei**, **Mas'ei**, or **Masse** (מַסְעֵי — [Hebrew](#) for “journeys,” the second word, and the first distinctive word, in the parashah) is the 43rd [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parashah*) in the annual [Jewish cycle of Torah reading](#) and the 10th and last in the [book of Numbers](#). It constitutes [Numbers 33:1–36:13](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) generally read it in July or August.

The [lunisolar Hebrew calendar](#) contains up to 55 Saturdays, the exact number varying between 50 in common years and 54 or 55 in leap years. In leap years (for example, 2011 and 2014), parashat Masei is read separately. In common years (for example, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2018), parashat Masei is combined with the previous parashah, [Matot](#), to help achieve the number of weekly readings needed.

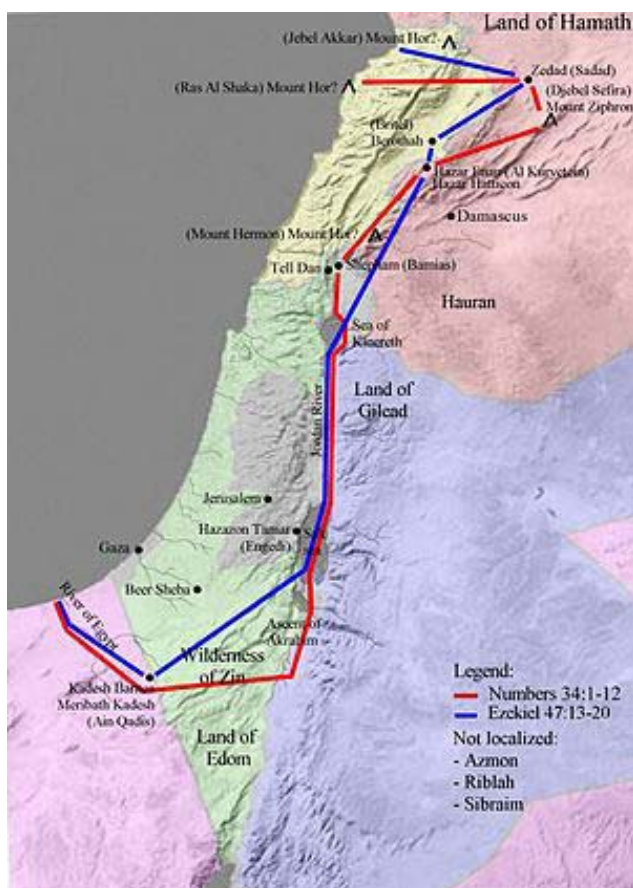


Encampment of Israelites, Mount Sinai (1836 intaglio print after [J. M. W. Turner](#) from *Landscape illustrations of the Bible*)

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## [\[edit\]](#) Summary



The [Land of Israel](#) as defined in [Numbers 34:1–12](#)

## [\[edit\]](#) Stations of the Israelites' journeys

[Moses](#) recorded the various [journeys](#) of the [Israelites](#) from the land of [Egypt](#) as directed by [God](#) as follows: They journeyed from [Rameses](#) to [Sukkoth](#) to [Etham](#) to [Pi-hahiroth](#) to [Marah](#) to [Elim](#) to the [Sea of Reeds](#) to [the wilderness of Sin](#) to [Dophkah](#) to

[Alush](#) to [Rephidim](#) to the [wilderness of Sinai](#) to [Kibroth-hattaavah](#) to [Hazereth](#) to [Rithmah](#) to [Rimmon-perez](#) to [Libnah](#) to [Rissah](#) to [Kehelath](#) to [Mount Shepher Haradah](#) to [Makheloth](#) to [Tahath](#) to [Terah](#) to [Mithkah](#) to [Hashmonah](#) to [Moseroth](#) to [Bene-jaakan](#) to [Hor-haggidgad](#) to [Jotbath](#) to [Abronah](#) to [Ezion-geber](#) to [Kadesh](#) to [Mount Hor](#). ([Numbers 33:1–37](#).) At God's command, [Aaron](#) ascended Mount Hor and died there, at the age of 123 years. ([Numbers 33:38–39](#).) They journeyed from Mount Hor to [Zalmonah](#) to [Punon](#) to [Obboth](#) to [Iye-abarim](#) to [Dibongad](#) to [Almon-diblathaim](#) to the hills of [Abarim](#) to the [steppes](#) of [Moab](#). ([Numbers 33:41–49](#).)

