

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 23

Behaalsoecha, Sicha 1

The Verse:

The parshah opens with G-d commanding the Jewish people to observe Pesach by bringing the Pesach lamb in the desert, and then the narrative of those who were given a second opportunity to bring the sacrifice, known as the Second Pesach. The Torah begins by setting the time and place of this communication:

“G-d spoke to Moshe in the Sinai Desert, in the second year of their exodus from the land of Egypt, in the first month, saying: (Bamidbar 9:1)

The Rashi:

In the first month — The portion at the beginning of Bamidbar [the census of the nation] was not said until [the second month of] Iyar. From this, you learn that there is no chronological order in the Torah. But why did Scripture not begin with this chapter? For it is a disgrace to Israel that throughout the forty years the children of

Israel were in the desert, they brought only this Passover sacrifice alone.

The Question:

Rashi has introduced us to the principle that “there is no chronological order in the Torah” several times before. Why does he say, “from this you learn...” implying that the placement of this narrative is the primary source for this principle?

The Explanation:

In the other narratives where Rashi clarified that the Torah does not follow chronology, the episodes were narrated without dates. Rashi wanted to ensure that the reader did not mistakenly place the episode according to its apparent chronology which would alter its straightforward meaning.

In this case, however, both episodes are prefaced with a specific date. The census, on the first day of the second month in the second year from the Exodus, and the command for Pesach in the first month in the second year from the Exodus. Rashi's point here is to say that even when the Torah includes dates, which would imply

that it wants to place the event chronologically, even then the Torah does not follow chronological order.

The Disgrace of Delaying:

Regarding the placement of this narrative, Rashi explains that this was deferred to here because the Torah did not want to highlight the disgrace of the Jewish people in the beginning of the book of Bamidbar.

But upon closer inspection, what was so disgraceful? Rashi explains that there was no command to offer the Pesach sacrifice throughout the forty year duration in the desert, besides for the very first year. If there was no command to bring the sacrifice, why was it disgraceful that they did not bring it?

The explanation lies in the narrative of the Second Pesach. Those that missed out on the opportunity to offer the sacrifice that first year clamored to Moshe, "why should we be excluded" from the sacrifice just because they were ritually impure? (Bamidbar 9:7) In response, G-d extended to them a second chance. The Jewish people should have looked to this as a precedent that, if they desired it and demanded it, G-d would have given them the opportunity to bring the Pesach sacrifice throughout their desert journey, even if it was not explicitly commanded. Their passive acceptance of the cessation of this mitzvah was their disgrace.

This explains why Moshe and Aharon also did not demand the opportunity to bring the Pesach sacrifice in the desert. As true leaders, they would never seek to satisfy their own spiritual desire at the expense of their people's dignity. If they would ask for the chance to bring the sacrifice, they would be highlighting the people's complacency. Therefore, Moshe and Aharon refrained from asking, so as not to draw further attention to their people's "disgrace."

The Deeper Dimension:

There is a thematic connection between the Second Pesach and the principle that Torah does not follow chronological order that explains why this principle is expressed specifically in this narrative:

The idea of the Second Pesach is that a person can alter the past; that the mistakes and missed opportunities can be rectified through determination and passion. Teshuva, repentance, is the spiritual expression of "non-chronological order," of transcending the linear nature of time and changing the past. This was the disgrace of the Jewish people: that they did not demand a suspension of the normative process where the Pesach sacrifice would only be commanded in the Land of Israel. From the Second Pesach they should have learnt that Torah is not bound by chronology, and they could demand a mitzvah opportunity even before its time has arrived.
