

PARSHAT PINCHAS

Should Chumash end with Parshat Pinchas?

Obviously not, yet in the middle of this week's Parsha we find the story of Moshe Rabbeinu's 'death' and the transfer of his leadership to Yehoshua (see 27:12-23).

Furthermore, a careful study of Parshat Pinchas reveals that almost all of its topics seem to belong elsewhere in Chumash.

In this week's shiur, we attempt to understand why.

INTRODUCTION

Up until Parshat Pinchas, the narrative of Sefer Bamidbar has followed in a very logical (chronological) order. However, towards the beginning of Parsha Pinchas, we uncover a serious problem in relation to the story of the war against Midyan.

Even though God's command to avenge the Midyanim is recorded towards the beginning of Parshat Pinchas, the details of that battle are not recorded until several chapters later in the middle of Parshat Matot. In the 'interim', Parshat Pinchas discusses several events that are not only unrelated, but also appear to have taken place at a later time!

After explaining this problem in a bit more detail, our shiur will attempt to explain the reason for what otherwise seems to be a very strange progression of parshiot.

[Before we begin our shiur, a note of convention:

Parsha - with a capital 'P' - refers to Parshat HaShavua, parsha (or parshia) - with a small 'p' - refers to 'parshiot' ['ptuchot' or 'stumot'] - the paragraph-like divisions in Chumash, denoted by a wide blank space on the line.]

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Review 25:1-15, noting how Parshat Pinchas begins by completing the story of Bnei Yisrael's sin with the daughters of Midyan (from the end of Parshat Balak). First, Pinchas is rewarded for his zealous act (that saved Bnei Yisrael from a harsher punishment/ 25:10-15); and immediately afterward God commands Moshe to avenge the Midyanites:

"And God spoke to Moshe, saying: Attack the Midyanites and defeat them, for they attacked you by trickery..." (25:16-18).

Logic would dictate that Chumash should continue at this point with the story of that battle. But that's not what happens! Instead, the details of that battle are recorded only some **five** chapters later -in the middle of Parshat Matot:

"And God spoke to Moshe, saying: Avenge the Israelite people on the Midyanites...[then] Moshe spoke to Bnei Yisrael: Choose men for battle, and let them attack Midyan to avenge God's anger with Midyan..." (see Bamidbar 31:1-2 / compare with 25:16-18).

In the interim (i.e. chapters 26-30), we find several unrelated topics, as summarized in the following table:

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Topic</u>
26:1-65	A census of the entire nation
27:1-11	The story of 'bnot Tzlofchad'
27:12-14	Moshe Rabbeinu's 'final day'
27:12-23	The transfer of leadership from Moshe to Yehoshua
28:1-30:1	Laws of korbanot - tmidim and musafim
30:2-17	The laws of nedarim (vows)

This problem usually goes unnoticed for a very simple reason. When the census begins in chapter 26, it appears to be directly connected to this commandment to avenge the Midyanim: "And God spoke to Moshe, saying: Attack the

Midyanites..." (see 25:16-18)

"And it came to pass after the plague, God told Moshe... take a census of Bnei Yisrael from the age twenty and up - by their ancestral houses, all who are able to bear arms" (see 26:1-2).

This juxtaposition leaves us with the impression that this census is necessary as part of the preparation for the ensuing battle against Midyan. However, by the time the details of that census are completed (some 60 verses later) it becomes quite clear that this "mifkad" has nothing to do with that battle. Rather, its purpose is stated explicitly:

"... This is the total number of Bnei Yisrael: 601,730.

And God spoke to Moshe saying: **To these [counted people] shall the land be apportioned** - according to the listed names, the larger the group the larger the share..." (see 26:51-54).

In other words, this census will form the basis for the partition of the Land after its conquest. This observation explains why this specific census is conducted "l'beit avotam" [lit. by their ancestral houses / see 26:2] - hence it includes the specific the names of the official family units, as the land will be apportioned according to the size of these family units (see 26:52).

