

# בְּמִדְבָּר

## Bemidbar/In the Wilderness Bemidbar (Numbers) 1:1 – 4:20

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This week as we begin the book of **Bemidbar (Numbers)**, let's start with a recap. **Shemot (Exodus)** and **Vayikra (Leviticus)** described for us the **escape of the Israelites from their captivity** in Egypt, **the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai**, **the erection of the Tabernacle**, and **the definitions of holiness, clean and unclean**. The first ten chapters of Bemidbar will cover **20 days** during which there will be **two censuses** performed and **special organization** geared towards **preparing them** for their **march through the wilderness**. The rest of Bemidbar will take the Israelites through the wilderness **to the borders of the Promised Land**, albeit amidst **trials, tribulations, and death of a generation**.

The word **bemidbar** (בְּמִדְבָּר) means “in the **wilderness**”. In the Scriptures, the **wilderness (midbar - מִדְבָּר)** is not necessarily the desert area, but **the uncharted territory we find ourselves in usually during exile**. The root of **wilderness (midbar - מִדְבָּר)** is **debar (דָּבַר)** which means “**to speak**” or “**words**”. Thus the very **literal meaning of bemidbar** is “**in the place of speaking**” or the “**place of words**”. Interestingly enough, we find both **midbar** and its **root** in the first verse:

**Bemidbar 1:1** Now **יהוה (Yahwey) spoke (דָּבַר)** to Moses in the **wilderness (מִדְבָּר)** of Sinai, in the tabernacle of meeting, on the first *day* of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 8 gives us insight into the **purpose** of the **wilderness experience**:

**Devarim 8:16** "who fed you in the **wilderness** with **manna**, which your fathers did not know, **that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good at the latter end** --

In the **wilderness**, He feeds us with **manna**. The disciple John tells us who this **manna** is:

**John 6:32** Then Yeshua said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but **My Father gives you the true bread from heaven**.<sup>33</sup> **For the bread of Elohim is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.**"

Thus we can see that the reason **יהוה** took His people **into the wilderness (the place of the Word)** was **to humble them and test them** by providing them with exactly what they needed through the **manna which is Messiah Yeshua, the living Word!** He is the way out of exile. And don't miss the last phrase in Devarim 8:16.... “**to do you good at the latter end**”. This is a clue to **end times**. The teaching that we learn out in the wilderness will “**do us good**” in the “**latter days**”. So if you think you are out there somewhere, being tested and humbled....**look for the manna. The Bread of Life** is also there and He wants to **teach you** what you need to know for the “**latter end**”!

Scripture teaches that there will be **another exodus** before we return to the Promised Land. Isaiah shows us **the same pattern of being humbled in order to be fed**:

**Isaiah 5:13** Therefore **my people have gone into captivity**, because *they have no knowledge*; Their honorable men *are* famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst....<sup>15</sup> People shall be brought down, **each man shall be humbled**, And the eyes of **the lofty shall be humbled**.<sup>16</sup> But **יהוה** of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, And El who is holy shall be hallowed in righteousness.<sup>17</sup> Then **the lambs shall feed in their pasture (דָּבַר)**, And in the waste places of the fat ones strangers shall eat.

The context of the above verses is people living their lives **without regard for the Almighty**. Because they have **no knowledge**, they will find themselves in **captivity**. Verse 17 says this is where **the lambs will feed in their pasture**. The word for **pasture** is דִּבְרָה, which aside from the added vowel points, is made up of the **same Hebrew letters** as “word”. יהוה **is always feeding the lambs with the Word**, which we know to be **His Son!** Check out your own English translation for this verse. It is very difficult to see this in many of the translations.

Let’s read another prophecy with this same message:

**Micah 2:12** " I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together like sheep of the fold, Like a flock in the midst of their pasture (דִּבְרָה); They shall make a loud noise because of *so many* people.<sup>13</sup> The one who breaks open will come up before them; They will break out, Pass through the gate, And go out by it; Their king will pass before them, With יהוה at their head."

It’s pretty awesome, isn’t it? The **Shepherd will gather up His sheep**, the remnant of Israel. He will take them to **the place of the Word (pasture)** where **He will lead us**. This commentary will later finish with two more prophecies that will give us a few more details about this.

