

# Content Issues in Bemidbar

Following are a number of issues that arose while we were working on the commentary, and how we did or did not (yet) deal with them. Your feedback and suggestions on any of these issues would be greatly appreciated. Text in [blue](#) has been updated or added since the previous update.

Previous update: the appendix to the Preliminary, Review Printing (Iyar 5763)

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## Parashat Bemidbar

1:2 **Take a census of all the adult males of the congregation of the Israelites by families**, and then add up the family totals to arrive at the total for each tribe. The people's tribal lineage will **follow their paternal houses**.

There are differences of opinion regarding what the difference is (if any) between the terms "family" (משפחה) and "paternal house" (בית אב), even according to Rashi himself. The research we've done on this issue is somewhat lengthy and therefore it is presented in a [separate file](#).

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1:2 **Take a census of all the adult males of the congregation of the Israelites by families**, and then add up the family totals to arrive at the total for each tribe. The people's tribal lineage will **follow their fathers' houses** [לביית אבתם]. Do not count them directly, but indirectly: take a half-shekel from each in accordance with **the number of their names** [במספר שמות], one for each. Thus you will have **an exact head count of every male**.

It was suggested that במספר שמות describes how the clan (בית אב) totals are further subdivided into family units, i.e., according to the names of the family heads. במספר שמות thus refers back to the words למשפחתם לבית אבתם, rather than forward to the words לגלגלתם כל זכר לגלגלתם. I didn't like this suggestion however, for: (1) in that case, the word במספר would no meaning here and it should say simply שמותם or על פי שמותם or לשמותם or בשמותם etc. (2) the trope, putting an אתנחתא on אבתם, implies that במספר שמות goes with what follows it rather than what precedes it. (3) If we accept that Rashi here holds that משפחה = בית אב, then במספר שמות cannot be a description of how בית אבותם are to be divided into משפחות.

Rather, במספר שמות seems to mean that they were counted in accordance with the number of their names. In other words, as they were giving in their half-shekels, everyone was checked off by name. The purpose of checking off everyone by name (or, as *Me'am Loez* [from Ramban & Abarbanel] says, having everyone announce their name as they passed by Moses & Aaron) was (not to count them) but merely to make sure that each and every person gave one and only one half shekel, ensuring that the count of half-shekels would be accurate.

This seems to fit in with Rashi's *peshat* (*al pi* Artscroll & co., as above), and possibly explains why Rashi says nothing on the words במספר שמות—they are not there to describe how the people are to be counted by their subdivisions (in which case Rashi would have to tell us what these words add to למשפחתם לבית אבתם), but to describe how they are to be counted in practice. Also, we preserve this way a continuum of "larger to smaller": (1) עדה (2) בית אב/משפחה (3) שמות [individual]. It also explains the meaning of במספר—*not* that the names were counted but that the names were used to ensure that each individual was counted once and only once. It also dovetails nicely with the *peshat* that each individual announced his name as he passed before Moshe and Aaron. Finally, as an *asmachta* (for we can't evoke trope definitively in fixing *peshat*), the trope favors connecting במספר שמות to כל זכר לגלגלתם.

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1:3-4 **You and Aaron shall count all those in Israel twenty years old and over**—for only those over twenty **are fit to serve in the army—by their tribal troops**. Throughout the census **there shall be one man with you from each tribe**: i.e., the prince of that tribe, the **one who is the head of his father's house**. All twelve princes shall assist you in counting each tribe.

It is not clear from Rashi whether each individual passed before Moses, Aaron, and the princes, or the work of counting was divided between all 14 people. If the former, then, the counting was truly miraculous: The census took no more than 20 days (since they left on 20 Iyar), and actually took less than that, because during the same 20 days there was also the census of the Levites, the census and redemption of the firstborn, and the census of the Levite clans. But, ignoring all this, if each individual passed before Moses and Aaron to be counted, this means approx. 600,000 people /20 days = 30,000/day. If they worked 12 hours a day, this gives 2500/hour or 41.66 counted per minute. Makes dollars by the Rebbe seem slow!

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1:52 the Israelites must camp in a specific formation: according to their tribal troops [לצבאותם], each man by his tribe's division [מחניהו]—three tribes per division—and each man by his division's banner [דגלו].

*degel* = “banner” (“flag”) or “[military] division”?

Artscroll Rashi makes a pretty good case that *degel* means “division,” not “flag”/“banner,” but (1) no one else seems to agree with him [but see R/S, p. 8, note 2]; (2) what, then, is the difference between *degel* and *machaneh*?

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2:2 **The Israelites shall camp each man by his division's banner** [דגל], each of which will be a unique color and **by the insignias** [אתות] on the banners **of their fathers' houses**, i.e., their tribes, each of whose banners will be the color of the tribe's stone in the High Priest's breastplate.

Rashi says on 1:52 that there is one *degel* for each group of three tribes. This is borne out by the list in ch. 2. Here he says that there were 12 colors of *degel* for the twelve tribes. Even Artscroll Rashi, who wants to be very precise about the meaning of *degel* (see above, on 1:52), does not address this contradiction at all. I therefore wrote it up according to Artscroll Stone Chumash, i.e., that *degel* = the flag of the 3-tribe division, and *ot* = the flag of each tribe.

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2:17 **Then the Tent of Meeting shall set out, together with the Levite camp, in the center of the other camps. Just as they camp, so shall they travel, each man in his place, by their banners.** According to one opinion, this means that the people traveled in exactly the same square formation as they camped in. According to another opinion, they traveled one tribe after the other, and the words “just as they camp, so shall they travel” here simply mean that they should travel in the order they are encamped around the Tabernacle. The description here accords with the first opinion; the description of how the people actually set out later accords with the second opinion.

One reviewer said you can't give two opinions about what happened in a *peshat*-commentary. I agree in principle—and strongly believe that giving two opinions should be avoided if at all possible—but (1) when Rashi, who is supposed to be *peshuto shel mikra* does so, it's hard to differ, and (2) in cases like this, where there are two passages, one of which makes sense only if we adopt the first *peshat* and the other of which makes sense only if we adopt the other, what is the alternative?

When I was able to figure out a way of reconciling the two *peshat*'s that Rashi gives, I did. Example: Exodus 1:10 “Let us deal wisely with them, lest...and they/we leave the land.” I translated this to include both *peshat*'s: they said, lest they leave, or worse, drive us out. In other instances, I was able to say “on a deeper level” before the 2nd *peshat*, etc.

But here, I don't see any way of accommodating both *peshat*'s together: either they traveled in camp-formation or in order, one after the other.

Or perhaps: Maybe they traveled sometimes one way and sometimes the other way? In general, it would seem that they could preserve their box-formation (each tribe in its proper compass location) *and* order (Yehudah leading, Dan last, etc.) only when traveling east. And they certainly didn't travel east *all the time!*

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**3:6-8 Bring forth the tribe of Levi and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him**, as follows: **They shall** help him **keep his charge**, specifically, **the charge** given him regarding **the entire lay community before the Tent of Meeting**, which is **to perform the service of the Tabernacle** by keeping the laity from serving in it. The Levites **shall** also **keep** their charge regarding **all the furnishings of the Tent of Meeting, the charge** they perform on behalf **of the lay Israelites**, which is **to perform the service of the Tabernacle** by carrying it and singing and playing music in it.

The Rebbe explains that the Levites are the people's representatives, acting on their behalf, as far as the work of carrying the Tabernacle and singing in it goes, because this is a responsibility that devolves on the whole community and the Levites fulfill for them. Whereas with regard to the job of guarding the Tabernacle from encroachment by the laity, the Levites are not the people's representatives since it is not *the people's* job to guard the Tabernacle this way; it is mainly the *priest's* job and the Levites help them with this.

So, vv. 6-7 are talking about the latter, i.e., the job of the priests and Levites to guard the Tabernacle from encroachment by the laity, while v. 8 is talking about the former, i.e., the job of the Levites in carrying the Tabernacle and singing in it. Therefore, v. 8 says "the charge of the Israelites."

Therefore, when v. 7 says "the charge of the entire community," it means "the job of [distancing] the whole community." But if this is so, then what is the "job" (משמרת) referred to in the previous phrase: ושמרו את משמרתו? I therefore had to translate it as referring to the same thing, interpolating the word "specifically."

By the way, any explanation of why the change in expression from v. 7 (כל העדה) to v. 8 (בני ישראל)?

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**3:39 All the tallies of the male Levites according to their families one month old and over, whom Moses and Aaron counted according to the word of God, was 22,300, of which 300 were firstborn.**

There were 300 firstborn out of 22,300 Levites total. Assuming that half the families had male firstborn and half female, this means there were 600 Levite families. This, in turn means that there were 22,300 males in 600 families, meaning an average of 37.17 males per family, and 74.33 children (male and female) per family. Dividing this by 6 (since Rashi said they gave birth to sextuplets), this gives an average of 12.39 births per mother. See below, on 3:43.

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**3:42 So Moses counted all the Israelite firstborn, as God had commanded him.** He did not need God's assistance as he did when he counted the Levites, since he only had to enter the laity's tents if the firstborn of a particular family was still a nursing baby.

The Rebbe says that Moshe didn't need G-d's help to count the firstborn because only a small percentage of them were nursing babies. But still, for those baby firstborn, Moses had to go into the tents to count them, no? Is the answer that yes, it was difficult in these cases, but there weren't enough of them to fuss about?

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**3:43 The tally of the firstborn males one month old and over, according to the number of names, was 22,273.**

22,273 firstborn male Israelites implies 44,546 families (half with male firstborns and half with female firstborns). Dividing up the total of 600,000 (actually more, since the firstborn were counted

from a month old and the 600,000 were counted from 20 years old, but let's overlook this for a minute) by this number, it means that each family had 13.47 males or 26.94 children. Dividing this by 6 yields 4.48 births per mother. In other words (see above, on 3:39), the Levites were 2.77 times more fertile than the other Israelites. Can the fact we overlooked—i.e., that the firstborn were counted from a month old and the 600,000 only from 20—account for the discrepancy?

Let's see: Assuming everyone lived to 120 and there was an even age distribution, 600,000 males from 20 to 120 means 6000 per age. Thus, there were 6000 x 20 (0 to 19) males, or 120,000, that have to also be considered. The total number of males is thus 720,000. Dividing this by 44,546 families yields 16.16 males per family or 32.33 children per family. Dividing this by 6 yields 5.39 births per mother. Still a far cry from the Levites' 12.39.

On the other hand, if everyone on the average only lived to 80, that means 15,000 per age. We then have to add 20 x 15,000 or 300,000 to the total. We now have 900,000 males; dividing this by 44,546 gives 20.20 males or 40.41 children per family. Dividing this by 6 gives 6.73 births. The Levites still come almost twice as fertile!

Are there any seasoned population statisticians out there than can help on this?