### **[edit] Instructions for taking the land**

In the steppes of Moab, God told Moses to direct the Israelites that when they crossed the [Jordan](#) into [Canaan](#), they were to dispossess all the inhabitants of the [land](#), destroy all their figured objects, [molten images](#), and [cult](#) places, and take possession of and settle in the land. ([Numbers 33:50–53](#).) They were to apportion the land among themselves by lot, [clan](#) by clan, with the share varying with the size of the group. ([Numbers 33:54](#).) But God warned that if the Israelites did not dispossess the inhabitants of the land, those whom they allowed to remain would become [stings](#) in their [eyes](#) and [thorns](#) in their sides, and would harass the Israelites in the land, so that God would do to the Israelites what God had planned to do to the inhabitants of the land. ([Numbers 33:55–56](#).) God then told Moses to instruct the Israelites in the boundaries of the land, which included the



[Dead Sea](#), the [wilderness of Zin](#), the [Wadi of Egypt](#), the [Mediterranean Sea](#), Mount Hor, the eastern slopes of the [Sea of Galilee](#), and the River Jordan. ([Numbers 34:1–12](#).) Moses instructed the Israelites that the [tribe of Reuben](#), the [tribe of Gad](#), and the half-[tribe of Manasseh](#) had received their portions across the Jordan. ([Numbers 34:13–15](#).) God told Moses the names of the men through whom the Israelites were to apportioned the land: [Eleazar](#), [Joshua](#), and a chieftain named from each tribe. ([Numbers 34:16–29](#).)

### [[edit](#)] Cities for the Levites and refuge



Cities of Refuge (illustration from a Bible card published 1901 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

God told Moses to instruct the Israelites to assign the [Levites](#) out of the other tribes' holdings towns and pasture land for 2,000 [cubits](#) outside the town wall in each direction. ([Numbers 35:1–5.](#)) The Israelites were to assign the Levites 48 towns in all, of which 6 were to be cities of [refuge](#) to which a [manslayer](#) could flee. ([Numbers 35:6–7.](#)) The Israelites were to take more towns from the larger tribes and fewer from the smaller. ([Numbers 35:8.](#)) Three of the six cities of refuge were to be designated east of the Jordan, and the other three were to be designated in the land of Canaan. ([Numbers 35:14.](#))

The [cities of refuge](#) were to serve as places to which a slayer who had killed a person unintentionally could flee from the avenger, so that the slayer might not die without a [trial](#) before the assembly. ([Numbers 35:9–12.](#)) Anyone, however, who struck and killed another with an iron object, stone tool, or wood tool was to be considered a murderer, and was to be put to death. ([Numbers 35:16–18.](#)) The blood-avenger was to put the murderer to death upon encounter. ([Numbers 35:19.](#)) Similarly, if the killer pushed or struck the victim by hand in hate or hurled something at the victim on purpose and death resulted, the assailant was to be put to death as a murderer. ([Numbers 35:20–21.](#)) But if the slayer pushed the victim without malice aforethought, hurled an object at the victim unintentionally, or inadvertently dropped on the victim any deadly object of stone, and death resulted — without the victim being an enemy of the slayer and without the slayer seeking the victim harm — then the assembly was to decide between the slayer and the blood-avenger. ([Numbers 35:22–24.](#))

The assembly was to protect the slayer from the blood-avenger, and the assembly was to restore the slayer to the city of refuge to which the slayer fled, and there the slayer was to remain until the death of the [high priest](#). ([Numbers 35:25](#).) But if the slayer ever left the city of refuge, and the blood-avenger came upon the slayer outside the city limits, then there would be no bloodguilt if the blood-avenger killed the slayer. ([Numbers 35:26–27](#).) The slayer was to remain inside the city of refuge until the death of the high priest, after which the slayer could return to his land. ([Numbers 35:28](#).) A slayer could be executed only on the evidence of more than one witness. ([Numbers 35:30](#).) The Israelites were not to accept a ransom for the life of a murderer guilty of a [capital](#) crime; the murderer was to be put to death. ([Numbers 35:31](#).) Similarly, the Israelites were not to accept ransom in lieu of flight to a city of refuge, enabling a slayer to return to live on the slayer's land before the death of the high priest. ([Numbers 35:32](#).) Bloodshed polluted the land, and only the blood of the one who shed it could make expiation for the bloodshed. ([Numbers 35:33](#).)





