



**To Teach or not to Teach:
Moshe's Instruction of the Laws of Sacrifices:**

Sicha Summary

Chelek 18 | Pinchas | Sichas 2

The Verse:

After G-d commands Moses concerning the daily and holiday sacrifices, the Torah concludes, "Moses spoke to the children of Israel just as G-d had commanded Moses." (*Bamidbar* 30:1) This concludes *parshas Pinchas*. *Parshas Matos* opens with Moses commanding the Jews concerning the laws of vows — "**Moses spoke** to the heads of the tribes..." (30:2)

Why does the verse need to tell us that Moses communicated G-d's command to the Jews? Isn't this obvious? Rashi explains:

The Rashi:

This verse is written to make a pause; these are the words of Rabbi Yishmael. Meaning, until here it was G-d who was speaking. The following chapter dealing with vows begins with Moses' words ("Moses spoke"). It was therefore necessary to first make a break and say that Moses repeated this chapter about offerings to the Jewish people. If not for this verse, we would have thought that Moshe did not convey this to the Jews, but rather, began his address with the chapter discussing vows. (*Sifrei Pinchas* 57)

The Questions:

- 1) Even after Rashi's explanation, we are still unclear: Why would we ever assume — regardless of the verse's implications — that Moses would not relay G-d's command to the people?
- 2) Previously, in *parshas Emor*, when G-d conveyed the laws prohibiting work on the holidays, the Torah concluded the chapter with a verse similar to ours: "Moses told the children of Israel these laws of G-d's appointed days." (*Vayikra* 23:44) Yet there, Rashi does not comment on why the verse mentions that Moses conveyed this to the Jews. If it needed to be addressed here, why not address it earlier, in *Emor*?

The Groundwork for the Explanation:

Rabbi Yishmael, the author of the interpretation cited by Rashi, maintains that Moses "taught the general principles of the *mitzvos* at Sinai, and the particulars at the *Mishkan*," throughout the desert journey. (*Chagigah* 6a)

He maintains this position because he takes the Torah's narratives of G-d's commandments to Moses at face value. Whenever a law appears in detail for the first time, he assumes that it was communicated just then for the first time.

Since Rabbi Yishmael believes that the *mitzvos* were given gradually, over a span of forty years, it is also conceivable that Moses would only have conveyed some parts of G-d's command when necessary, and would have left the rest for a later date.

The Explanation:

This is the case regarding the laws of the holidays in *parshas Emor*. These laws were given in close proximity to the inauguration of the *Mishkan*. (*Rashi* to *Bamidbar* 9:4) Many of these laws would only have become relevant in the Land of Israel (such as the *omer*, the prohibition of the new grain, and the two loaves offered on Shavuot). According to Rabbi Yishmael, it might be thought that Moses did not immediately convey all of these laws to the people because he had more urgent, practical matters to

attend to. The verse, therefore, had to clarify that, indeed, Moses conveyed all of these laws to the people immediately upon receiving them from G-d. There is, therefore, no need for Rashi to offer an explanation.

Our *parsha*, however, is set at the end of the forty years in the desert. There is no reason, even according to Rabbi Yishmael, to think that Moses would have delayed conveying the laws given to him by G-d. Why, then, does the verse need to confirm that “Moses spoke... as G-d had commanded”? Rashi’s comment addresses this question, as follows:

The Torah divides the holiday laws into two separate *parshiyos*: The laws prohibiting work and the general sacrificial rites in *parshas Emor*, and the detailed laws of the sacrifices here, in *Pinchas*. There are two ways of understanding their relationship:

- a) The passages were given to Moses at different times: *Emor* was given at the time of the *Mishkan*’s inauguration, and *Pinchas* was given at the end of the forty years.
- b) Both passages were given to Moses near the time of the inauguration. Yet, for some reason, the Torah chose to place the detailed laws of sacrifices later, out of chronological order. (*Rashi to Bereishis 6:3*) In this scenario, we would assume that Moses was commanded to convey only the laws of *Emor*, not *Pinchas*.

It follows that if the Torah did not expressly say that Moses conveyed the detailed laws of the holiday sacrifices to the people, it would imply that G-d didn’t convey this passage to Moses here, at the end of the forty years, but rather, it was given to Moses together with the rest of the holiday laws in *Emor*. These detailed laws of sacrifices were the concern of the *Kohanim*; therefore, Moses did not teach them to the people.

By expressly saying that “Moses spoke... as G-d had commanded,” the Torah clarifies that Moses did report these laws to the people. Therefore, there is no reason to say it was written out of order; rather, it truly was given to Moses at the end of the forty years.

Harsh and Soft:

In *Emor*, Moses' speech is described with the verb “*vayidaber*,” which means to speak harshly. In *Pinchas*, the verb used is “*vayomer*,” which indicates a softer type of speech. The reason: the prohibition of labor (in *Emor*) applies at all times, therefore its instruction is “harsh” and inflexible. The laws of sacrifices (in *Pinchas*) are not practically applicable today — so they were spoken “softly.”

Additionally, the laws of sacrifices were spoken softly because G-d tenderly asks that, in the meantime, we study the laws of the sacrifices so that “it is considered as if we offered” them. (*Menachos* 110a)