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4:5 ff. Regarding the בגדי שרד that the furnishings of the Tabernacle were put in for transportation purposes:

furnishing	first cover	second cover
ark (covered by <i>parochet</i> )	<i>tachash</i>	blue ( <i>techelet</i> )
table	blue ( <i>techelet</i> , on which is placed its utensils and showbread), then scarlet ( <i>tola'at shani</i> )	<i>tachash</i>
menorah	blue ( <i>techelet</i> )	<i>tachash</i>
golden altar	blue ( <i>techelet</i> )	<i>tachash</i>
utensils of golden altar	blue ( <i>techelet</i> )	<i>tachash</i>
outer altar	purple ( <i>argaman</i> ), on which is placed its utensils	<i>tachash</i>

Why in the case of the ark does the *tachash*-skin cover come first, then the cloth covering, while with the others, it's the opposite? Explanations for all this?

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4:6 **They shall put a covering of *tachash*-skin on it, and on top of that they shall spread a pure blue wool cloth. Then they shall put its poles in place.**

Aren't the poles supposed to stay in the ark all the time (Exodus 25:15)?

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4:16 **The charge of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest is as follows...he has the charge of supervising the work of the clan of Kehot, assigning each one of them what of the entire Tabernacle and all that is in it, of the holy things, and of all its furnishings they should carry.**

Compare this with:

4:19 **Aaron and his sons shall first come and appoint each man individually to his task and his load.**

Are these the same directive (at least according to Rashi)? If so, (1) why the redundancy, and (2) in v. 16 it's just Eleazar, in v. 19 it's both of Aaron's sons.

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## Parashat Naso

5:5 The Torah stated the laws of thievery earlier, but repeats them now...in order to add two new details: (a) the thief is only liable to pay a surcharge and bring a guilt-offering if he confesses on his own, but not if he is convicted by a court....

This is what Rashi says, but Rashi himself has already explained Leviticus 5:23 to mean that the thief is only liable to pay a surcharge and bring a guilt-offering if he confesses on his own!

Maybe Rashi means that the *chidush* here is that the thief can become liable even when convicted by a court if, after the conviction, he confesses. But that would give rise to a weird scenario wherein the court, after convicting every thief, has to ask him if, now that he's been convicted, he confesses. (Possible support for this weird idea may be found in the way Artscroll translates this Rashi: "one is not required to pay a fifth...and to bring a guilt offering by the word of witnesses, i.e., where he swears in contradiction to witnesses who testify that he robbed, *until* he confesses about the matter" [my emphasis]. Translating Rashi literally and saying "until" rather than "unless" *could* imply that this confession comes *after* the conviction.)

But maybe I'm making too big a deal about this, and the truth is that Rashi is just saying that he understands Leviticus 5:23 the way he does (not only because of the יתור לשון and use of the future tense there, as pointed out by R/S, but also) because of the explicit statement of this fact here.

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5:21-22 ...when He **causes your thigh** [—a euphemism for genitals—] **to rupture and your belly** [i.e., womb] **to swell**—the priest mentions the organs in the order in which they were used to sin. [22] **“For these fatal waters shall enter your innards, causing also the paramour's belly to swell and his thigh to rupture”**

Since the “the priest mentions the organs in the order in which they were used to sin,” the belly must be the womb (unless it is understood to have sinned by having the paramour to lay on it). But then what is the paramour's belly? His seminal vesicles? testicles? Or maybe it's just his stomach, even though it was not used to sin, because its rupture will look similar to the rupture of her uterus?

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7:1 **—having anointed and sanctified it and all its vessels, and having anointed and sanctified the altar and all its vessels—**

Why the repetition? The verse could have made perfect sense, it would seem, without the words וימשחם ויקדש אותם at the end.

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7:2 **They were the same princes of the tribes** who had been appointed by the Egyptian taskmasters as foremen to oversee the slaves' work. They had been beaten on account of their mercy on the people, and this earned them the right to be their princes.

When did the foremen become princes? Who appointed them? Was there a directive from G-d to do so? Presuming that each tribe had had its leader from the days of the sons of Jacob on, were whoever the leaders were at the time of slavery subsequently replaced by these people appointed by the Egyptians? Or did the Egyptians just tell the tribal leaders to be the foremen? If so, how can it be said that they “earned” the right to be the leaders, and if not, why did the Egyptians pick these people *davka*?

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## ***Parashat Beha'alotecha***

8:12 **You shall present the second clan of Levites, the clan of Gershon, before Aaron and his sons, and Aaron will lift them...**

8:15 **Thereafter, the Levites shall come to serve in the Tent of Meeting. You shall purify them and Aaron will lift the third Levite clan...**

I interpolated here that Aaron will do the lifting since this seems to be the case, especially in light of v. 21: “Then Aaron lifted them [the Levites] as a wave-offering....”

9:4 **Moses spoke to the Israelites to offer the Passover sacrifice.**

Chronology: It seems like the commandment of Pesach in 2nd year in the desert, like everything else before it, was said on 1st of Nisan, and with verse 4 the Torah goes 2 weeks ahead into the

narrative of how they did it, but some people were defiled, etc. This would imply that the laws of Pesach Sheini were given on the 14th of Nisan. EVEN according to the Rebbe's radically different reading of Rashi (vis-à-vis the *Sifrei*), it still comes out that the argument and laws happened on the 14th of Nisan.

BUT Rashi on *Gitin* 60a says that the laws of Pesach Sheini are the third of the eight passages that were given on 1st of Nisan! Tosefot notes this discrepancy, and therefore offer an alternative passage as the third of the eight. So, as the Rebbe notes (LS, vol. 28, p. 68, note 4), we must say that this is an instance where Rashi does not explain things in the Talmud (i.e., what the 8 passages are) as he does in *pehuto shel Mikra*. Interestingly, R&S (Numbers, p. 180) explain the third passage to be Numbers 9:1-4, the instructions to observe Pesach exceptionally the first year in the desert, and justify calling it *parashat temei'im* because once the people received these instructions, they had to be careful avoid *tumah* in order to be pure for Pesach. It would be interesting to know their source for this.

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#### 10:17 ff. and the clan of Gershon and the clan of Merari, who carried the Tabernacle, set out....

Is there any way of explaining these verses according to the opinion that holds that they traveled in their box formation?

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10:29 Just before they set out from Mt. Sinai, **Moses said** the following to Jethro, who was also known as **Chovav** ("the cherisher"), for he cherished the Torah. Jethro was also known as **the son of Reuel the Midianite**.

Or perhaps this happened once they had camped at Kivrot HaTa'avah, which was on the way to the Land of Israel but possibly where Jethro would have parted company had he wished to go to Midian instead? This would be helpful, since it would mean that the *parashiot* aren't out of order.

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10:29 Even though Jethro himself became known as Reuel ("the friend of God") when he abandoned idolatry, his father apparently adopted the same name, presumably for the same reason. Or perhaps, because Jethro's love of the Torah was derived from his love of God, he is referred to here as "the cherisher" who was the offspring of "the friend of God."

I couldn't find anyone who explains how the opinion who says Reuel was one of Jethro's names deals with this verse, where Jethro is called Chovav *ben Reuel*. So I made this up.

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10:33. ...**they miraculously traveled a distance of three days from the mountain of God** in one day.

Does this mean that the ark traveled *a normal person's 3-day journey* ahead of the people, or *the people (slowed down by cattle & kids)'s 3-day journey* ahead of them? The difference is that if it is the former, then the only way the ark can be described as being always 3 days ahead of them is to say that it either left early or miraculously jumped a 3-day's journey's distance ahead of them as soon as they set out. If it is the latter, we could conceivably say that the people and the ark left at the same time, but the ark made normal time while the people moved much slower, so that the ark traveled in one day what the for the people took three, and thus did not achieve its full three-day lead on the people until the end of the first day.

But, in either case, how did it work on *this* trip, when the people covered three days' distance in one? The only way the ark could have been three days ahead of the people is by either (1) instantaneously jumping to the destination immediately upon setting out, and the rest of the day the people closed the distance by their speedy traveling, or (2) starting out ahead of the people, as above.

In general, does the description of the ark going 3 days ahead of the people apply to the whole trek in the desert or only to this journey (Sinai to Kivrot HaTaavah)? From v. 35, below (and Rashi's comment from the *Tanchuma*), it sounds like it was the rule.

And how did the ark travel? Did someone carry it? Who? Did it go by itself? I'm assuming somebody carried it, since I haven't seen anything else.

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10:35 Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say...

I could neither find nor figure out a way of fitting what Rashi says here (from *Tanchuma*) with what he says on 9:18 (from *Sifrei*), so I left it out.

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11:23 **you will now see if what I said happens to you or not!**

What is the force of the words "to you" in this phrase according to its first meaning, i.e., that G-d is responding to Moses' blasphemy by saying (so it seems): "I certainly *can* and *will* provide them with meat!"?

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12:2 Moses at this point *divorced* Zipporah...

The Rebbe (LS, vol. 18, p. 145, note 41) says this, but does not say *why* Moses now, all of a sudden, divorced her. Any suggestions?

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## ***Parashat Shelach***

13:1 Moses knew that it was not necessary to spy out the land, since God would lead them and do battle for them.

At this point, there are two possibilities: (1) either Moses did not realize that the people wanted to *spy out* the land, and thought they just wanted to check its *quality*, or (2) he did realize they wanted to *spy out* the land, and agreed, thinking that if he agreed, they'd withdraw their request. (1) seems to be the Rebbe's opinion in LS vol 33; (2) seems to be his opinion in SHS 5751. I have written it up here as it seems in SHS 5751.

The problem with (1) is: how is it that Moses did not realize what the people were thinking? He *did* realize what the spies were thinking (the same thing), as we see later.

The problem with (2) is: if they wanted to spy out the land, why would Moses think that by agreeing to their request, they would withdraw it? The *marshal* of the donkey salesman doesn't seem to fit in this case.

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13:1 Moses knew that it was not necessary to spy out the land, since God would lead them and do battle for them

So why the Jews' lack of faith? Could it be that they were afraid because G-d Himself had chosen not to take them out of Egypt "by way of the land of the Philistines, lest the people regret when they saw battle and return to Egypt?" I.e., if G-d thought there was reason for them to get scared, maybe there really is? Or maybe because the battle they had fought with Amalek (1) was fought in a more or less conventional way, and (2) they did not win it conclusively, only weakened them. If so, then the question goes the other way: How could Moses be so sure that the battles they would fight with the Canaanites would be different than the one they fought with the Amalekites? Because Joshua led that one and he was going to lead the coming ones? (**One reviewer answered: because G-d told him so!**)

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**13:4ff: These were their names:...**

Anybody address the fact that the “princes” here are not the same “princes” that offered the installation offerings 2 months before?

One person suggested that there is a difference between ראשי בני ישראל and ראשי אלפי ישראל, as the Arizal notes. He (this person, not the Arizal) conjectures that perhaps they spies were selected by “the princes” and/or by Moses, who felt “the princes” shouldn't abandon their posts for at least forty days.

