

VA'EIRA

14th of 54 sedras;

2nd of 11 in Sh'mot



Written on 221.8 lines; ranks 16th

16 parshiot; 8 open, 8 closed

121 p'sukim - ranks 20th (4th)

1748 words - ranks 15th (3rd)

6701 letters - ranks 17th (3rd)

P'sukim are above average in length

MITZVOT

No mitzvot are counted from Va'eira.

The past 18 sedras (Nitzavim thru

Va'eira) - that's one third of all the sedras - have a total of 5 mitzvot.

That will be changing next week.

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.



Va'eira has the classic examples of incorrect accenting which changes the meaning of the word. I refer to the Terms of Redemption:

v'ho-tzei-TI, v'hi-tzal-TI, v'ga-al-TI, v'la-kach-TI, v'hei-vei-TI (but not v'ho-TZEI-ti, etc.)

Each of these words (and many others in Torah, Nach, and davening) is a verb in past tense form that is switched to future tense by the VAV HAHIPUCH.

v'ho-TZEI-ti would mean 'and I took you out'. Not what the Torah is saying. When G-d told Moshe to say that to the people in His name, it hadn't happened yet.

v'ho-tzei-TI means '(and) I will take you out.' So too for the other L'shonot of Geula.

If these words are misaccented by the BK (baal korei or baal k'ri'a), he is supposed to repeat the p'sukim with the correct accents (MILRA rather than MIL'EIL).

However, correcting a BK can confuse him or annoy him, etc. It might be a good idea to go to your BK before Layning and point out the need to accent these words on the last syllable.

In the Sh'ma, we find several words commonly misaccented (especially by native English speakers): v'a-hav-TA, v'di-bar-TA, v'na-ta-TI... to name a few.

To be clear: Saying v'a-HAV-ta in Sh'ma distorts the meaning of the pasuk and raises a doubt on the validity of the fulfillment of the

mitzva. Thankfully, one gets away with careless pronunciation, according to some authorities. But it is very important to say the Sh'ma and all of davening properly and with good kavana.

Kohen - First Aliya - 12 p'sukim - 6:2-13

A long SDT: (A term just like front back-axle.) The two most common names of G-d in the Torah are E-LO-HIM and A-DO-NAI (as an act of respect for G-d's sacred names, these two are generally pronounced ELOKIM and HASHEM respectively, when referred to other than in prayer or Torah reading). ELOKIM is usually considered to be G-d's name of strict judgment, whereas HASHEM carries the connotation of Divine Mercy (and other meanings). Notice that in the accounts of Egyptian oppression, the predominant name of G-d is Elokim (especially in 2:23-25).

Exile is certainly associated with the stricter side of G-d's treatment of His People. If the quality of mercy were dominant, we would be redeemed and restored to our Land - or perhaps we would acclimate too well to conditions and lose our yearning for redemption. (See what has happened in modern times when exile is accompanied by G-d's MIDAT HARACHAMIM and Jews are quite comfortable, and potentially, compla-

cent - a regrettable state of affairs. Comfortable is not bad; complacent is - it means "contented to a fault".)

In the opening pasuk of this week's sedra, we find the unusual combination of both names of HaShem. It is ELOKIM Who speaks to Moshe, G-d Who has judged and treated the People strictly and harshly. And G-d Who is also speaking harshly to Moshe for his outburst at the end of Parshat Sh'mot - why did you make it worse for the people... However, His message to Moshe is "I am HASHEM" (which comes with VAYOMER, the softer "say", rather than VAIDABEIR, the harsher "speak" which began the pasuk). And His words of hope and promise to the People begin with the same declaration, "I Am HASHEM." In this context, we are told that G-d will take the People out of Egypt, save them, redeem them, take them unto Him, be our G-d and then bring us into - and give us - the Promised Land. These stages of redemption are summed up with the reiteration of the statement, "I Am HaShem." It is as if G-d is saying to the down-hearted People: "until now you've experienced Me as ELOKIM, but rest assured that you will now see Me as HASHEM - the G-d of Mercy - in full measure. The Egyptians on the other hand are being punished by the hand of G-d as ELOKIM (see 5:15).