[Note how this detail of "le-beit avotam" is the primary difference between the census here, and the census in Bamidbar chapters 1-2. There, we don't find these individual family unit names!]

Further proof that this census is totally unrelated to the war against Midyan comes from the details of that battle in Parshat Matot. Review 31:4-6, noting how God instructs Moshe to conscript only one thousand soldiers from each tribe. If only 12,000 soldiers are needed to fight Midyan, then there is certainly no need for Moshe to conduct a comprehensive census of over 600,000 soldiers!

Conclusive proof that the census in chapter 26 is taken for the sole purpose of apportioning the land (and has nothing to do with the ensuing battle against Midyan) is found in chapter 27, where we find the story of how the daughters of Tzlofchad complained that they would not receive a 'nachala' [a portion of the land]. Certainly, this has nothing to do with the war against Midyan, but everything to do with inheriting the Land!

[The final topic of chapter 27, i.e. the appointment of Yehoshua to succeed Moshe, also relates to the topic of inheriting the land, as it will become Yehoshua's responsibility to conquer and then oversee the inheritance of the land according to the tribal families.]

Finally, chapters 28 thru 30 describe numerous laws regarding korbanot and nedarim [vows]. These laws as well certainly have no direct connection to the war against Midyan.

Only in chapter 31, Sefer Bamidbar finally returns to the details of the battle against Midyan that began back in chapter 25.

The following chart summarizes our discussion thus far and illustrates how the natural flow from chapter 25-31 is interrupted by topics A-F:

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>EVENT / TOPIC</u>
*****	*****
* 25 ==>	GOD'S COMMANDMENT TO ATTACK MIDYAN
A) 26	The Census of the people who will inherit the Land
B) 27:1-11	The story of bnot Tzlofchad
C) 27:12-14	Moshe Rabbeinu's final day
D) 27:12-23	The transfer of leadership from Moshe to Yehoshua
E) 28->29	The laws of korbanot - tmidim and musafim
F) 30	The laws of nedarim (vows)
* 31 ==>	THE BATTLE AGAINST THE MIDYANIM

Clearly, none of these topics relate directly to 'milchemet Midyan'. Nonetheless, the Torah records them here in Parshat Pinchas.

To understand why, we must first determine where each of these parshiot (i.e. A-F) **does** belong.

A) THE CENSUS - MIFKAD HA-NACHALOT

As we explained above, the census (in chapter 26) was taken to enable the leaders to properly apportion the land. Therefore, it's rather easy to identify where this section 'belongs', for the last three chapters of Sefer Bamidbar discuss the topic of inheriting the land (see 33:50 till the end of the book). In fact, we can pretty much pinpoint where this unit belongs by noting a rather obvious textual (and thematic) parallel. Simply review once again the concluding psukim of the census:

"Among these shall the land be apportioned as shares, according to the listed names, with larger groups **INCREASE** the share, with smaller groups **REDUCE** the share. Each is to be assigned its share according to its enrollment..." (see 26:52-54).

The note how we find almost the identical commandment in Parshat Mas'ei, when God charges Bnei Yisrael with the mission of conquering the land:

"When you cross the Jordan into the Land of Canaan... you shall take possession of the land and settle it..."
"You shall **apportion** the land among yourselves... with larger groups **INCREASE** the share, with smaller groups **REDUCE** the share... You shall have your portions according to your **ancestral tribes**..." (see 33:50-55)
[Note CAPS in both quotes to highlight parallel]

Review these psukim once again, noting how this commandment in Parshat Mas'ei is almost identical to the commandment recorded at the conclusion of the census in Parshat Pinchas (see above 26:52-54)!

Furthermore, Parshat Mas'ei continues with numerous other commandments concerning inheriting the land. [For example, the borders of Eretz Canaan that are to be conquered (see 34:1-15), the tribal leaders who will apportion the land (see 34:16-29), the cities of the lev'im and the cities of refuge (see chapter 35), etc.]

Hence, we conclude that the census in Parshat Pinchas actually 'belongs' in Parshat Mas'ei!

