

PARSHAT PINCHAS

PART I - QUESTIONS FOR THE 'SHABBOS TABLE'

MILCHEMET MIDYAN

1. In the sin of 'bnot Mo'av' (see 25:1-9), both the daughters of **Mo'av** and **Midyan** participate. Afterward, in 25:16-18, God commands Bnei Yisrael to attack only the **Midyanites** (and not Mo'av). In your opinion, can you explain why?

2. Why was **Mo'av** interested in causing Bnei Yisrael to sin?

[Relate to 22:2-8.]

Why was **Midyan** interested in causing Bnei Yisrael to sin?

[Note which of these two countries borders with Israel.]

Whose sin would you consider worse?

[In your answer, relate to Devarim 2:9-10 & 2:17-19.]

[See also Rashi & Ramban on 25:18.]

3. When Bnei Yisrael finally go to war with Midyan (see 31:1-8), they send only 1,000 soldiers from each tribe (total 12,000) and the army is led by Pinchas (the kohen).

How is this form of going to battle different from other battles that Bnei Yisrael have fought thus far (or that they will fight in the future)? Who has led Bnei Yisrael in battle in their previous battles?

4. Even though we don't have exact population figures of Mo'av at that time, we can extrapolate a rough estimation of how many men there were from the number of female children (most likely under the age of 13) who were taken captive = 32,000 (see 31:35). [Note also that not all of Midyan was destroyed. This nation appears again many other times in Tanach - see Shoftim chapter 6.]

Based on that figure, how many adult males would you estimate lived in Midyan, and hence, how large (would you estimate) was their army?

Based on the size of Bnei Yisrael's potential fighting force (i.e. 600,000 men age 20 and up), does it make sense that they would send a force of only 12,000 men? If not, why do you think that this is the 'strategy' that God commands Moshe to follow?

5. Based on the above questions, what do you think is significant about 'milchemet Midyan'?

Use your answer to explain the reason for the special tax that was levied in 31:25-54.]

[Can you relate this as well to Moshe's special relationship with Midyan. Note Bamidbar 10:29-32.]

6. Is there any relationship between Midyan and Amalek?

Relate to Bil'am's final blessings in Bamidbar 24:20-25 & Sefer Shoftim 4:11,17-20. [See also Breishit 25:1-6.]

NUMBERS

7. As long as we are dealing with numbers [in the 'Book of Numbers'], what is the population drop in Shevet Shimon between the census in Bamidbar chapter 1 and chapter 26? Is there any other shevet in which we find such a drastic drop?

Can you relate this to 25:14 and 25:9?!

Does Shimon receive a blessing from Moshe Rabeinu in Parshat Ve-zot Ha-Bracha (Devarim chapter 33)? If so, what is it? If not, why not? Is there any other 'shevet' that had such a significant drop in population?

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PART II - QUESTIONS FOR PREPARATION (for weekly shiur)

SHIUR #1 - THE ORDER OF PARSHIOT IN SEFER BAMIDBAR

1. Chapter 26 describes a 'mifkad' [census] of the twelve tribes. To the best of your recollection, what was the purpose of this census. In your answer, relate to:

- a) your 'first impression' - when reading 26:1-4 as a continuation of 25:16-18.
- b) its juxtaposition to the opening sentence - "And it came to pass after the **plague**... (i.e. 26:1)
- c) the final psukim of this census in 26:51-56!
- d) what transpires in chapter 27.

Rashi on 26:1 quotes two different Midrashim that relate to the purpose of this census. How do these two interpretations relate to your answer to the above question? Which of the above possibilities does he relate to?

See also Chizkuni & Ibn Ezra in regard to this topic.

2. Carefully compare the 'style' of this census (i.e. how the people are counted by families) to the census in the first chapter of Sefer Bamidbar. What is the primary difference between them?

As you review Bamidbar chapter one, note also what takes place in Bamidbar chapter 2. Is there anything similar to this in chapter 26?

Based on your comparison:

What was the purpose of the census in Bamidbar 1-2?

What is the purpose of the new census in Bamidbar 26?

Does your answer explain the reason for the differences?

3. In 25:16-18, God commands Bnei Yisrael to attack Midyan. Where in Sefer Bamidbar do we find the actual details of this battle?

Can you explain why the details of that battle are not recorded until chapter 31?

[See Chizkuni on 25:17. How does he 'solve' this problem?

See also Ramban on 25:17. How is his peirush different?]

4. Carefully review the primary topics of each of the individual parshiot that are recorded between chapters 25 and 31. It would be helpful to list them, and attempt to group them together by common topics.

Note how these parshiot appear to form an 'interruption' of the narrative that otherwise would flow naturally from 26:1 to chapter 31. Can you explain the reason for this structure?

5. In your opinion, where in Chumash does 27:12-23 belong? Can you explain why this narrative is recorded at this point in Sefer Bamidbar?

Compare 27:12-13 to 31:1-2. What can we assume from this in regard to the chronological order of these events?

6. What was your conclusion in regard to the primary topic of chapters 28-29? In your opinion, does this unit belong in Sefer Bamidbar? If not, where does it belong (and why)?

7. Continue your review (or 'scan') of Sefer Bamidbar until its conclusion in chapter 36. As before, make a listing of all the primary topics of each parshia (or set of parshiot); this time listing from chapter 25 until the end.

Study this list, and attempt to 're-organize' these parshiot (i.e. from chapter 25 until chapter 36) in a more 'logical' order.

Would you consider chapters 26-27 as one unit? If so, why?

In your opinion, where does this unit belong?

Can you explain why the Torah places it after chapter 25?

Read Rashi on 26:1 once again?

