

**Sefer Bamidbar - one book, two books, or three? /shiur #1**  
**From confusing chronology to 'mosaic' composition**  
**The structure of Sefer Bamidbar, and how it explains Matan Torah**

Source sheet for shiur by Menachem Leibtag,

**INTRODUCTION**

*This week - we begin our study of Sefer Bamidbar, by noting how it relates to both Sefer Vayikra and Sefer Shmot - but also, what makes it unique.*

*Opening Discussion: Precise dates in the Torah, and implied dates*

*Breishit - ages of individuals, but no continuous chronology*

*Shmot: Nisan The first month - that begins the story of the Exodus*

*15<sup>th</sup> - Exodus*

*15<sup>th</sup> of Iyar - chapter 16, the manna story...*

*Rosh Chodesh Sivan -and ensuing events of Matan Torah [chap. 19]*

*First day of Nisan in Year Two - assembling the Mishkan [chap. 40]*

*Implied dates*

*When the covenant at Sinai took place [6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> of Sivan?]*

*Three sets of 40 days*

*[making 10<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei, the day we received 2<sup>nd</sup> luchot]*

**VAYIKRA:**

*No explicit dates,*

*Inferred dates of the 7 days of the Miluim & 8<sup>th</sup> day*

*Needs to be synchronized with Shmot chapter 40*

**BAMIDBAR -**

**WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER?**

*Recall, from our final shiur on Vayikra:*

*Time line of the events at Har Sinai (and their logic/purpose)*

*Which laws were given: (consider when given vs. when recorded)*

*Before Matan Torah (re: Exodus, Mara, Manna etc.)*

*At Matan Torah*

*During the first 40 days*

*During the second 40 days*

*After the Mishkan was assembled & dedicated*

*Also - which laws were given AFTER Am Yisrael left Har Sinai*

*Discuss - units in Chumash, and how to identify them-*

*Examples:*

*The Dibrot*

*The "ko tomar" unit [Shmot 20:19 thru end of chapter 23]*

*The commandment to build the Mishkan [chapters 25 thru 31]*

*The units in Sefer Vayikra [korbanot / torot/ moadim etc.]*

*Short units, including those in Sefer Bamidbar [nazir, sota, etc.]*

*The core assumptions made by the commentators re: how the Torah was written*

*[Basically Ramban vs. Chazal re: "mukdam u'm'uchar"]*

# I. Chronology in the book of Bamidbar, as well as style

Review - the Torah's 'narrative' sections vs. its law section

Breishit - primarily narrative

Shmot - primarily narrative - with law sections embedded within

Vayikra - primarily law units

Bamidbar - none of the above;

Rather - primarily narrative but...

with law sections that consistently interrupt the narrative!

Note the date in opening verse of the book

1<sup>st</sup> day of the SECOND month in Year 2 [since Exodus]

## The last date in Sefer Shmot - 1<sup>st</sup> day of FIRST month

### The opening verses of the final chapter of Shmot (40:1-9)

- א** וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר. **1** And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying:
- ב** בַּיּוֹם-הַחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן, בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ, תִּקְיָם, אֶת-מִשְׁכַּן אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד. **2** 'On the first day of the first month shalt thou rear up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting.
- ג** וְשַׂמְתָּ שָׁם, אֶת אֲרוֹן הָעֵדוּת; וְסַכַּת עַל-הָאָרוֹן, אֶת-הַפָּרֹכֶת. **3** And thou shalt put therein the ark of the testimony, and thou shalt screen the ark with the veil.
- ד** וְהֵבֵאתָ, אֶת-הַשֻּׁלְחָן, וְעָרַכְתָּ, אֶת-עָרְכּוֹ; וְהֵבֵאתָ, אֶת-הַמְּנֹרָה, וְהַעֲלִיתָ, אֶת-נֵרֹתֶיהָ. **4** And thou shalt bring in the table, and set in order the bread that is upon it; and thou shalt bring in the candlestick, and light the lamps thereof.
- ה** וְנִתְּתָה אֶת-מִזְבֵּחַ הַזָּהָב, לְקַטֹּרֶת, לִפְנֵי, אֲרוֹן הָעֵדוּת; וְשַׂמְתָּ אֶת-מָסַךְ הַפֶּתַח, לְמִשְׁכַּן. **5** And thou shalt set the golden altar for incense before the ark of the testimony, and put the screen of the door to the tabernacle.
- ו** וְנִתְּתָה, אֶת מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֹלָה, לִפְנֵי, פֶּתַח מִשְׁכַּן אֹהֶל-מוֹעֵד. **6** And thou shalt set the altar of burnt-offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting.
- ז** וְנִתְּתָה, אֶת-הַכִּיֹּר, בֵּין-אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד, וּבֵין הַמִּזְבֵּחַ; וְנִתְּתָה שָׁם, מֵיִם. **7** set the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and shalt put water therein. **8** And thou shalt set up the court round about, and hang up the screen of the gate of the court
- ח** וְשַׂמְתָּ אֶת-הַחֲצֵר, סָבִיב; וְנִתְּתָה, אֶת-מָסַךְ שַׁעַר הַחֲצֵר. **9** And thou shalt take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that is therein, and shalt hallow it, and all the furniture thereof; and it shall be holy.
- ט** וְלָקַחְתָּ אֶת-שֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה, וּמִשַּׁחְתָּ אֶת-הַמִּשְׁכָּן, וְאֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ; וְקִדַּשְׁתָּ אֹתוֹ וְאֶת-כָּל-כְּלָיו, וְהָיָה קֹדֶשׁ. **10** And thou shalt anoint the altar of burnt-offering, and all its vessels, and sanctify the altar; and the altar shall be most holy.
- י** וּמִשַּׁחְתָּ אֶת-מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֹלָה, וְאֶת-כָּל-כְּלָיו; וְקִדַּשְׁתָּ, אֶת-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ, וְהָיָה הַמִּזְבֵּחַ, קֹדֶשׁ קְדָשִׁים.