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**13:20 Is there a tree in it, or not?**

Rashi interprets this allegorically since, it would seem, that it is obvious that there are trees in the land, or because the fact that there are trees there would not be so impressive. The problem is that taking it allegorically, referring to a righteous person, makes the continuation of the verse—that they should take some fruit—seem anticlimactic or at least discontinuous. Can we make up for this by interpolating “If not,” before the phrase about taking fruit, as if to say, “See if there is a righteous person who can protect them; if not, be courageous and take some of the fruit.”?

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**13:22 Achiman, Sheishai, and Talmi, the descendants of the giant.**

These were in Hebron, and only Caleb went to Hebron. Yet in v. 28 the other spies report this fact to the people. Did they see these descendants-of-the-giant also (from afar, since they were giants), or were they using the information Caleb had given them about his findings?

Also: on Genesis 23:2, Rashi says that Hebron was called Kiryat Arba after these three (and their father) who were buried there. So if Caleb saw them now, generations later, it means either (1) Caleb saw their sepulchers [but this unlikely because why would that frighten anybody?], or (2) that Hebron was called Kiryat Arba either (a) only much later than the events in Genesis 23:2, i.e., after these four giants were buried, or (b) prophetically, in the name of these four who would be buried there later. Which was it?

Also: The Rebbe (LS vol. 28 p. 89) says that the second set of *nefilim*—the descendants of the fallen angels, whose existence the spies used to frighten the Jewish people—had survived the flood, and that this was evidence of their supernatural nature. In contrast, the first set of giants (Achiman, Sheishai, and Talmi) were just mortal giants, descendants of the original *nefilim* of Genesis 6, whom the Rebbe says were just mortal giants, not fallen angels.

But if they were just mortal giants, how did they (or their descendants) survive the flood?! It is hard to say that a new breed of giants arose after the flood, somehow descended from Noah. But if not, it means that some mortal giants survived the flood—and if so, how can we use the fact that the fallen-angel-giants survived the flood as evidence of their supernatural origins?

And if, as the Rebbe says, Genesis 4:6 refers only to the mortal race of giants, then Rashi's comment on “in those days”—in the days of Enosh and the descendants of Cain—must also apply to these mortal giants. If so, it follows that the mortal giants began their bad behavior at the same time as the fallen-angel-giants descended and propagated amongst men.

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**13:33 These angels were involved with the beginnings of idolatry**

This is from LS vol. 28 p. 89. The question is: how were they involved in the beginnings of idolatry? Did they give the idea to the generation, or, being only angels, did they merely reflect the evil of the humans of that generation?

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14:9 for while we were there we heard that the last, most righteous individual among them, Job, had just died.



The Rebbe (LS 18, p. 163, note 18) says that Rashi mentions Job because how could the spies have known that *all* the righteous goyim whose merit could have protected them had died? Scripture must therefore mean Job, who was famous and whose death would have been news. But still, how did the spies know that other than Job, there were no other (less) righteous individuals whose collective merit could have protected the goyim? Also, Rashi does say (*before* mentioning Job) that the spies said that *all* the righteous goyim had died out, as the Rebbe points out. Maybe when they heard the news about Job, the inhabitants of the land were saying something like, “He was the last and most righteous among us, now there are none left.” Based on this conjecture, I interpolated this phrase.

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14:10 **but the glory of God appeared to all the Israelites** in the form of a cloud that descended and rested **in front of the Tent of Meeting**, so they desisted.

My conjecture. It’s hard to take the *beit* of באהל מועד as meaning “inside,” for if the cloud was *inside* the Tent of Meeting, no one could have seen it. Also, in Exodus 33:9 and Numbers 12:5 the cloud stands *outside* the tent (but cf. Deut. 31:15). It therefore makes more sense to take the *beit* to mean “onto” or “in front of.”

Or perhaps the meaning is that it was seen *on its way into* the Tent of Meeting.

Was this cloud the cloud-of-glory that was resting on top of the Tent of Meeting all the time (when they weren’t traveling), or was it another cloud? We have seen that G-d appeared in *ad hoc* clouds even after the Exodus (when He surrounded the people with clouds) and the Tabernacle was built (when the leading cloud rested on it when they were not traveling). See:

- Exodus 16:10 (“They looked towards the desert and the glory of G-d appeared in the cloud.”),
- The cloud that descended on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:9, etc.),
- Exodus 33:9 (“When Moses came to his tent, the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the opening of his tent and [G-d] spoke to Moses.”),
- Exodus 34:5 (“And G-d descended in the cloud...”),
- Numbers 11:25 (“And G-d descended in the cloud...”),
- Numbers 12:5 (“And G-d descended in a pillar of cloud...”),
- Numbers 17:7 (“They turned to the Tent of Meeting and saw that the cloud covered it and the glory of G-d appeared.” But the use of the definite article [*the* cloud] plus the fact that this cloud covered the Tent might imply that this was the cloud parked on top of the Tent of Meeting anyway. See my question below on 17:8),
- Deuteronomy 31:15 (“And G-d appeared in the Tent in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood at the entrance of the Tent.”).

I have therefore taken it to be an *ad hoc* cloud.

\*

#### 14:45 Chormah

Does the Rebbe or Chassidus contrast/compare this defeat by the Canaanites & Amalekites at Chormah with the Israelites’ victory over the Caananites/Amalekites at Chormah in 21:3?

\*

15:1 ff Grain offerings & libations.

Artscroll says that G-d had libations added to the daily *tamids* only after the sin of the Golden calf, and to other offerings (*olahs* and *zevachs* brought as peace offerings brought as *neders*, *nedavas*, or as obligatory festival peace-offerings) only after the sin of the *meraglim*. Any support for this?

explanation of it? Does Rashi hold of this? It would seem that the Rebbe does not (LS vol. 18 p. 338 ff).

\*

Does the term “fire-offerings” (אֲשָׁה) include *olah*, *shelamim*, *chatat*, and *asham*, or just the first two?

\*

#### 15:31 that person will be utterly cut off

Rashi generally holds that “being cut off” means dying prematurely and childless. Chazal (*Shavuot* 13a) understand תכרת תכרת to mean “to be cut off in this world and in the next.” This would explain the need for the doubling: תכרת for the usual meaning, and תכרת for the additional punishment (for idolatry/blasphemy) of being excluded from the next world. But Rashi does not say anything about this here, evidently taking the doubling as merely emphatic. Yes?

\*

#### 15:32 The man who gathered sticks

When did this happen? There are two opinions: (1) the second Shabbat after the commandment to keep Shabbat was given [Rashi, based on Sifrei quoted also in *Yalkut Shimoni*]; (2) immediately after the incident of the spies [*Tosefot (Bava Batra 119b, quoting Midrash)*].

Since Rashi shares the first opinion, we have interpolated accordingly. But things aren’t so simple. The commandment to keep Shabbat was given at Marah (*Seder Olam* 5), where the Jews stayed from Monday, 25 Nisan 2448 to Shabbat, 30 Nisan. So, presumably, the first Shabbat they kept should have been the 30<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, which means the second would have been the 7<sup>th</sup> of Iyar, when they were at Eilim (where they stayed from Sunday, 1 Iyar, to Wednesday, 11 Iyar).

But: two weeks *after* the 7<sup>th</sup> of Iyar, i.e., on Friday, the 20<sup>th</sup> of Iyar, when they were at Alush, a double portion of the manna fell and the Jews asked Moses what’s up and he said tomorrow’s Shabbat and you won’t find it in the field then, and so the Jews rested on that Sabbath (Exodus 16:22-30). And thus, *Seder Olam* (ch. 5) says that “At Alush, the Sabbath was given to them,” seemingly contradicting its statement a few lines earlier that the commandment to keep the Sabbath was given at Marah.

The *Sifrei* quotes Exodus 16:30 as proof that the stick-gatherer couldn’t have done his sin on that Shabbat (21 Iyar), but rather, he had to have done it on the next Shabbat, i.e., 28 Iyar, while the Jews were at Refidim. So the *Sifrei* also seems to hold that the first Shabbat kept was the 21<sup>st</sup> of Iyar, at Alush.

The Gra on *Seder Olam* says that G-d told Moses about keeping Shabbat at Marah (25-30 Nisan) but that Moses did not tell the Jews until they were at Alush (20 Iyar), i.e., almost a whole month later—and even then, only because he was forced to because the Jews asked him about the double portion of manna. According to this, the question is why Moses kept Shabbat a secret for so long?

Rashi on Exodus 16:22 says that Moses delayed in telling the Jews about Shabbat and was therefore included in G-d’s castigation in v. 28. But he only says that Moses delayed in telling what G-d had said about Shabbat *in reference to the manna*, which G-d had said on Sunday, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Iyar (a delay of 6 days).

In any case, the Talmud (*Y. Beitzah 2:1*) also records the argument over whether the *mitzvah* of Shabbat was given at Marah or Alush.

If the first Shabbat kept was 21 Iyar and the second 28 Iyar, it follows that the Jews kept exactly two Sabbaths before the Torah was given (on the following Shabbat, 6 Sivan). This is stated explicitly in *Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezar* 18.

R. Yaakov Emden (glosses to *Seder Olam*) says that Shabbat was given in general at Marah, but the prohibitions against carrying and walking outside the settled area were not given until they were at Alush.

So, whether we use the Gra's solution, R. Yaakov Emden's, or some other solution, it seems pretty clear that according to the opinion that the stick-gatherer did his sin in the first year from the Exodus, this occurred on 28 Iyar.

There is a further complication: In the Talmud (*Shabbat* 118b) it says that "if the Jews had even kept *the first* Sabbath, no nation could have overcome them," juxtaposing the sin of some of the people going out to gather manna on 21 Iyar and Amalek's attack while they were at Refidim (22-29 Iyar). Thus, the whole thrust of the *Sifrei's* statement—that the incident of the stick-gatherer was a big embarrassment to the Jews since they only kept one Sabbath (as testified to by Exodus 16:30) and on the second this fellow came along and desecrated it—seems wrong, since in any case the Jews had already desecrated the *first* Sabbath.

(Bibliography for the above: Commentary *Yemot Olam & Seder Zemanim* on *Seder Olam*, by Rabbi Moshe Yair Weinstock.)

*Torah Temimah* (on Numbers 15:32, §97) says that both the manna-gatherers and the stick-gatherer sinned on the same Shabbat, saying that this was on the second Shabbat after the commandment to keep Shabbat was given. If he means 28 Iyar, then it's hard to understand how Exodus 16:27 can be wrenched out its context (at Alush) and be construed to have occurred at Refidim. If he means 21 Iyar, then that implies that the first Shabbat kept was 14 Iyar, when they were camped at Dafka. But where is the textual support for this, and how does this jibe with the statement of *Pirkei d' Rabbi Eliezar* that they kept only *two* Sabbaths before the Torah was given? (Maybe he understands this to mean that they kept one [Iyar 14], desecrated one [Iyar 21], and then kept another [Iyar 28], giving a total of two kept?). Furthermore, on v. 34 (§103), he refers to his comment here as "the interpretation of the *Sifrei*, that the incident of the stick-gatherer happened on the second Sabbath *after the manna began to fall*"—which can only mean 28 Iyar.