Now let’s pick up another point from the first verse of our Parsha:

**Bemidbar 1:1** Now יהוה spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of meeting, **on the first day of the second month, in the second year** after they had come out of the land of Egypt:

It’s the **precise timing** in this verse that I want you to remember. We know from Exodus 16, that **manna** was to be collected each day, with a double portion collected on the 6<sup>th</sup> day. Each day’s manna was **sufficient for that day only** (with the exception of what was gathered on the 6<sup>th</sup> carrying over into the 7<sup>th</sup>). I believe that this teaches us that what we need to know about the end times will also come **a little at a time...sufficient for that day only**. To attempt to gather more information than what is being revealed will lead to **rotten manna**. Gathering manna destined to rot **could be** following the words of **self-proclaimed prophets** who claim to have heard from the Spirit of the Almighty. Often their words **even contradict Scripture!** Also it is important to notice that **each day’s manna was called an omer**. Now here is where we link the **omer/manna with Bemidbar 1:1...**

**Shemot 16:16** "This is the **word** (דִּבְרָה) which יהוה has commanded: 'Let every man gather it according to each one's need, **one omer for each person**, according to the number of persons; let every man take for *those who are* in his tent.' " <sup>17</sup> Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less. <sup>18</sup> So when **they measured it by omers**, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one's need. <sup>19</sup> And Moses said, "Let no one leave any of it till morning." <sup>20</sup> Notwithstanding **they did not heed Moses**. But some of them left part of it until morning, and **it bred worms and stank**. And Moses was angry with them.

Now back to the **time frame** given in Bemidbar 1:1 and how it connects with the **manna**. **The timing of Bemidbar 1:1 is the first new moon between the waving of the first fruits of barley and Shavuot (Pentecost)**. This obviously puts us right in the middle of the “**counting of the omer**”. As we all attempt to figure out the significance of the **omer**, is this one more clue as to **the gathering of revelation through the Word/manna/omer during this**

**important time period of counting?** Is the teaching on the **census** and **the set up of the tribes as they make their way through the wilderness also important to our trek to the Promised Land?** I'm only asking. I wish I knew all the answers, but I think as **we count**, we may be **collecting our omer of the Word for each day!**

Oh, just one more thing here! Notice in Shemot 16:20 that their **omer of manna stunk** because **“they did not heed Moses.”** Remember that **Moses and Torah are synonymous terms** (Luke 24:27), so **any truth that does not heed Moses/Torah will “breed worms and stink”**.

Here's another couple verses that may tie in with **counting the days of the omer**:

**Jeremiah 2:31** "O generation, **see the Word** (דְּבַר) of יְהוָה! Have I been a **wilderness** (מִדְבָּר) to Israel, Or a land of **darkness**? Why do My people say, 'We are lords; We will come no more to You'? <sup>32</sup> Can a virgin forget her ornaments, Or a bride her attire? Yet **My people have forgotten Me days with no number.**

Notice in verse 31 the appearance of these important and related words again...**word and wilderness.** יְהוָה is imploring His people to **“see the Word of יְהוָה”!** Did they only see **darkness**, or did they miss the **Word** which would have brought **light**? How could they have **forgotten**? And his complaint is that they have forgotten Him **“days with no number”**....could unnumbered days be days that **they were not counting the omer**? Is this the reason why they **forgot Him**?

**Psalm 90:12** So **teach us to number our days**, that we may gain a **heart of wisdom.**

What can we learn from the taking of the **census** in Bemidbar, chapter 1? This is the process for the census that יְהוָה commanded:

**Bemidbar 1:2** "Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, **by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names**, every male individually, <sup>3</sup> **“from twenty years old and above -- all who are able to go to war in Israel.** You and Aaron shall **number them by their armies.** <sup>4</sup> "And with you there shall be a man from every tribe, each one the head of his father's house.

There are several details in these verses that we will want to take note of:

- This count was by **tribes**. Today it is no longer possible for most who are not of Judah or Levi to know absolutely what tribe they are identified with (although there are clues as to the personalities of each of the tribes). **Yeshua**, however, did give us a clue as to who our family is:
  - **Matthew 12:46** While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. <sup>47</sup> Then one said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You." <sup>48</sup> But He answered and said to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and **who are My brothers?**" <sup>49</sup> And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! <sup>50</sup> **“For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.”**
  - **Luke 8:21** But He answered and said to them, **“My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.”**