## Compare with opening lines of Bamidbar chapter 7

- א** וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם כָּלוּת מֹשֶׁה לְהַקִּים אֶת-הַמִּשְׁכָּן, וַיִּמְשַׁח אֹתוֹ וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ וְאֶת-כָּל-כְּלָיו, וְאֶת-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ, וְאֶת-כָּל-כְּלָיו; וַיִּמְשַׁח אֹתָם, וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתָם; **1** And it came to pass on the day that Moses had made an end of setting up the tabernacle, and had anointed it and sanctified it, and all the furniture thereof, and the altar and all the vessels thereof, and had anointed them and sanctified them;

**ב** וַיִּקְרִיבוּ נְשִׂאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, רָאשֵׁי בֵּית אֲבֹתָם: הֵם נְשִׂאֵי הַמִּטָּה, הֵם הָעֹמְדִים עַל-הַפְּקָדִים.

2 that the princes of Israel, the heads of their fathers' houses, offered--these were the princes of the tribes, these are they that were over them that were numbered.

**ג** וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶת-קָרְבָּנָם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה, שֵׁשׁ-עֶגְלוֹת צָב וּשְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר בָּקָר--עֶגְלָה עַל-שְׁנֵי הַנְּשִׂאִים, וְשׂוֹר לְאֶחָד; וַיִּקְרִיבוּ אוֹתָם, לִפְנֵי הַמִּשְׁכָּן.

3 And they brought their offering before the LORD, six covered wagons, and twelve oxen: a wagon for every two of the princes, and for each one an ox; and they presented them before the tabernacle.

Clearly, the narrative of Sefer Shmot continues with chapter 7

Hence, opening chapter of Bamidbar is 'out of chronological order'

The 12 days of "chanukat ha'mizbayach" bring us to 13<sup>th</sup> of Nisan

Bamidbar chapter 9 :1 -14

Pesach on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, then Pesach sheni a month later

## II. Why does the book begin instead with 'counting'

See Shmot 30:11-17

**א** וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר.

11 And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying:

**יב** כִּי תִשָּׂא אֶת-רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, לִפְקֹדֵיהֶם, וְנָתַנּוּ אִישׁ כֶּפֶר נַפְשׁוֹ לַיהוָה, בִּפְקֹד אֹתָם; וְלֹא-יְהִי בָהֶם נֶגֶף, בִּפְקֹד אֹתָם.

12 'When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel, according to their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them.

**יג** זֶה יִתְּנוּ, כָּל-הָעֹבֵר עַל-הַפְּקָדִים--מִחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל, בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ: עֶשְׂרִים גֶּרָה, הַשֶּׁקֶל--מִחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל, תְּרוּמָה לַיהוָה.

13 This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary--the shekel is twenty gerahs--half a shekel for an offering to the LORD.

**יד** כָּל, הָעֹבֵר עַל-הַפְּקָדִים, מִבֶּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה, וְמַעְלָה--יִתֵּן, תְּרוּמַת יְהוָה.

14 Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and upward, shall give the offering of the LORD.

