



Understanding the Parsha

B'midbar 10:35-36

We will Learn how to

- 1) **interpret the main theme** (subject) of a **Parsha** (weekly reading from the Torah),
- 2) **make thematic connections to that Parsha** (study the Scriptures related by a common theme [subject], line upon line and precept upon precept)
- 3) **learn how to gain greater understanding of the Parsha we are looking at through its thematic connections to other portions of Scripture.**

Three Books in One?

Read Numbers 10:35-36.

35 *So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said: "Rise up, O LORD! Let Your enemies be scattered, And let those who hate You flee before You."* 36 *And when it rested, he said: "Return, O LORD, To the many thousands of Israel (Numbers 10:35-36)."*

This is a very unique passage in the Torah. You may not know this, but Hebrew basically has no punctuation marks. For the most part, the text just continues to unfold, letter after letter, line after line. The only major interruptions are the Parsha breaks. Also, every once in a while some letters are unusually larger or smaller than the normal text. Every kosher (that which is clean according to Adonai's commandments) Torah scroll has been copied **perfectly since the first scroll penned by Moses**; we can see that Adonai purposely placed, these few anomalies inside the text. They are there because of thematic considerations. As a believer in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob you will need to develop an appreciation for the beauty and wisdom of the Hebrew text. As you learn more, you will begin to realize that most Chris-

tian sources do not study the Scriptures using Hebraic resources. So, they do not get a FULL understanding of what Adonai is speaking to us. Please remember to pray that more will have their eyes opened, especially Pastors and teachers.

Numbers 10:35-36 is particularly unique because of a unique set of markers that set it apart from the rest of the text. If you have a Chumash, please look at the passage. You will see that **Numbers 10:35-36** is set apart from the rest of the text by two inverted nuns (the Hebrew letter **nun** ך is equivalent to our letter **n**). In the Hebrew text, it's impossible to miss it! But what do they mean? Why did Adonai inspire this section of text to be set apart from the rest of the text? Right now, the only answer I can give you is the same answer used by the sages of Israel.

The Talmud, Shabbos 115b-116a refers to these two verses as **a separate book!** That's right. The sages of Israel felt that these two verses were set apart by Adonai to indicate that they have a complete message all by themselves! If this is true, then the book of Numbers would actually consist of three books.

Book 1 would be Numbers 1-10:34
Book 2 would be Numbers 10:35-36
Book 3 would be Numbers 11:1-36:13

This would make a total of seven books of the Torah instead of only five. Interesting, isn't it. How did they come to this conclusion? It's based on an application of Proverbs 9:1.

"Wisdom has built herself a house; she has carved her seven pillars."



The Torah is seen as the ultimate wisdom. Therefore, the Torah should have "seven pillars." By making Numbers 10:35-36 a book in itself, we then have seven total books of the Torah. The sages of Israel felt that the many layered messages of Numbers 10:35-36 was so powerful that it deserved to be a book in its own right!

Numbers 10:35b—What is the key event in this passage?

The key event in this passage is the going forth of the A ark.

We know the ark represents Adonai's throne where He dwells between the cherubim. The lifting of the ark is a picture of Adonai lifting Himself to go before Am Yisrael.

Where has the Torah mentioned Adonai going before Am Yisrael? Read the following passages, which state that Adonai will go before Am Yisrael

Exodus 23:20, Exodus 23:23, Exodus 23:27, Exodus 23:28, Exodus 23:29, Exodus 23:30. What does most of these verses say that the reason Adonai went before them?

To destroy their e enemies.

This is exactly what Moses prayed in Numbers 10:35b. In other words, the main theme is warfare.

In Parashat Naso (our last study) we introduced the theme of warfare. The Haftarah portion was about the life of Sampson. What was one of the main ways Adonai repeatedly used Sampson?

He repeatedly used Sampson as His instrument of wrath against the e enemies of Am Yisrael (the people of Israel), in this story, it was the Philistines.

Thematically, Sampson was used by Adonai as a warrior, defending Am Yisrael from their enemies. Let's go back to the garden. Remember the promise Adonai made to Adam and Chava (Eve) concerning her seed? In **Genesis 3:14-15** Adonai promised them that the seed of the woman would one day crush hasatan's head. In fact, we know that this viewpoint of warfare has been present throughout the covenants Adonai made with the Patriarchs and Am Yisrael. In Genesis 22:17, Adonai promises to Abraham that his descendants will possess the gate of their enemies. And when was this to happen? **It's about to happen now.** Now it's time for Am Yisrael to enter a new phase of the covenant with Abraham—

the **sphere of warfare**. In view of this new dimension of the covenant, Moses prays that Adonai would rise up, go before them and destroy their enemies, making good on the promise to Abraham (Genesis 22:17). Putting this all together, the theme captured by Numbers 10:35b is **warfare!** In order for Am Yisrael to be successful in warfare, **they need Adonai to RISE UP and destroy their enemies!**

Now let's look at Numbers 10:36.

