

DIMENSIONS IN CHUMASH

Parshas Naso

Inauguration of the Mishkan – in Chumash Bamidbar

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם כִּלְאוֹת מֹשֶׁה לְהַקִּים אֶת הַמִּשְׁכָּן

And it was on the day Moshe finished setting up the Mishkan¹

INTRODUCTION: ONE EVENT IN THREE CHUMASHIM?

The greater part of our parsha is devoted to the offerings brought by the *nesi'im* (princes) of each tribe on the inaugural day of the Mishkan. Many commentators discuss the unusual feature of the Torah describing each *nasi's* offerings separately. However, alongside the question of repetition, there is perhaps a more basic question still:

Why is the inaugural day of the Mishkan being discussed here at all?

The inauguration of the Mishkan, mentioned briefly at the end of Chumash Shemos² as the culmination its construction, is then discussed at length in Chumash Vayikra,³ where the various unique offerings of the day are outlined. Would it not have been more appropriate to include the offerings of the *nesi'im* there as well? Why is this segment of the day deferred until a later Chumash?

The answer to this question will give us much insight, not only to this question, but to the entire concept of the division of the Torah into five distinct chumashim.

FIVE THEMES

One of the great Torah luminaries of recent years, R' Leib Mintzberg *zt"l*, presents a most profound understanding of the entire concept of the five chumashim. This is not simply the breaking up of a long sefer for purposes of convenience. Our relationship with Hashem is multi-faceted. He is our Creator, our Savior, our God, our King and our Father. All of these harmonize into our fulfilment of His will through Torah living.

Each of these five themes is developed and emphasized in one of the Chumashim:

1 Bamidbar 7:1.

2 Chap. 40.

3 Chap. 9.

Chumash Bereishis – the Book of Creation, focusses on Hashem as Creator of the world.

Chumash Shemos – the Book of Redemption, focusses on Hashem as Savior of the Jewish people and discusses their Exodus and initiation into their historic role as His people.

Once we have received the Torah and become Hashem’s people, the following three Chumashim develop the three core aspects of our relationship with Him:

Chumash Vayikra – the Book of *Avodah* (Divine Service), is devoted to matters of sanctity generally and the Divine service of *korbanos* specifically. This highlights our relationship with Hashem as our God, the Infinite Spiritual Being, Whose ways we are looking to emulate and Whose closeness we are seeking to rise above the mundane in order to attain.

Chumash Bamidbar – the Book of Royalty. The theme of this Chumash is Hashem’s presence among us as our King. It is in this Chumash that Hashem is first described in this way, as Bilaam proclaims, “וַתְּרוּעַת מֶלֶךְ בֹּרִי – *the friendship of the King [Hashem] is with him [Israel]*.”⁴

Chumash Devarim – the final Chumash emphasizes the theme of Hashem as our Father, as the verses there state, “הֲלוֹא הוּא אָבִיךָ – *is He not your Father,*”⁵ and “בְּנִימ אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם – *You are children to Hashem, your God.*”⁶

In our present discussion, let us focus on how this idea will give us deeper understanding of the theme and contents of Chumash Bamidbar.

CAMPS AND FLAGS

The concept of royalty can be seen very clearly from the very beginning of Chumash Bamidbar. In Parshas Bamidbar, immediately after having been counted as tribes, the Jewish people are arranged into four camps around the Mishkan, each camp with its own flag.⁷ This formation expresses the idea of the Jewish people as a host encamped around their King.

KOHANIM IN CHUMASH VAYIKRA – LEVI’IM IN CHUMASH BAMIDBAR

Chumash Vayikra is referred to by Chazal as “*Toras Kohaim – the Law of the Kohanim,*” as it discusses the special laws that apply to them and the role assigned to them in their service in the Mishkan. As we know, beyond the kohanim themselves, the entire tribe of Levi was set aside and designated as their attendants and assistants in matters pertaining to the Mishkan. How interesting it is, therefore, to consider that entire discussion of the role of the Levi’im is not mentioned at all in Chumash Vayikra – where we would have expected it to be – but rather in Chumash Bamidbar!⁸ Yet why would these two partner groups not be discussed together in the same chumash? Or, to put it differently, dare we ask: Why are there no Levites in Leviticus?

When we consider the specific roles assigned to the Levi’im. We will understand why this is so. The Levi’im do not participate in the service of the offerings themselves. Rather, they are responsible for things that surround and accompany the service, such as opening and closing the gates of the Beis Hamikdash, guarding its precincts, and singing at the time the *korbanos* are offered. All of these duties reflect the Mishkan as a royal dwelling. The Rishonim point out

4 Ibid. 23:21.

5 Devarim 32:6.

6 Ibid. 14:1.

7 Bamidbar chap. 2.

8 Chaps. 3 and 8.

that the mitzvah of guarding the Mishkan is not out of fear that someone will steal or damage anything that is there. Rather, it is like an honor-guard, as befits a royal presence.⁹ Indeed, Rashi in Parshas Bamidbar,¹⁰ commenting on the fact that the tribe of Levi was not counted together with the other tribes, explains:

It is befitting for the king's legion to be counted separately.