B) BNOT TZLOFCHAD

Note how this incident (see 27:1-11) is recorded immediately after the census [read 27:1 carefully], and most probably that is exactly when it took place. After all, the daughters of Tzlofchad's complaint stems from their worry that their father's inheritance (as promised in the census) will be lost, for they have no brothers.

Clearly, this story can be considered a direct continuation of the "mifkad ha-nachalot" (i.e. chapter 26), for it too deals with laws concerning inheriting the Land. Therefore, it too should have been recorded in Parshat Mas'ei. [In fact, the story of bnot Tzlofchad actually continues in Parshat Mas'ei - see chapter 36!]

C) MOSHE RABBEINU'S FINAL DAY

In the next parsha (27:12-14), God commands Moshe to take a final glance of the Promised Land prior to his death:

"And God told Moshe: Ascend Mount Eivarim and view the land which I am giving to Bnei Yisrael, then you will be gathered unto your people, just as Aharon was..." [i.e. the time has come for Moshe to die (see 27:12-13)].

Obviously, this commandment should have been recorded at the very end of Sefer Bamidbar, or even at the end of Sefer Devarim - prior to Moshe's death; surely not in the middle of Parshat Pinchas! [To verify this, simply compare it to Devarim 34:1-6.]

Furthermore, even if this story 'belongs' in Sefer Bamidbar, it most definitely should have been recorded **after** "milchemet Midyan", for that story begins -stating explicitly:

"And God spoke to Moshe: Avenge the Midyanites... **afterward** you shall be gathered to your nation" (31:1).]

D) APPOINTING YEHOSHUA AS THE NEW LEADER

The next parshia (27:15-23) is simply Moshe's reaction to this commandment (that he must die). Therefore, Moshe requests that God appoint a leader in his place. Clearly, both of these parshiot [(C) and (D)] form a unit, but it would have made more sense to records this unit somewhere towards the end of Chumash; but definitely **not** in the middle of Parshat Pinchas!

In fact, considering that this story includes the appointment of Yehoshua as the new leader, this unit could have formed a very appropriate conclusion for the entire Sefer.

E) KORBANOT TMIDIM U-MUSAFIM

The next two chapters (28->29) constitute a schedule of the various korbanot **musaf** that are offered on special occasions in 'addition' [= musaf] to the daily **tamid** sacrifice.

Obviously, this entire unit doesn't belong here, for it has nothing to do with the ongoing narrative. Rather, it should have been recorded in Sefer Vayikra, most probably in Parshat Emor, together with the other laws of korbanot and holidays (see Vayikra chapter 23, noting how the phrase: 've-hikravtem isheh la-Hashem..' relates to the complete details found in Bamidbar chapters 28-29)

F) PARSHAT NEDARIM

In chapter 30 we find a commandment regarding the laws of "nedarim" [vows]; yet another parshia of mitzvot (as opposed to narrative). These laws could be understood as a direct continuation of the previous section - because the final pasuk of the "tmidim u'musafim" section states that these korbanot were brought **'in addition to their nedarim...'** (see 29:39!).

Based on this analysis, it becomes clear that the Torah has intentionally 'interrupted' the story of the war against Midyan with several unrelated parshiot! The obvious question is: **why?**

DIVIDE & CONQUER

To answer this question, we must first group these six topics (i.e. A-F above) into two basic categories.

I. PREPARATION FOR ENTERING ERETZ CANAAN (26-27)

- A. The census for dividing the land - mifkad ha-nachalot
- B. The complaint of bnot Tzlofchad re: their inheritance
- C. Moshe's death
- D. The transfer of his leadership to Yehoshua.

II. MITZVOT THAT BELONG IN SEFER VAYIKRA (28-30)

- E. The laws of tmidim u-musafim
- F. The laws of nedarim

These two categories can help us pinpoint where each of these two units belong.