1. And when it rested, he said: "Return, O LORD, To the many thousands of Israel.
2. And when it rested, he said: "Return, O LORD, the many thousands of Israel.
3. Rest O Lord amongst the myriads of Israel.

The first interpretation (for Adonai to return) seems to focus on the wilderness experience. After Adonai has gone before Am Yisrael to destroy their enemies, Moses then called for Him to return to them.

The second and third interpretations have been given a prophetic interpretation, such that they apply to all generations.

We learned that Numbers 10:35-36 is about the theme of warfare. Now let's see how important the placement of this passage is inside the book of Numbers.

Read Numbers 1:3. What seems to be the reason for numbering Am Yisrael?

They are establishing an א למנין.

Look over Numbers 2. What seems to be the reason for the requirements of the encampments of the tribes?

They are positioning themselves in an orderly grouping of troops, in the manner of an א למנין.

As you can see, this theme of warfare has become a powerful theme. Why? Because, **Am Yisrael are about to march to the Promised Land to inherit it.** However, there's one small problem. The inhabitants are still in the land! They will have to be destroyed before Am Yisrael can inherit the land. Although this has always been the plan (Genesis 14:16), it is only now that Am Yisrael are ready to go and possess the land.

Why were the priests numbered and assigned their tasks in Parashat Naso?

They were given responsibilities for how to † למשכן the Mishkan (Tabernacle).

From what we have just learned, if we were to determine a theme for Numbers 1-10:34 write what you think it would probably be,

If you have been following along, you may have written something like: "Preparation to Journey to the Promised Land." The preparations included the creation of an army and the commandments of responsibilities for **transporting the Mishkan**.

Read Numbers 10:33-11:3. What major development has happened during these verses?

Am Yisrael have started the journey from M הר סיני Mount Sinai to the P ארץ כנען Land of Canaan the Promised Land !



That's right. Until this point, Am Yisrael have been encamped near Mount Sinai. Now, they have actually begun their journey to the Promised Land! This is a major thematic event in the ongoing story of the redemption of the nation of Israel. If you were to read Numbers 11-26 straight through, you would see that it reports the journeys of the generation that left Egypt as they made their way towards the Promised Land.

Now we know were to place Numbers 10:35-36.

From Numbers 1-10:34 the general theme is Preparation to Journey to the Promised Land.

From Numbers 11 on, the general theme is The Journey to the Promised Land.

Therefore, Numbers 10:35-36 sits right in the middle of these two thematic shifts!

Looking Ahead—If you were to read Numbers 11-26 you would see that the story moves from one crushing defeat to another. Beginning in Numbers 11, it's not difficult to notice that almost every event in Israel's journey is characterized by rebellion and disaster! Story after story reveals to us that Am Yisrael refused to do what was necessary to actually go in and take the Land. Although the nation made many mistakes during the periods of the Exodus and **Matan Torah** (the giving of the Torah), through Adonai's grace, and self-restraint they were able to recover and fulfill His will.

Until Numbers 11, Am Yisrael have seen Adonai's mighty hand of deliverance, received the Torah at Mount Sinai and received the Shekhinah to dwell among them in the Mishkan. Then, once it was time to actually go and take the Land by military conquest, the people stumble beyond recovery, doomed to perish in the wilderness. What happened? What went wrong? I will save that discussion for next week. For now, I want you to see the great transition that has occurred right at Numbers 10:35-36. Before that passage, Am Yisrael are riding high. Afterwards, they sink to the depths of rejection! These thematic considerations are the reasons why the sages of Israel place so much emphasis on Numbers 10:35-36. These verses form a buffer between two extremes found within the book of Numbers.

So why is Numbers 10:35-36 so important? How is Exodus 23:20-27 thematically connected to Numbers 10:35-36?

Exodus 23:20-27 records the promise of h _{מוי} Adonai will bring Am Yisrael into the land. Numbers 10:35-36 records

h _{מוי} that promise was supposed to be fulfilled.

The passage in Exodus 23 shows us what should have happened—Adonai's original plan. It represents the perfect scenario. Had Am Yisrael not rebelled, the calling on Adonai in Numbers 10:35-36 would have caused a fulfillment of Exodus 23:20-27 to happen. Conquest of the Promised Land should have been a piece of cake! Instead, Numbers 11 begins to describe the tragic reasons why that generation was doomed to die in the wilderness.

Can you find the words from this Parsha?

B N U M B E R S G N C A
 E U M U R A T E R R O D
 R S A R K M N S A U R O
 E O Q B A A A O P T P N
 T I E Y E N E M I E S A
 T N S V N R I L S R S I
 A H I T W V S O L A T A
 C H R B Y I S R A E L D
 S A A H K T O L A A B B



BHAALOTKHA
 NUMBERS
 ARK
 ENEMIES
 MOSES
 ARISE
 ADONAI
 RETURN
 YISRAEL
 SCATTERED 4