- They are counted “**according to the number of names**”. It has been pointed out that these names were **not the names of slaves**. These were **the names of freed men!** These are the names of **men learning to walk with the Almighty in the wilderness, the place of the Word**. The names listed from each tribe are **reflective of the moral fiber of their leadership**. If this is our **pattern, leaders such as these will be in place before we head for the Promised Land**. Here are a few of the meanings of their names:
  - Elizur (El/God of the rock)
  - Shelumiel (Peace of El)
  - Nethaneel (Given of El)
  - Elishama (El of hearing)
- Twenty years and up, “**who are able to go to war**”. This census, therefore, was of a **military nature**. The **age of 20** is considered by the Sages to be the **ideal** as far as **physical endurance and capacity**. The implication is that **those who would not fight for Israel were not counted**. There is **no upper age limit** given. When there was a **war coming**, the usual **deferment for the elderly was set aside**. The elderly were expected to contribute in whatever way possible. This is **still** the way Israel responds to war today.

The **Levites were not a part of the first census**. They are handled in a much different way:

**Bemidbar 1:48** for **יהוה** had spoken to Moses, saying: <sup>49</sup> **"Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number**, nor take a census of them among the children of Israel; <sup>50</sup> **"but you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the Testimony, over all its furnishings, and over all things that belong to it; they shall carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings; they shall attend to it and camp around the tabernacle. <sup>51</sup> "And when the tabernacle is to go forward, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be set up, the Levites shall set it up. **The stranger who comes near shall be put to death. <sup>52</sup> "The children of Israel shall pitch their tents, everyone by his own camp, everyone by his own standard, according to their armies; <sup>53</sup> **"but the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the Testimony, that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the children of Israel; and the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony."** <sup>54</sup> Thus the children of Israel did; according to all that **יהוה** commanded Moses, so they did.****

Although it appears that the **Levites escaped being part of the army, this is not so**. It was the duty of **the Levites to camp around the tabernacle** (verses 50 & 53). **Verse 51 indicates that any stranger who comes near the tabernacle must be put to death**. Therefore we picture the Levites as a kind of **elite company or the palace guards whose duty it was to guard the holiness of the sanctuary**. If anything unholy got by the rest of the tribes, it was **the responsibility of the Levites to stop it**. Therefore, we can make more sense out of the story of **Phinehas, who killed the couple in the midst of the Tabernacle courtyard**. He was properly doing the job he was commissioned for!

**Bemidbar 25:6** And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who *were* weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. <sup>7</sup> Now when **Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; <sup>8</sup> and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body**. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel.

Today we are of the **priesthood** of the **order of Melchizedek**:

**1 Peter 2:9** But you *are* a chosen generation, a **royal priesthood**, a **holy nation**, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Although we are not guarding the tabernacle, if we want to be a part of this royal priesthood, it is our duty **to guard the holiness of the Almighty**:

**Ezekiel 44:23** "And they shall teach My people *the difference* between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.<sup>24</sup> "In controversy they shall stand as judges, *and* judge it according to My judgments. **They shall keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed meetings, and they shall hallow My Sabbaths.**

And what **weapons** have we been given?

**Ephesians 6:10** Finally, my brethren, be strong in Adonai and in the power of His might.<sup>11</sup> **Put on the whole armor of Yah, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**<sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.<sup>13</sup> **Therefore take up the whole armor of Yah, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.**<sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having **girded your waist with truth**, having put on **the breastplate of righteousness**,<sup>15</sup> and **having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace**;<sup>16</sup> above all, taking the **shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.**<sup>17</sup> And take the **helmet of salvation**, and the **sword of the Spirit, which is the word of Elohim**;<sup>18</sup> **praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints –**

Now let's take a look at the concept of the **firstborn**:

**Bemidbar 3:11** Then יהוה spoke to Moses, saying:<sup>12</sup> "Now behold, I Myself have taken the **Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel. Therefore the Levites shall be Mine,**<sup>13</sup> "because all the firstborn *are* Mine. On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast. They shall be Mine: I *am* יהוה."

When יהוה struck the firstborn in Egypt, **those males who died** provided a Scriptural basis for the concept of יהוה **taking one person's blood as a payment for the guilt of another.** This is **redemption.** **Redemption** has in it the idea of **exchange or substitution.** As a result **He owned and set apart the firstborn in Israel.** It was then the Almighty's prerogative to **exchange the firstborn in Israel for the Levites.** This required another **count.** Unlike the previous census, this time the **Levite males are numbered from a very early age:**

**Bemidbar 3:14** יהוה spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying: <sup>15</sup> Record the Levites by ancestral house and by clan; **record every male among them from the age of one month up.** <sup>16</sup> So Moses recorded them at the mouth of יהוה as he was commanded.