The first unit (I.) contains parshiot that detail Bnei Yisrael's preparation for entering the land. As we explained above, these parshiot belong in Parshat Mas'ei. To illustrate this point, the following table shows the progression of parshiot from the story of milchemet Midyan until the end of Sefer Bamidbar:

CHAPTER	TOPIC
31:1-54	The war against Midyan
32:1-42	The inheritance of Reuven & Gad in Transjordan
33:1-49	Summary of B.Y.'s journey through the desert
33:50-56 *	The commandment to conquer & inherit the Land
34:1-15 *	The precise borders of Eretz Canaan.
34:16-29 *	The tribal leaders who are to apportion the Land
35:1-18 *	The cities of the Levites for their inheritance.
35:9-34 *	The cities of refuge to be set up in the land.
36:1-13 *	Laws of inheritance relating to inter-tribal marriages

This table illustrates how the final topic of Sefer Bamidbar is **preparation for entering Eretz Canaan** (i.e. 33:50-36:13). Considering that chapters 26-27 in Parshat Pinchas discuss this very same topic, we conclude that they actually 'belong' at the end of Sefer Bamidbar.

The second unit, containing the laws of **tmidim u-musafim** and **nedarim**, clearly belongs in Sefer Vayikra. However, this

phenomenon should not surprise us, for there are many other instances in Sefer Bamidbar where we find 'insertions' of a set of laws that seem to belong in Sefer Vayikra.

[See our Introductory shiur to Bamidbar, where this topic was discussed in detail. Later in our shiur, we will suggest a reason why specifically these mitzvot were 'transferred' from Vayikra to Bamidbar.]

CUT AND PASTE?

Based on this distinction, we can now redefine our question: Why does the Torah 'cut' these parshiot (i.e. chapters 26 & 17) from Parshat Mas'ei (where they seem to belong), and 'paste' them instead in Parshat Pinchas - after the story of Bnei Yisrael's sin with bnot Midyan, but before they avenge the Midyanim?

Before we offer a thematic explanation, we should note a small technicality that can support our conclusions thus far.

Using a Tanach Koren (or similar), take a careful look at the opening pasuk of chapter 26, noting how there is a parshia break smack in the middle of this pasuk!

"Va-yehi acharei ha-mageifa" - when the **plague** was over - **SPACE** , [i.e. a parshia break in the middle of the pasuk] ...and God told Moshe...Take a census of Bnei Yisrael..." (see 26:1-2)

This strange 'parshia break' in the middle of the pasuk may reflect this 'interruption' of the narrative, which takes place precisely at this point, in the middle of this pasuk!

Now that we have established that the census in chapter 26 'belongs' at the end of the book, we must now search for a reason why the Torah intentionally inserted this unit specifically at this point in Sefer Bamidbar, i.e. after the plague that followed Bnei Yisrael's sin with 'the women of Moav & Midyan'.

We will suggest a reason for this juxtaposition by considering the overall theme and structure of Sefer Bamidbar.

THE LAST PLAGUE

Recall how the narrative of Sefer Bamidbar began as Bnei Yisrael prepare for their journey from Har Sinai towards the Promised Land. Ideally (i.e. had Bnei Yisrael not sinned), Sefer Bamidbar would have continued with the story of the conquest and settlement of the Land.

Even though everything seems to be going fine in the first ten chapters - i.e. up until the psukim of "va'yhi bnsoa ha'aron" (see 10:35-36) - as soon as Bnei Yisrael begin their journey (in chapter 11), everything seems to go wrong. Instead of describing what should have been, Sefer Bamidbar becomes the story of how and why Bnei Yisrael do NOT make it to the land of Israel.

Note how just about every story in Sefer Bamidbar from chapter 11 thru chapter 25 describes a rebellious act of Bnei Yisrael, followed by a terrible punishment.

[For example, the "mitonim", the "mitavim", the "meraglim", Korach and his followers, "mei meriva", the "nachash nechoshet" incident, and "chet bnot midyan".]

The sin of the "meraglim" (in chapter 13) was so severe that God swore that the first generation must perish in the desert. Then, even in the fortieth year, we find additional incidents where Bnei Yisrael sin (and are punished). For example, note the story of the 'nachash nechoshet' (see 21:4-10) and 'chet bnot Midyan' (see 25:1-6).

