The name of this parashah; “B’midbar”, means “in the desert”. As the Children of Yisra’el continue in their desert wanderings something had to keep them going. Think about it, the Children of Yisra’el were walking through a wilderness and a desert that had very little creature comforts (including very little food and water). Sound fun? To many of them it didn’t seem logical to wander through a desert wasteland when everything they needed was back in Egypt. Likewise, with God’s people today, we sometimes go through dry times in our lives and God’s direction may not make sense to us. Sometimes in our lives it can feel like we are wandering through a desert. And, to some of us at certain points in our life perhaps following God feels like it is aimless, and tedious without much hope on the horizon. We may ask ourselves, “what am I doing?” Why am I doing this? We need something to keep us going, something to motivate us so that we continue putting one foot in front of the other, lest we give up. We need hope.

But, as we will see, Adonai gave Yisra’el all the hope they needed in the desert which they traveled. The Hebrew word for “hope” is “tikvah”. It can mean to bind together in the sense of a rope that is wound together. But, it can also mean to gather something together, and within that context it can mean to have a future expectation…A future expectation of a binding, or gathering together. The word can be used in a variety of contexts, but to me it means that when we are gathered to God, bound to Him, and wound about Him, we have the hope of also being gathered to Him in His future Kingdom. This is the ultimate hope for mankind and is the very reason for our existence. As we read the first four chapters of B’midbar (Numbers), as Am Yisra’el is given instruction to be wound around Adonai in a particular order, I believe He teaches us about this.

B’midbar (Numbers) 4:19 states, "...and you are to assign each one his task”. A few verses later in B’midbar 4:22 we read, "Take a census of the descendants of Gershon also, by clans and families". And again, a few verses later in B’midbar 4:24 we read, "The Gershon families are to be responsible for serving and for transporting loads". Furthermore, in B’midbar 4:49 we read, "According to Hashem’s order they were appointed by Moshe, each one to his specific service or work. They were also enumerated, as HaShem had ordered Moshe". As we read this, Adonai’s Torah seems to make a consistent connection between the census and each one being assigned their specific tasks, according God’s instruction. In this I believe we find part of our hope and purpose and our connection to Adonai.

We not only find the meaning of life and fulfillment in life when we walk in the instructions He has given us, but I believe this is part of the Biblical definition of what it looks like to
draw close and to cling to Adonai. It is not only through a cognitive faith, but through a
faith that results in Godly action that we cling to God. As Am Yisra'el traveled through the
desert towards the Land Of Promise, they clung to Adonai on all sides of Him. You can
circle the Mishkan (Tabernacle) as Adonai's garment, which has four corners. And as
HaShem, Yisra'el's Father traveled, they clung to Him upon all four sides of His garment,
with Him at their center. And, how did they maintain their grip upon Him as they traveled?
It was through the mechanism of His Torah. That is, through each one fulfilling the Torah
given to them. We have "tikvah" (hope) in God's promises because He always keeps them.
He never fails. He is faithful, even when we are not. And, this should be a source of hope in
our lives everyday. But, His promises and His hope go hand in hand with His Torah. We
must be bound to Him in accordance with His Torah. And, if we bind ourselves to Him
and cling to Him, and we are His children...He promises that He will not leave us or forsake
us.

The book of Ivrim (Hebrews) teaches us in chapter 11:1 that "faith is the substance of things
hoped for, the evidence of things not seen". The hope that we have manifests itself in what
we call, "faith". The Hebrew word for "faith" is "emunah", which really means to "trust".
Because of our hope we have in God's promises we place our trust in Him. And, when we
hope and trust in His promises and His Torah it will provide what we need to weather the
storms and trials of this life.

Even when things look hopeless, just as it may have looked to the woman with the chronic
issue of blood that plagued her, which we read about in Luke 8:43-44...Just as in hope she
clung to the corner of Yeshua's garment, the place where his tzitzit was placed, which
symbolically represented Adonai's Torah (B'midbar/Numbers 15:38), so too can we can
have hope in the God of Yisra'el when we cling to Him, because He is greater than all
things, and He has given us hope in His Torah...Indeed, He has given us hope in His
Yeshua. He is greater than the discouragements, the sins, and the obstacles that so easily
weigh us down and make us ineffective for His Kingdom. We may not be able to overcome
these things by ourselves in our own wisdom, but if we place our hope in Him...He can do it
for us. Even when we feel like we are in some of the most hopeless situations... all we have
to do is turn our eyes to the One whom created the world and everything in it. This is what
the Hebrew term "teshuvah" means. It means to turn our eyes from the things that are
distracting us in this world and turn to the One whom alone can give us "tikvah" in a world
that is fallen and in a world that provides so much discouragement on our journey.

