

Parsha Ponders

Pinchas | July 21, 2022 | 22 Tammuz 5782

Beyond our assumptions¹

אלה בני בנימין למשפחותם ופקודיהם חמשה וארבעים אלף ושש מאות: אלה בני דן למשפחותם וגו' ארבעה וששים אלף וארבע מאות

These are the children of Binyomin according to their families: their count came to 45,600. These are the children of Dan according to their families...64,400²

Parshas Pinchas contains yet another census. No wonder this is called the book of Numbers³. If we analyze the counts of the individual tribes, we'll notice some interesting patterns and observations. Something noteworthy is the adjacent counts of the tribes of Binyomin and Dan. The total number for the tribe of Binyomin was forty-five thousand, whereas the total number for the tribe of Dan was sixty-four thousand. Why is this significant?

If we look closely at the families of Binyomin and Dan, we'll notice a big discrepancy. Binyomin, the son of Yaakov, had ten sons. As such, the family heads of the tribe numbered ten. Dan, on the other hand, only had one son. And yet, this one son merited to have more descendants than the ten sons of Binyomin. This is the exact opposite of what would have been expected. More than that, who was the one son of Dan? His name was Chushim⁴, which literally means "senses". Our Sages teach us⁵ that he was deaf.

We learn from here that our superficial understanding of things isn't always correct. We look at someone with one kid who is deaf, we immediately assume that not much will come from him. We see a man with ten sons, we immediately assume his family is destined for greatness. What ended up happening? That single deaf son produced more offspring than Binyomin's ten sons. If Hashem wants Dan's descendants to be more prosperous, they will, despite our limited understanding of how things "should" play out.

The same is true in all aspects of our lives. Someone with a lot of wealth might end up struggling to pay their bills, due to lawsuits or government fines. Someone with meagerly wages might live very comfortably, as they are happy with their lot⁶. We can't assume things will play out the way we think they will. If Hashem wants it to end up a certain way, it will, regardless of the present circumstances. Something to always keep in mind.

Good Shabbos

¹ Based on Chofetz Chaim Al HaTorah to Numbers 26:41-43

² Numbers *loc. cit.*

³ In fact, like all the Greek names of the five books of Moses, the book of Numbers comes from its name in Rabbinic literature: *Sefer HaPekudim* (*inter alia*, Yoma 7:1; Sotah 36b; Menachos 45b; Bechoros 4a)

⁴ Genesis 46:23. In Numbers 26:42,43 he is called Shucham (see Rashi *ad. loc.*)

⁵ Sotah 13a; Midrash HaGadol to Genesis 49:21; Midrash Lekach Tov *ad. loc.*; Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer Chapter 39 adds that he was also mute, and Radal *ad. loc.* § 69 explains that he could still communicate with sign language. Cf. Bereishis Rabbah 93:7 and Midrash HaGadol to Genesis 44:18, which sound like he could hear. However, Maharzu and Radal *ad. loc.* say that was an exceptional miracle

⁶ Avos 4:1