

Sefer Devarim – the most misunderstood book in the Bible

For Torah in Motion – by Menachem Leibtag

Class # 3 – Why & Where Sefer Devarim belongs in Sefer Shmot

I. Review of first two classes

Chapters 5 thru 26 form main speech in Sefer Devarim

In it, Moshe Rabeinu reviews a set of laws that God gave him on Har Sinai together with the first Luchot

Chapters 1 thru 4 formed an introductory speech-

Explaining why it has been 40 years since these laws were first given, and serves as a 'pep-talk' to assure the new generation will not repeat their mistakes

In today's shiur, we will try to identify where the laws of this main speech belong chronologically in Sefer Shmot, and why they became a separate book

II. Review of the story in chapter 5

יח אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל-
כָּל-קְהֵלְכֶם בְּהָר, מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ הָעֹנֵן
וְהָעֲרָפֶל--קוֹל גָּדוֹל, וְלֹא יָסַף; וַיִּכְתְּבֵם,
עַל-שְׁנֵי לַחַת אֲבָנִים, וַיִּתֵּןם, אֵלַי.

18 These words the LORD spoke unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice, and it went on no more. And He wrote them upon two tables of stone, and gave them unto me.

יט וַיְהִי, כִּשְׁמַעְכֶם אֶת-הַקּוֹל מִתּוֹךְ
הַחֹשֶׁךְ, וְהָהָר, בֵּיעַר בְּאֵשׁ; וַתִּקְרְבוּן
אֵלַי, כָּל-רֹאשֵׁי שְׁבֵטֵיכֶם וְזִקְנֵיכֶם.

19 And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, while the mountain did burn with fire, that ye came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders;

כ וַתֹּאמְרוּ, הִן הִרְאָנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
אֶת-כְּבוֹדוֹ וְאֶת-גְּדֻלוֹ, וְאֶת-קְלוֹ שְׁמַעְנוּ,
מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ; הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה רָאִינוּ, כִּי-יְדַבֵּר
אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם וְחָי.

20 and ye said: 'Behold, the LORD our God hath shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice out of the midst of the fire; we have seen this day that God doth speak with man, and he liveth.

כא וְעַתָּה, לָמָּה נָמוּת, כִּי תֹאכְלֵנוּ,
הָאֵשׁ הַגְּדֹלָה הַזֹּאת; אִם-יִסְפִּים אֲנַחְנוּ,
לְשָׁמֵעַ אֶת-קוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ עוֹד--
וּמָתָנוּ.

21 Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, then we shall die.

כב כִּי מִי כָל-בָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַע קוֹל
אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים מִדְּבַר מִתּוֹךְ-הָאֵשׁ, כָּמוֹנוּ-
וַיְחִי.

22 For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?

כג קִרְבֵּ אֶתָּה וּשְׁמַע, אֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר
יֹאמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ; וְאֵת תְּדַבֵּר אֵלֵינוּ,
אֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר יִדְבַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵלֶיךָ--
וּשְׁמַעְנוּ וְעָשִׂינוּ.

23 Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God may say; and thou shalt speak unto us all that the LORD our God may speak unto thee; and we will hear it and do it.'

כד וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה אֶת-קוֹל דְּבָרֵיכֶם,
בְּדַבְּרְכֶם אֵלַי; וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי,
שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת-קוֹל דְּבָרֵי הָעָם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר
דִּבְּרוּ אֵלַיךָ--הִיטִיבוּ, כָּל-אֲשֶׁר דִּבְּרוּ.

24 And the LORD heard the voice of your words, when ye spoke unto me; and the LORD said unto me: 'I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee; they have well said all that they have spoken.

כה מִי-יִתֵּן וְהָיָה לְבַבָם זֶה לָהֶם,
לִירְאָה אֹתִי וּלְשָׁמֹר אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹתַי--
כָּל-הַיָּמִים: לְמַעַן יִיטֵב לָהֶם וּלְבָנֵיהֶם,
לְעֹלָם.

25 Oh that they had such a heart as this always, to fear Me, and keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

כו לָךְ, אָמַר לָהֶם: שׁוּבוּ לָכֶם,
לְאֹהֲלֵיכֶם.

26 Go say to them: Return ye to your tents.

כז וְאַתָּה, פֹּה עֹמֵד עִמָּדִי, וְאַדְבָּרָה
אֵלֶיךָ אֵת כָּל-הַמִּצְוָה וְהַחֻקִּים
וְהַמְּשֻׁפָּטִים, אֲשֶׁר תִּלְמַדְם; וְעָשׂוּ
בְּאֶרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי נֹתֵן לָהֶם לְרִשְׁתָּהּ.

27 But as for thee, stand thou here by Me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandment, and the statutes, and the ordinances, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it.'