The God Of Yisra'el has many wonderful promises and covenants that He will keep with
His people if we simply continue to put one foot in front of the other turning our eyes
towards Him. Besides the many miracles Adonai has performed in our own lives, the past
wonders that Adonai has performed should also be a source of hope for us as well. These
are also found in His Torah. Sometimes when we loose hope we need to remember all the
times past that God has intervened in the history of man and in the history of Yisra'el. And,
if we turn to Him in hope and trust, He will once again encourage us and deliver us from
whatever dry place of despair we have found ourselves in. But, we must cling to Him in the
place and in the family He has called us to, just as we read Yisra'el did in the first four
chapters of parshat B'midbar.

As for Yisra'el, as they traveled through the desert it was a day by day and moment by
moment endeavor as they clung to Adonai in accordance with His instructions. And, while
Adonai wants us to live for today, He also wants us to place our hope in a future that He
promises to us, and not to worry about the troubles that the world promises to give us tomorrow. The children of Yisra'el had “tikvah”, they had hope for the future. It was this “tikvah” that kept them putting one foot in front of the other through their desert journeys. Indeed, Adonai had renewed their hope because He had delivered them from Egypt as He has done for so many of us on a spiritual level. But, the hope and journey does not end there! We need that hope every day of our journey, thus we need to cling tightly to His Torah each and every day. And, we have many more miracles to look forward to if we patiently do this each day with all long-suffering.

We have the hope of a future reward greater than we could ever imagine or understand. As we read through parshat B'midbar I believe Moshe also had these hopes. The book of Ivrim (Hebrews) chapter 11:24-26 tells us, “By faith, Moshe, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Par'oh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill treatment with God's people, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a time; accounting the reproach of Messiah greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he looked to the reward”.

Moshe had hope in the future reward. In the first book to the Corinthians chapter 2:9 the Emissary Sha'ul (Paul) tells us, "But as it is written, "Things which an eye didn't see, and an ear didn't hear, which didn't enter into the heart of man, these God has prepared for those who love him". So, in other words, we can do our best to imagine how wonderful our future will be with God in His Kingdom, but our best efforts will pale in comparison to what Adonai has planned for His people. We are looking forward to a time when those who are faithful to the God of Yisra'el will rule and reign with His Son, Yeshua The Messiah. Our Rabbi and Messiah Yeshua tell us in Yochanan (John) 14:1-3, "Don't let your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. In my Father's house are many homes. If it weren't so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will receive you to myself; that where I am, you may be there also.” Adonai wants to encourage His people and if we continue with Him, in due time, He will give us that encouragement.

In the beginning of parshat B'midbar (1:2), and all throughout up to chapter 4:22 we read the following, “Take a census...”. The Hebrew phrase for "Take a census" in our passages is either "su et rosh" in 1:2 or "naso et rosh" in 4:22, which in both cases literally means to "lift up the heads". This phrase can have multiple meanings, but the positive aspect is that the people would be uplifted and exalted. Adonai was lifting up the heads of the various tribes of Yisra'el to prepare them to enter in the land of promise! Through His Torah, He was giving them hope for the future battles they would fight. In the book of Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) chapter 29:11 Adonai says, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says HaShem, thoughts of shalom, and not of evil, to give you hope in your latter end”. And, just as Adonai lifts up the heads of Yisra'el through His Torah, giving them hope...so too does Adonai lift up our head through the living Torah; Yeshua the Messiah. Likewise, in Tehillim (Psalms) 3:3 we are encouraged and given hope with the following words, "But you, HaShem, are a shield for me; you are my glory, you lift my head high".