Even though chapters 11 thru 25 of Sefer Bamidbar are replete with stories of rebellion, punishment, and death; from chapter 26 and onward, the primary topic of Sefer Bamidbar changes once again. Instead of stories of rebellion, now we find stories of conquest and preparation for entering the land. The following table summarizes this division of the narrative of Sefer Bamidbar into three distinct sections:

- I. 1->10 Preparation at Har Sinai to travel to Israel
- II, 11->25 What went wrong, i.e. why first generation failed
- III. 26->36 Preparation for entering the land [new generation]

From this perspective, the act of Pinchas, which stopped the plague in the aftermath of the sin with "bnot Mo'av" constitutes an important milestone in Sefer Bamidbar - for this incident was the **last** punishment in the desert. Hence, those who survived that plague are now destined to become the first **inheritors** of Eretz Canaan!

With this background, we can suggest that the Torah's 'insertion' of the census specifically at this point in the Sefer emphasizes precisely this point - that the tragic events in the desert have finally come to an end. Those who survived this plague are now worthy of inheriting the Land.

This interpretation is supported by the final statement of that census, recorded after the levi'im are counted:

"These are the persons counted by Moshe...Among these there was not one of those counted by Moshe & Aharon in Midbar Sinai (chapters 1-2) ... For God had said of them: They shall die in the wilderness, not one of them survived, except Kalev ben Yefuneh and Yehoshua bin Nun" (26:63-65).

Further support is found in Sefer Devarim, in Moshe Rabbeinu's opening address to the nation. In Moshe's introductory speech (before he begins his main speech that reviews the various laws that Bnei Yisrael must keep once they enter the land / see 5:1, 5:28, 6:1 etc.), note his emphasis on this very same point:

"Your very own eyes have seen what God has done to Ba'al Pe'or, for anyone who had followed Ba'al Pe'or [i.e. chet bnot Mo'av] - God has destroyed him from your midst [via the 'mageifa']. But **you** - who have remained loyal to your God - are standing here alive to today!" (see Devarim 4:3-4).

[Did you realize that this is the context of the pasuk "v'atem ha'dvakim b'Hashem Elokeichem" (that we often quote in our daily tefilla)?]

FROM CENSUS TO LEADERSHIP

In a similar manner, we can explain why this census is followed by God's commandment to Moshe to ascend Har HaEivarim to die, and the story of how his leadership is transferred to Yehoshua. Considering that this census will become the basis for the 'inheritance' of the Land of Israel, we mention immediately afterward this transfer of leadership, for it will become Yehoshua's duty to lead the new generation to conquer and inherit the Land. [See further iyun section for a discussion of how Rashi relates to this point.]

TMIDIM U-MUSAFIM - WHY HERE?

Now that we have explained why the Torah moves the unit of chapters 26-27 from Parshat Mas'ei to Parshat Pinchas, we must also explain why the Torah moves chapters 28-30 (the second category) from Sefer Vayikra to Parshat Pinchas.

As we explained in our introductory shiur, Sefer Bamidbar contains numerous mitzvot that 'could have been' recorded in Sefer Vayikra. Here we find yet another example.

However, as was the case in the other instances, we must look for a thematic connection between those laws and the ongoing narrative. In other words, we must ask - what is the connection between the laws of tmidim u-musafim and Bnei Yisrael's preparation for entering Eretz Canaan?

Once again, we return to the theme of Sefer Bamidbar to suggest an answer.

Recall that the first ten chapters of Sefer Bamidbar describe Bnei Yisrael's **preparation** for their journey from Har Sinai to the Promised Land. Those chapters emphasize the intrinsic connection between the camp of Bnei Yisrael and the mishkan. Bnei Yisrael must travel with the mishkan, and thus the 'Shchina' (the Divine presence), at the center of the camp (see shiur on Parshat Bamidbar).

