

PARSHAT BEHA'ALOTCHA

PART I - QUESTIONS FOR THE 'SHABBOS TABLE'

LIGHTING THE MENORA

1. Most probably, you have read the opening pasuk of Parshat Beha'alotcha many times, and it is often translated as follows:
"...when you go up to **light** the menorah..." (see 8:2).

Do you agree with this translation? Is this an exact translation of the Hebrew?

If not, what would be a more precise translation? [Be sure that you understand the meaning of the word 'ner'.]

Now, read Shmot 25:31-38, especially 25:36-37. What is the precise definition of 'neirot' according to these psukim?

See Rashi on 25:37!

Relate this to Bamidbar 8:4, and its description of the menorah as 'miksha' [made from one piece of gold]. In your opinion, are the neirot [of the menorah] part of this miksha, or are they separate from it? [In other words, are the neirot permanently connected to the menorah, or are they removable?

If they were removable, can you explain why?

From a technical standpoint, how did the kohen light the menorah each day? [i.e. how did he set up the wicks and oil in the candles? What did the candle look like? etc.]

See also Ibn Ezra & Chizkuni on Rashi 25:37.

Based on these questions, how would you now interpret 8:2?

A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE?

2. In chapter 11, as Bnei Yisrael begin their journey from Har Sinai, Moshe Rabbeinu is very angered by the people's behavior. Note Moshe's complaint to God in 11:10-15, especially 11:11!

How is this both parallel and different to Moshe's petitions to God in Sefer Shmot, based on Shmot 5:22, 32:30-32, and 33:16?

Can you explain the reason for his 'change' in attitude?

Relate to Bamidbar 11:4-6, while noting Breishit 3:6.

In what manner is the nature of Bnei Yisrael's sin in this incident worse than their sin at 'chet ha-egel', and why would this affect Moshe Rabbeinu's reaction?

What is God's response to Moshe's complaint in Bamidbar 11:10-15, and how does this response relate to his complaint?

See 11:16-17. Relate this to the above parallel.

Is Moshe Rabbeinu's reaction to this incident similar to his reaction to the other complaints that will later arise in Sefer Bamidbar? Explain what is similar and what is different.

[Relate to Moshe's reaction to the incidents at 'chet ha-meraglim', Korach's rebellion, and 'mei meriva'.]

How do the above questions relate to the more general topic of 'leadership' in Sefer Bamidbar?

A LEVITE FOR EVERY 'BECHOR'

3. In what manner is the special dedication ceremony for the levi'im (as described in Bamidbar 8:5-14) similar to the dedication ceremony for the kohanim as detailed in Vayikra 8:1-13 (and/or in Shmot chapter 29)?

In what manner is this ceremony different?

Can you explain the reason for the similarities and differences?

Review God's original commandment to set aside the 'bechor' [first born son] of each family as explained in Shmot 13:1-2 (and 13:11-15). What does the word 'kadesh' in Shmot 13:1 imply, and what would be the practical result of this commandment?

Based on that original mitzva, relate that commandment and its intention to the ceremony that is described in Bamidbar 8:5-14 as well as Bamidbar 3:11-13 (& 13:14-51).

[Relate also to Shmot 32:26 & Devarim 10:8-9.]

How does this help your understanding the meaning of the word kadesh in Shmot 13:1 and the original purpose of that mitzva?

BETWEEN a NAZIR, a KOHEN and a LEVI

4. In the dedication ceremony of the levi'im (see 8:5-14), we find the need to:

- * sprinkle upon them special water
- * shave off all of their hair
- * wash their clothing and purification
- * to offer a chatat and ola [w/ 'semicha']
- * waive them before God [= 'tenufa']

In what manner are any of these 'rituals' similar to the laws of nazir (as described in Bamidbar chapter 6)? In what manner are they similar to the dedication ceremony of the kohanim (as described in Vayikra chapter 8)? Can you explain the significance of these parallels?

[Note especially Bamidbar 6:8,14-20; Vayikra 8:1-6,22.]

Relate your answer to the juxtaposition between these laws (and all of the other laws) in Bamidbar chapters 6 thru 8.

PART II - QUESTIONS FOR PREPARATION (for weekly shiur)

1. Clearly, the primary topic of the end of Parshat Naso (i.e. Bamidbar chapter 7) was the 'korbanot ha-nesi'im' [dedication offerings of the tribal leaders].

What is the primary topic of the opening psukim in Parshat Beha'alotcha (see 8:1-4)?

Can you identify a thematic connection between these two topics?

Note as well the primary topic of the next 'parshia', i.e. 8:5-

22. In what manner does the ceremony described in those psukim relate to the previous topics in chapters 7 & 8?

Could you consider chapters 7 thru 8 as a unit? If so, how would you title that unit? How does this unit relate to the earlier units in Sefer Bamidbar, and/or to the topics that will follow in chapter 9?

2. Review once again Bamidbar 8:1-4. In your opinion, do these psukim belong here, or somewhere else in Chumash? If so, where?

Relate to Shmot chapter 25, and the topic of that chapter, as well as Shmot chapter 40.