The Rebbe (LS 28 pp. 93-97) expounds on the second opinion, i.e., that the stick-gatherer sinned *after* the incident of the spies. But this does not mean that he argues with Rashi's *peshat* that the stick-gatherer sinned on the second Shabbat after the commandment to keep Shabbat was given. In LS 8, p. 179, he takes it for granted that the stick-gatherer sinned before the giving of the Torah. (There, he says this occurred on the *first* Sabbath the Jews were in the desert, quoting Rashi here. Probably this simply means the first Sabbath after it was given and they kept one.)

\*

15:37 The following [*tzitzit*] is a commandment given at Sinai.

Yes?

\*

15:40: by doing so **you shall remember and** in effect **perform all My commandments** by wearing them.

The Rebbe (LS 8, p. 98) says that *Shabbos* and *tzitzit*—in addition to being equivalent to all the other *mitzvot* because they either (1) bring one to perform all the other *mitzvot* or (2) involve the philosophical foundation of all the *mitzvot*—also are equivalent to all the other *mitzvot* because one who does them in some way actually or allegorically or implicitly *does* all the other *mitzvot*. (This is similar to idolatry, which the Rebbe explains is equivalent to (negating) all the other *mitzvot* because it strikes at the three reasons we do *mitzvot*—G-d's authority over us, our covenant with Him, and logic.) The question is: *how* do *Shabbos* and *tzitzit* do this, i.e., what is it about them that makes someone who does them as if he is actually *doing* all the other *mitzvot* (and not just doing something that will bring him to do all the other *mitzvot* or affirming the philosophical foundation of all the *mitzvot*)?

\*

## Parashat Korach

16:4: **When Moses heard this, he fell on his face.** When the people committed the sins of the Golden Calf and the spies' rebellion, God had threatened to wipe the people out and Moses had interceded successfully on their behalf. When they complained at Taveirah, God had actually started to burn up the people in order to prevent the rebellion from spreading, but the offenders quickly repented and Moses could pray to God to halt the flames. Now, however, Moses was afraid that Korach's rebellion would spread and God would threaten to wipe out the people, or that God would punish the offenders in order to prevent the rebellion from spreading. But this time, he was at a loss as to how to convince God to forgive them. At the sins of the Golden Calf and the spies, he had argued that wiping out the whole people would lead to God's disrepute, but here, Korach's rebellion had not yet spread to the whole people. At Taveirah, the offenders had repented, so Moses could pray for them, but here, they had not. God, however, told Moses that it was possible in this case to conduct a test that would demonstrate the error of Korach and his followers and to punish only *them*.

Rashi on this verse seems to be saying that Moses fell on his face because he felt he had no option of prayer. Prayer involves some appeal to logic, overriding love, or something else, and Moses felt he had no basis on which to ask God to forgive the people. "Falling on the face," therefore, would indicate giving up because all avenues of prayer have been exhausted.

But there are some problems with understanding Rashi this way: (1) the Jews had affronted G-d on more than these four occasions (see [this chart](#)). Why does Rashi here list only these three, and does not even list one that he lists as one of the 10 trials mentioned in Numbers 14:22? What is unique about these three?

(2) Moses does indeed pray for the Jews not long after this. In 16:22—*still in the heat of the Korach rebellion*—he Aaron fall on their faces to *pray* to God not to wipe out the people. So (a) Moses could not have felt that all avenues of prayer had been used up, and (b) "falling on the face" cannot have this meaning—at least not in all contexts.

As to the first question, it seems that the three instances Rashi mentions are unique in that they are the only times God either threatened to wipe out the people or actually started doing so.

(True, we are told that in test #9 God threatened to kill the people by stuffing them with quails, but there, God only threatened to punish the offenders, not the whole people. Of course, in the case of the מתאוננים, God also only punished the offenders [and/or the elders, who were also offenders], but He was afraid that their rebellion would spread to the whole people [as actually started happening—and this is what led to test #9], so the incident took on the character of one that involved the whole people.)

In the first and third of Rashi's three cases, Moses reasons with G-d, convincing Him logically not to wipe out the Jews mainly because of the *chilul Hashem* that would be involved. No such argument is mentioned with regard to the second case, the מתאוננים, but there, God was not yet wiping out the whole people, so simple prayer for the penitents was enough.

Here, the fourth time,

- (a) Moses could not argue *chilul Hashem*, because (i) the rebellion had not spread to the whole people and there was therefore no reason to assume God would threaten to wipe out the whole people, and (ii) God himself [at test #9] had shown that *chilul Hashem* is a reason to *punish* offenders when not the whole people is involved.
- (b) Moses could not just pray, because unlike the case of the מתאוננים, the offenders had not repented.

But it would seem that this doesn't make sense, because Moses *did* have an alternate argument, which he would soon use in 16:22, namely: "If only one man sins, how can You get angry at the whole congregation?" Why didn't Moses use this argument (or feel that he *could* use it if necessary) now?

The answer apparently is that at *this* point, the mutiny had not yet spread very far. (Only later does Korach stay up the whole night swaying the whole people over to his side.) He therefore couldn't plead: "If only one man sins, how can You get angry at the whole congregation?"

But if that's the case, what does this episode have in common with the other three? The answer to this is that Moses was apparently afraid that Korach's rebellion *would* spread to the whole people and then G-d would threaten to wipe out the whole people or actually start doing so (similar to what happened with the מתאוננים).

He therefore fell on his face in exasperation because he had no options available.

But G-d did *not* start wiping out the people, as He did with the מתאוננים (before they repented), because, apparently, this situation was not as serious as the case of the מתאוננים was. It was still possible to demonstrate how Korach and company were wrong and kill only *them*. (Since the מתאוננים were just seeking pretexts, no such demonstration was possible in their case. God had to take immediate action, and when the survivors repented, Moses prayed for them and the fire subsided.)

Only later, when the mutiny spread to the whole congregation, could Moses pray using the logic of "If only one man sins...."

I therefore wrote the interpolated explanation as I did. But it is based heavily on my own conjectures. Any voices to approve or disapprove of it?

Furthermore, if the above is true, how do we understand 17:10? There, the people complain that Moses and Aaron killed God's people in the Korach rebellion, God threatens to wipe everyone out, and Moses and Aaron fall on their faces. They do not pray or argue with God, but just act to stop the plague that has begun wiping out the people.

The Rebbe answers this (LS 28, pp. 1-7). The people's complaint (in and of itself) could not have been what got God angry and caused the plague, because there had been many complaints before, and none of them angered God to this extent. Therefore, this complaint must have constituted an extension of the Korachite rebellion. God's wrath (קצף) had been ignited beforehand, but only now, that the 250 judges actually offered incense and the people complained when the Korach's company was killed, did it actualize as a real-live plague. Therefore, it is clear that if Moses' only argument before was "If only one man sins....," this argument is now longer available. So they fell on their faces with nothing left to say *now*.

(Still, this is difficult, for if the problem was that the קצף was actualized by the הקטרת הקטורת, why didn't the plague start when they did this, rather than on the next day? And secondly, now that God was about to wipe out the whole people, why didn't Moses argue *chilul Hashem*?)

**"Falling on the face":** Examining the usage of this expression elsewhere, we find that besides meaning "praying" or "feeling at a loss of what to do," it can express:

- being overcome with awe (Genesis 17:3 & Rashi, Leviticus 9:24 [probably]),
- feeling gratitude (Genesis 17:17),
- begging someone [not to do something] (Numbers 14:5).

**Prayer:** Regarding whether or not Moses felt that prayer was still an option, we find that a generation later, after Miriam dies and the people complain about water (20:6), Moses & Aaron fall on their faces, but it doesn't say explicitly that they prayed; just that after they fell on their faces God told them to produce water from the rock. So, perhaps they still thought that there was no option of prayer open to them. But God said, "don't worry, this is a new generation and I'm not going to wipe them out, since it's their first time. Go get them water." But why would they think there is no option of prayer open to them? Why could they not plead *chilul Hashem*?

So it makes more sense to say that they did actually pray and that's what's intended in the words "they fell on their faces" (as in 16:22).

It is unlikely that “they fell on their faces” means that they were begging the people not to complain (as in 14:5), because before they fell on their faces they “moved away from the assembly to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.”

And sure enough, in 21:7, Moses explicitly prays to God after He unleashes the snakes on the people. So we see that at least with the new generation (but maybe only after God taught him in 20:6 that prayer was now an option again?), Moses felt he could pray for them.

I took this simplest option, and translated 20:6 to mean that they prayed to God to provide the Jews with water.

\*

16:8 Moses addressed the entire tribe of Levi.

This is what Rashi says, based on the switch from Korach to the sons of Levi in this verse. However, the “you” in the ensuing verses changes between singular and plural a few times. So, I have accounted for this with my insertions.

\*

16:19 Korach and the 250 men offered their incense, and Aaron offered his.

The Torah & Rashi never say explicitly when this happened. We only know that the incense was indeed offered because later (17:1-3) God tells Moses to collect the censers and use them for a holy purpose because they had become sanctified. Nothing happened to the rebels when they actually offered their incense, even though we would have expected them to be burnt the same way Nadav and Avihu were when *they* offered unauthorized incense; the Rebbe says that this is because Moses asked God not to consider their incense and offering *at all*. The rebels died only when they got consumed by fire at the same time Dathan, Aviram, and Korach got swallowed up by the earth.

So, unless anybody says they offered their incense at some other time, it seems most logical that it happened at this point. Maybe the 250 offered their incense one at a time, in which case the ensuing events could have happened while the offering was going on?

Also, how could they have entered the Tent of Meeting to offer their incense if the cloud was hanging around there? Maybe they offered it first, and only then—after the act had been done—did God appear in the cloud and tell Moses and Aaron that He had had it and was going to wipe out the whole congregation.

\*

16:22 **They fell on their faces...**

See above, on 16:4.

\*

16:25 After the cloud departed, the crowd dispersed and everyone went back to their tents.

This must have happened, because otherwise everyone how could God tell Moses to tell everyone to get away from the tents of Korach, Dathan, and Aviram? Korach had congregated everybody to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, so unless they dispersed, they would be nowhere near the tents of Korach, and certainly not those of Dathan and Aviram. One could possibly say that there were so many people that they overflowed the precincts of the Tabernacle and were hanging around in the surrounding areas, including the vicinity of Korach’s tent, but they couldn’t have also been around Dathan’s, and Aviram’s tents, 2000 cubits away. The other possibility is that they all followed Moses to the tents of Korach, Dathan, and Aviram.

\*

16:27 Most of the people withdrew

“*Most* of the people”—because evidently some of them remained loyal to Korach, and were swallowed with him, Dathan, and Aviram in v. 32.

\*

16:32 Thus we see how serious contention is, for although children are generally not punished for their errors, here they perished.