As we revisit the concept of Adonai gathering Yisra'el around Him in a particular order, as He is lifting up the heads of the various tribes having them counted and organized...we do see that He instructs them to be gathered around the Mishkan, the dwelling place of Adonai, in a certain order. He is not only organizing them, but He is wrapping the hope of Yisra'el around His presence. Now I know that some people are against "organized religion", but this organization that we see Adonai instructing here really is a beautiful thing when it all
comes together. So too, there is a great beauty in the structure that Adonai orchestrates as He gathers His people around Him today so that He may dwell in our midst, as we are on our journey to the land of promise. But, to do this we must go to the place in which He has called us to. When this happens there is beauty and shalom within Adonai's assembly. I believe that this is one of the signs that the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) is not being quenched. For Adonai is a God of order. In 1Corinthians 14:33 Sha'ul (Paul) writes the following, “for God is not a God of disorder, but of shalom. As in all the assemblies of the holy ones”. Indeed, I believe this truth is reflected in our parashah.

As we do the things we were created to do this also creates hope for the future. As we seek to be at shalom with people in our congregation, and as we move forward, God will also be apart of the camp, which for Him includes the center. And, if He is dwelling in our center than it can be said that God is with us. And, that is something that also creates “tikvah”, the hope that fosters life in the congregation of Yisra'el. When the God of Yisra'el is our center than we will have “Emmanuel”. “Emmanuel” literally means “God With Us”, but as you know it is also a title for Yeshua The Messiah. This type of hope in God greatly helps to maintain our covenant with Him.

As we meditate on all of this, I believe there was visible sign that all of these truths formed. As the people of Yisra'el followed God's instructions, as they worked together in unity, and they were gathered around the dwelling place of God, they actually formed a visible shape. I believe that as Adonai looked down upon the camp of Yisra'el He saw a covenant people. From a bird's eye view the camp of Yisra'el, which was centered around the Mishkan, the dwelling place of God is said to have looked like a cross. Why would this be significant? Some point to the cross of Messiah, which I believe is certainly a profound truth. But, another profound reason I found this interesting was because when the people gathered in the prescribed formation...they also formed the shape of one of the ancient letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which I believe the cross of Messiah possibly also points to.

The Hebrew letter in question is the last character in the Hebrew aleph-bet, the “tav”. While our contemporary Hebrew looks a little different, in ancient times this Hebrew character “tav” resembled a cross +. Why may this be significant? The Hebrew letters are actually pictographs that relate information other than their intended sounds. In the case of the Hebrew letter “tav”, it symbolizes a “mark”, a “sign”, or a “covenant”. In one sense, with the Children of Yisra'el it was as if God was marking His spot, just as one may in a similar fashion mark an X on a map to designate the location of His valued treasure. For in Shemot (Exodus) 19:5 when God's people fulfilled His instructions He says the following; “Now if you will pay careful attention to what I say and keep my covenant, then you will be my own treasure from among all the peoples, for all the earth is mine”. Every time that Adonai looked down upon Yisra'el it was a visible sign that His people were in covenant with Him. But, if they didn't follow His instructions and didn't work with each other to do so...then that sign wouldn't be apparent.

If you have done “t’shuvah”, which includes turning from a life without God, a life without Torah, and you have faced God to seek a loving relationship with Him as your Heavenly Father, than you have also sought to enter into a covenant relationship with Him. From this point on you have “tikvah”, you have hope. And, regardless of what some may teach, it is not only the Jew that has this kind of “tikvah”. The Goyim, those of the Nations, are also called by the God of Yisra'el to enter into and become part of the camp of Yisra'el and partake in its covenants as we see in passages like Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 56 and Ephesians 2:11-
22. The scriptures make this clear from the beginning to the end. Whether we are Jewish or of Gentile origin we can enter into the covenant of Yisra'el and become part of the camp of God. If we have done this and continue in His covenant we will have “tikva olam”, which is “hope everlasting”. And indeed, if we continue in His covenants as found throughout scripture, than this is also a sign to God that we are His people. If this is your case, just as the tav signifies...you have been marked!

In the book of Yechezk'el (Ezekiel) 9:4-6 we read the following account, “The glory of the God of Yisra'el was gone up from the Keruv, whereupon it was, to the threshold of the house: and he called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writer's inkhorn by his side. HaShem said to him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Yerushalayim, and set a mark on the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry over all the abominations that are done in the midst of it. To the others he said in my hearing, Go you through the city after him, and strike: don't let your eye spare, neither have you pity; kill utterly the old man, the young man and the virgin, and children and women; but don't come near any man on whom is the mark: and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the old men that were before the house”.