Now, forty years later, as the Torah describes Bnei Yisrael's preparation for entering the Promised Land, Chumash may be emphasizing this very same point once again - by recording the laws of tmidim u-musafim in Parshat Pinchas.

One can suggest two thematic reasons:

- 1) The korban Tamid, the daily collective offering on the **mizbeiach**, together with the additional **musaf** offering on the holidays, is purchased with the 'machatzit ha-shekel', collected from each member of Am Yisrael when taking the yearly **census**!
- 2) The **tamid** offering is a symbolic daily reminder of Ma'amad Har Sinai. Recall (from our shiur on Parshat Tetzaveh) our definition of the **Shchina** unit in Shmot chapters 25-29 (the commandment to build the mishkan). That unit began with the purpose of the mishkan:

"And they shall make for Me a mikdash, ve-**shachanti** betocham - that I should **dwel**l in their midst" (25:8).

That unit concluded with the commandment to offer the daily korban tamid, whose purpose was to perpetuate the **Shchina** which dwelled on Har Sinai:

"**Olat tamid** for all generations, at the entrance of the ohel mo'ed... for there **I will meet** with Bnei Yisrael... v-**shachanti** - and I will **dwel**l among Bnei Yisrael, I will be their God..."

(see Shmot 29:42-45 compare Bamidbar 28:1-6).

A similar phrase is found in the presentation of the korban tamid in Parshat Pinchas:

"**Olat tamid**, which was instituted at **Har Sinai**..." (28:6).

Thus, the korban tamid may symbolize the special connection between God and Bnei Yisrael that must crystallize as Bnei Yisrael prepare to conquer and inherit their Land.

From this perspective, this korban **tamid** may reflect both the collective nature of Am Yisrael's relationship with God ['korban tzibbur'], together with the value of the contribution of each individual [machatzit ha-shekel].

As Yehoshua prepares to lead Bnei Yisrael into a new era, these principles of the 'avodat tamid' - collective purpose, individual responsibility, and daily routine - must serve as a guiding light for the entire nation.

shabbat shalom,
menachem

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FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. The interpretation presented in the above shiur can explain why Rashi (26:1) quotes **two** Midrashim to explain why this parsha of the census is located here.

1) The first Midrash he quotes, relating to the connection between the plague and the census, explains that Bnei Yisrael are so dear to God that He counts them after every tragedy, just as the shepherd counts his sheep after they have been attacked.

However, this approach is difficult, for it does not take into account the Torah's explicit explanation that this census is to determine who will inherit the land (see 26:53). Furthermore, in the other instances when Bnei Yisrael are smitten by plagues, the Torah never records God's command Moshe to take a census. Why should this plague be any different?

2) Therefore, Rashi quotes a second Midrash comparing Moshe to a shepherd: Moshe, like a shepherd, when he took Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt he counted them, now that he is about to die, he must return the sheep to their owner. Therefore, he must count them once again.

While the first Midrash focuses on the connection between the plague and the census, the second Midrash focuses on the connection between the census and the transfer of leadership from Moshe to Yehoshua.]

B. Note the Ramban's explanation why the parsha of Moshe's 'death' is written at this time (in Parshat Pinchas).

What issue led Ramban to this conclusion?

C. The story of Bnei Gad & Reuven (chapter 32) could be

considered part of the nachala section.

1. Explain why.
2. Explain why it isn't, and why it actually continues to the story of milchemet Midyan.

Pay attention to the opening words of perek 32.

How does this relate to milchemet Midyan?

3. How does this story relate to other events in the desert, such as chet ha-meraglim for example. (See the Netziv on this issue.)

D. Use our explanation of the importance of the korban tamid to explain why each korban musaf in Parshat Pinchas concludes with the phrase 'milvad olat ha-tamid ...'.

E. Compare the names of the family groups in the census in Parshat Pinchas [le-beit avotam...] to the names of the original seventy members of Yaakov's family who went down to Egypt (see Breishit 46:8-27). Can you find the significance of this parallel?

[To whom was this land first promised?]