I'm not too clear on the contrast: "Children are not normally punished for their errors, but here they were punished for their parents'" (???) We would expect: children are not normally punished for their errors, but here they were [but then, did the *sucklings* sin? obviously not, so this cannot be *peshat*]. Or: children are not normally punished for their parents' errors, but here they were. [makes more sense, but doesn't fit into the actual words of chazal: "kids are not normally punished until 12/13 by earthly court and 20 by heavenly court (i.e., for their *own* sins), but here, etc..." and what about "visiting the iniquities of the parents upon the children..."?] Did they have to go in order that they not remain helpless, impoverished orphans?

\*

16:35

According to the Midrash (*Bemidbar Rabbah* 18:14), Korach was first burned by fire together with the 250 incense-bringers, before he rolled into the mouth of the earth that had opened up to swallow Dathan and Aviram and their households. But there does not seem to be any indication of this in the verses or Rashi or the Rebbe. On the other hand, in 16:6 and 16:16-17, Korach is included amongst those directed to offer incense, so it is logical to assume he would be punished the same way they were (by fire). But again, Scripture is vague about this: the punishment of fire, in context, seems to be meted out only to the 250, and the punishment of being swallowed, in context, seems to be meted out only to Dathan, Aviram, and Korach's (other) supporters.

\*

17:8 **Moses and Aaron**, understanding this as a sign that God wanted to address them...

JPS commentary makes a big deal out of this, understandably, since the cloud is anyway always hovering/covering the Tent of Meeting. He says that the appearance of the "glory of God" is the fact that the cloud becomes luminous, and that this is always a signal that God wants to talk to Moses. Any sources on this? previous *parashah* it was an additional cloud; could it be the same thing here?

\*

17:10 **They fell on their faces...**

See above, on 16:4.

\*

17:11 The people began to perish from the plague.

Or maybe—since the Torah makes no mention of it—they hadn't yet, but Moses knew prophetically (or correctly guessed?) that this is how God was going to wipe them out? The text seems to imply this, but I'm wary of saying it without an *asmachta*.

\*

17:27 **whoever comes too close** and even mistakenly enters **the Tabernacle of God will die!**

The question is: how did they know this? Where was this warning/punishment given? The closest I can get to an answer is above, 3:7 ("[The Levites] shall [help Aaron] keep his charge and the charge of the entire community before the Tent of Meeting, to perform the service of the Tabernacle [i.e., keeping the laity away]") according to Rashi. But there is no mention there, even in Rashi, that encroachment on the Tent of Meeting is to be punished by death. Could it be because there was precedent at Mt. Sinai in the boundary surrounding it when the Torah was given? because there was precedent at Mt. Sinai in the boundary surrounding it when the Torah was given?

There is 1:51 (“**When the Tabernacle is set to travel, the Levites shall dismantle it, and when the Tabernacle camps, the Levites shall erect it; any non-Levite who approaches** and tries to do this **shall be put to death**”), but as the interpolated comment from Rashi shows, Rashi takes this to refer specifically to someone who approaches for the specific purpose of handling the sacred objects, not to someone who simply enters the Temple precincts.

\*

**18:1 God said to Moses to tell Aaron:**

Rosenberg/Silverman cites Rashi to Leviticus 1:1, where he says that when the Torah says God spoke to Aaron it really means God spoke to Moses to tell Aaron. BUT in fact, all Rashi brings there is that whenever it says “God spoke to *Moses and Aaron* it means He spoke to Moses to tell Aaron.” Rashi says nothing there about the places where it says “God spoke to Aaron” without any mention of Moses. Rashi quotes the *Sifrei* that there are 13 places where it says God spoke to Moses and Aaron. I found 13 instances of ויאמר ה' אל משה ואל אהרן and another 4 of וידבר ה' אל משה ויאמר/וידבר ה' אל אהרן. Besides these, there are 5 instances of ויאמר/וידבר ה' אל אהרן.

The Artscroll Rashi does not refer to the Rashi on Leviticus 1:1, but brings another reason why Rashi asserts that this “God spoke to Aaron” is really “God spoke to Moses to speak to Aaron.”

\*

**18:7 any layperson who approaches on purpose shall die.**

Rashi doesn't say this, but it seems to be implied by all the “inadvertently”s above. I.e., responsibility for a layperson inadvertently entering the Sanctuary has been transferred to the Levites, but if a layperson does this *on purpose*, he gets the punishment, not the Levite.

\*

**18:10 you shall eat it** only in the place where **the holiest of the holy** sacrifices may be eaten, the courtyard of the Tabernacle.

What was the equivalent of the *azarah* in the Tabernacle?

\*

**18:32 you shall not profane the sanctified produce of the Israelites, so that you shall not die.**

It would seem that this refers to the case when the Levite takes his *maaser* before the *kohen* collects his *terumah*, and then the layperson's *terumah* is dealt with by him—as was just mentioned. Does anybody say this? (Rashi doesn't).

\*

## ***Parashat Chukat***

**19:9 A ritually clean person shall gather the cow's ashes and place one third of them in a vial outside the Israelite camp in a ritually clean place.**

I am assuming that in the desert they did something analogous to what Rashi describes as being done in the Temple. Or perhaps in the desert they just put the whole thing somewhere outside the camp and this division into three parts was just when they built the Temple?

\*

**19:16 a person slain by the sword**

What does this include that isn't this included in “corpse” that follows?

\*

**20:6 They fell on their faces...**

See above, on 16:4.

\*



**20:9 Moses took the staff from before God as He had commanded him.**

What does “from before God” mean? Where was it and what was it doing there? If this was Aaron’s staff, we could say that it was still inside the Holy of Holies (as per Numbers 17:25-26) from 38 years previous. But it would seem God meant for Moses to take his own staff.

And why did God have Moses take the staff if he was not supposed to use it to strike the rock? R. Avigdor Miller says that it was just a sign of his authority to do miracles as the teacher of God’s Torah. Is there a simpler or deeper reason?

\*

**20:19 we will pass through on foot**

As opposed to...? They didn’t have chariots, did they?

\*

**20:21 He did potentially allow them to frighten, raid, and plunder them.**

*Potentially*, because it seems that the Rebbe holds that they did not in fact plunder them (despite what it seems Rashi says in Deuteronomy), and the Moabites were only afraid—after Sichon and Og fell—that they *would* plunder them.

\*

**21:1 The Amalekites...assumed now that by removing the Clouds of Glory, God indicated that He permitted the nations to attack the Israelites.**

In one *sichah* (LS vol. 18, pp. 253-261) the Rebbe says that only the Clouds of Glory disappeared, but that the rest of the clouds remained. In two other *sichos* (LS vol. 8, pp. 192-199 and vol. 38, pp. 78-84) the Rebbe does not differentiate between clouds of glory and other clouds, and simply assumes that they all disappeared. I have chosen to follow the first theory, since (as the Rebbe himself notes in vol. 38) it is supported by the fact that Rashi holds that the clouds were still around in *parashat Balak* (25:4) and explains why there is no mention in the Torah or Rashi of when the clouds reappeared.

The disadvantage of the first theory is that it makes Rashi on this verse somewhat difficult to sort out: If, as Rashi says, the ‘Canaanite’ heard that Aaron died and the clouds disappeared, how do we explain the rest of the verse (“...that Israel was coming by way of the atarim”)? If the clouds disappeared entirely, we can say, as the Rebbe does (), that “was coming by way of the atarim” means that they were now coming either (1) on the path paved by the spies (since they didn’t have the cloud to lead them anymore) or (2) being led by the ark (since they didn’t have the cloud to lead them anymore), and thus this phrase follows nicely Rashi’s explanation of “The ‘Canaanite’ heard.” But if the Jews were still being led by the clouds, what does the fact that the fact that the Jews were traveling by the route paved by the spies or that the ark was traveling before them have to do with the fact that Aaron died and the clouds disappeared?

\*

Working within the second theory, the Rebbe says that these two explanations of Rashi show how much the Amalekites hated Israel: (1) as soon as Israel came to the same place where they had been punished because of the spies, they attacked; (2) even though they were not near the Amalekites yet—still three days away—they hated them so much that they went out of their way to attack them.

But, as I said, I’m not working within this theory, for the reasons stated, and also because now that we have explained the phrase “was coming the way of the atarim” this way, it also does not fit into the way I have geographically understood this part of Bemidbar so far: this happened at Hor HaHar, after the Jews had passed the Amalekite’s territory and were headed east around the south of Edom etc. (Did the Amalekites also occupy territory east of Edom? Is there any indication of this anywhere? Does anyone say Arad was east of Edom? Or does the Rebbe hold that Hor HaHar was

somewhere south of Beersheva, like it is on some maps—although then we'd have to explain how it could be “at the border of the land of Edom,” etc.)

So, working within the first theory, we are left with the problem of how to explain “was coming the way of the ataraim” in a way that fits in with “The ‘Canaanite’ heard” referring to the death of Aaron and the disappearance of the clouds of glory. Can we “salvage” the above explanation from the second theory and use it in the first theory? I.e., that yes, the clouds were still around, and yes, the Jews had already passed Amalek (who did not attack them because of the clouds), but now that the clouds of glory disappeared, Amalek ran *after* Israel to attack them? And thus, the phrase “was coming the way of the atarim” is translated “*had come* the way of the atarim” and means that because they hated Israel so much they wanted to attack them when they were in the same place they had gotten punished because of the spies, and even before that, when they were on the way to their land and the Amalekites first heard about it because the ark was ahead of them—but they refrained because of the clouds. But now...

Admittedly, this is a *chidush* that violently wrenches the Rebbe's explanation out of its context (the second theory) and transplants it into another (the first theory). But is there any other way to make sense out of this phrase in this verse according within the context of the first theory?

\*

If we assume, as the Rebbe says (vol. 18, p. 258-259), that the clouds often did double-duty (i.e., protective and “honor guard”—*ibid.*), how did the Amalekites *notice* that the clouds of glory had been removed? What exactly did they see? And in general, if no specific clouds were clouds of glory, how they fulfill their function of being “clouds of glory”? (The only example the Rebbe gives is when protection was not required in one direction, the cloud of that direction defaulted to being a cloud of glory. But this implies that when protection *was* required in all directions, there was no apparent cloud of glory. Is that correct?)

\*

...when they had tried to enter the Land of Israel through Edom, **by the route the spies had taken**....

I added “through Edom” because I assume that “by the route the spies had taken” means entering the land through the south, which the Israelites tried to do when they tried to pass through Edom northward into the land.

\*

...disguised themselves as **Canaanites**, hoping that the Israelites would pray to God to deliver them from the wrong enemies.

I chose to follow the early versions of Rashi (that say that they dressed and spoke like Canaanites) rather than the usual ones (that say that they dressed like Amalekites but spoke like Canaanites), for otherwise, it appears to be a classic case of a *goyishe kup*: They should have changed their dress (which the Israelites could plainly see as soon as they got close enough to do battle) and forgotten about their language (which the Israelites could not hear at a distance! UNLESS: they assumed the Jews were sending spies into their camp beforehand, OR they sent an envoy to the Jews telling them something?).

\*

...a woman the Israelites had captured from Amalek in their earlier encounter with them.