**טו** הָעֲשִׂיר לֹא-יִרְבֶּה, וְהַדָּל לֹא יִמְעִיט, מִמִּחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל--לִתְּת אֶת-תְּרוּמַת יְהוָה, לְכַפֵּר עַל-נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם.

15 The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than the half shekel, when they give the offering of the LORD, to make atonement for your souls.

**טז** וְלָקַחְתָּ אֶת-כֶּסֶף הַכִּפָּרִים, מֵאֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְנָתַתָּ אוֹתוֹ, עַל-עֲבֹדַת אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד; וְהָיָה לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְזָכְרוֹן לִפְנֵי יְהוָה, לְכַפֵּר עַל-נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם. {פ}

16 And thou shalt take the atonement money from the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tent of meeting, that it may be a memorial for the children of Israel before the LORD, to make atonement for your souls.'

## Sefer Bamidbar - What 'belongs' & what doesn't!

Left column is primary topic of the book/ - right column are the 'interruptions'

Not how most of most of the right column would fit better in Sefer Vayikra:

Chapter	Ongoing Narrative	Mitzvot l'dorot (Commandments)
**	<b><i>Preparing to leave Har Sinai</i></b>	
1->4	Organizing the camp, army etc.	
5		Laws of "asham" * "sotah"
6		Laws of "nazir" & birkat kohanim
7	Dedication of Mishkan by the Nsiim	
8	Ceremony for Leviim, replacing bchorim	
9	Pesach in the desert; instructions on how to travel following the 'anan'	[Pesach sheni/ reason for delay?]
10	Using the "chatzrotot" for travel signals; Travel begins on 20 Iyar; "va'yhi b'nsoa"	
**	<b><i>Failure of first generation</i></b>	
11	Sin of the "mitavim"; 70 elders appointed	
12	Sin of Miriam, talking against Moshe	
13-14	Sin of the spies; & the "maapilim"	
15		Laws re: korbanot, taking challa, Sanhedrin, shabbat, & tzizit
16-17	Korach's <b>rebellion</b> ; test of the 12 staffs	
18		Laws re: Compensation for shevet Levi
19		Laws re: 'para aduma' / "tumat meyt"
20	Moshe & Aharon's <b>sin</b> at Mei Meriva; Fortieth year/ journey around Har Seir	
21	War with Arad; <b>sin</b> of "nachash nchoshet" War with Sichon/ Conquer of Transjordan	
22-24	Story of Bilam & Balak	
25	Sin of Bnei Yisrael with 'bnot Moav'; revenge taken by Pinchas etc.	
**	<b><i>Preparing to Enter Canaan</i></b>	
26	Census, who will inherit the land	
27	Daughters of Tzlofchad request 'nachala'; Moshe is told to die, Yehoshua appointed	
28-29		Laws of Tmidim u'Musafim (holidays)
30		Laws re: annulling vows
31	War against Midyan	
32	Inheritance taken by Reuven, Gad & Menashe; & their promise to fight....	
33	Summary of Travel thru the desert	[Commandment to conquer the land?]
34	Borders of Eretz Cannan (to conquer)	
35	Cities of Levites & Cities of Refuge	
36	Bnot Tzlofchad - protecting inheritance	

### III. Classical commentary that relates to this structure:

Ramban - In his Intro to Sefer Bamidbar

...והספר הזה כולו במצות שעה שנצטוו בהם בעמדם במדבר, ובנסים הנעשים להם, לספר כל מעשה ה' אשר עשה עימהם להפליא. וספר כי החל לתת אויביהם לפנייהם לחרב, וצוה איך תחלק הארץ להם. ואין בספר הזה מצות נוהגות לדורות זולתי קצת מצות, ובענייני הקרבנות שהתחיל בהן בספר הכהנים - ולא נשלם ביאורן שם, והשלימן בספר הזה.

#### . Chizkuni's commentary on Shmot 34:32

*When Moshe Rabeinu descends Mount Sinai with the 2nd Luchot*

וַיְהִי, בְּרִדְתָּ מִשֶּׁה מִהַר סִינַי, וּשְׁנֵי לַחַת הָעֵדוּת בְּיַד-מֹשֶׁה, בְּרִדְתּוֹ מִן-הַקָּהָר ... לֹא וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים מֹשֶׁה, וַיֵּשְׁבוּ אֵלָיו אֶהְרֹן וְכָל-הַנְּשָׂאִים בְּעֵדָה; וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה, אֲלֵהֶם. לֵב וְאַחֲרֵי-כֵן נִגְשׂוּ, כָּל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל - וַיִּצְוּם-- אֶת כָּל-אִשׁוֹר דָּבָר יְהוָה אֲתוֹ, בְּהַר סִינַי.