Every Levite baby had to see **one new moon** ...that is **one complete cycle of renewing before they were to be counted**. Why? Because **this became the job of the Levites** – to work at **renewing Israel**, bringing her **out of darkness into the light**.

Now after the completion of the Levitical census, it is found that there are **273 extra first-born** that needed to be **redeemed**:

**Bemidbar 3:46** "And for the redemption of the **two hundred and seventy-three of the firstborn of the children of Israel, who are more than the number of the Levites**,<sup>47</sup> "you shall take five shekels for each one individually; you shall take *them* in the currency of the shekel of the sanctuary, the shekel of twenty gerahs.<sup>48</sup> "And you shall give the money, with which the excess number of them is redeemed, to Aaron and his sons."

Let's take a closer look at the numbers that were a part of this census:

- 22,000 – **Levite males**, 1 month and older (Bemidbar 3:39)
- 22,273 – **Firstborn males**, 1 month and older, among the sons of Israel (Bemidbar 3:43)
  
- 603,550 – Those of the ages of 20 and upwards counted for war (Bemidbar 1:46)
- 3,000,000 – The number many estimate for the total coming out of Egypt
- 1,500,000 – Estimate for all males

So, what do these numbers tell us? We can divide the number of firstborn males into the total estimate for males (22,273/1,500,000) and find out what would appear to be the **average number of males per family** (shouldn't every family have a **firstborn**?). The number we get is **67** and that's **sons only!** We also would expect that the **Levite males** would make up **1/12 of the number** of the **sons of Israel**. Again by dividing 22,000 into 1,500,000 we get approximately **1/67**. This is a **perplexing problem** to many trying to come up with **common sense solutions**. Could there be a **simple answer**?

Let's think about what happened on **the night of the Passover**. The Israelite families killed the Passover lamb and painted its blood on their doorway to ensure the **life of their firstborn**. This was not done in secret. Most Egyptians probably knew that they had done this, though they may not have **understood the reason** behind it. The next morning, however, **when their firstborn son was dead**...they understood the **power and the authority of the Elohim of the Hebrews**. They had been witness to the plagues, but **now He was taking their children!** Were they able **to make a choice**? Did **multitudes of these people** (representing the **70 nations**) make the split second **decision to leave after the loss of their firstborn** in order to **possibly save the rest of their families**? Could this have been the reason for so many **rebels** later on as they journeyed through the wilderness?

So if this was the case, then the **numerous families** that **joined with the Israelites came without their firstborn sons**. The **other sons** in these families were included in **the number of estimated males** who left Egypt, but **only those families who painted their doorway with the blood of the lamb had a firstborn**. Thus you can no longer perform the simple division. The number of 67 that we came up with for **sons per family** would **decrease dramatically** as the **families without firstborn sons** were taken into consideration. All of these people would have **attached themselves to the various tribes** and actually merged into those tribes, becoming a part of the count. It is possible that the tribe of the **Levites kept themselves pure** and did not allow in any extras. This would also explain **the unusual ratio of Levites to the other tribes**.

Now, if this is true, then could this be a **pattern** that we will see again in a **future exodus**? Keep in mind that this is not about the **personal salvation** that was accomplished through **Yeshua**. This is about the **physical salvation of**

**Israel during the tribulation.** Will we see others **joining with us after we are gathered together as Israel**? I would like to take you to prophesies in Ezekiel and Isaiah to see what you think:

**Ezekiel 20:34** "I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out.<sup>35</sup> "And I will bring you into the **wilderness** (midbar - מִדְבָּר) of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face.<sup>36</sup> "Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness (midbar - מִדְבָּר) of the land of Egypt, **so I will plead My case with you,**" says יהוה Elohim.<sup>37</sup> "I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant;<sup>38</sup> "I will **purge the rebels from among you**, and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the country where they dwell, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I *am* יהוה."

These verses seem to indicate that somehow **He gathers us**, but yet **we are still in "the wilderness of the peoples"**. Could it be that He is beginning to **separate us into communities (like little Goshen's) even while we are out amongst the nations**? I know that some of you are already a part of a **separated community** such as this. Many others are seriously entertaining the idea of **living in community as a group of Torah keepers**.

