

PARSHAT BEHAR

Shouldn't Parshat Behar be in Sefer Shmot? After all, its opening pasuk informs us that these mitzvot were given to Moshe Rabeinu on **Har Sinai**! Why then does Chumash 'save' it for Sefer Vayikra instead?

To complicate matters, Parshat Behar is only one example of many 'parshiot' towards the end of Sefer Vayikra that appear to belong in Sefer Shmot. Take for example the law to light the menorah (recorded at end of Parshat Emor (see 24:1-3). As you most probably noticed, that parshia is almost a direct quote from Parshat Tetzaveh! [Compare 24:1-3 with Shmot 27:20-21.]

To answer these (and many other) questions, this week's shiur investigates the intriguing possibility of a chiastic structure that may explain what otherwise seems to be a random progression of parshiot in Sefer Vayikra.

INTRODUCTION

Recall our explanation that Sefer Vayikra contains primarily mitzvot, and neatly divides into two distinct sections:

- 1) Chapters 1->17: laws relating to the **mishkan** itself,
- 2) Chapters 18->27: laws relating to living a life of 'kedusha' even **outside** the mishkan.

Even though this definition neatly explained the progression of mitzvot in Parshiot Acharei Mot and Kedoshim, many of the laws in Parshat Emor seem to contradict this definition.

For example, just about all of the topics in Parshat Emor relate to the mishkan itself, and hence (according to our above definition) should have been recorded in the first half of Vayikra.

To verify this, note how:

- * Chapter 21 – discusses laws pertaining to **kohanim**;
- * Chapter 22 – defines animals not fit for **korbanot**;
- * Chapter 23 – includes the **korbanot** offered on the mo'adam.
- * Chapter 24 – discusses the oil for lighting the **menora**; and baking the 'lechem ha-panim' for the **shulchan**.

Based on our above definition of the two halves of Sefer Vayikra, just about all of these topics would fit better in the 'first half'.

To complicate matters, at the very end of Parshat Emor we find a short little story about a 'blasphemer' (see 24:10-23). This is rather bizarre, for this is the lone short **narrative** in all of Sefer Vayikra!

[Recall how chapters 8 thru 10 contained the only other narrative -detailing the dedication ceremony of the Mishkan, but that story related directly to the topic of korbanot.]

As you review 20:10-43 (in their context), note how this story seems to 'come out of nowhere'! Nor is there any apparent reason why Sefer Vayikra records this story specifically at this point. [See Rashi's question on 24:10 'Me-heichan yatza?' - Where did the 'mekallel' come from!]

MORE PROBLEMS!

Parshat Behar (chapter 25) is no less problematic! Even though its laws of 'shmitta' and 'yovel' fit nicely into our definition of the second half of Sefer Vayikra (see Ibn Ezra 25:1), the opening and closing psukim of this unit present us with two different problems.

The first pasuk of Parshat Behar (25:1) informs us that these mitzvot were given on **Har Sinai**, and hence suggests that this entire Parsha may really belong in Sefer Shmot!

More disturbing (and often not noticed) is the very conclusion of Parshat Behar. There we find three 'powerful' psukim that seem to come out of nowhere! Let's take a look:

* "For Bnei Yisrael are servants to Me, they My servants whom I freed from the land of Egypt, I am the Lord your God." (25:55).

* "Do not make for yourselves any other gods.." (26:1).

* "Keep My Sabbath and guard My Temple, I am your God" (26:2).

Indeed, the first pasuk (25:55) forms a nice summary pasuk for the laws of that unit (i.e. 25:47-54); however the last two laws are totally unrelated! Furthermore, all three of these psukim seem to 'echo' the first four of the Ten Commandments.

Why do they conclude Parshat Behar, and why does Sefer Vayikra repeat these first four 'dibrot' specifically at this point? [Note the discrepancy between the chapter division (i.e. where chapter 26 begins) and the division of parshiot (note that Parshat Bechukotai begins with 26:3) - which reflects this problem.]

The above questions appear to shake the very foundation of our understanding of the two halves of Sefer Vayikra. Should we conclude that Sefer Vayikra is simply a 'random' collection of mitzvot?