[S> 6:2 (8)] The sedra begins with G-d speaking to Moshe Rabeinu and telling

him of the promises He had made to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Also, G-d tells Moshe that He has heard and is responding to the cries of the People of Israel.

Therefore, G-d will take the People out from under Egyptian oppression, will save them from bondage, and will redeem them with His might. He will then take the People to Him as a Nation and be our G-d. He will then bring us into Eretz Yisrael.

Moshe relates this to the People, who are too exhausted from their labors to listen.

[P> 6:10 (3)] G-d then tells Moshe to go to Par'o and demand the People's release. Moshe questions how Par'o can be expected to listen, if the People (Moshe's own people) themselves didn't listen to him.

SDT: Moshe's KAL VACHOMER is interesting. Moshe blamed himself for the people not listening to him - because I have a speech impediment (or something to that effect). If this is so, then the KAL VACHOMER works. If my own brethren didn't listen to me, how am I to expect Par'o to listen. But the Torah tells us the reason the people didn't listen - they were exhausted and oppressed. If that is so, then the KAL VACHOMER doesn't hold up. That's not a reason why Par'o wouldn't listen.

Aside from the validity (or otherwise) of the KAL VACHOMER, there is an

interesting lesson that we can learn from Moshe (one of many, many, many, many...). There was a poor communication between a leader and his people. And this leader took the blame to himself. Parent-child communication? Don't jump to find fault (only) with the child - he's not respectful; he's difficult to deal with; he's not tuned in... Rather examine yourself as the parent, first. Did you say something harshly when it could have been said softly? Were you clear in what you wanted from the child? Was your request fair or unreasonable? Same thing for teacher-student situation. The kids are dumb; they don't pay enough attention... No, rather ask yourself as the teacher - was I clear? Was I understandable? Did I explain things well? Was I receptive to questions? Did I handle them well?

Yes, it isn't always that simple - sometimes (often) the problem is on both sides. But we should learn from Moshe Rabeinu to examine ourselves first before we look to blame the other.

[P> 6:13 (1)] (Over Moshe's objections, so to speak,) G-d reiterates to Moshe and Aharon, that they are to tell the People as well as Par'o that the People will be leaving Egypt.

Note that this last pasuk of the first Aliya is one whole parsha. Single-pasuk parshiyot seem to say, LOOK AT ME a little harder and understand

some special point. Perhaps, G-d is saying to Moshe - all your hesitations and protestations aside, it is time for TACHLIS. You and Aharon are going to tell/command the people and Par'o about leaving Egypt. Period (a.k.a. full-stop).

Levi - Second Aliya - 15 p'sukim - 6:14-28

[S> 6:14 (15)] The Torah begins to enumerate the names of the tribes and family groups. It is obvious that the intention here is not to review the whole of the nation, but rather to focus on Moshe & Aharon. The Torah starts the list with Reuven and Shimon, and when it gets to Levi, there is much more detail. In this brief section, we meet many of the main personalities of the rest of the Torah. The Torah is also giving us the ability to continue to draw the timeline of Jewish history, by giving us the ages at death of Levi (we already know the ages of the previous generation - Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov), his son Kehat, and Kehat's son, Amram. That brings us to Moshe and Aharon. We are also introduced to Korach and his sons and Aharon and his family.

SDT: On the Torah's HU AHARON UMOSHE, Rashi points out that sometimes (Ed. 34 times) Moshe is mentioned first, and sometimes Aharon is mentioned first (Ed. 4 times in Tanach), to teach us that they were equals. (On some levels, but on

others, Moshe Rabeinu was obviously on a higher level.)

Shlishi - Third Aliya - 9 p'sukim - 6:29-7:7

[S> 6:29 (2)] After the "digression" of the previous passage, the Torah now repeats that G-d is sending Moshe to Par'o and that Moshe continues to "object" because of his speech impediment. (But this time, the fact that the people didn't listen is not mentioned.)

Rashi says that G-d did not repeat the command, nor did Moshe repeat his objection. The Torah is putting us back where we left off before the genealogical data were presented.