This is according to Rosenberg/Silverman p. 100a, footnote 2, who takes it as obvious, and Ginzberg's *Legends of the Jews*, vol. 3, p. 333 (who even says that the captive was a slave girl when the Amalekites had her originally), his source is in his vol. 6, p. 114, note 649, where he quotes “*Yelammedenu* in *Yalkut* I, 764 (in later editions of the *Yalkut* the reference to *Yelammedenu* as a source is missing); *Lekah*, Numb. 21.1.” I didn't see this in my *Yalkut* or my *Lekach Tov* (which says something I don't understand: לא נשתקעו השבויים ביניהם אלא חזרו ובאו אל מחנה ישראל, (שנאמר: וישמע ה' בקל ישראל). It makes sense, since the only battles the Israelites had since the exodus

were with Amalekites (once in *Beshalach* and once in *Shelach* with the *ma'apilim*). *The Midrash Says* (p. 281) also says this, citing *Tanchuma* (but its not in my *Tanchuma* or *Tanchuma Buber*).

\*

### 21:3 Chormah

Is the same as 14:5 or different? Geographically, I would hope that it's different, since over there, we are in the vicinity of Ritmah/Kadesh Barnea, while here, we are in the vicinity of Hor HaHar.

\*

### 21:7 So Moses prayed...

See above, on 16:4.

\*

### 21:8 The Copper Snake

It is clear from this episode—according to the Rebbe's explanation—that if a person's *teshuvah* is not sufficient, G-d hints to him to do *teshuvah* on a deeper level. Therefore, we must say that whenever a decree is carried out even though the person or the people did *teshuvah* (e.g., the *ma'apilim*), it is because the *teshuvah* was not sufficient. In both cases (snakes and *ma'apilim*), the missing ingredient was *submission* to G-d.

\*

### 21:11 the pass that leads towards Mt. Nebo

The book *Eleh Maasei* says that this is the correct reading in Rashi, and says that this is how Mizrachi quotes Rashi as well.

\*

### 21:14 the territory of the Amorites

It would be thriftier to write "Amor," but I've never seen this anywhere.

\*

### 21:18 nobles of the people

Does this (in Rashi's first explanation) mean Moses and Aaron, just like the word "princes" immediately before it? And does Rashi's explanation of מזוקק (in his comment on v. 20) apply only to his second explanation? If so, what is the meaning of מזוקק in the first explanation?

\*

### 21:28 it has consumed Ar

But we saw above (v. 15) that Ar still belonged to Moab when the Jews arrived. Unless there are two Ar's? Maybe not all of Balaam's curse came true? Maybe Moab conquered part of their land back by the time the Israelites came?

\*

### 21:32 Yaazer, an Amorite district not included in Sichon's territory

Sichon's territory was from the Arnon to the Yarmuk (21:24), and all the maps I've seen put Yaazer south of the Yarmuk. So there must have been some areas in this territory that were not under Sichon's rule.

\*

## Parashat Balak

22:2 When [Balak] saw that the Jews had successfully waged war against Sichon and Og—who did not live in Canaan proper—he feared that they would now not hesitate to wage war against the Moabites, as well, and there was now no one to protect them.

1. It is clear that the Rebbe holds that neither Balak nor the Moabites knew that God had forbidden the Jews to wage war with the Moabites. (LS vol. 8, p. 148, col. 1, and fn 33 there; LS 38, pp. 85 ff.)

2. The Rebbe also says (*ibid*) that Balak assumed that one of the reasons the Israelites did not attack Moab before was because they feared that Sichon and Og would rush to their defense. But if the arrangement between Sichon and Og and the kings of Canaan was a secret, why would Balak assume that the Israelites knew about it? Indeed, the proof the Rebbe brings for the fact that this arrangement was a secret is the fact that *the Jews* asked to pass through Sichon's land because *they did not know* about the arrangement, and only then did Sichon inform them of it! (Maybe Balak was not aware of this dialogue between the Jews and Sichon before their battle?)

3. Rashi (on 31:2) says that the Moabites were afraid only that the Israelites would plunder them, not attack them—*not* because God had forbidden them to attack them (for they did not know about this), but rather because it was known that the Jews were not after their land. (LS vol. 8, p. 148, fn 33). There was thus a difference between Balak's and Moab's fear, as the Rebbe says. The question then becomes: why didn't the Moabites calm Balak down by "proving" that the Jews were not interested in their land, or Balak rile the Moabites up by arguing that that was only in the past but that now they were poised to attack?

\*

22:32 that you eagerly hastened to set out on the journey

This is from Rashi's 3rd peshat, "You *desired* [to set out on] the journey [and to go] against Me."

\*

22:36 This city **is on the border of** Moab, the **Arnon River, which is at the northern edge of** Moab's **territory**.

The Rebbe (LS 38, p. 122 ff) points out that the word *gevul* can mean both the line of the border and the area within the border. Here, I have been forced to use it in both senses, translating the second *gevul* as "territory." I had to interpolate "Moab" after the first *gevul*, because what is the border of a river? (the river bank?)

\*

23:10 **Who has counted** the number of commandments the Jews do with **the dirt?**

The Rebbe says that the significance of the commandments Rashi lists as being referred to here is that they express the Jews' intrinsic *ma'alot*: their infinite, uninterrupted *zechut* that they get from doing these *mitzvot*.

However, the Rebbe does not seem to say why "it just so happens" that specifically commandments related to dirt express this *maalah*. Could it have anything to do with the fact that the dirt expresses God's infinity, through the *כה הצומח* within it, as per IGHK 20?

\*

23:10 **Or the number of** people in even **one of the four** divisions of the camp **of Israel**

The Rebbe's interpretation of Rashi (and this verse), i.e., that the question Balaam is asking is "who in their right mind could think that counting the number of people in a division of the camp expresses the Jews' greatness?! Their greatness is in their qualities, not their quantity!" answers neatly a question that could be asked if the verse was taken at face value (i.e., "Who can possibly count even one of the four divisions!?!"), namely: Wasn't this done quite precisely in *parashat Bemidbar*?

Another thought: By insisting that the Jewish people's importance lies in their quality, not their quantity, could it be that Balaam's prophecies are taking the Jews to a higher level of importance than the censuses that were conducted in the beginning of the book (and the sojourn in the desert) did? (Problem with this: there is another census shortly after this, after the incident of Baal Peor.)

\*

23:10 because he anxiously awaits the conception of righteous individuals:

Or maybe "...of every Jew," since "your people are all righteous" and this passage is talking about the *intrinsic* qualities of every Jew, regardless of their individual merit based on their performance of the mitzvot?

Another thought: The Rebbe later explains that "How good are your tents, O Jacob" came to Balaam's mind because he saw the Jews arranged carefully according to tribes and so as not to peek into each other's tents, indicating their tremendous respect for sexual purity and fidelity, as reflected in their concern for their pedigrees and modesty. Thus, Balaam was associating the Jew's *kedushah* with their sexual purity. Could it be that the qualities he praised in the second blessing were also of the same nature: Organized by divisions (similar to "dwelling according to their tribes"), performing the mitzvot of *kilayim* (not sexually mixing animal or vegetable species), *parah adumah* (oops, nothing significant there), *sotah* (marital fidelity), God watching their marital relations anxiously?

\*

23:22 and His **power** over **demons**

Huh? Referring to the Egyptian's magical powers? which they used to enslave the Jews?

\*

27:14

Rashi's second interpretation of the second half of this verse is that water had occasioned the people's rebellions at Marah (Exodus 15:22-26), at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:11-12) and at Kadesh. *Lifshuto shel Rashi* says it's hard to understand what Rashi intends by this comment. Artscroll quotes *Maaseh Hashem* that it means that because water had occasioned so many rebellions in the past, Moses & Aaron should have been doubly careful about how they behaved. Should we accept this as *peshat*?

\*

24:17 and his descendant, the Messiah, **will undermine** the autonomy of **all the descendants of Seth**

Rashi does not say that the second half of the verse refers to the Messiah, but he does say that the ruler it refers to will undermine [the autonomy] of all nations, so it would seem that it *does* refer to the Messiah. But: he mentions on v. 19 that it refers to the Messiah, and this would imply that everything till then does not. If this is so, we would have to explain the 2nd half of v. 17 as referring to David, and see if v. 18 was fulfilled by David, which if my memory serves me, I don't think it was.

\*

24:17 who are all descended from Adam's son Seth through Noah, his only surviving descendant.

Genesis 5:4 says that Adam had other sons and daughters after he had Seth, so not all human beings that walked the face of the earth (other than the line of Cain) were descendants of Seth (unless, of course, all of Adam's other children were childless, but this is unlikely).

\*

24:24 the land of the **Kittites**, that is, from Rome, **and afflict** the empires that will succeed **Assyria**

I added the interpolation “the empires that will succeed” in this verse because the Assyrians were long gone (conquered by the Babylonians, who were conquered by the Persians, who were conquered by Alexander the Great, whose empire split up...) before the Romans came along.

\*

24:24 **and** then proceed to **afflict those on the other**, eastern **side** of the Euphrates.

Trajan (98-117 CE) annexed Armenia & Mesopotamia, but these areas were abandoned by the next emperor, Hadrian (117-138). So, albeit for a short time, Rome did rule over these areas.

\*

25:2 **and** 157,200 of **the people ate** of the offerings

I originally wrote the interpolation as “157,200 *or more* of...,” since I presumed that some of those killed in the plague were also guilty, beyond the 157,200 that were killed by the judges after being proven guilty by the cloud.

On the other hand, if only the guilty were being wiped out by the plague, (1) why was everyone so concerned? and (2) why was the way to stop the plague judging and convicting the guilty?—they were being taken care of by the plague anyway! Therefore, it seems more likely that the plague was decimating innocent people. This is not such a moral problem, since we have learned that “when permission is given to the destructive forces to destroy they do not differentiate between righteous and wicked”—which is why in Egypt, for example, there had to be the protective blood of the *korban Pesach* on the doorposts.

\*

25:6 The offenders from the tribe of Shimon then approached one of their princes, Zimri son of Salu

The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 82b) says that this was another name for Shlumiel ben Tzurishadai (Num 1, 2, 7, 10). Rashi does not say this, and on 25:14, says Zimri was not the prince of the whole tribe, but only a prince of one of the five *batei av* (see 26:12-13) of the tribe of Shimon. Does this solve the problem for the “princes” in *parashat Shelach*, who became the “spies,” too?

\*

25:6 So this **Israelite man**, Zimri son of Salu, **came** from this call to action, assembled 24,000 Israelites

Rashi doesn't say this number, but it's in the *Gemara* he cites (*Sanhedrin* 82a). Is this the same 24,000 listed at the end of the *parashah* as having died in the plague? I hope not, because *al pi peshat* the plague had already begun. On the other hand, the sixth miracle wrought for Pinchas (from *Sanhedrin* 82a, which Rashi directs the reader to) was that God sent a plague against the people, so that Zimri's allies would be preoccupied with it and not come to his defense. Is this plague the same one already mentioned in the story? Again, I hope not, because *al pi peshat* that plague started right away, and it was in response to that plague that God told Moses to punish the guilty in order to stop it, in response to which the tribe of Shimon approached Zimri, etc. etc. (This is why I left out this sixth and last miracle from the story.)