The Daughters of Zelophehad (illustration from the 1908 *Bible and Its Story Taught by One Thousand Picture Lessons*)

### **[[edit](#)] The daughters of Zelophehad**

Kinsmen of Zelophehad, a man of the tribe of Manasseh who had died without a son (see [Numbers 27:1–11](#) and parshat [Pinchas](#)), appealed to Moses and the chieftains regarding [Zelophehad's daughters](#), to whom God had commanded Moses to assign land. ([Numbers 36:1–2.](#)) Zelophehad's kinsmen expressed the concern that if Zelophehad's daughters married men from another Israelite tribe, their land would be cut off from Manasseh's ancestral portion and be added to the portion of the husbands' tribe. ([Numbers 36:3.](#)) At God's bidding, Moses instructed the Israelites that the daughters of Zelophehad could marry only men from their father's tribe, so that no inheritance would pass from one tribe to another. ([Numbers 36:6–7.](#)) And Moses announced the general rule that every daughter who inherited a share was required to marry someone from her father's tribe, in order to preserve each tribe's ancestral share. ([Numbers 36:8–9.](#)) The daughters of Zelophehad did as God had commanded Moses, and they married [cousins](#), men of the tribe of Manasseh. ([Numbers 36:10–12.](#))



The Ark Passes Over the Jordan (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

## [\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 33

The [Gemara](#) taught that while the Israelites were in the Jordan River with the water standing up in a heap (as reported in [Joshua 3:14–17](#)), Joshua told them that they were crossing the Jordan on condition that they would disinherit the inhabitants of the land, as [Numbers 33:53](#) says: “Then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you.” Joshua told them that if they did this, it would be well and good; otherwise, the water would return and drown them. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 34a.](#))

Interpreting [Numbers 26:53](#), [26:55](#), and [33:54](#), the Gemara noted a dispute over whether the land of Israel was apportioned

according to those who came out of Egypt or according to those who went into the land of Israel. It was taught in a [Baraita](#) that [Rabbi Josiah](#) said that the land of Israel was apportioned according to those who came out of Egypt, as [Numbers 26:55](#) says, “according to the names of the tribes of *their fathers* they shall inherit.” The Gemara asked what then to make of [Numbers 26:53](#), which says, “Unto *these* the land shall be divided for an inheritance.” The Gemara proposed that “unto these” meant adults, to the exclusion of minors. But [Rabbi Jonathan](#) taught that the land was apportioned according to those who entered the land, for [Numbers 26:53](#) says, “Unto *these* the land shall be divided for an inheritance.” The Gemara posited that according to this view, [Numbers 26:55](#) taught that the manner of inheritance of the land of Israel differed from all other modes of inheritance in the world. For in all other modes of inheritance in the world, the living inherit from the dead, but in this case, the dead inherited from the living. Rabbi [Simeon ben Eleazar](#) taught a third view — that the land was divided both according to those who left Egypt and also according to those who entered the land of Israel, so as to carry out both verses. The Gemara explained that according to this view, one among those who came out of Egypt received a share among those who came out of Egypt, and one who entered the land of Israel received a share among those who entered the land. And one who belonged to both categories received a share among both categories. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 117a–b.](#))

## [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 35

Chapter 2 of tractate [Makkot](#) in the [Mishnah](#), [Tosefta](#), [Jerusalem Talmud](#), and Babylonian [Talmud](#) interpreted the laws of the cities of refuge in [Exodus 21:12–14](#), [Numbers 35:1–34](#), [Deuteronomy 4:41–43](#), and [19:1–13](#). (Mishnah Makkot 2:1–8; Tosefta Makkot 2:1–3:10; Jerusalem Talmud Makkot; [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 7a–13a](#).)

The Mishnah taught that those who killed in error went into banishment. One would go into banishment if, for example, while one was pushing a roller on a roof, the roller slipped over, fell, and killed someone. One would go into banishment if while one was lowering a cask, it fell down and killed someone. One would go into banishment if while coming down a ladder, one fell and killed someone. But one would *not* go into banishment if while pulling *up* the roller it fell back and killed someone, or while *raising* a bucket the rope snapped and the falling bucket killed someone, or while going *up* a ladder one fell down and killed someone. The Mishnah's general principle was that whenever the death occurred in the course of a downward movement, the culpable person went into banishment, but if the death did not occur in the course of a downward movement, the person did not go into banishment. If while chopping wood, the iron slipped from the ax handle and killed someone, [Rabbi](#) taught that the person did not go into banishment, but the sages said that the person did go into banishment. If from the split log rebounding killed someone, Rabbi said that the person went into banishment,

but the sages said that the person did not go into banishment.  
(Mishnah Makkot 2:1; [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 7a–b.](#))