כל המצות שנאמרו בארבעים יום ראשונים ובארבעים יום אחרונים. - וכל המצות שנצטוו ישראל נאמרו מניסן שבו יצאו ישראל ממצרים עד עשרים באייר בשנה השנית,

**אבל התורה מגלה נתנה,**

שלפי שהיה משה שומע המצות מפי הקב"ה

היה כותב כל אחת ואחת במגלתה לעצמה,

וכשבא ליפטר מן העולם

**סידר ספר תורה וקבע בו הפרשיות עד היום הזה**

**לפי הסמוכין הראויין להם, כמו שדרשו רבותינו.**

"all the commandments that God had spoken to him about while he had been on Mount Sinai on his first and third stay on the Mountain, as well as all the commandments that He had communicated to him from Nissan when they had left Egypt until the twentieth of Iyar in the second year when they broke camp around the Mountain.

However, according to the Talmud in tractate Gittin folio 60, the written Torah, i.e. in scroll form, **he wrote down personally, one parchment at a time.** When Moses made ready to leave this earth, **he arranged these parchments in the order in which we read them nowadays according to the order he considered appropriate.**

Let's note how Ramban ties everything together  
in Sefer Vayikra as well:

הקדמה

הספר הזה הוא תורת פהנים והלויים,

יבאר בו עניני הקרבנות כלן ומשמרת המשכן,

כי כאשר היה ספר אחד בענין הגלות והגאולה ממנו,

והשלימו בענין אהל מועד וכבוד השם אשר מלא את המשכן,

צוהו בקרבנות ובשמירת המשכן, שיהיו הקרבנות כפרה להן

ולא יגרמו העונות לסלוק השכינה.

וצוה בפהנים הנגשים אל ה' שיתקדשו,

שהזהיר על טמאת מקדש וקדשיו, וגם שלא יהרסו לעלת אל ה',

כמו שאמר "דבר אל אהרן אחיך ואל יבא בכל עת אל הקדש מבית

לפרכת אל פני הכפרת אשר על הארץ ולא ימות כי בענין אראה על

הכפרת", באזהרת "פן יהרסו אל ה' לראות ונפל ממנו רב".

ואח"כ יגביל המשכן כהגבלת הר סיני בעת היות שם כבוד אלהי ישראל.

והנה רב הספר הזה בקרבנות, בתורת הקרבן והמקריבין ובמקום

שיתקרב בו, ויבואו בו קצת מצות נגררות עם אלה.

כי מתחלה צוה בקרבנות הנדבה, ואסר החלב והדם בעבורם,

וְאַחֲרֵי כֵן בְּקִרְבָּנוֹת הַחֹטָא, וְנִגְרָר אַחַר זֶה לְהִזְכִּיר הַמַּאֲכָלִים הָאֲסוּרִים,  
בְּעִבּוֹר שָׁהִם מִטְּמְאִים וְהָאוֹכֵל אוֹ הַנוֹגֵעַ בָּהֶן בְּכָל קֹדֶשׁ לֹא יִגַע וְאֵל  
הַמִּקְדָּשׁ לֹא יָבֹא, וְאִם נִכְנַס שָׁם בְּטִמְאָה יִהְיֶה חַיֵּב קִרְבָּן עוֹלָה וַיִּזְרַד  
שֶׁהִזְכִּירוּ כָּבֵר.

וְהִצְרִיךְ לְהִזְכִּיר תּוֹרַת הַמִּצְוָה וּמִשְׁפָּטֵי הַיּוֹלָדֶת וְהַזָּב וְהַזָּבָה לְחַיֵּב אוֹתָם  
בְּקִרְבָּן וְלְהַזְהִיר עוֹד מִטְּמְאָתָם, כְּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר בְּסוּפֵם "וְהִזְרַתֶם אֶת בְּנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל מִטְּמְאָתָם וְלֹא יָמְתוּ בְּטִמְאָתָם בְּטִמְאָם אֶת מִשְׁכַּנִּי אֲשֶׁר בְּתוֹכְכֶם".

וְנִגְרָר אַחַר זֶה שְׂיִזְהִיר עַל הָעֲרִיזוֹת, כִּי מִשְׁכָּבָם מִטְּמֵא וְעוֹנָם יִקְרָא  
טְמֵאָה, גּוֹרְמַת לְסְלוֹק הַשְּׂכִינָה וּלְגָלוּת.