To answer the above questions, we must first 're-examine' each of the parshiot (mentioned above) to determine where each of these 'out of place' parshiot really **does** belong.

As we do so, a very interesting pattern will emerge that will form the basis of a chiastic structure – one that will explain the nature of all these exceptions, and beautifully tie Sefer Vayikra back to Sefer Shmot..

[The solution that we are about to suggest is based on a rather amazing shiur that I heard many years ago from Rav Yoel Bin Nun, where he uncovers a chiastic structure that ties together Sefer Shmot and Vayikra. Btw, in case you've never heard of chiastic structure before don't worry, it will be explained as the shiur progresses.]

WHERE DO THEY BELONG?

We'll begin our analysis (of finding where each of these parshiot do belong) –with chapter 24, for it is quite easy to identify where these sections do 'belong'.

THE NER TAMID (24:1-4)

As we noted above, these four psukim (describing the mitzva to light the **menora** with olive oil) are almost an exact repetition of the first two psukim of Parshat Tetzaveh! [See and compare with Shmot 27:20-21.] Hence, we posit, that this short parshia 'belongs' in **Parshat Tetzaveh**.

THE LECHEM HA-PANIM (24:5-9)

This parshia describes how Bnei Yisrael were to prepare the **lechem ha-panim** [show bread] - that were to be placed on the **shulchan** [the Table located inside the mishkan], and changed weekly.

Even though this is the first time that we find the details of this mitzva in Chumash, the general mitzva to put lechem ha-panim on the **shulchan** was already mentioned in Parshat **Teruma** (see Shmot 25:30). Hence, we conclude that this 'parshia' could have been recorded in Parshat Teruma, together with all the other mitzvot concerning how to build the **shulchan**.

THE MEKALLEL - The 'blasphemer' (24:10-23)

Even though this parshia begins with a story (see 24:10-12), this short narrative leads directly into a small set of civil laws ('bein adam le-chaveiro') relating to capital punishment (see 24:13-22). Furthermore, as your review 24:17-22, note how they are almost identical with Shmot 21:12,23-25. For example, note how Shmot 21:24 is identical to Vayikra 24:20. -"ayin tachat ayin, shein tachat shein ..." ["an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth..."]

Hence, we conclude that the mekallel parshia 'belongs' in Parshat **Mishpatim**.

THE LAWS of SHMITTA & YOVEL (25:1-25:54)

As we explained above, the opening pasuk of this parshia states that these mitzvot concerning shmitta & yovel were given to Moshe Rabbeinu at Har Sinai. However, in Sefer Shmot, we find many other laws that were given to Moshe Rabbeinu on Har Sinai, and they were all recorded in Parshat Mishpatim. In fact, in that very same Parsha, the basic laws of shmitta" were already mentioned:

"Six years you shall sow your Land and gather your produce and the seventh year..." (see Shmot 23:10-11).

Therefore, we conclude that this entire unit of the laws of shmitta & yovel belongs in Parshat Mishpatim, together with all of the other mitzvot that were given to Moshe on **Har Sinai**.

The 'MINI-DIBROT' (25:55-26:2)

As we explained above, these three psukim at the very end of Parshat Behar 'echo' the first four Commandments. If so, then we can conclude that these psukim 'belong' in Parshat **Yitro** (see Shmot 20:1-9).

A BACKWARD 'BACK TO SHMOT'

In case you have yet to notice, not only do all of these parshiot (from chapters 21 thru 25) thematically belong in Sefer Shmot, they progress in **backward** order, from Tetzaveh, to Teruma, to Mishpatim, to Yitro!

Even though this order may seem to be simply coincidental, the next chapter in Vayikra (i.e. the TOCHACHA in chapter 26) provides us with enough 'circumstantial evidence' to suggest that this pattern may be intentional!

Let's take a look:

THE TOCHACHA (26:3-46)

The 'tochacha' explains the reward (or punishment) that Bnei Yisrael receive should they obey (or disobey) God's laws. This tochacha constitutes an integral part of the covenant (brit) between God and Bnei Yisrael that was agreed upon at Har Sinai (see Devarim 28:69!).

