

Transition

Bamidbar 5782/2022

In the book of Bamidbar, the themes of wandering, punishment, regeneration, and eventual destination are quite apparent, but the meta themes of transition are a little harder to see.

The opening verse describes the first transition of geography, that of being spoken to, not at the mountain, but from the midst of the tabernacle¹. God is at home, and the Jewish people surround him. The Ramban explains that there is also the idea that the few laws given within this book also only relate to the tabernacle². But the very idea of speaking from the Tabernacle moves the focal point from the mountain, from the moment of revelation to the beginning of settlement.

The second transition is that of Moshe's leadership, in the book of Shemot and Vayikra Moses' leadership is public facing, in the book of Bamidbar, it is much private, it comes from within the Tabernacle. It shifts from being outward judge, to inward teacher. Rabeinu Bachya explains that Moshe was so humble that he was scared to enter into the Tabernacle, and waited until he was called, from then on, he is given unlimited permission to enter and commune with God³. Moshe transitions from being a guest on the mountain, to being an intimate visitor within God's house, from being a public disseminator of law, to being the holy teacher ensuring continuity.

The third transition is that of style of law. In previous books the Torah dealt with laws that were timeless, but according to Ramban, Bamidbar, when presenting new laws that haven't previously been addressed, relate solely to that moment in history⁴. This is a legal shift that allows law to be presented within its sociological context, ensuring that halakha maintains fluidity and relevancy.

These three transitions, geography, leadership, and law, represent the maturation of the relationship between the Jewish people and the Almighty! If Sinai represented the wedding canopy, then Bamidbar represents the home, and the development of the bayit neeman, that pleasant home that we model our own marriages on⁵. The Sifrei Chakhamim elaborates on this theme by stating that the opening command of the book is to count the Jewish people in a census relates less to the counting of the people to tally their number, and more of an indication of God counting his beloved treasure⁶.

It is always good to move through transitions, coming out the other side stronger and more mature.

All citations can be found in **A New Page of Talmud**