וְעוֹד כִּי הַשׁוֹגֵג בָּהֶן מְחַיֵּב הַחֹטָא שֶׁהִזְכִּיר כָּבֵר בּוֹ "אִם נִפֶּשׂ אַחַת  
תִּחַטָּא בְּשִׁגְגָה".

וְאַחֲרֵי כֵן הִזְכִּיר מִצְוֹת הַשַּׁבָּת וּמוֹעֲדֵי ה', בְּעִבּוֹר הַקִּרְבָּן,

כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר "אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי ה' אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ לְהַקְרִיב  
אִשָּׁה לָהּ עֹלָה וּמִנְחָה זָבַח וּנְסֻכִים דְּבַר יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ".

וְרַב פְּרָשִׁיּוֹת הַסֵּפֶר הַזֶּה יִדְבַר בָּהֶן עִם הַכֹּהֲנִים, "דְּבַר אֵל אֱהָרֹן וְאֵל בְּנָיו"  
"צוֹ אֶת אֱהָרֹן וְאֶת בְּנָיו".

וּבְפָרֶשֶׁת קְדוּשִׁים תִּהְיֶה קִצָּת מִצְוֹת לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, רַבֵּן נִגְרָרוֹת עִם עֲנִינֵי  
הַקִּרְבָּנוֹת אוֹ בְּדוּמִים לָהֶם,

וּבְמִקוֹמָם אֲפָרֵשׁ בְּעִזְרַתוֹ שֶׁל הַב"ה.

In it G-d explains matters concerned with all the offerings and watching over the Tabernacle [that it should not become defiled]. This is because one book [i.e., the second book of the Torah] was dedicated to the Egyptian exile and the redemption therefrom, and He completed it with an account of the building of the Tent of Meeting and the Glory of G-d which filled the Tabernacle, therefore He now commanded Moses about the offerings and about watching over the Tabernacle, in order that the offerings effect atonement for [the children of] Israel, and that their sins should not bring about the removal of the Divine Glory.

Thus He commanded *the priests that come near unto the Eternal that they sanctify themselves*, warning them against defilement of the Sanctuary and its hallowed offerings, and also that they are not *to break through to come up unto the Eternal*, just as He said, *Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil, before the ark-cover which is upon the ark, that he die not; for I appear in the cloud upon the ark-cover*, which is similar to the warning [given at the Revelation] *lest they break through unto the Eternal to gaze, and many of them perish*.

After that He set limits to the Tabernacle, even as He had marked off Mount Sinai when the Glory of the G-d of Israel was there. Thus the greatest part of this book deals with the offerings, the laws of the offering itself and of those who perform its rite and of the place where it is to be brought; some commandments are also mentioned incidentally to those dealing with the offerings.

Thus at first He commanded concerning the freewill offerings, and prohibited the eating of fat and blood on account of [mentioning] them. Following that He commanded concerning the offerings that are to be brought upon committing a sin, and incidentally to these He mentioned the laws of forbidden foods; for they defile the person, and he who eats them or touches them must not touch any hallowed thing, nor come into the Sanctuary, and if he does go in there [or eat of the hallowed things] while in a state of uncleanness, he has to bring the offering of higher or lower value which He had already mentioned. After that it was necessary to mention the law of the leper and the ordinances of the woman in childbirth and of the *zav* and *zavah*, in order to tell that they must bring an offering [at the end of the period of their uncleanness], and to warn them further concerning their uncleanness — as He said at the end [of these laws], *Thus shall ye separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness; that they die not in their uncleanness, when they defile My Tabernacle that is in the midst of them*. As a result of mentioning these laws,

He warned afterwards about those persons with whom it is forbidden to have sexual relations, since association with them defiles, and their sin is called "defilement" and brings about the removal of the Divine Glory, and exile. Besides, he who commits any of these sins [of forbidden sexual relations] unwillfully, must bring the sin-offering which He mentioned already in the verse, *And if anyone sin through error*. Following that He mentioned the commandment of the Sabbath and the appointed seasons of the Eternal on account of the offerings [which are brought on those days], just as He said, *These are the appointed seasons of the Eternal etc. to bring an offering made by fire unto the Eternal*. In most of the sections of this book He speaks with reference to the priests: *Speak unto Aaron, and to his sons; Command Aaron and his sons*. In the section of *Kedoshim* however, there are some commandments addressed to the children of Israel, but most of them are mentioned because of some connection with the offerings or matters similar to them. I will explain them in their place with the help of the Holy One, blessed be He.