Here in the book of Yechezk'el (Ezekiel) we read of a remnant of the people of God who remain faithful, and they are set-apart from the unfaithful. The way that this was done was by placing a “mark” on the foreheads of the men whose souls were vexed by the unrighteousness around them. The Hebrew word for “mark” here in this passage is literally the word “tav”, and it likely looked like a cross on their forehead. This is the very same symbol that the camp of Yisra'el is forming in parshat B'midbar. The message in Yechezk'el is clear, those who are in covenant with the God Of Yisra'el have hope and will be spared from the coming judgment. We must cling to the covenant of God! In the book of Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 8:16 we read that Adonai says the following to the Prophet, “Bind up the Testimony, seal the Torah among My disciples.” In the book of Revelation chapter 14:12 it says the following about Adonai’s disciples, “Here is the patience of the holy ones, those who keep the mitzvot (commandments) of God, and the faith of Yeshua.”

But, three verses before (14:9-11) our previous passage in the book of Revelation we read about the disciples of the Anti-messiah who will have their own peculiar mark to indicate their covenant relationship with him. It says, “Another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead, or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger. He will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. They have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

This particular mark will indicate that they are in covenant with HaSatan and not the God of Yisra'el. Their hope will not be in Adonai, but it will be bound up in the lies of The Enemy and in the hope that this World has to offer. But, the “tav” of Adonai is a mark or sign of Biblical Judaism, the Judaism that Yeshua practiced. It has been found that some archaeologists have even mistaken Jewish graves for Christian burials because the graves were marked with the sign of the cross, which actually turned out to be the ancient “tav”. This includes graves that predate the birth of Yeshua. Although misrepresented over the centuries, and regardless of how un-tasteful some may think this may sound, I believe that it is possible that the Christian sign of the cross is really a continuation and fulfillment of the
Jewish sign of the cross. It is a continuation of the covenant between the God of Yisra'el and His people. A literal version of 1Corinthians 1:18 states, "For the Word of the cross is foolishness to those being lost, but to us being saved, it is the power of God".

If we have chosen not to enter into a covenant relationship with the God of Yisra'el and His Son, Yeshua The Messiah, than we are certainly without hope in this World and can only expect a most unpleasant future judgment. But, there is hope! The book of Ephesians chapter 2:10-13 tells us the following about those Nations that had once been separated from God, "For we are his workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which God prepared before that we would walk in them. Therefore remember that once you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "uncircumcision" by that which is called "circumcision," (in the flesh, made by hands); that you were at that time separate from Messiah, alienated from the commonwealth of Yisra'el, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Messiah Yeshua you who once were far off are made near in the blood of Messiah".

What a wonderful hope and promise that Adonai has given to both Jew and Gentile! Those who have been made near by the blood of Messiah now are apart of all the covenants of Yisra'el. In the future both Jew and Gentile will make up the camp of Yisra'el and they will all have hope as a covenant people. The first census conducted by Moshe could be counted, but the second census that will occur under Messiah at the end of the age will be a future fulfillment of the Avrahamic covenant. In B'reishit (Genesis) 22:16-18 Adonai says to Avraham the following, "I have sworn by myself, says HaShem, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, that I will bless you greatly, and I will multiply your seed greatly like the stars of the heavens, and like the sand which is on the seashore. Your seed will possess the gate of his enemies. In your seed will all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice".

The seed of Avraham and his spiritual descendents will be as numerous as the sand of the sea and will be so many that no human could number. After the book of Revelation details the 144,000 Messianic Jewish believers from each tribe whom are witnesses for Adonai on the Earth in the end of days, it immediately goes on to describe the following in chapter 7:9, "After these things I saw, and behold, a great crowd which no one was able to number, out of every nation, even tribes and peoples and tongues, standing in front of the throne, and before the Lamb, having been clothed with white robes, and in their hands palm branches".

We should hope in God and not what the World has to offer us. For its ways lead to sin, vanity, and despair. If we are in Messiah, and we are clinging to Him in accordance with His instructions, than God will never leave us or forsake us and we will remain inside the covenant signified by the "tav" that the camp of Yisra'el formed. To conclude, Mishlei (Proverbs) 23:17-18 states, "Don’t let your heart envy sinners; but rather fear HaShem all the day long. Indeed surely there is a future hope, and your hope will not be cut off".

Shabbat shalom!