[Note that the final pasuk (26:46) is not only parallel to Devarim 28:69, but also includes the phrase 'beino u-bein Bnei Yisrael', which also implies a covenant (based on Shmot 31:15-17)!]

Even though this covenant is detailed in Parshat Bechukotai, recall how its basic principles were first recorded in Parshat **Yitro** in the Torah's account of the events that took place at **ma'amad Har Sinai**:

"And now, **if you shall listen to Me and keep My covenant** faithfully, then..." (Shmot 19:5-6, see also Shmot 24:4-7)
[Compare carefully with Vayikra 26:3,12,23!]

Therefore, even though this parshia is thematically consistent with the theme of the second half of Sefer Vayikra (compare chapter 26 with 18:25-29), nonetheless, it was given to Bnei Yisrael on Har Sinai. Hence, it could easily have been included in Parshat **Yitro**, most probably in chapter 19 (i.e. immediately prior to the Ten Commandments).

[Note also that the 'dibbur' that began in 25:1 includes chapter 26 and is summarized by the final pasuk of the tochacha (26:46). See also Chizkuni on Shmot 24:7 & Ibn Ezra on Vayikra 25:1. where they explain that this tochacha was actually read at Har Sinai at Ma'amad Har Sinai!]

WORKING 'BACKWARDS'

Let's summarize all of these 'parshiot' that we have discussed (from the end of Sefer Vayikra) that seem to 'belong' in Sefer Shmot. [Working backwards,] we assign a letter to each 'parshia' for future reference.

- (A) - THE TOCHACHA (26:3-46)
- (B) The 'MINI-DIBROT' (25:55-26:2)
- (C) The laws of SHMITTA & YOVEL (25:1-25:54)

- (D) Parshat "ha-MEKALLEL" (24:10-23) - The 'Blasphemer'.
- (E) THE MENORA AND SHULCHAN (24:1-9)

And there's more!

Let's continue 'working backwards' from chapter 24 to chapter 23, showing how this pattern continues! We'll continue using the letters of the alphabet for 'headers' as well:

(F) PARSHAT HA-MO'ADIM (23:1-44)

- The **holidays** in Parshat Emor

As we explained in last week's shiur, the Torah presents the mo'adim together with the laws of Shabbat. Even though these laws relate thematically to the theme of '**kedushat zman**' in the second half of Vayikra, they also relate to the laws of Shabbat that conclude the parshiot concerning the **mishkan**. [See Shmot 31:12-17 & 35:2-3.]

Note the obvious textual similarities:

* "sheshet yamim ta'aseh melacha, u-vayom ha-shvi'i..." [Vayikra 23:3- Compare with Shmot 35:2!].

* "**ach** et shabtotai tishmoru...
ki ani Hashem **mekadishchem**"

[See Shmot 31:13/ compare with 23:3,39.]

Therefore, 'parshat ha-mo'adim' (chapter 23) in Sefer Vayikra could have been recorded in Parshat **Ki-Tisa** as well, together with the laws of Shabbat.

(G) ANIMALS THAT CANNOT BE KORBANOT (22:17-33)

In this parshia we find the prohibition of offering an animal with a blemish, or an animal less than eight days old.

Surely, this mitzva could have been recorded just as well in Parshat **Vayikra** (i.e. in the first half of the Sefer), for it discusses the various types of animals which one can offer for a korban (see 1:2).

(H) KEDUSHAT KOHANIM (21:1-22:16)

Parshat Emor opens with laws that explain when a kohen CAN and CANNOT become "tamey" (ritually impure by coming into contact with a dead person).

Even though these laws thematically relate to the second half of Vayikra (for they govern the daily life of the kohanim OUTSIDE the mishkan), nonetheless the mitzvot that follow should have been recorded in Parshat TZAV, for they concern who can and cannot eat the meat of the korbanot. [See 21:16-22:16.]

In summary, even though each of the above parshiot may be thematically related in one form or other to the theme of the second half of Vayikra, nonetheless each parshia could also have been recorded either in the second half of Sefer Shmot (or early in Sefer Vayikra) as well!