Explain the two answers that Rashi suggests based on the above analysis. See also Chizkuni.

8. Based on your answers to the above, what can we learn from the 'parshia break' that we find in the middle of 26:1?

9. Review Devarim 4:3-4, noting its specific context within the opening topic of chapter 4. [Btw, do these psukim sound familiar? How did you understand them up until now?]

Can you relate Devarim 4:3-4 to the events of Bamidbar chapter 25? Can you explain why Moshe mentions specifically 'ba'al pe'or' in this rebuke?

After that event, do we find any other instance when Bnei Yisrael sin in the desert (or when they are punished)?

Attempt to this relate to the overall theme of Sefer Bamidbar (and the above questions)?

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SHIUR #2 - PARSHAT TMIDIM U-MUSSAFIM - [ITS INTERNAL STRUCTURE]

1. Chapters 28-29 form a unit. Explain why (both textually and thematically), and give a title to this unit based on its content.

Would the heading: 'The Jewish Holidays' - be a precise title for this unit? Explain why yes, and why not.

Does your title of this unit explain the reason for the repetition of the phrase 'milvad olat ha-tamid...' in each holiday? [If it doesn't, it should.]

What does the word 'mussaf' mean? Did you include it in your title?

When we daven 'fillat mussaf', do we ever quote the psukim from Parshat Pinchas? If so, when, where, and why?

When we read the Torah on Yom Tov, do we ever read from Parshat Pinchas? If so, for which aliya?

Can you explain why?

2. How does this unit relate to Vayikra chapter 23?

Is it simply a repeat? If not, what is the difference?

Be sure that you relate to the phrase 've-hikravtem isheh la-Hashem' that is repeated so often in chapter 23. Relate as well to Vayikra 23:37-38 - See Rashi on that pasuk!

[See also TSC shiur on Parshat Emor re: the "moadim".]

3. Based on Bamidbar chapters 28-29, compose a table that lists (and compares) the specific animals (and their numbers) that are offered on each holiday. Can you identify any type of a 'pattern'?

If so, based on that pattern, attempt to group the holidays together based on their similar 'korbanot'. Can you find a reason for the groupings that emerge?

According to these groupings, should Shmini Atzeret be considered one of the 'shalosh regalim' or one of the 'Days of Judgement'?

4. In **your** opinion, should the special Mussaf offering of Rosh Chodesh be offered on Rosh Hashana as well, or does the special Mussaf offering of Rosh Hashana 'override' it?

Now, look at the parsha carefully, and see if you arrived at the same conclusion that Chumash does (i.e. make sure that you study 29:6 in its context)!

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PART III - PARSHANUT

1. Review the opening four psukim of Parshat Pinchas (i.e. 25:10-13). In your opinion, does 25:13 'explain' 25:12, or does God grant Pinchas an 'additional' reward in 25:13?

Can you explain the difference between the award of 'brit shalom' in 25:12 to the award of 'brit kehunat olam' in 25:13?

In your opinion, are these two britot identical or are they different?

If they are different, what does brit shalom imply?

After you have thought about this, see:

* Rashi 25:12-13 - How does Rashi answer the above question?

* Ramban 25:11-13. This Ramban is very difficult, how does he explain the difference between the two britot?

* Ibn Ezra 25:12-13 - How does Ibn Ezra answer the above...?
[See also Chizkuni - is this the same as Ibn Ezra?

Why does he add the law about birkat kohanim?

* Sforno 25:12 / Clearly, he understands brit shalom in a very different manner. Can you explain why? What does he base his interpretation on?

Then, see once again the Ibn Ezra on 25:13. How and why does he argue with Sforno's approach?

2. Note the word 'shalom' in birkat kohanim (Bamidbar 6:26).

If I am not mistaken, these are the only two instances in Sefer Bamidbar where we find the word shalom. [E-mail me if you find another].

Could this parallel help us understand the connection between brit shalom and brit kehunat olam? Would this imply that brit shalom is the same as brit kehuna?

3. In Sefer Breishit we discussed two approaches to the concept of brit - a) a one sided covenant, basically a Divine promise; b) a two sided covenant, which binds both sides.

[See Ramban Breishit 6:18 for complete discussion.]

In your opinion, what of these two types would you consider God's covenant with Pinchas?

Based on his commentary on Breishit 6:18, attempt to better understand Ramban's commentary on Bamidbar 25:13.

[Using the Ramban's own words, 've-hamaskil yavin!']

How does the zealous nature of the act of Pinchas relate to the biblical concept of kehuna? [Relate to Shmot 19:4-6.]

4. In relation to question #1 in 'shabbos table questions' - be sure to see Rashi & Ramban on 25:18 concerning why only Midyan is attacked [and not Mo'av].

Does Ramban argue with Rashi, or does his interpretation 'add' to Rashi's explanation? Explain!

Now see Chizkuni on 25:18. What does his peirush **add**? Which problem in 'pshat' does Chizkuni's peirush answer?

5. In regard to the 'strange' progression of parshiot in Parshat Pinchas (as discussed in Part II above) - Note how the following parshanim relate to these problems of 'smichut parshiot'!

Rashi on 27:12. See also Ibn Ezra.

Relate to Rashi's two 'meshalim' in his peirush to 26:1!

See also Chizkuni on 27:12. Can you explain his peirush?

Finally see Ramban on 27:12. How is his peirush here affected by his opinion of 'yeish mukdam u-me'uchar'?!]

6. In regard to why Parshat Tmidim u-Mussafim is recorded here: See Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Ramban on 28:2.

Explain how (and why) each commentary is different.

be-hatzlacha,
menachem