Rabbi Jose bar Judah taught that to begin with, they sent a slayer to a city of refuge, whether the slayer killed intentionally or not. Then the court sent and brought the slayer back from the city of refuge. The Court executed whomever the court found guilty of a capital crime, and the court acquitted whomever the court found not guilty of a capital crime. The court restored to the city of refuge whomever the court found liable to banishment, as [Numbers 35:25](#) ordained, “And the congregation shall restore him to the city of refuge from where he had fled.” (Mishnah Makkot 2:6; [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 9b.](#)) [Numbers 35:25](#) also says, “The manslayer . . . shall dwell therein until the death of the high priest, who was anointed with the holy oil,” but the Mishnah taught that the death of a high priest who had been anointed with the holy anointing oil, the death of a high priest who had been consecrated by the many vestments, or the death of a high priest who had retired from his office each equally made possible the return of the slayer. Rabbi Judah said that the death of a priest who had been anointed for war also permitted the return of the slayer. Because of these laws, mothers of high priests would provide food and clothing for the slayers in cities of refuge so that the slayers might not pray for the high priest’s death.  
(Mishnah Makkot 2:6; [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 11a.](#)) If the high priest died at the conclusion of the slayer’s trial, the slayer did not go into banishment. If, however, the high priests died before the trial was concluded and another high priest was



appointed in his stead and then the trial concluded, the slayer returned home after the new high priest's death. (Mishnah Makkot 2:6; [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 11b.](#))

### [\[edit\]](#) Numbers chapter 36

Chapter 8 of tractate [Bava Batra](#) in the Mishnah and Babylonian Talmud and chapter 7 of tractate Bava Batra in the [Tosefta](#) interpreted the laws of inheritance in [Numbers 27:1–11](#) and [36:1–9](#). (Mishnah Bava Batra 8:1–8; Tosefta Bava Batra 7:1–18; [Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 108a–39b.](#))

A Baraita taught that Zelophehad's daughters were [wise](#), Torah [students](#), and [righteous](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 119b.](#))

And a Baraita taught that Zelophehad's daughters were equal in merit, and that is why the order of their names varies between [Numbers 27:1](#) and [36:11](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 120a.](#))

According to the Gemara, Zelophehad's daughters demonstrated their righteousness in [Numbers 36:10–11](#) by marrying men who were fitting for them. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 119b.](#))

## [\[edit\]](#) Commandments



Moses Maimonides

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are 2 positive and 4 negative [commandments](#) in the parshah:

- To give the Levites cities to inhabit and their surrounding fields ([Numbers 35:2.](#))
- Not to kill the murderer before he stands trial ([Numbers 35:12](#))
- The court must send the accidental murderer to a city of refuge ([Numbers 35:25.](#))
- That a witness in a trial for a capital crime should not speak in judgment ([Numbers 35:30.](#))
- Not to accept monetary restitution to atone for the murderer ([Numbers 35:31.](#))

- Not to accept monetary restitution instead of being sent to a city of refuge ([Numbers 35:32.](#))

(Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah, Positive Commandments 183, 225; Negative Commandments 291, 292, 295, 296.](#) Cairo, Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 1:196, 239; 2:271–72, 275–76. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 4:216–35. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1988. [ISBN 0-87306-457-7.](#))

## [\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is:

- for [Ashkenazi Jews](#): [Jeremiah 2:4–28](#) & [3:4](#).
- for [Sephardi Jews](#): [Jeremiah 2:4–28](#) & [4:1–2](#).

When parshah Masei is combined with parshah Matot, the haftarah is the haftarah for parshah Masei.

When the parshah coincides with Shabbat Rosh Chodesh (as it does in 2008), [Isaiah 66:1](#) & [66:23](#) are added to the haftarah.

## [\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

### [\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Exodus 21:12–14](#).

- [Numbers 27:1–11](#) (Zelophehad’s daughters).



Philo

- [Deuteronomy 4:41–43; 17:6; 19:1–13.](#)
- [Joshua 17:3–6](#) (Zelophehad’s daughters); [20:1–9.](#)

### **[[edit](#)] Early nonrabbinic**

- [Philo](#), [Allegorical Interpretation](#) 2:10:35; [That the Worse Is Wont To Attack the Better](#) 40:147; [On the Unchangableness of God](#) 37:183; [On Drunkenness](#) 30:114; [On the Confusion of Tongues](#) 13:55; [On the Migration of Abraham](#) 25:139; [On the Change of Names](#) 37:203; [On Dreams, That They Are God-Sent](#) 2:4:30; [The Special Laws](#) 1:32:158–61.] [Alexandria](#), Egypt, early 1st Century C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [Charles Duke Yonge](#), 41, 128, 173, 217, 239, 266, 358, 390, 548–49. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1993. [ISBN 0-943575-93-1](#).





