

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Bechukosai 5784

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Sefer Vayikra ends with this:

אֵלֶּה הַמִּצְוֹת אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת-מֹשֶׁה אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהַר סִינַי:

“These are the commandments that Hashem commanded Moshe to convey to Bnei Yisroel, on Har Sinai.” (Vayikra 27:34).

A previous pasuk said something similar. אֵלֶּה הַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים וְהַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן ה' בְּיַד מֹשֶׁה וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד מֹשֶׁה: “These are the statutes and rules and laws that Hashem gave between Him and Bnei Yisroel through the hand of Moshe, on Har Sinai.” (Ibid 26:46). Another previous pasuk also introduced this entire section as being given on Har Sinai. (Ibid 25:1). Why do these pesukim specifically say that these laws were given on Har Sinai? Why also repeat the fact that it was on Har Sinai?

Not all of the mitzvos, necessarily, were given on Har Sinai. The Torah specifically says certain mitzvos were given in other places. “And Hashem said to Moshe and Aharon in the Country of Mitzrayim, saying.” (Shmos 12:1). The laws of korban Pesach, counting the months, and redeeming the first born, were given in Mitzrayim. The laws of Shabbos were first introduced in the wilderness prior to reaching the Wilderness of Sinai. (Ibid 16:23). The entire body of laws regarding korbanos was given to Moshe in his tent between visits to Har Sinai. (Vayikra 1:1). Every mitzvah that is in sefer Devraim was taught to Bnei Yisroel after it already left the Wilderness of Sinai. Moshe does introduce that many of the mitzvos he was repeating in his last days were taught to him on Har Sinai. (Devarim 5:2). It can be, and many opinions have this view, that all of the laws there were given to Moshe years earlier and he just taught them in the Plains of Moav before his death. This makes sense, logically, because Moshe was teaching a new generation that was not by Har Sinai.

However, Hashem did give final instruction to Moshe at that time, away from Har Sinai. (Ibid 31:16). Also, the law of the blasphemer (Vayikra 24:11) and of the daughters of Tzelophchad (Bamidbar 27:2) were also given away from Har Sinai. Further, and similar to our parsha, Hashem gave similar incentive about keeping the mitzvos in the desert prior to reaching Har Sinai. (Shmos 15:26). Therefore, not every mitzvah was given on Har Sinai. The Torah is digressing from the many that were taught to Moshe in his tent and in the Ohel Moed. (Vayikra 21:1). The Torah is stating that it is now returning to the commandments given on Har Sinai.

The Torah introduces this digression with “And Hashem spoke to Moshe on Har Sinai.” (Ibid 25:1). The Torah uses the vav which is a term of connection. It connects to the previous pesukim and instruction. Just as important as all of those previous teachings, and just as authentic, were further instruction that Moshe received on his visits to Har Sinai. The Torah does not specify if it was Moshe’s first visit to Har Sinai post-the geula

or his second visit (post the Molten Calf). However, it was on one of those visits that Hashem taught him the laws of shmita, yovel, and redemption. Therefore, the Torah says, “And” back on Har Sinai “Hashem taught Moshe the following.”

The laws of Yovel connect well to the beginning of our parsha. וְנָתַתִּי גִשְׁמֵי־כֶסֶם בְּעִתָּם וְנָתַתִּי הָאֶרֶץ יְבוּלָהָ וְעֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה יִתֵּן פְּרִיָּו: “I will grant you rains in their proper times, and I will give the earth and the trees of the field abundance to yield its crop and its fruit.” (Ibid 26:4). If one follows the laws of shmita and Yovel then the land will be יְבוּלָהָ “a yielder of abundance.” That word has the same root as Yovel and helps give meaning to the word Yovel. The logical equivalent is that following Hashem’s laws leads to much reward. This entire topic of incentives – abundance if following Hashem and terrible tragedy if turning away from Hashem’s laws – ends with “These are...on Har Sinai.” (Ibid 26:46). There is no vav to connect it because no vav is necessary. This is the close of the entire previous chapters and segments.

After the Torah gives the incentives to keep the Mitzvos based on the assembly being holy, and understanding that Hashem took them out of Mitzrayim and Hashem is their redeemer and the one that makes them holy (e.g. Ani Hashem), the Torah returns to the incentives given to Moshe on Har Sinai. Hashem wants the Land to be special and the people to live with constant faith and emunah in Hashem. He also wants to protect everyone’s financial interests. Therefore, Hashem gave the laws of shmita and Yovel. These laws give rest to the land and respite to the poor. It is also a reset for tribal ancestral claims and all indentured servants go free. Keeping these important laws that keep the status quo over generations, and keeps the land flowing with milk and honey, was given with incentive. Keep them and the land will yield abundance and everyone will be satiated. Violate them, show your lack of faith in Hashem, and the land will spit out the people and thereby get its rest to make up for the violated shmita and Yovels. (Ibid 26:43).

Having returned to these teachings, the Torah continues the digression with the laws of vows and valuations. “And Hashem spoke to Moshe.” (Ibid 27:1). The pasuk uses the vav to connect it to the previous segment. It does not say “on Har Sinai” because the vav does that. Then the section concludes, “These are ... on Har Sinai.” (Ibid 27:34). That confirms that the entire section was also told to Moshe on Har Sinai.

This conclusion answers the following question. Why did Hashem give the incentives before finishing teaching the entire Torah? The incentives of abundance of reward for keeping the Torah and terrible tragedy for violating it should be given either in the beginning before the Torah was taught, or at the end of the Torah, after all the laws were taught. Having it in the middle does not seem to make sense.

The answer is, the Torah is not warning about keeping the entire Torah. The Torah is specific to the laws taught on Har Sinai. These are the ten utterances, (Shmos 20), the civil laws (ibid 21 - 23), the laws of the mishkan (ibid 25 - 31), Shabbos and holidays (ibid 34), and the laws of shmita, yovel, redemption, valuations, and vows (Vaykra 25 - 27). Before Hashem finished instructing Moshe, He gave Moshe this incentive. However, given the incidents of the Molten Calf, the building of the Mishkan, and Aaron’s sons, it was inappropriate to teach it until now. Thus, the incentive is specifically on these laws of emunah and faith. They are separate from the Tochecha that Moshe gave in Devarim.