דְּבָרִים 6 Deuteronomy Chapter 6

א וְזֹאת הַמִּצְוָה, הַחֻקִּים וְהַמְּשֻׁפָּטִים,
אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, לְלַמֵּד אֶתְכֶם-
לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אֶתֶם עֹבְרִים שָׁמָּה
לְרִשְׁתָּהּ.

1 Now this is the commandment, the statutes, and the ordinances, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it--

III. Overall structure of the main speech:

Chapter 5 Moshe Rabeinu retells the story of Maamad Har Sinai, and how he received at that time - the laws that he is about to teach

Chapters 6->11 - The “mitzvah” section , the love & fear of God / From “shema” to “v’haya im shmoah”

Chapters 12->26 - The “chukim u’ mishpatim” section / The Laws that will establish God’s nation

IV. Parallel story in Shmot 24:12-18, after Maamad Har Sinai

- יב** וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, עֲלֵה אֵלַי, הַהָרָה--וְהִיִּיה-שָׁם; וְאֶתְנַה לְךָ אֶת-**לַחַת הָאֲבֹן, וְהַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוָה,** אֲשֶׁר כָּתַבְתִּי, לְהוֹרֹתָם.
- יג** וַיִּקַּם מֹשֶׁה, וַיְהוֹשֶׁעַ מִשְׁרָתוֹ; וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה, אֶל-הַר הָאֱלֹהִים.
- יד** וְאֶל-הַזְּקֵנִים אָמַר שְׁבוּ-לָנוּ בָּזָה, עַד אֲשֶׁר-נָשׁוּב אֵלֵיכֶם; וְהָיָה אַהֲרֹן וְחוּר עִמָּכֶם, מִי-בַעַל דְּבָרִים יִגַּשׁ אֲלֵהֶם.
- טו** וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה, אֶל-הָהָר; וַיִּכֶס הָעָנָן, אֶת-הָהָר.
- טז** וַיִּשְׁכֹּן כְּבוֹד-יְהוָה עַל-הַר סִינַי, וַיִּכַּסְהוּ הָעָנָן שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים; וַיִּקְרָא אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי, מִתּוֹךְ הָעָנָן.
- יז** וַיִּמְרָאֵה כְּבוֹד יְהוָה, כְּאֵשׁ אֹכֶלֶת בְּרֹאשׁ הָהָר, לְעֵינַי, בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.
- יח** וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה בְּתוֹךְ הָעָנָן, וַיַּעַל אֶל-הָהָר; וַיְהִי מֹשֶׁה, בָּהָר, אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, וְאַרְבָּעִים לַיְלָה.
- 12** And the LORD said unto Moses: 'Come up to Me into the mount and be there; and I will give thee the tables of stone, and the law and the commandment, which I have written, that thou mayest teach them.'
- 13** And Moses rose up, and Joshua his minister; and Moses went up into the mount of God.
- 14** And unto the elders he said: 'Tarry ye here for us, until we come back unto you; and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; whosoever hath a cause, let him come near unto them.'
- 15** And Moses went up into the mount, and the cloud covered the mount.
- 16** And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days; and the seventh day He called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.
- 17** And the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.
- 18** And Moses entered into the midst of the cloud, and went up into the mount; and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

V. When Moshe finally teaches these laws

כט וַיְהִי, בְּרִדְתֵּי מֹשֶׁה מִהָרְ סִינַי,
וּשְׁנֵי לַחַת הָעֵדוּת בְּיַד-מֹשֶׁה, בְּרִדְתּוֹ
מִן-הָהָר; וּמֹשֶׁה לֹא-יָדַע, כִּי קָרוֹ עוֹר
פָּנָיו--בִּדְבָרוֹ אֹתוֹ.

29 And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of the testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses knew not that the skin of his face sent forth beams while He talked with him.

ל וַיֵּרָא אֶהָרֹן וְכָל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֶת-
מֹשֶׁה, וְהִנֵּה קָרוֹ, עוֹר פָּנָיו; וַיִּירָאוּ,
מִגִּשְׁתֵּי אֱלֹהֵי.

30 And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face sent forth beams; and they were afraid to come nigh him.

לא וַיִּקְרָא אֲלֵהֶם מֹשֶׁה, וַיָּשְׁבוּ אֵלָיו
אֶהָרֹן וְכָל-הַנְּשָׂאִים בְּעֵדָה; וַיְדַבֵּר
מֹשֶׁה, אֲלֵהֶם.

31 And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him; and Moses spoke to them.

לב וְאַחֲרֵי-כֵן נִגְשׂוּ, כָּל-בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל;
וַיְצַו־ם--אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר
יְהוָה אֹתוֹ, בְּהָרְ סִינַי.

32 And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh, and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in mount Sinai.

לג וַיִּכַּל מֹשֶׁה, מִדַּבֵּר אֲתָם; וַיִּתֵּן עַל-
פָּנָיו, מַסְוָה.

33 And when Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.