Using the letters noted above, the following table summarizes these special parshiot, noting where each 'misplaced parshia' really belongs:.

PARSHA OUT OF PLACE =====	WHERE IT BELONGS... =====
(A) THE TOCHACHA	YITRO (pre dibrot)
(B) THE MINI-DIBROT	YITRO (the dibrot)
(C) SHMITTA AND YOVEL	YITRO/MISHPATIM (post dibrot)
(D) MEKALLEL & mishpatim	MISHPATIM
(E) MENORA AND SHULCHAN	TRUMA /TETZAVEH
(F) MO'ADIM IN EMOR	KI TISA/ VAYAKHEL (shabbat)
(G) ANIMALS FIT TO OFFER	VAYIKRA
(H) KEDUSHAT KOHANIM	TZAV

Study this table carefully, noting the correlation between where these parshiot 'belong' and the order of the Parshiot in Sefer Shmot [and the beginning of Vayikra].

THE CHIASTIC STRUCTURE OF SHMOT & VAYIKRA

This literary style is known as a chiastic structure (A-B-C-B-A), a literary tool which emphasizes unity of theme and accentuates a central point (C).

To uncover the significance of a chiastic structure, it is usually critical to identify its central point. To do so in our case, we must first summarize the basic units of mitzvot (in Sefer Shmot) which Bnei Yisrael receive from the time of their arrival at Har Sinai:

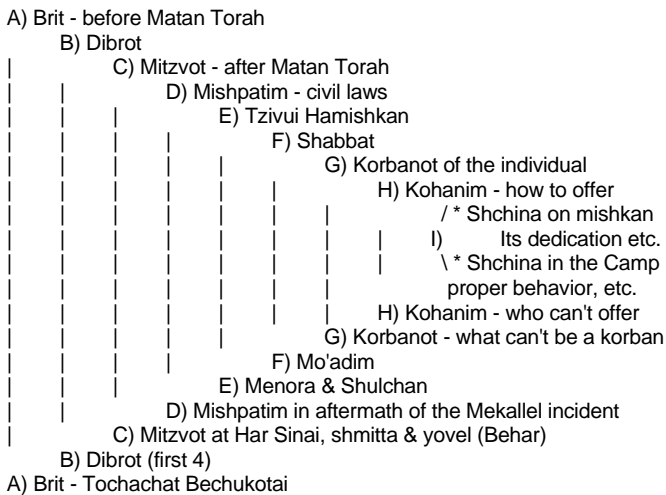
- (A) BRIT - prior to Matan Torah (perek 19 & parallel in perek 24)
- (B) DIBROT - the Ten Commandments (20:1-14)
- (C) MITZVOT - immediately after the dibrot (20:19-23)
- (D) MISHPATIM - the civil laws in Parshat Mishpatim (21->23)
- (E) TZIVUI HA-MISHKAN - Parshiot Truma/Tetzaveh (25->31)
- (F) SHABBAT (31:12-18 followed by 35:1-3)

[In the further iyun section, we discuss why we skip chet ha-egel (32->34) in this structure.]

- (G) LAWS OF THE KORBAN YACHID (Vayikra 1->5)
 - (H) LAWS FOR THE KOHANIM - serving in the mishkan (6->7)
 - (I) THE SHCHINA ON THE MISHKAN:
The dedication ceremony of the mishkan (8->10);
laws governing proper entry (11->15);
the yearly 're-dedication' ceremony on Yom Kippur (16->17)
- AND ITS AFFECT ON THE NATION
Kedushat ha-AM ve-haARETZ
climaxing with "KDOSHIM TIHIYU"

Using the chart below [I hope your word processor is able to format it, if not try to format it by yourself], note how each of these units corresponds in REVERSE ORDER with the problematic concluding parshiot of Sefer Vayikra (that were discussed above)!

The following chart illustrates this structure:



Note how the above chart identifies a chiastic structure (symbolized by ABCDEFGH-I-HGFEDCBA) that connects together all of the mitzvot given to Bnei Yisrael in Midbar Sinai from the time of their arrival at Har Sinai.

