

Moshe has finished his instructions.

וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת־הַדָּבָרִים הָאֲלֵה אֶל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל:

“And Moshe went and he spoke these words to all Yisroel.” (Devarim 31:1).

What is the meaning of “Moshe went?” What can be learned from the two “es” in the pasuk?

The Torah uses anthropomorphic terminology to describe Hashem and His conduct as a way of humans being able to understand Him. Hashem has a breath. (Bereishis 1:2). Har Sinai is described to be under Hashem’s feet. (Shmos 24:10). Hashem used His hand (ibid 9:3) and outstretched arm (ibid 6:1) to save Bnei Yisroel from Mitzrayim. Hashem is described to have eyes. (Devarim 11:12). Hashem’s face is not to be seen. (Ibid 31:17). And Hashem’s countenance forgives (Shmos 34:6) and blesses (Bamidbar 6:26) His people. Hashem is also described as “conversing” with other heavenly beings in an ethereal court. (Bereishis 1:26).

Moshe also uses deictic imperatives to the people in order for them to understand that they must follow the Torah. Moshe tells the people to see: “See that I have placed before you today the Blessing and the Curse.” (Devarim 11:26). Also, the Torah says, “You were shown that so that you may know.” (Ibid 4:35). Moshe adjures the people to “Hear O’ Yisroel, the statutes and ordinances...” (Ibid 5:1). “Hear O’ Yisroel, Hashem, our Lord, Hashem is one.” (Ibid 6:4). Moshe also references smell in “Idols...that do not smell with their noses.” (Ibid 4:28). He also references taste. “You will eat, be satisfied, and grow fat in the Land.” (Ibid 8:10). Moshe tells the people to touch, or at least, take action with their bodies. “You shall keep the commandments to do them.” (Ibid 7:11).

Moshe tells them to love Hashem. “And you shall love Hashem.” (Ibid 6:5). Moshe also tells Bnei Yisroel, “And now, Yisroel, what does Hashem, your Lord, ask from you because with fear of Hashem, your Lord, you are to walk in His ways.” (Ibid 10:12). This references time (now), fear, and walking. Moshe also indicates that the Torah is not hard to keep. “See, I have placed before you life and good.” (Ibid 30:15). “You shall love Hashem, your Lord, to walk in His ways, and guard His commandments, statutes, and ordinances.” (Ibid 30:16). Moshe assures the people that the Torah is not concealed from them nor is it far away. (Ibid 30:11). Here, he also references distance.

Having exhausted his teaching to Bnei Yisroel his job was all but completed. His task left was to charge Yehoshua to take over (ibid 31:7), write down Hashem’s final poem to him (ibid 31:19), and to bless the people (ibid 33:1). Moshe then “went.” (Ibid 31:1).

אֶלָּה הַדָּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֵבֶר הַירָּאָה “These are the matters that Moshe spoke to all Yisroel on the Transjordan.” (Ibid 1:1). Sefer Devarim does not start with a vav. It is not a direct connection to the narrative of Sefer Bamidbar. Of course, it follows

and Moshe reiterates the entire episodes of Shmos to the end of Bamidbar in his discourses. However, the Sefer is meant to be something different than just following the previous narrative. It is Moshe's final instructions around the time Hashem told Moshe he was going to be buried in the wilderness (Bamidbar 31:2). There, Hashem told Moshe, "Bnei Yisroel shall surely take revenge against the Midianites. Afterwards, you will be gathered to your people." (Ibid). However, while revenge was taken, (ibid 31:8), further instruction followed (ibid 33:2), and he also fielded questions (ibid 32:2). It seems that only after that did Moshe give his dissertation of Sefer Devarim.

It could be that the revenge against Midyan happened after the other events. It can also be that "gathering up" to his people meant that Moshe had to finish his worldly business first. This included giving his final instructions to Bnei Yisroel. The term "And Moshe went" means he moved on from his previous mission as leader to his final mission. He completed his teaching and exhortations.

Going in the Torah means moving from a previous position or status to a new one. Avram was the first to famously go. (Bereishis 12:4). He went from Charan to Eretz Canaan after Hashem instructed him to go. He went from his old life and walked to a new one. "And Balaam got up and he went and he resided in his place. And also, Balak went on his way." (Bamidbar 24:25). Balaam learned his lesson from his failures and his inability to do anything that Hashem did not allow him to do. However, he settled in his place. He returned right back to where he started. The lesson did not stick. Balak also got up and also went. However, he went on his way. He walked in the ways of Hashem. He did teshuva. That is why Balaam was punished and revenged but Balak was not.

Moshe also got up and went. This occurred when he received instruction from Hashem that everyone should move away from the Korach and Dasan camp. (Ibid 16:25). He went to Dasan and Aviram. Moshe got up from before Hashem and he went to go placate to Dasan and Aviram. He did not bother with Korach or the ten Scouts. They were leaders and foregone. He did not think Dasan and Aviram had enough skin in the game, so he went in order to get them to repent.

Moshe finished his final tasks and went. Sefer Devarim begins, "These are the matters that Moshe spoke to all of Yisroel." His instruction ends. The narrative of the Torah picks up back from Hashem telling Moshe that he is to avenge Bnei Yisroel and then be gathered up. The Torah is saying, "And Moshe went, and spoke all these matters to all of Yisroel." The two "es" in the pasuk means all of the Torah, not just a specific portion. It is also to all of Yisroel, not just those standing in front of him, but all future Yisroel, too. He went from being Moshe the leader to Moshe the one that is about to be gathered up to his people. He did not refuse Hashem nor shirk away. He boldly went from leader to teacher and finished his job. There is hardly a bigger blessing than being able to finish one's tachlis, duty, while still on this world. Moshe went and did it. When he did so, and when anyone walks the right path, it is also walking in the ways of Hashem.

Have a Gmar Chasima Tova.