

# CHILDREN GUARANTEE

*by Shlomo Katz*

## Parshas Bamidbar

## Children Guarantee

**Bamidbar**  
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Today's Learning:  
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Yevamot 16  
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Pesachim 41

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Parashat Bemidbar, which is devoted in part to the genealogy of the Jewish People, is nearly always read on the Shabbat preceding Shavuot. A number of midrashim observe that this is not coincidental. One midrash states, for example, that the Torah was given to Bnei Yisrael because of their genealogy.

R' Shmuel Guenzler z"l (rabbi of Oyber Visheve, Hungary; died 1911) explains in light of another midrash which states: When Yisrael stood at Har Sinai, Hashem asked them, "Who will guarantee your observance of Torah?" Bnei Yisrael answered, "Our forefathers," but Hashem responded that those were not adequate guarantors. "Our children," Bnei Yisrael then said, and Hashem responded, "Your children are certainly good guarantors." This, the midrash concludes, is the meaning of the verse (Tehilim 8:3), "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings you have established oz / strength." ["Oz" refers to the Torah, as is written (Tehilim 29:11), "Hashem will give oz to His nation."] And, this,

writes R' Guenzler, is the meaning of the midrash that the Torah was given because of our genealogy, i.e., our children.

However, this itself requires explanation. How do our children serve as guarantors of our mitzvah observance? R' Guenzler explains further:

Yet another midrash teaches that Hashem sent His Torah into this world only on the condition that He could reside near it, so-to-speak. This is why the Mishkan and, later, the Bet Hamikdash, were built. But what about when there is no Bet Hamikdash? The Gemara (Shabbat 119b) teaches that the world exists in the merit of the Torah study of young children. They are the "mishkan." Why is the Torah study of young children so precious? After all, a seasoned adult scholar studies on a far deeper and more meaningful level! Nevertheless, the Torah uttered by the mouths of children - mouths not yet sullied by sins such as lashon hara (because the sins of children do not "count") - is very dear to Hashem. (Meishiv Nefesh)

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*"Take a census of the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael according to their families, according to their fathers' household, by number of the names, every male according to their head count." (Bamidbar 1:2)*

R' Amram Zvi Gruenwald z"l (dayan / rabbinical court judge in Oyber Visheve; later rabbi in the Fernwald Displaced Persons camp) observes: At the end of last week's parashah we read (Vayikra 27:33-34), "He shall not distinguish between good and bad and he should not substitute for it . . . These are the commandments that Hashem commanded Moshe to Bnei Yisrael on Har Sinai." Verse 33 teaches that when one sets aside Ma'aser Beheimah / a tithe from his animals, he must give each tenth animal regardless of its quality. Then, verse 34, by placing "These are the commandments . . .," right after the just-mentioned halachah, teaches us to have the same attitude toward all mitzvot. This alludes to the Mishnah (Avot ch.2), "Be as careful with a seemingly light mitzvah as with a seemingly strict mitzvah, for you do not know the reward associated with each mitzvah." Finally, our verse, by being placed next to the preceding two verses, teaches us to practice a similar attitude towards all people.

(Zichron Amram Zvi)

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*"And with you shall be one ish / man from each tribe; ish / a man who is a leader of his father's household." (Bamidbar 1:4)*

The word "ish" commonly denotes a person of spiritual stature. Why? R' Chaim Yehuda Meir Hager z"l (the Vishever Rebbe in Tel Aviv; died 1968) explains: The Mishnah (end of Masechet Uktzin) teaches, "Hashem is destined to reward each tzaddik with 310 worlds." Our Sages also teach that: "One hour of Torah and good deeds in this world is worth more than an entire lifetime of Olam Haba." The gematria of ish equals 311, one more than the number of worlds in the tzaddik's reward. This

signifies the Torah and good deeds -- more valuable than Olam Haba -- that the man of stature performs.

(Zecher Chaim)

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*"These were the kru'ai / ones summoned by the assembly, the leaders of their fathers' tribes, they are the heads of Israel's thousands."* (Bemidbar 1:16)

The word kru'ai, which should be spelled "kuf-raish-vav-aleph-yud," is in fact spelled with an extra yud instead of the vav, as if it said kree'ai. Why?

R' Eliezer David Gruenwald z"l (rabbi and rosh yeshiva of Oyber Visheve and other Hungarian towns; died 1928) explains:

The greatest Jewish leaders have also been the most humble. The most obvious example is Moshe Rabbeinu, about whom we read (Bemidbar 12:3), "Now the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth." Likewise, King David was very humble and said about himself (Tehilim 22:7), "I am a worm and not a man."

At the beginning of the Book of Vaykira, the word "Vayikra" ("He called [to Moshe]") is written with a small letter aleph, as if the word really was "Vayikar" ("He happened [upon Moshe]"). Hashem allowed Moshe to write the Torah this way in deference to Moshe's humility. Similarly, here, writes R' Gruenwald, writing that the leaders of the tribes were "kree'ai" rather than "kru'ai" implies a certain degree of happenstance, in deference to their humility.

(Keren L'David)

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*"Nadav and Avihu died before Hashem when they offered an alien fire before Hashem in the Wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children."* (Bemidbar 3:4)

This verse mentions two of the reasons that our Sages give for why Nadav and Avihu died: (1) they introduced an "alien" fire onto the altar in the Mishkan, and (2) they never married.

R' Mendel Hager z"l (rabbi, rosh yeshiva, and chassidic rebbe of Oyber Visheve; died 1941) explains that these are really two sides of one coin. Why did Nadav and Avihu never marry? Because they thought that earthly matters such as marriage have no place in the lives of people dedicated to holiness, such as themselves. Of course, they were wrong, as that is not the Torah's attitude. Indeed, their error may be seen in the halachah that even though G-d sends a fire from heaven to burn on the altar, man is obligated to light a fire there as well. The Torah in fact expects earthly matters to be elevated to spirituality, not to be shunned entirely.

Given Nadav and Avihu's attitude, however, it was inconsistent for them to introduce an earthly fire

onto the altar. That is why they were punished.

(She'airit Menachem)

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