[P> 7:1 (7)] G-d tells Moshe that Aharon will do the talking, that Par'o will refuse the repeated requests to free the People, and that He (G-d) will take His people out, and that it will be clear to Egypt (and everyone else) that it is indeed G-d Who is doing everything. Moshe and Aharon do as G-d instructs them; they are 80 and 83 years old respectively.

Observation When the Torah is specific about ages, it usually is meant to give us an accurate way of constructing a timeline. Perhaps too, in this case, the Torah is pointing out something that we saw very often in the book of B'reishit - namely, the prominence of the younger brother over the older one. (But - this time - without the jealousy or its problems.)

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 28 p'sukim - 7:8-8:6

[P> 7:8 (6)] G-d tells Moshe and Aharon, that when Par'o asks for a sign, Moshe shall tell Aharon to throw down the Staff before Par'o (and) it will turn into a TANIN. Moshe and Aharon appear before Par'o and do as G-d has told them.

WHAT'S A TANIN? Rashi says that TANIN is NACHASH, i.e. snake or serpent. Not everyone sees it that way. When G-d first had Moshe throw his staff down, it changed into a NACHASH, a snake. Remember that the snake was also a rebuke by G-d of Moshe for the way he spoke about the People.

Now with Par'o, it changed into a TANIN. Strong possibility is that we are talking about a crocodile (a fellow reptile to the snake), venerated and worshiped by Egypt. Many Pharaohs identified with the crocodile as the king of the Nile, which makes the crocodile a great choice for this sign.

SDT: Baal HaTurim points out that the pasuk says: G-d says to Moshe that when Par'o will ask for a sign, you (Moshe) shall tell Aharon to take your staff and throw it (on the ground) in front of Par'o; it shall become a TANIN. It didn't say: AND it will become a Tanin. He explains that the staff was thrown down and then he was to command it to become a

TANIN. And that's what happened, to show Par'o the power of speech that G-d has given to Moshe. In other words, the staff did not change upon being thrown down. It changed by a spoken command. That carries a pointed message to Par'o that his wizards aren't even in the same league with Moshe and Aharon.

Par'o calls his wizards who are able to duplicate (sort of) what Aharon does; however, Aharon's staff (note: not his TANIN - his staff) swallows those of the wizards. Nonetheless, Par'o refuses to listen to Moshe and Aharon, as G-d had said.

[S> 7:14 (5)] G-d then instructs Moshe to go to the river (the Nile) in the morning, where Par'o will be, and to bring the Staff with him. Moshe is to say to Par'o that G-d has sent me (Moshe) to tell you (Par'o) to release the People and you have refused until now. "With this will you know Who G-d is..." Moshe (actually Aharon) will be striking the water of the river, turning it to blood and killing all the fish in it.

[S> 7:19 (7)] Following the official warning to Par'o, G-d tells Moshe to tell Aharon to take the Staff and strike the waters of Egypt. Moshe and Aharon do as instructed and the waters turn to blood, the fish die, and the Egyptians cannot drink the water. Par'o's wizards again duplicate what was done, causing Par'o to remain stubborn. Egyptians are forced to dig

for water (and/or buy water from the Israelites). This first plague lasts 7 days.

[P> 7:26 (15)] G-d next instructs Moshe to go to Par'o (at his palace) and warn him that if he does not let the People go, Egypt will be smitten by a plague of frogs. Aharon is to raise the Staff above the river, which he does, and the land is blanketed by frog(s). The wizards are again able to replicate this plague with their magical powers (not that they needed more frogs). Par'o calls to Moshe and Aharon to pray to G-d that the frogs be removed, promising that he will let the People go into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to G-d. Moshe asks Par'o when he wants the frogs to leave. (A strange question, to which Par'o gives a stranger answer). Par'o says "tomorrow", to which Moshe responds "so be it. And that will serve as proof of G-d's powers".

SDT: Why would Par'o ask for the plague to be withdrawn on the following day? He and his people were certainly suffering and would want to rid themselves of the frogs as soon as possible. Par'o (still refusing to see the plagues as Divine, and assuming that there was some natural explanation for them) figured that Moshe came before him when he (Moshe) knew that the frogs would leave. Moshe would give the impression that he (in the name of the G-d of Israel) had power over the frogs. So Par'o tried to trick Moshe by asking the

unexpected - do it tomorrow. Moshe's answer was that doing so would demonstrate that it was truly G-d's power that was being observed.