Will there be **those who must give of their lives, like the 1<sup>st</sup> born of Egypt** before **their families** will also **join with us**? **Isaiah** seems to point to this. I will present these verses to you, with my comments, for your own **meditation**:

**Isaiah 42:18** "Hear, you **deaf**; and look, you **blind**, that you may see.<sup>19</sup> Who *is* blind but **My servant**, Or deaf as My messenger *whom* I send? **Who is blind as he who is at peace with me**, And blind as יהוה 's servant?<sup>20</sup> Seeing many things, but you do not observe; Opening the ears, but he does not hear."

The Almighty addresses these words to **someone who is deaf and blind, yet He calls them a servant**. **They are also at peace with Him (Romans 5:1)**. Does this point to **believers (at peace)** who are blind and deaf because they **do not understand the truth of Torah**?

**Isaiah 42:21** יהוה is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; **He will exalt the Torah and make it honorable**.

In the midst of confusion and turmoil, **the Torah will be exalted** and regain its honor.

**Isaiah 42:22** But this *is* a people robbed and plundered; All of them are snared in holes, And they are hidden in prison houses; They are for prey, and no one delivers; For plunder, and no one says, "**Return!**"

Is this the **tribulation**? Are **believers in Messiah still confused, not understanding the Almighty's plan of returning to their roots**?

**Isaiah 42:23** Who among you will give ear to this? **Who will listen and hear** for the time to come?<sup>24</sup> Who gave Jacob for plunder, and Israel to the robbers? Was it not יהוה, He against whom we have sinned? **For they would not walk in His ways**, Nor were they obedient to His Torah.<sup>25</sup> **Therefore He has poured on him the fury of His anger** and the strength of battle; It has set him on fire all around, Yet he did not know; And it burned him, Yet he did not take *it* to heart.

This has been the **discipline** of יהוה.

**Isaiah 43:1** But now, thus says יהוה, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for **I have redeemed you**; I have called *you by your name*; You *are* Mine.<sup>2</sup> When you pass through the waters, **I will be with you**; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.

His **discipline will be refining**. And **He will be with them throughout the process**. Notice that He calls them "**by their names**". Compare this with **Bemidbar 1:18** where the people are numbered "**according to the number of their names**".

**Isaiah 43:3** For I *am* יהוה your Elohim, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior; **I gave Egypt for your ransom**, Ethiopia and Seba in your place.<sup>4</sup> Since you were precious in My sight, You have been honored, And I have loved you; **Therefore I will give men for you, And people for your life**.

Here's the **pattern**. Do you see it? **In the same way that He gave the firstborn of Egypt for a ransom, now again he will take men's life in exchange!**

**Isaiah 43:5** Fear not, for I *am* with you; **I will bring your descendants from the east**, And gather you from the **west**;<sup>6</sup> I will say to the **north**, 'Give them up!' And to the **south**, 'Do not keep them back!' Bring My sons from afar, And My daughters from the ends of the earth --<sup>7</sup> **Everyone who is called by My name**, Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him."

Here's the **regathering** for those "**called by His Name**"! He finds each one! And by the way, notice the **four directions**. This points to the **set-up** of the **tribes around the tabernacle** as they head for **the Promised Land**.

**Isaiah 43:8** Bring out the blind people who have eyes, and the deaf who have ears.<sup>9</sup> **Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled**. Who among them can declare this, And **show us former things**? Let them bring out their witnesses, that they may be justified; Or let them hear and say, "**It is truth**."

There seems to be a sorting out here. **Some of these blind people have eyes. They want to see! It's beginning to make sense to the nations!** (Just like it began to make sense to the Egyptians after the death of their firstborn.) What are the "**former things**" they are being shown? Is it the **first exodus**? And look at their **declaration of truth!**

**Isaiah 43:10** "You *are* My witnesses," says יהוה, "And **My servant whom I have chosen, That you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am He**. Before Me there was no El formed, Nor shall there be after Me.<sup>11</sup> I, *even* I, *am* יהוה, And **besides Me there is no Savior**.<sup>12</sup> **I have declared and saved, I have proclaimed**, and **there was no foreign god among you**; Therefore **you are My witnesses**," Says יהוה, "that I *am* El."<sup>13</sup> Indeed before the day *was*, I *am* He; And **there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it?**"



Such an awesome declaration of everything that He is! He is the **ONLY El**. He is our **Savior**. **He will not share His Name with any foreign god**. And we must be a **witness** of who He is. He is our **ONLY deliverer**.

You can continue reading on your own. I'll just finish with this....just a few verses later:

**Isaiah 43:19** Behold, **I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness (midbar). And rivers in the desert**

Shabbat Shalom!

***Ardelle***