

## SIDRA OF THE WEEK : במדבר

1. This week's Sidra is the first in the fourth *Sefer* of the Five Books of the Torah. It treats of the counting of the Jewish People (and thereby gives it its name "*Chumash haPekkuddim*" or "Numbers"); how we were encamped during our time in the Wilderness of Sinai on our way out from Egypt to Eretz Yisroel; the order in which we broke camp and travelled; some of the duties of the different houses of the Tribe of Levi; and the names of those in charge.
2. In the same way as a king newly enthroned wishes to get to know his subjects so too before HaShem came to dwell amongst us in the recently completed Sanctuary, HaShem commanded Mosheh to take a count of His People. By ordering the counting of the People of Israel — every man aged twenty years or more was to be included — HaShem showed that each man standing at the head of his household, prepared to place himself with his family within the ranks of HaShem's People, under the rule of HaShem and His Torah, is precious to Him.
3. The method of counting, too, is indicative of the importance of each person: The people were not to be counted directly, for this could imply that each is no more than a number. Instead, the Torah commands that each man gives a token (a half-Shekel) and these tokens are counted. The silver thus collected goes towards the upkeep of the Mishkan HaShem, and thus symbolizes how the Jewish People in its totality becomes the Abode of the Divine Presence.
4. The Tribe of Levi, however, is not included in the general count: as befits their special status as "the Legion of the King" they are counted separately. Similarly, whereas the Tribes of Israel were encamped round the Mishkan at a distance, the Levites, the guardians of the Sanctuary, encamped closer to the Mishkan. The position of each Tribe's camp is given in this week's Sidra (see PLAN below) and the procedure of breaking camp and travelling is also described.
5. As reward for their unbroken loyalty to Him, HaShem commands the Levites to be the assistants to the Kohanim instead of the firstborns of the Children of Israel, and their induction into their Divine Service and their various duties are described.

**For the explanation of the Haftorah of Sidra במדבר please go to HAFTORAHS.**