\*

25:6 Moses forgot the law regarding what should be done in such a case, and because he seemed powerless to stop this insurrection, the loyal Israelites started **weeping at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting**.

In other words, they wept because Moses did not remember the law of קנאים פוגעין בו, not because he did not know how to answer Pinchas' affront about Zipporah. Even though a cursory reading of the verses would make a person think that this is what stumped Moses, Rashi and everyone else says it was the *halachah* of קנאים פוגעין בו. I took the idea that Pinchas didn't wait for an answer and just proceeded to sin with Kozbi from *The Midrash Says*.

\*

## Parashat Pinchas

### 25:10 Jethro, his mother's father

Eleazar's wife could not have been both a daughter of Jethro and a daughter of Joseph, but only one of the two. The Rebbe says (LS 8, p. 165, note 29) that Mrs. Eleazar was Jethro's daughter and at the same time a descendant (but not a daughter) of Joseph. Could Mrs. Eleazar's mother (Jethro's wife, or one of his wives) have been a daughter of Joseph?

\*

26:2 Finally, since the other nations are questioning the purity of the Israelites lineage, insinuating that the Egyptians raped the Jewish women, I wish to testify through this census that the Israelites' lineage is pure.

This insinuation could have been made 38 years ago, when the Jews were first commanded to organize themselves according to paternal lineage. Why are either the goyim only raising the issue now, or is God only addressing the goyim's insinuation now? Maybe it was because the Jews were only now drawing close to entering the land of Israel (encounters with the goyim at Sichon/Og/Balaam/Shitim, etc.)? Or because Balaam praised them as "How good are your tents [meaning tribal array], O Jacob?" Or maybe its because the issue of tribal loyalty and patriotism played a certain role in the Zimri-Kozbi incident?

\*

### 26:2 Therefore, **take a census**

Rashi gives these 2 reasons for the census, and further on we will see that it is also used to determine who will get a portion of the Land of Israel. What about the simple *peshat*: God just now said there was going to be a war against Midian, and here we need to count "all those in Israel who are fit to serve in the army" (v. 2)? Could it have anything to do with the fact that Levites are usually exempt from army service, but they were required to fight in the war against Midian, and therefore this census *cannot* be construed as having anything to do with the war because then there would be no reason to count the laity and the Levites separately? That is problematic, because (1) there seems to be no reason in the other purposes of the census [to count the Jews after the plague, to give them back to God accounted for, and for Moses to value them more] to differentiate between the laity and the Levites either, and (2) what do we do with the words, "all those in Israel who are fit to serve in the army"? (I presume that, like in the earlier count, everyone in the appropriate age group was miraculously fit for army service, so the point of this phrase cannot mean to exclude the lame. Or maybe it is, and the fact that there were no lame highlights the miracle.) Israel who are fit to serve in the army" (v. 2)? Could it have anything to do with the fact that Levites are usually exempt from army service, but they were required to fight in the war against Midian, and therefore this census cannot be construed as having anything to do with the war because then there would be no reason to count the laity and the Levites separately? That is problematic, because (1) there seems to be no reason in the other purposes of the census [to count the Jews after the plague, to give them back to God accounted for, and for Moses to value them more] to differentiate between the laity and the Levites either, and (2) what do we do with the words, "all those in Israel who are fit to serve in the army"? (I presume that, like in the earlier count, everyone in the appropriate age group was miraculously fit for army service, so the point of this phrase cannot mean to exclude the lame. Or maybe it is, and the fact that there were no lame highlights the miracle.)

\*

26:53 But only those included in the present census will be considered: someone currently under 20 who turns 20 by the time the people actually conquer and divide up the land will not be entitled to his own portion

(1) What if somebody alive now dies by the time they actually divide up the land? Is his portion given to his inheritors, or will the people in charge (Joshua and Eleazar) just divide up the land into

601,730 parts minus the number of people who died by then? Whichever it is, I think this point should be made in a footnote.

(2) In whose portion do the unmarried sisters and those brothers who are under 20 live? If a father and his above-20 sons get portions, we'd assume that the daughters and under-20 sons live with the father. But what if there is no father, only brothers? This point should also be in footnote, I think.

\*

26:55 Divide the land into area-units of equal fertility...

Rashi says that the land was divided *per capita*, that is, the larger tribe got more land than the smaller tribe, and on top of this, the land sections were not equal in area but in quality vis-à-vis arability. This means that unless they knew ahead of time what land was going to be given to what tribe, there is no way they could have written out twelve tickets with fixed boundaries on them. For each territory had to contain enough arable-land-units to cover exactly the adult male population of that tribe. Therefore, either (1) the whole thing was by Divine Spirit from the beginning, including the division of the land into 12 regions *before* the actual lottery took place, as I have written it up here, or (2) on the tickets were written just general *regions*—Galilee, lowlands, central plain, central mountains, etc.—and only after the prince got his ticket, they would enlarge or shrink the actual area given to him based on his tribe's population.

\*

26:55 The ticket on which is written the tribe's inheritance will then speak

Is this what is meant by "the *lot* would speak"? If not, what?

\*

26:65 There were, however, Levites, women, and members of the mixed multitude from the previous generation, since God's decree applied only to those counted in the military census.

Why, then, is this point made after the Levite census instead of after the lay census?

\*

27:1 After hearing the laws concerning the division of the land, **the daughters of Tzelofechad the son of Chefer**

Usually, Rashi only explains why one section follows another if they appear not in chronological order. Here he explains that the complaint of the daughters follows the point about the women not having died out (which is tagged on to the end of the Levite census) because it serves as evidence that the women endeared the land. But wouldn't it stand to reason that the daughters would in any case complain only after God had given the laws of inheritance, which He did right after the *lay* census ("To *these* shall the land be divided...")? Perhaps the chronological discontinuity is very slight here, i.e.,

lay-census—inheritance laws—Levite census—daughters' complaint, instead of the more logical:

lay-census—Levite census—inheritance laws—daughters' complaint, or

lay-census—inheritance laws—daughters' complaint—Levite census?

OR: does the fact that Rashi point out a homiletical reason for the order of events not always mean that they are out of order chronologically?

Also, on v. 2, Rashi says that mention of Eleazar instead of Aaron indicates that this happened after Aaron's death. Does this imply that otherwise it would not at all be clear when this happened? Why wouldn't it be?

\*

27:5 ...he had forgotten the law in such a case.



I.e., Moses knew the law before, but forgot it (either as a punishment to him or a reward for the daughters of Tzelofechad). The Rebbe makes this clear in LS 13, p. 93 ff. But in LS 17, p. 280, note 25, the Rebbe lists this law as one of the laws Moses simply hadn't heard yet. ???

27:21 Joshua **and all Israel with him, and the entire assembly** of judges, that is, the Sanhedrin.

The Sanhedrin goes to war? In *Sanhedrin* 16a the phrase “and the entire assembly” is taken to mean that, as the Mishnah says, “we do not initiate an optional war (*milchemet reshut*) except by the direction of the court of 71.” So, it would stand to reason that this is what Rashi means here, but he does not say what the *gemara* says the preceding phrase, “and all Israel with him,” means: the priest anointed to address the army before battle (*meshuach milchamah*), implying that it retains its literal meaning, the Jewish people (i.e., their representatives, the army). In other words, the *gemara* seems to imply that to go to war, the king had to inquire of the *urim v'tumim* (via the High Priest) and the *meshuach milchamah* and the Sanhedrin. Rashi seems to imply either that (1) to go out to a war (presumably *milchemet reshut*), the king and the Sanhedrin had to consult Eleazar and the *urim v'tumim*, but not the *meshuach milchamah*, or that (2) in a *milchemet reshut*, the Sanhedrin also goes to war. But if the latter, (1) would we think that the Sanhedrin goes to war? On the other hand, no upper age limit for conscription was mentioned in the whole book (for the lay army)! Everyone over 20, up to 120, goes to war! If this is indeed true, then (2) why are the Sanhedrin mentioned explicitly here?

Maybe the *teitch* is: “By [Eleazar's] word they shall go [out to war,] and by [Eleazar's] word they shall come [back from war; Joshua] and all Israel with him, [having previously consulted with] the entire assembly [of judges, that is, the Sanhedrin].”

This seems the most elegant way to make sense out of Rashi's partial reliance on the *gemara*, but it is a little forced, nay?

Help!

\*

28:2 This applies particularly to its blood, which is termed “**My offering**,” and its fat-parts, which are termed “**My food for My fire-offerings...**”

But in ascent-offerings, such as the *tamid* and *musaf*, the whole thing (except for the hide) is burnt, not just the fat parts. Possible explanations: (1) yes, but the fat parts are especially scrumptious and are therefore representative of all the edible parts; (1b) other offerings where just the fat is burned are also called food, so for sure fat is main course even when all is burned; (1c) fat is to the whole animal what bread is to a meal: “Let us eat bread” doesn't mean empty *pita*; (2) the word *eimurim* here does not mean “fat parts” but “stated parts” [Artscroll Rashi, rather weird though] (3) The *ma'amad* is to observe specifically when the fat parts are burnt as opposed to any other parts (source for this)???

\*

28:4 **The one lamb you shall offer in the morning...**

Sure looks from Rashi's comment on this verse and on v. 6 that the *tamid* was offered during the *miluim* (Adar 23—1 Nisan 2449) and then not again until now (some time between Tishrei & Shevat 2488). But the Rebbe (LS 18, p. 338 n36) says flat out that *tamidim* and *musafim* were offered during the whole time in the desert, and that this whole section is not the initial instance of these laws being promulgated—this happened *before* the *miluim*—but rather a directive now for the Jews to observe the communal offerings on time [almost as a retort for Moses telling God to take care of the Jews]. Rashi's comment simply means that the commandment in Exodus 29:38-39 to do the *tamid* was a type of *hora'at sha'ah*, and that the commandment to offer *tamidim* & *musafim* permanently (in the *permanent* Tabernacle) was given to Moses sometime between 10 Tishrei and 23 Adar 2449 and just repeated now for the benefit of the whole community.

Right?

\*

The Rebbe (LS 18, p. 336) says that *parashat hamoadot* in *Emor* was said *besmichut* to the erection of the Tabernacle. I assume this means any time between Yom Kippur 2449 (when Moses came down from the mountain with the Torah) and Rosh Chodesh Nisan 2449 (when the Tabernacle was permanently erected). Or maybe even narrower, between 25 Kislev 2449 (when they finished working on the Tabernacle, since between Yom Kippur and then they were busy collecting the materials and putting everything together) and 23 Adar (when the 7 days of the *miluim* started and a. they needed to know the laws and b. they were busy with the *miluim*). Correct? which?