Egypt saw itself as great because of the Nile and because of the fertile land created by the waters of the Nile. The first plague smote the water. The second was a plague that came from the river and attacked the land. The third smote the land itself.

Chamishi - 5th Aliya

- 12 p'sukim - 8:7-18

So it happens, and after the frogs are gone, Par'o reneges on his promise, as G-d had said he would (an oft-repeated phrase indicating G-d's active role in the events of the Exodus).

[S> 8:12 (4)] G-d tells Moshe to tell Aharon to strike the dust of the earth (no warning to Par'o this time). The resultant plague of lice was not able to be matched by the wizards, who acknowledge G-d's might. Par'o, however, remains stubborn.

[S> 8:16 (13)] G-d sends Moshe to warn Par'o about the next plague (swarms of insects or wild animals, depending upon which opinion you follow). New element with this fourth plague - the obvious contrast between Egypt and the Jews.

There was always a contrast between the Egyptians and the Jews - Egyptians had no water during the first

plague; the Jews had water. The Midrash even says that if a Jew and an Egyptian drank from the same cup, the Jew would be drinking water and the Egyptian would have blood.

Similarly, the Jews did not suffer the plagues and the Egyptians did. Yet it seems that G-d had different messages for each of the plagues. (Or each set of three plagues.) AROV was the first plague that the distinction between Goshen and the Jews on one hand, and the land of Egypt and the Egyptians on the other, was so sharp and obvious. (And that Par'o was well aware of the differences.)

Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 26 p'sukim - 8:19-9:16

And so the AROV descend upon the land. Par'o calls for Moshe and gives permission for the people to sacrifice to G-d in Egypt. Moshe says that it must be in the Midbar.

Par'o agrees on the condition that Moshe pray for the removal of the plague. Afterwards, Par'o reneges.

[P> 9:1 (7)] G-d next sends Moshe back to Par'o to repeat the demand for the People's release and to warn him of the consequence of his refusal this time - NEVER. And so it happens that the Egyptian livestock all die, with not a single loss to the Jews. Par'o checks this, yet he still remains stubborn.

[P> 9:8 (5)] The sixth plague (boils) is

brought upon Egypt without warning. Although his people are being seriously beaten, Par'o continues to resist (from this point on, with G-d's "help").

[S> 9:13 (9)] Moshe is next sent to warn about the seventh (and very powerful) plague.

SDT: In warning about HAIL, G-d says (through Moshe) that this time, I will send ALL my plagues... The Vilna Ga'on explains that G-d uses 3 main weapons, so to speak, to punish those who violate His commands - Fire, Water, and Wind. For example, to destroy Dor HaMabul, G-d used Water. To disperse Dor HaP'lagah, He used Wind, and to destroy S'dom, His main weapon was Fire. The plague of Blood used Water. Plague 6 was the burning Fire of Boils on the skin. The locust came on the Wind. But Hail consisted of the whole arsenal - the Hail itself was Water, it had Fire in it, and the Hail was accompanied by strong Wind - hence the phrase: All My plagues.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 19 p'sukim - 9:17-35

The threat/warning about hail continues. Never has hail like this been seen. There is also a challenge to the Egyptians in that G-d is allowing servants and animals to be saved by taking them indoors.

[P> 9:22 (14)] Moshe raises his hand

heavenward and the hail falls. It is extremely destructive, but some plants survive (because they were young and supple), as do the animals of those Egyptians who heeded Moshe's warning to bring them indoors. Par'o admits that he has sinned and grants Moshe's demands, if only the hail will stop. When Par'o sees that the hail and thunder have stopped, he yet again reneges, as G-d has said he would.

MAKOT to be continued next week -
Same time, same station...

Haftara - 23 p'sukim - Yechezkeil 28:25-29:21

The haftara begins with the prophecy of redemption (as does the sedra). The main connection to the sedra is that the haftara speaks of the downfall of Egypt, albeit at a different time in history. We also find in both the sedra and the haftara, the extreme arrogance of the Pharaoh. A pattern can definitely be seen. Egypt mighty, only to fall hard; Israel to be restored to its glory.