Therefore, while the mitzvos of the Kohanim – Hashem's holy priests – are contained within Chumash Vayikra, the mitzvos of the Levi'im – the King's Legion – find their place in Chumash Bamidbar.

It is of further interest to consider, in this light, one aspect of the service of the Kohanim themselves that is mentioned specifically in Chumash Bamidbar, namely, Birkas Kohanim – the priestly blessing.¹¹ This element of the Kohanim's duties has them serving as a conduit for Hashem's blessing and protection of the Jewish people in all areas of life, including the temporal. This reflects Hashem's relationship as our King, overseeing the well-being of His people in all spheres and hence is contained in Chumash Bamidbar.

TRUMPETS

In Parshas Beha'alosecha,¹² Hashem commands Moshe to make two trumpets, whose sound will signal to the people when they are to journey, encamp assemble etc. These trumpet sounds likewise express the idea of a people receiving commands from their king, as the verse states in Tehillim:¹³ "בְּחֻצְרוֹת וְקוֹל שׁוֹפָר הֲרִיעוּ לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ ה'" – *With the trumpet and the sound of the Shofar, call out before the King, Hashem.*"

VAYIKRA AND BAMIDBAR – ZICHRON TERUAH AND YOM TERUAH

Chapter 23 of Chumash Vayikra discusses the festivals of the Jewish year. As a rule, when each festival is mentioned, the special mitzvah that applies to that festival is also introduced – for example, eating matzah on Pesach, fasting on Yom Kippur, and Sukkah and Arba Minim on Sukkos. When it comes to Rosh Hashanah, the Torah states that it shall be a "זְכֵרוֹן יְרוּעָה" – remembrance of the Teruah."¹⁴ Different commentators discuss the exact meaning of this phrase, but it is not the mitzvah itself of sounding the shofar, rather, a remembrance that is associated with the mitzvah. It is not until Rosh Hashanah is mentioned again in Chumash Bamidbar that we find the actual mitzvah of blowing the shofar, in the words "יוֹם יְרוּעָה יִהְיֶה לָכֶם" – a day of sounding [the shofar] shall it be for you."¹⁵ This situation is very perplexing and seemingly counter-intuitive! Why does the Torah deviate from what would appear to be the appropriate order, i.e., to first present the actual mitzvah and then to discuss its attendant elements?

9 See Rambam, *Hilchos Beis Habechirah* 8:1 and *Sefer Hachinuch*, mitzvah 388.

10 1:49 s.v. *ach*.

11 Bamidbar 6:22-27.

12 Bamidbar 10:1-10.

13 98:6.

14 Vayikra 23:24.

15 Bamidbar 29:1.

Perhaps, based on the approach of R' Mintzberg, we can understand the allocation of these elements. The sounding of the Shofar is an act of malchuyos – proclaiming Hashem's kingship over the world, stated in the above-quoted verse: "With the trumpet and the sound of the Shofar, call out before the King, Hashem". As such, this mitzvah is pertinent to Chumash Bamidbar – the Chumash of Royalty – and hence, is mentioned there. The effect of 'remembrance of the teruah" relates to how we are remembered by Hashem and assessed regarding our performance of mitzvos for that year. This effect is thus placed in the earlier sefer of Vayikra which is dedicated to our service of Hashem.

TOPICS DISCUSSED IN MORE THAN ONE CHUMASH

Bearing all the above in mind, we can understand how, not only will a specific mitzvah find its place in a certain chumash based on its affinity with the theme of that chumash, it is further possible for one topic to be split up and covered in two or more chumashim, in the event that it contains different elements appropriate to those chumashim. An example of this idea is the dedication of the Mishkan, which, as we noted, features in the three chumashim of Shemos, Vayikra and Bamidbar:

- ▷ The Mishkan represents the fundamental idea of redemption of the Jewish people, going from being slaves in Egypt to housing the Divine presence in their midst.¹⁶ Hence, the setting up of the Mishkan first appears in Chumash Shemos – the Chumash of Redemption.
- ▷ The inaugural day brought with it a number of special offerings appropriate for the occasion, which are naturally discussed within Chumash Vayikra – the Chumash of Avodah.
- ▷ There is one category of offerings for that day which deserves separate discussion. The offerings brought by the *nesi'im* reflect the fact that they – the princes of each tribe – are ultimately subservient to their King, Hashem, and that their leadership role is purely to as representatives of His rule. It is for this reason these offering are discussed separately in Chumash Bamidbar – the Chumash of Royalty!

This idea regarding the division of the chumashim is truly an eye-opening concept and should serve as something to keep in mind as we go through each chumash and contemplate its particular contents.

16 See Introduction of Ramban to Chumash Shemos.