\*

#### 28:11 The Musafim

The Rebbe says that the sacrifices offered at each *mo'ed* has significance in *peshto shel mikra*. To wit: the bulls signify Abraham, the rams Isaac, and the lambs Jacob. Then Rashi says that the 70 bulls of Sukkos are for the non-Jews and the 98 lambs for the Jews, and the Rebbe says on this that regarding the 2 rams offered each day, it is obvious from the 70/98 correspondence to non-Jews/Jews that the 2 rams are an intermediate level, which fits in with the fact that the rams allude to Isaac since he had one Jewish and one non-Jewish son. Then, regarding Shemini Atzeret, the Rebbe says that the one bull and one ram signify the Jews (in contrast to the 13-7 bulls and 2 rams of the previous seven days), and that the lambs don't have to be only 1 because (and this is obvious) it's *davka* the number 7 (of lambs) that signifies the special relationship between God and the Jews, just like the 7 lambs of Abraham & Avimelech signified the covenant between them.

So, backtracking to the beginning of the *mo'adim* section, we can therefore assume that the 5-year-old should also assume that the 7 lambs recurring at every *mo'ed* mean the same thing, and that is specifically why there are 7. But then we have to deal with the fact that while there is always only 1 ram (except for Sukkot) there are sometimes 2 bulls (Rosh Chodesh, Pesach, Shavuot) and sometimes 1 (Rosh HaShanah & Yom Kippur). How would the Rebbe explain how, in *peshto shel mikra*, the 5-year-old is supposed to understand that? Are we to take our cue from Shemini Atzeret, where 1 bull indicates the uniqueness of Israel? In that case, the uniqueness of Israel would be emphasized in the Tishrei holidays (RH, YK, ShA) but specifically not on Rosh Chodesh, Pesach, and Shavuot, which would somehow emphasize some kind of duality. What would this Abrahamic duality be? (Jews and non-Jews, like the 2 rams of Sukkot? If so, would we say the yearly holidays are to the Tishrei holidays what Sukkos is to Shemini Atzeret, i.e., universal vs. particular?).

\*

#### 29:13 The seventy bulls

Rashi (later, on 29:36) gives a third significance to the descending number of bulls: that we learn from here how to give a guest a gentle hint that he has overstayed his welcome (the Rebbe says that this refers only to a guest in an inn, who does not pay like he's supposed to). How does this fit into *peshto shel mikra*? The Rebbe says that it is only in that we should know that everything the Torah says, even the stories about non-Jews (or the sacrifices offered on their behalf) has some lesson for us in our daily lives. [Parenthetical remark: I guess this means that everyone should know what the Torah says about how to treat a louse.] I cannot, it would seem, include this derash about how to treat a non-paying guest in my *peshto*-commentary, for its connection to the context is somewhat far afield.

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#### 29:31 and its libations

What is the plain meaning of this? The *tamid* had only *one* libation (see how I fudged v. 19). But what can we do with *this* verse?

\*

## ***Parashat Matot***

30:10 **whatever she prohibited upon herself will remain binding upon her**

Does the past tense imply “whatever she prohibited upon herself when she was married remains in force in her widow/divorcee hood,” or do we take it as if in the present: “whatever she prohibits upon herself *from now on*, since she is widowed or divorced, takes force”?

\*

**30:14 any vow or any binding oath of self-affliction that affect their relationship**

Does this restriction apply to the fiancé as well? Are there any restrictions on the father’s power of annulment? Does the type of vow he can annul change when she becomes betrothed?

\*

**31:8 Balaam, in the meantime, left the Midianite camp and approached the Israelite army, attempting to argue that it was useless to try to subdue Midian.**

From Rashi, it appears that the Jews killed Balaam right after he tried to advise them against attacking Midian. If this is the case, then he had to have gone to them *after* he fell down with the kings of Midian, for he could hardly have made them fly and flew with them after he had been executed. However, this would mean that he went to dissuade Israel from attacking Midian *after* they had already “killed all the men!” What was the point? Perhaps it means that Balaam wanted them to just leave at that point and *not take any captives or booty*, and threatened them with the threat that if they take the Midianite women captive, they’ll fall into sin with them once again. Indeed, Moses got mad at the Israelites for taking the Midianite girls, perhaps because he, too, feared the Israelites would sin with them again. Or perhaps the verse about killing all the men is out of place chronologically, and that Balaam went to them before this happened. Or perhaps we are reading too much into Rashi, and Balaam went to give his advice before the battle, to dissuade the Israelites from attacking, then went back to Midian and flew and fell and they killed him in battle? This makes sense because his challenge—“If you could not overcome them when you were 600,000 strong what makes you think you can beat them when you’re only 12,000 strong?”—makes sense only *before* the Israelites went to battle. But on the other hand, (1) why would the Israelites let him go back to Midian? and (2) Rashi says (or at least implies) that the Jews killed him right after (and in response to) his advice to them; inserting the word “later” at the end of Rashi’s comment is somewhat forced. See also next comment.

\*

**31:8 The Israelites thereupon slew Balaam the son of Beor with the sword.**

Implied in all this is that Balaam did not die by falling down from the sky, but by execution by the sword. In the sources, these are simply different Midrashim, one *darshening* the use of *al* here and in Joshua and the other *darshening* the separate phrase used for Balaam. Neither version deals with the other. Does anyone address the contradiction between the inference from Joshua and the plain meaning of this verse head on?

\*

**31:21 purifying the eating utensils they plundered from the defilement of having come in contact with a corpse**

They didn’t plunder anything for themselves; they brought it all back to Moses. Why was it their responsibility to purify it? Did they do so at Moses’ order as his agents? Maybe it’s because later on Moses lets them plunder the *metaltelin*? But this hasn’t been mentioned yet.

\*

**31:23 (1) because Moses had implied that they were not applicable**

The Rebbe (in the source quoted here) does not mention this reason, but it follows from his explanation of the previous verses.

\*

**31:23 and it must be immersed in a mikveh or the ocean to purify it from the defilement caused by non-Jewish ownership**

*Likutei Sichot* vol. 18, p. 369, note 43 answers why they weren't commanded to *kasher* their plundered vessels after the war with Sichon and Og, but I don't understand from what is said there why they weren't commanded then to *immerse* their vessels in order to purify them from non-Jewish ownership. ???

\*

**31:53 the soldiers had seized moveable spoils for themselves and kept them**

So does the "any man" in v. 50 refer only to the officers? Or are they representing their troops, or did they confiscate from them?

\*

**32:1 the land of Yaazer and the land of southern Gilead**

A. Rashi refers here to "the land of Sichon and Og," but if we are contrasting Gilead with Yaazer, the former must mean "southern Gilead," i.e., the land of Sichon. Yaazer was in between the territories of Sichon and Og. So in this verse, at least, we are only talking about the land of Sichon and Yaazer, but not about the land of Og. In fact, the land of Og is mentioned later (v. 33) only when the half-tribe of Manasseh come into the picture, so maybe Rashi is referring to this and encompassing the whole section in his remark. ??? Or more likely, he's just clumping the whole conquered region together as one block, calling it "the land of Sichon and Og" in order to distinguish it from the land of Midian where the previous battle took place. In Deut. 3:12-13, the land of Sichon is called "half of Gilead" the land of Og is called "the *rest* of Gilead."

B. Manasseh's grandson was named Gilead (above, 26:29). Perhaps the Torah refers to this area by the name it would be given later, when the Israelites conquered it, (but [Genesis 31:47-48 implies that this area was perhaps known by this name from the time of Jacob](#)) or perhaps Manasseh's son Machir named his son Gilead after the area he sensed prophetically he would one day possess.

\*

**32:28 for they changed the names of the cities they built**

Why does the verse say that the names of Nebo and Baal Meon were changed, and then say that the tribe of Reuben changed the names of all the cities they built up? Artscroll, p. 400, note 4, says that only the two mentioned had their names changed, and not Sivmah. But then Rashi says Sivmah is the same as Sevam, so we see that its name was changed! (Or perhaps this name change was so slight as to be insignificant [relatively], perhaps due only to sloppy pronunciation or regional accent?)

\*

**32:29 the northern part of Gilead, that was beyond Og's territory**

For all of Og's territory had already been conquered. The Rebbe says that one explanation of why Yair named only the villages after himself even though his territory also included cities is because the cities of Og were already conquered. But this apparently cannot describe the situation in the whole region the half-tribe of Manasseh conquered now, for it says (v. 39) just "...went to Gilead...and conquered it" and (v. 42) "...conquered Kenat [the city] and its surrounding villages."

\*

**32:41 Yair, the great grandson of Manasseh**

So R.A.Kaplan, based on the fact that Yair is not mentioned in Numbers 26:29-34, and on 1 Chronicles 2:22, where he is mentioned as being the son of Seguv the son of Machir's daughter, who was a concubine to Chetzron the son of Peretz the son of Judah. (According to Malbim, quoted in Artscroll Tanach, since Machir's daughter became Chetzron's wife only later, *after* she had Seguv, Seguv and Yair are considered *Manasseh's* lineage, after Seguv's mother, rather than Judah's.)

*Bemidbar Rabbah* 14:7, *Bava Batra* 121b, and *Sanhedrin* 44a refer to Yair as the *son* of Manasseh, but it could be that they are just using the terminology of the Torah and in fact agree with the above identification of Yair.

*Bava Batra* states that Yair was born during the lifetime of Jacob. This would mean that Jacob’s great-great-great-great grandson (Yair b. Seguv b. daughter b. Machir b. Manasseh b. Joseph b. Jacob) was born during his lifetime.

This only works out if we postulate that everyone in this line had their first child at age 6, as follows: Jacob died in the year 2255. Joseph was released from prison and married in 2229. Manasseh was born the following year, 2230.

2230	Manasseh born
2236	Manasseh age 6; Machir born
2242	Machir, age 6; his daughter born
2248	daughter, age 6; Seguv born
2254	Seguv, age 6; Yair born
2255	Jacob dies

In Biblical terms, this is not unheard of, since the line of Judah till Peretz had their first children at age 7, in order to squeeze into the 22 years between the sale of Joseph and their arrival in Egypt.

The Ramban, Ibn Ezra, and Chizkuni also understand Yair to be the great-grandson of Manasseh. Perhaps the Midrash can be understood similarly, taking “son” to mean “descendant,” as R. Kaplan does.

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### ***Parashat Masei***

34:19 These are the names of the men:

Why is the word “prince” not used for the first three tribes?

\*

35:31 **You shall not accept monetary ransom for the life of a murderer who** has killed inadvertently and **is guilty of death** if found outside the city of refuge by the victim's close relatives, **for he must be put to death.**

It is not clear from Rashi whether this verse is talking about an intentional murderer (as the previous verse is) or the inadvertent murderer (as the following verse and most of the section is). I have opted for the second possibility, because then the 3-verse unit of which this verse is the middle has one flow: “[30] The *go’eil hadam* has to kill the murderer even without a trial if he leaves his city of refuge—unlike a premeditated murderer, who must stand trial. [31] Therefore, he has to stay in his city of refuge; you can’t ransom him from the death penalty [32] or from exile by paying money.”