

The Round Figures that Trigger Sniggers

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Question:

When the Torah says there were 22,273 first born Yisraelim from one month old was there an age until which firstborns were counted?

On average, how many kids did each family have when the Jews were in the desert?

In general, are the numbers in the census real and exact counts? How could every tribe have such even and exact numbers?

Answer:

Rounded numbers

The census of all the tribes is recorded twice in *Chumash Bamidbar*. Each time the numbers of the tribes end with a 100 except for twice when it ends with tens, Gad in *Bamidbar* – 45,650, and Reuven in *Pinchas* – 43,730.

There are several approaches how to explain this phenomenon:

- The Torah rounded numbers when it's off by one or two. For example, The Torah states: "Do not give more than 40 lashes" whereas the most a person can receive is 39. Elsewhere, the Torah states: "Count 50 days"