## Josephus

- [Josephus](#), *Antiquities of the Jews* 4:4:3, 7; 4:7:4–5. Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 106–07, 114. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).

## [\[edit\]](#) Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): Shekalim 3:2; Sotah 5:3; [Kiddushin 3:4](#); Bava Batra 8:1–8; [Sanhedrin 1:6](#); Makkot 2:1–8. Land of Israel, circa 200 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#). New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- [Tosefta](#): Terumot 2:12; Challah 2:11; Bikkurim 1:2; Sotah 4:8, 5:13, 8:5; Bava Kamma 8:19; Bava Batra 7:1–18; Sanhedrin 3:7, 4:1; Makkot 2:1–3:10; Bekhorot 6:19; Keritot 4:3. Land of Israel, circa 300 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).
- [Sifre](#) on Numbers 35:28. Land of Israel, circa 250–350 C.E.



## Talmud

- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Sheviit 44a, 47b; Challah 15b, 18a, 44b–45a; Makkot 1a–. Land of Israel, circa 400 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 6b, 11. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006–2009.
- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 4b, 9a](#); [Shabbat 33a](#); [Eruvin 35b, 51a, 55b, 56b–57a](#); [Pesachim 8b, 12a](#); [Yoma 73a, 75b](#); [Rosh Hashanah 2b–3a, 26a](#); [Taanit 30b](#); [Megillah 11a](#); [Moed Katan 5a](#); [Yevamot 6b, 13b](#); [Ketubot 33b, 35a, 37b](#); [Nedarim 81a, 87b](#); [Sotah 27b, 34a, 47b, 48b](#); [Gittin 8a](#); [Kiddushin 42a](#); [Bava Kamma 4a, 26a–b, 28a, 32b, 45a, 83b, 86b–87a, 91a](#); [Bava Metzia 31b](#); [Bava Batra 17a, 24b, 100b, 108a–39b, 159b](#); [Sanhedrin 3b, 10a, 13b, 15b, 18a, 29a, 32a, 33b–34a, 35b, 45b, 49a, 53a, 69a, 72b, 76b, 77b, 84b, 91a](#); [Makkot 2a, 5a–6a, 7a–13a](#); [Shevuot 7b–8a, 33b](#); [Avodah Zarah 9b](#); [Horayot 11b](#); [Zevachim 117a](#); [Bekhorot 55a](#); [Arakhin 33b](#); [Temurah 16a](#); [Keritot 26a](#). Babylonia, 6th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr,

Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols.  
Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

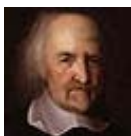


Rashi

### [[edit](#)] Medieval

- [Rashi](#). *Commentary*. [Numbers 33–36](#). [Troyes](#), France, late 11th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 4:403–34. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1997. [ISBN 0-89906-029-3](#).
- [Numbers Rabbah](#) 23:1–14. 12th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Numbers*. Translated by Judah J. Slotki. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Zohar](#) 1:114a; 2:207a. Spain, late 13th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Zohar*. Translated by Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon. 5 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1934.

## [\[edit\]](#) Modern



Hobbes

- [Thomas Hobbes](#). *Leviathan*, [Review & Conclusion](#). England, 1651. Reprint edited by [C. B. Macpherson](#), 724. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1982. [ISBN 0140431950](#).
- [Thomas Mann](#). *Joseph and His Brothers*. Translated by [John E. Woods](#), 109, 111, 447. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. [ISBN 1-4000-4001-9](#). Originally published as *Joseph und seine Brüder*. Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer Verlag, 1943.
- Bernard F. Batto. “Red Sea or Reed Sea? How the Mistake Was Made and What Yam Sûp Really Means.” [Biblical Archaeology Review](#), 10:04. July/Aug. 1984.
- [Jacob Milgrom](#). *The JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, 277–99, 497–512. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990. [ISBN 0-8276-0329-0](#).
- [Mary Douglas](#). *In the Wilderness: The Doctrine of Defilement in the Book of Numbers*, 86, 103, 108–11, 113, 117, 120, 123,



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