

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Chukas 5784

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Hashem gives instruction to Moshe and Aharon.

זאת תקת התורה אשר-צוה ה לאמר דבר | אל-בני ישראל ויקחו אליה פרה אדמה תמימה אשר
אין-בה מום אשר לא-עלה עליה על:

“This is the statute body of law that Hashem commanded saying, ‘Speak to Bnei Yisroel, and they shall take to you a red cow, purely healthy that has no blemish, that upon it went no yoke.’” (Bamidbar 19:2).

If the pasuk before said “Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aharon” (ibid 19:1), why did this pasuk then say “that Hashem commanded?” Who else would have commanded? Is there something special about “chukas Hatorah?” When was this instruction given?

Parshas Chukas has a time lapse in it. Almost the entire parsha from 20:1 to its end at 22:1 takes place in the final months before kivush Eretz Yisroel. This one segment about the red cow and purity laws for those mekabel tumas meis (became ritually unclean by touching or being under the same roof as a human corpse) begins the parsha. That is the only part that was not given in that later timeline. The laws about ritually purity were given thirty-eight years earlier.

The people had to know the laws of purity in regards to touching or being under the same roof (tent) as a corpse. Aharon’s sons died and his first cousins – Mishael and Eltzaphan, became tameh by carrying out their bodies (Vayikra 10:5). Then there were those that that became tameh in order to take care of those that died in the plague after the Molten Calf (Shmos 32:35), the man who carried on Shabbos and was stoned (Bamidbar 15:36), those that died with the rebellious scouts (ibid 17:14) – and note that Korach and his inner circle were swallowed in the ground and the two-hundred fifty scouts and their company were burned by fire, so they did not require anyone to become tameh for them – and the blasphemer (Vayikra 24:23). All of these people’s kins had to know the laws of corpse tumeh. As did those watching over the mummy of Yosef.

Specifically, ויהי אנשים אשר היו טמאים לגופש אדם ולא-יכלו לעשות-הפסח ביום ההוא ויקרבו לפני משה ויהיו: “And there were people that were ritually impure from the soul of man, and they could not make the Korban Pesach on that day, and they came close before Moshe and before Aharon on that day.” (Bamidbar 9:6). There were certain people that were *tameh meis* (corpse impurity) as that second Pesach approached. The Mishkan was up, it was being dedicated and inaugurated, and they were in a tameh status. They would not be able to bring that first Korban Pesach (and only one) in the wilderness. They came to inquire of Moshe and Aharon of what they should do. The Torah continues.

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֲלֵהֶם מִשָּׁה עֲמְדוּ וְאַשְׁמְעָה מִה-יְצַוָּה יְהוָה לָכֶם: “And Moshe said to them, stand by and listen to what Hashem will command you.” (Ibid 9:8). The answer then appears to be “Speak to Bnei Yisroel saying, ‘When an individual person finds himself in a status of

corpse impurity...and they would make a Pesach to Hashem, they shall offer it in the second month..." (Ibid 9:10-11). Something about the order of those pesukim does not make sense. The instruction and reminder about Korban Pesach were given to Moshe – and there is no reason to think Moshe delayed in relaying the instruction – on the first day of the first month of the second year. (Ibid 9:1). Sure, it was a busy time with Moshe assembling the Mishkan and then the twelve tribal leaders bringing their combined gifts and korbanos and then having to divide the spoils to the Leviim and then offering Shevet Yehuda's korban in the Mishkan. It was quite a day. However, certainly by the next day Moshe would have time to instruct Bnei Yisroel on the upcoming Korban Pesach obligation. That would give anyone who was corpse-tameh plenty of time to become ritually pure. That process took 7 days (ibid 19:12) and there would be thirteen days left to offer the Korban Pesach on the afternoon of the 14th. How does Pesach Sheini respond to those that were tameh on the first or second of that first month (Nisan)?

There is a break (פ) in the Torah immediately after the question about what the people who were *tameh meis* should do and Moshe telling them to wait for a response. (Ibid 9:9). The instructions about Pesach Sheini begins only after that break and commences with "Speak to Bnei Yisroel..." That appears to be new instruction given at a different time. It does not appear to be Hashem answering Moshe and Aharon. It would have said, "So Hashem answered Moshe and Aharon, saying..." or something to that effect. Those two segments: Korban Pesach and Pesach Sheini are next to each other, but are separated by a break on purpose.

The answer to the question about *tameh meis* is actually our pasuk. "And Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aharon, saying." (Ibid 19:1). The people asked both Moshe and Aharon (Vayikra 9:6) so Hashem instructed both Moshe and Aharon. Further, "This is the statute body of laws that Hashem commanded, saying." (Bamidbar 19:2). In other words, this is the answer to tell Bnei Yisroel who may be *tameh meis*. This is the statute, the body of law, of how to become pure again after corpse-impurity. The Pesach Sheini instruction, however, was given after Pesach to those who were unable to make the Korban Pesach in the correct time.

Why are these laws here and not after the inquiry by the people? They were likely saved for here because it was a special avodah given to Eliezer (Ibid 19:3) who was going to take over as Kohen Gadol. Also, immediately after this segment, the Torah talks about Miriam's and then Aharon's passing. It wanted to start those segments with special mitzvos and not to be purely about bad news. It also follows the laws of tithes given to Kohanim and Leviim, the laws that Yisraelim should not wander into the Mishkan, about the Leviim serving in the Mishkan, and it's at the conclusion of the Torah writing about the death of that entire generation. Purity laws allow entrance to the Mishkan.

זאת תקנת התורה "This is the statute, body of laws" is used one other time. That is when giving instruction to those that fought enemies and came back from war with corpse-tameh. (Ibid 31:21). The body of law of ritual purity applied to them, too. (Ibid 31:24). Eliezer gave that instruction, as well, another tie to the laws given here.