It should come at no surprise that at the thematic center of this structure - (letter 'I') - lies the dual theme of Sefer Vayikra - i.e., its two sections:

- (1) the SHCHINA dwelling on the mishkan, and
- (2) its subsequent effect on the nation.

As we explained in our previous shiurim, this model reflects the impact of the intense level of the kedusha in the mishkan on the spiritual character of the entire Nation in all realms of daily life.

Furthermore, this 'central point' ties back to the basic theme of **ma'amad Har Sinai** in Sefer Shmot, which just so happens to be the opening 'bookend' of the chiastic structure (A). Recall how Bnei Yisrael first entered into a covenant before they received the Torah at Har Sinai. Note once again the wording of God's original proposal:

"And if you listen to Me and keep my **covenant**... then you shall be for Me, a - **mamlechet kohanim ve-goy kadosh** - a kingdom of **priests** and a **holy nation**" (see Shmot 19:5-6) .

The achievement is this goal - to become God's special nation -as detailed in 'bookends' of this structure (letters A), is manifest with the dwelling of God's Shchina in the mishkan (I) -at the center of this structure; and is achieved by the fulfillment of God's mitzvot of kedusha - as detailed throughout this entire unit of Sefer Shmot& Vayikra.

In essence, the covenant of Har Sinai, the climax of Sefer Shmot, is fulfilled when Bnei Yisrael follow the mitzvot of Sefer Vayikra! By keeping the mitzvot of both halves of Sefer Vayikra, we become a mamlechet kohanim ve-goy kadosh (Shmot 19:6) - the ultimate goal and purpose of **brit Har Sinai**.

BRIT SINAI & KEDOSHIM TIHIYU

The thematic significance of this chiastic structure is strengthened by its closing 'book-end'. Just as **brit Sinai** - the covenant at Har Sinai - is the **opening** parsha, the details of that covenant - the tochacha of Bechukotai - constitutes its **closing** parsha.

In that covenant, we find yet another aspect of this 'two-sided' deal. The tochacha explains how the Promised Land will serve as God's agent to reward Bnei Yisrael, should they be faithful to His covenant, while the Land will punish (and ultimately kick them out) should they go astray.

Finally, note (from this chiastic structure) how the mitzvot of Sefer Vayikra [GHI]- that were given from the ohel mo'ed (see 1:1) are surrounded by mitzvot that were given "be-**Har Sinai**" [ABCDEF]. Considering that the entire purpose of the mishkan was to serve as a vehicle to perpetuate the fundamentals of Ma'amad Har Sinai, this unique structure beautifully reflects the eternal goal of the Jewish nation.

shabbat shalom
menachem

=====

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. As you may have noticed, during the entire shiur we have purposely 'neglected' the location of parshat 'erchin' (perek 27) at the end of Sefer Vayikra. This topic will be dealt with iy"H in next week's shiur. [See also Ibn Ezra 27:1.]

B. Most all of the commentators deal with the question: Why does Parshat Behar open by mentioning that this parsha was given on **Har Sinai**? See the commentary of Rashi and Ramban. [25:1 / "ma inyan shmitta etzel Har Sinai?"]

- 1. Explain the machloket between Rashi and Ramban.
- 2. How is their approach to this question different than the approach taken in the above shiur.

How is their approach to this question different than the approach taken in the above shiur? More specifically: Which fundamental question are they asking? How is it different from the fundamental question raised in the above shiur? Do these different approaches contradict each other, or do they complement one another?

C. A careful examination of the chiastic structure developed in the above shiur shows that the parshiot that we have conveniently 'left out' of our chart in both Seferim coincide with the narratives (i.e. chet ha-egel, Vayakhel, Pekudei, Shmini, the mekallel etc.). Thus, we can conclude that the structure focuses on the mitzvot and the covenant, but not on the ongoing story of Chumash. This makes sense, since it is logical to create a chiastic structure within a set of mitzvot, not in an ongoing narrative.

This provides an explanation why we skipped over chet ha-egel and its related mitzvot in our chart. [Recall that they were 'repeats' from Mishpatim because of chet ha-egel.]