[In your answer, be sure to relate to 7:1. See also Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, and Chizkuni on 8:2 as well as Rashi & Ramban.]

3. When (i.e. on what day) did the events described in 8:5-22 take place? Based on your answer, how does this ceremony relate to the events in chapter 7, and to the details in 8:1-4?

Is there any logic to the flow of these parshiot? [In your answer, relate to last week's TSC shiur on the 'nesi'im'.]

4. In your opinion, do chapters 7-8 belong in Sefer Bamidbar, in Sefer Vayikra (chapter 9), or in Sefer Shmot (chapter 40)?

Why do you think that they are included in Sefer Bamidbar?

How do they relate to chapters 9-10 that follow?

Do they relate as well to chapters 1-4. If so, how?

5. Can you identify a common topic for all of the parshiot in chapters 9 thru 10? If so, how does it relate to the overall theme of Sefer Bamidbar (as discussed in our introductory shiur to Sefer Bamidbar)?

Similarly, can you identify a common topic for all of the parshiot in chapters 11 thru 14? If so, how does that topic relate to the topic of chapters 9 thru 10?

6. In your opinion, what 'should have been' the topic of Sefer Bamidbar (from chapter 11 onward) had Bnei Yisrael not sinned at that time? What becomes the primary topic 'instead'?

7. What is special about 10:35-36? What is the purpose of the upside down 'nun's' that surround these two psukim?

Can you relate your answer to question #4 above?

Can you explain why Chazal understand these two psukim as a Sefer by itself? [See Shabbat 115b-116a.]

Relate your answer to what 'should have happened' in chapter 11 (i.e. had Bnei Yisrael not sinned), as discussed in the question above.

See also Rashi, Ramban, Seforno & Chizkuni on 10:35-36.

8. Relate your answers to the above questions to Moshe's anger with the people after the sin of the 'mit'avim' and his subsequent request that God relieve him from his leadership responsibilities? [See 11:3-14 and question #2 in Part I above.]

See Rashi on 10:33. How does he solve this problem?

Why does Rashi conclude that there were **two** arks?!

[Note also Chizkuni!!!]

Next, see Ibn Ezra. Why does he claim that this (first) journey was different than the rest of the journeys that would follow?

Then, see Ramban. How is his peirush different than Rashi and Ibn Ezra's? Why does he begin with 'al derech ha-pshat'?

Finally, see Seforno.

In what manner is his commentary similar to Ibn Ezra's and how does it differ?

be-hatzlacha,
menachem

PART III – PARSHANUT

PESACH SHENI

1. In your opinion, is the main topic of chapter 9 (i.e. 9:1-14) 'pesach rishon' or 'pesach sheni'? [Explain your answer.]

Relate to why this story is included in Sefer Bamidbar.

Use your answer to explain the problem in the chronological order of these parshiot. [i.e. date of Bamidbar 1:1/ compared to 9:1]

Now, see Rashi on 9:1.

What conclusion does Rashi reach? Why?

How does he explain **why** it is 'out of place'?

[See also Chizkuni.]

Next, see Ibn Ezra. Note how he explains why this parshia is recorded here. How is his peirush different than Rashi?

[In your opinion, what peirush is closer to 'pshat'?]

Next, see Ramban. Usually, Ramban argues with the opinion of 'ein mukdam u-me'uchar'. Why does he accept it for this pasuk? How does he explain **why** this parshia is recorded here? How does his peirush differ from Rashi & Ibn Ezra?

Finally, see Seforno. Notice how comprehensive his peirush is! How does he explain **why** this story is here in the context of theme of Sefer Bamidbar?

How does he relate this to the problem of ein mukdam u-me'uchar? [Note the final few lines!]

How does Seforno's commentary differ from Ramban's?

Can you explain why?

LOOKING FOR A TOUR GUIDE

2. Read 10:29-34, the story of how Moshe offers Yitro to 'come along' with them. Based on these psukim, is it possible to determine if Yitro indeed agreed to Moshe's offer?

Now, compare this story with the story of Yitro's arrival at Har Sinai in Shmot chapter 18. Note especially 18:27, as it describes how Yitro left. In your opinion, does 18:27 (describing Yitro's departure back to Midyan) refer to the same story as here in Bamidbar 10:29-34, or did he first go back, and then return at a later time back to Bnei Yisrael's camp at Har Sinai?

In your opinion, in the story in Bamidbar, does Yitro (= Chovav) end up staying with Bnei Yisrael or does he go back home to Midyan?

See Rashi, Ramban, and Seforno. Note how each commentary deals with the above problem, and how each peirush differs.

IN FRONT, OR IN THE MIDDLE?

3. When Bnei Yisrael travel through the desert, **where** is the aron supposed to be? [i.e. at the front of the camp or in the middle?]

Relate to 9:11-28 as well as 10:33-36.

As you study 10:33, note how it describes the manner by which the aron leads the camp.

Was this the original plan?

- * Based on Bamidbar 9:11-28, note 9:21.
- * Based on Bamidbar 10:35.
- * Based on Shmot 23:20-23.
- * Based on Yehoshua chapter 3.