

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Bamidbar – 5783

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וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַר סִינַי בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי בַּשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִית לְצֵאתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר:

“And Hashem spoke to Moshe, in the Sinai Desert, in the Ohel Moed, on the first of the month, of the Second Month from the exodus from the Land of Mizrayim, saying.” (Bamidbar 1:1).

There is a common *machlokes*, dispute, whether the Torah is written in chronological order or written out of sequence. Those that argue for sequence state the Torah is not haphazard. Those that argue for out of order state that the Torah is not a mere history book. Actually, there is no *machlokes*—dispute. The Torah is written in sequentially except when it specifically (or implicitly) indicating otherwise.

The Torah is certainly not haphazardly compiled. When Moshe compiled the Torah, and when Ezra edited it, it remained specifically in sequenced. However, the Torah does digress often. The Torah goes out of order for two main reasons.

First, to complete a narrative and then return to a time within those events to speak about a specific event. An example of this is the Torah completing the teaching of the building of the Mishkan at the end of sefer Shmos. Vayikra then begins at a time between Moshe’s two visits upon Har Sinai and returns to the laws of the korbanos. Another example is the story of Yehuda finding a wife, and then ultimately a *yibum* partner for his daughter-in-law, Tamar. The Torah completes that narrative, even though it clearly took longer than the few weeks it took for Yoseph to arrive in Mitzrayim, before returning to Yoseph.

Second, the Torah goes off on a tangent to teach a lesson. Here, the Torah clearly states, the following count of Bnei Yisroel took place on the first of the Second Month. The Torah returns to the first of the First Month later. “And it was on the day that Moshe completed setting up the Mishkan.” (Ibid 7:1). “On the first day of the First Month, you shall set up the Mishkan.” (Shmos 40:2). Clearly, Moshe finished setting up the Mishkan on the first day of the First Month of the second year. Yet, our pasuk is the first of the Second Month of the second year. Here, the Torah clearly indicates it went out of sequence.

The Torah is sometimes explicit in its going out of sequence, like in our pasuk and with the story of Yehuda and Tamar. Sometimes, it is more subtle. “Speak to Aharon and his sons, saying, this is how you should bless Bnei Yisroel.” (Bamidbar 6:23). This took place during the ordination of the Mishkan, the First Month. Aharon blessed the people for the first time on the first day of Pesach, that second year. “Aharon lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them.” (Vayikra 9:22). The sequence of events is out of order—the blessings were before this counting—but the timing is referenced when reading the Torah carefully.

The Torah commences with this type of timeline. The Torah commences with the creation of the world. (Bereishis 1:1). It finishes the narrative of creation, through the Seventh Day. (Ibid 2:3). Even though Man was created on the Sixth Day, the Torah digresses back to Man after the narrative of creation. (Ibid 2:7). If the Torah was perfectly chronological, it would have finished the narrative of Man and then went on to the Seventh Day. However, finishing the narrative of Creation was more important and then it easily digressed.

Understanding the sequence of such events aids in understanding events themselves. Yaakov and his family arrived safely in Shechem after meeting Eisav outside of the Land of Canaan. (Bereishis 33:18). Suspiciously, the Torah ends that parsha (section) and then talks about Dina's abduction in a new section (after a v break). The Torah says that "Yaakov heard that he (Shechem) had defiled Dina; and his sons were still in the field with the cattle, and Yaakov kept silent until they would come." (Ibid 34:5). Shechem's father *went out* looking for Yaakov (ibid 34:6), and the brothers heard the news and were outraged (ibid 34:7), and Shechem's father speaks to *them* (ibid 34:8). What happened was that Shechem's father *went out* to look for Yaakov. Yaakov already moved on and had settled in Chevron, in the plains of Maamrei. (Ibid 37:1). The brothers, who were in the field near Shechem, intercepted Shechem's father when they heard the news. They were closer to Shechem because they went to pasture the sheep near Shechem. (Ibid 37:11).

The brothers went to pasture the sheep *after* the incident with Yoseph and his dreams and after the Torah talks about Shimon and Levi destroying Shechem. How can they possibly feel that Shechem was a welcome place to pasture their sheep? It is because that is when the story of Shechem happened. After the dreams, the brothers went out to pasture their sheep near Shechem. Dina was violated and returned home. Yaakov sends Yoseph to look after their well-being and to call them to discuss the Dina incident. (Ibid 37:13). The brothers intercept Shechem's father, make the deal about the entire city undergoing circumcision and then Shimon and Levi rout the city. Yoseph arrives in Shechem looking for them, but they had moved on (because of their acts of vengeance). (Ibid 37:14). A man leads him to Dothan, to his brother (ibid 37:17) where they saw him from afar and were already primed for blood (ibid 37:20). They were ready to kill Yoseph because they just finished with Shechem and were battle hot. Notice how Reuven and Yehuda do the talking because Shimon and Levi suggested to kill Yoseph. They sat down to their victory meal, having plundered Shechem. (Ibid 37:25). A careful reading of the Torah reveals deeper understanding in the events. There are many such examples.

"In the Ohel Moed." It was not Moshe in the Ohel Moed but Hashem speaking from within the Ohel Moed. At this time Moshe no longer entered the Ohel Moed (Shmos 40:35) but would hear Hashem speaking from within (Bamidbar 7:89).

"In the second year." The Torah opens this sefer with the counting of Bnei Yisroel, showing how precious Bnei Yisroel were, at a time when they were ready to move on to go conquer the Land of Canaan.