

BEHAALOTCHA: PARSHA CONNECTIONS by RAV SOLOVEITCHIK ZT"L

- Rav Soloveitchik establishes connections between the seemingly disparate elements of Behaalotcha, and explains the NUN HAFUCHA that marks two central passages.

Beha'alotcha: Parsha Connections
Shiur HaRav Soloveitchik zt"l

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The Rav began the shiur by noting that Bhaloscha is one of the most difficult Parshios to understand. It is the number of seemingly diverse topics that are discussed, and not the complexity of the Mitzvos that are presented in the Parsha, that makes it so difficult to understand.

The Parsha begins with the command to Aharon to light the Menora in the Mishkan, followed by the sanctification of the Leviim, Pesach Sheini, the description of how the people traveled in the desert based on the cloud and pillar of fire and the actual traveling formation of the tribes, the command to fashion trumpets of silver to be used in assembling the people, the story of Yisro returning to his homeland, Vayehi Binsoa and the two backward "Nun"s, the Misoninim and the story of Miriam.

At first glance, these topics appear to be unrelated to each other. The Rav was searching for the common thread that runs through the Parsha.

The Rav explained that when Hashem commanded Moshe to take Bnay Yisrael out of Egypt, Moshe was given a double mission. The first was to physically take the people out of bondage in Egypt. The second was to build the Mishkan. This is obvious from the Passuk that says when you, Moshe, will take the people out of Egypt, you shall worship Hashem on this mountain, Mount Sinai. These 2 aspects of Moshe's mission were the divine plan of Hashem.

Moshe's first mission was essentially completed in Parshas Bshalach with the drowning of the Egyptians in the sea, thus closing the chapter of their bondage to, and exodus from Egypt. The Torah tells us next about the process they went through to receive the Torah at Mount Sinai. This process was also the prelude to the construction of the Mishkan as well. In fact, Mount Sinai was the first Mikdash, as evidenced by the required separation of the various camps, Kedushas Machanos, for Giluy Shechina, the revelation of Hashem at Sinai. The second Mikdash was the Ohel Moed and the third was the Mishkan.

According to the Ramban, with the completion of the Mishkan, Moshe's two tasks were

complete, and Bnay Yisrael were ready for the fulfillment of the promise to march straight into Eretz Yisrael, of Vhayavaysi Eschem, in Parshas V'ayra.

With this understanding of the mission of Moshe, we can explain the overall flow of the Parshios. Sefer Shemos begins with the story of the Exodus, followed by Kabbalas Hatorah. The construction of the Mishkan was delayed due to the unfortunate episode of the golden calf. Vayikra continues with the details of the Korbanos, all of which are included in the overall topic of the construction of the Mishkan.

Sefer Bamidbar begins with the command from Hashem to organize the Mishkan and the tribes into Machanos, which will apply to the final Beis Hamikdash as well. This is followed with the dedication of the Mishkan by the Nesiim and the dedication of the Menora by Aharon. Both dedications were required. [The Midrash mentions, that Aharon was depressed that neither he nor his tribe was included in the dedication of the Mishkan. Hashem comforted him by saying that his part of the dedication ceremony was the greatest of all in that he was charged with the kindling of the Menora.]

The details of the Mishkan continue with the description of the selection of the Leviim to serve as the stewards of the Mishkan. Pesach Sheini was an important part of the mission to worship Hashem on Mount Sinai, since the first Pesach took place in Egypt and not at Sinai. These details needed to be completed before Moshe could turn to Hashem and say Bnay Yisrael have done their part (the exodus and the construction of the Mishkan); It is now up to Hashem to fulfill His part, to bring them into Eretz Yisrael.

The people were now ready for their march into Eretz Yisrael. We know this from the discussion that Moshe has with Yisro. Moshe tells Yisro that we are traveling, all of us Bnay Yisrael and Moshe, into Eretz Yisrael. We will be there shortly, because we will not have to even fight to conquer the land. Hashem, who took us out of Egypt in the blink of an eye, will allow us to conquer the land without even so much as a battle. Moshe fully believes that he will lead the people into the promised land. He invites Yisro to come along with Bnay Yisrael, to join them on their way to Eretz Yisrael. He uses the present tense of Nosim, we are traveling on our way right now, as opposed to the future tense Nisa, we will travel. The glorious march is starting right now.

The Torah tells us that the Ark was traveling ahead of the people in preparation of their imminent arrival at their appointed place of Menucha and Nachala, Shilo and Jerusalem.

Unfortunately, events did not unfold as Moshe hoped they would. Moshe was not permitted to enter the land. For had he entered the land as the leader of Bnay Yisrael and built the Beis Hamikdash, Jewish History would have unfolded differently. We never would have known exile nor would the Beis Hamikdash have been destroyed.

The unfortunate episode of Vayivku H'am Balayla Hahu, (and the people cried the entire night of Tisha B'av after the return of the spies), never would have happened. There would have been no need for 7 years of battle to conquer the land in the time of Joshua.

Everything was on track for an easy conquest of the land. The first sign of trouble is the story of the Misoninim and the Misavim. Such people who complain and agitate, and lust after food are not ready to be ushered into Eretz Yisrael. So this caused a delay of their entry to Eretz Yisrael. We do not know how long this delay lasted. But it is followed by the story of Miriam and the delay of 7 days till she is cleansed from her leprosy. However, once the entry was delayed, it became permanently delayed with the subsequent sending of spies, causing Jewish History to take a painful detour in the road of their destiny.

How would Jewish History have unfolded if all these delays did not combine to change our destiny? We do not know for sure. But Chazal gave us a hint based on the apex of Parshas Bhaloscha, Vayehi Binsoa. The Gemara (Shabbos 115b) says on the Passuk (Mishlei 9) of Chatzvah Amudeha Sheva, that Vayehi Binsoa and the next verse of Uvenucho Yomar were to have been the first and last verses in an additional book of the Torah. Instead of there being 5 Books, there would have been 7, with Bamidbar subdivided into 3 distinct Books around the verses of Vayehi Binsoa and Uvenucho Yomar. Between these 2 verses, this middle Book would have told the complete story of the conquest of the land by Moshe and Bnay Yisrael. Had Moshe entered the land, we would have merited seeing the fulfillment of Kumah Hashem Vyafutzu Oyvecha, Arise Hashem and let Your enemies scatter, and the conquest of the land would have been immediate. Unfortunately, we did not merit seeing what was to have been written in that Book.

The Torah is telling us that the seventh Book was prepared and ready to be written. All we have left from it is the first and last verses. That is why these verses are enclosed with reversed letter "Nun"s. We don't know how large this Book was supposed to be. The Gemara (Shabbos 115a) that a Sefer Torah that contains at a minimum the number of letters that are found in the verses of Vayehi Binsoa and Uvenucho Yomar, is to be treated as Kisvei Kodesh with regards to saving it from a fire on Shabbos. Because it represents a Sefer Shalem, a potential complete book of the Torah. While it would not have contained additional Mitzvos beyond the 613 we have in the 5 Books, it would have told the story of the conquest of Eretz Yisrael. This would have been the connection to the commandment to fashion trumpets, which were needed in times of war and conquest of the enemy that is referred to in Vayehi Binsoa.

The tragic story of how the destiny of the Jewish People changed does not begin with the story of the spies in Parshas Shelach. It begins with the events that prevented the fulfillment of the sefer of Vayehi Binsoa which culminated in Vayivku H'am Balayla Hahu.

(submitted by Nisson Shulman)