

מקראות גדולות

The

COMMENTATORS'
BIBLE

THE JPS MIQRA'OT GEDOLOT

LEVITICUS ויקרא

*With the 1917 and 1985 English translations of
The Jewish Publication Society TANAKH, the questions of Abarbanel,
the commentaries of Rashi, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, and Nahmanides,
and selections from the Masorah and from the commentaries of
Bekhor Shor, Kimhi, Hizkuni, Gersonides, Abarbanel, and Sforno*

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NJPS 25 The LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai: OJPS 25 And the LORD spoke unto Moses in mount Sinai,

RASHI 25:1 On Mount Sinai. What does the sabbatical year have to do with Mount Sinai? Were not all the commandments given there? But just as the overall commandment to let the land rest, as well as the details of the commandment, come to us from Sinai, so it is with all the other commandments. All of them, both in general and

in detail, were spoken at Sinai. So teaches the Sifra. But it seems to me that it should be explained this way: We do not find the commandment to let the land rest repeated in Deuteronomy, on the steppes of Moab, as the Israelites are about to enter the land. We therefore understand that all of its aspects, general and detailed, were given to Moses at Sinai. Since that is (nonetheless) explicitly stated here, we learn that every divine utterance

NAHMANIDES 25:1 The LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai. In my view Rashi's comment is completely wrong. There are many commandments that, like that of the sabbatical year, are not repeated on the steppes of Moab. So we know that the details of such commandments were given either at Sinai or in the Tent of Meeting. Moreover, from where does Rashi get that the sabbatical year, which was not repeated on the steppes of Moab, can be compared to the divine utterances that were repeated there? And what makes him think that they did not have just their general outlines given at Sinai, and their full details on the steppes? It would have been more logical to say that the commandments that were repeated in Moab were repeated specifically out of the necessity to add the details. In fact, what the Sifra says is quite clear: The general commandment to let the land rest every seven years was given at Sinai. "Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield; but in the seventh you shall let it rest and lie fallow" (Exod. 23:10-11). Here, the text adds that even the details were given at Sinai, though they are written in the Torah only here. When the very end of Leviticus states, "These are the commandments that the LORD gave Moses for the Israelite people on Mount Sinai" (27:34), that is the verse which compares all the other commandments to the sabbatical year, saying that they were given, in general and in detail, at Sinai. That is exactly how the Sifra explains it. The point of the repetition on the steppes of Moab was that Moses was commanded there to explain the Torah to the next generation. That appears to me to be what the Sifra means, and it is an absolutely top-notch explanation. Ibn Ezra thinks these chapters are part of the covenant made in Exodus 24, but I think they are written in their proper place. The Lord "spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai" when he went up there to get the second set of tablets. [A] The explanation is as follows: At the beginning of the first 40 days, those in which he was to get the original set of tablets, "Moses then wrote down all the commands of the LORD" (Exod. 24:4) and all "the rules" (Exod. 21:1) that were spoken there, and "dashed the blood on the people" (Exod. 24:8). When they sinned with the calf, that set of tablets was broken, and as far as the Holy One was concerned, it was as if that covenant was canceled. Note that when the Holy One reconciled with Moses and gave him the second set of tablets, He said, "I hereby make a covenant" (Exod. 34:10). At that point, the most important of the rules given in the original covenant were repeated, and the Lord said, "Write down these commandments, for in accordance with these commandments I make a covenant with you and with Israel" (Exod. 34:27). The Holy One wished to make the second covenant tougher, including all of the provisions of the original covenant and imposing it upon them with a set of curses against the violators. That is why the end of ch. 26 says, "These are the laws, rules, and instructions that the LORD established, through Moses on Mount Sinai, between Himself and the Israelite people" (26:46). That is, they are the same as the commandments given as part of the original covenant, in Exodus 21-23. As I mentioned, the sabbatical year is commanded there, in Exod. 23:10-11. Now, as part of this second covenant, all of its detailed regulations, as well as the punishments for violating it, are spoken.

The Torah is written in the following order: The making of the Tabernacle was commanded as part of the original covenant, which was abrogated before Moses even managed to give those instructions to the Israelites. When the covenant was renewed, Moses came down and "instructed them concerning all that the LORD had imparted to him on Mount Sinai" (Exod. 34:32), including the making of the Tabernacle. They joyfully accepted that task and went forth immediately to accomplish it. Immediately after the Tabernacle was set up, "The LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting" (1:1) to give him the commandments about the offerings and all of the rest of the commandments here in Leviticus. Moses immediately gave these commandments to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelite people. When he finished, he said, "The Lord commanded me on Mount Sinai to explain to you the sabbatical year and the jubilee, and to make a new covenant with you, bound by oath, on the basis of all of these commandments and regulations." He did not need to offer sacrifices and dash blood on the people now as he had in Exodus 24; they simply accepted the original covenant, now including the curses. That is the point of 26:46. See further my comment to Exod. 34:31. The covenant made on the steppes of Moab similarly affirmed the original covenant: "These are the terms of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to conclude with the

[A] See Exodus 24.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS 25:1 On Mount Sinai. Unlike the priestly matters of chs. 1-24, which were spoken in the Tent of Meeting/Tabernacle (to which they apply), chs. 25-27 were spoken on Mount Sinai. But because they do have some connection to the priests—obviously so in the assessments of ch. 27, but according to Num. 10:8, "The trumpets shall be blown by Aaron's sons," even in blowing the ram's horn—they were appended here (Bekhor Shor). They are written in the Torah only now because they look forward to the Israelites' entrance into the land. Nahmanides is quite right in explaining why the book of Leviticus is written in the order that it is. But there is no "new covenant" made in ch. 26; the original covenant made at Sinai lasts forever (Abarbanel). It is quite new to have the place where the commandment was given mentioned. Clearly Exod. 23:11 was accompanied by the fuller description given in our

כה וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי

ABARBANEL'S QUESTIONS ✦ Why are we suddenly told that the following commandments were given "on Mount Sinai" (v. 1)? Were not all the commandments given there?

RASHBAM 25:1 On Mount Sinai. Before the Tent of Meeting was set up. [A]

[A] See Rashbam's comment to Num. 1:1.

IBN EZRA 25:1 On Mount Sinai. The Torah is not written in chronological order. Chronologically, this section precedes the beginning of the book of Leviticus, where God "called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting" (1:1). This passage was spoken on Mount Sinai, after which the covenant was made (see Exod. 24:3-8); this is the covenant described in ch. 26. It is recorded at this point in the Torah to unite it with the other commandments of Leviticus on which their continued occupation of the land was conditioned. Just as failure to observe the regulations about sex would result in their being "spewed out" of the land, [A] so too ch. 26 says that failure

[A] See 18:28 and 20:22.

THE PENTATEUCH
and
RASHI'S COMMENTARY

A Linear Translation into English

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| and the man and his wife hid themselves | וַיִּתְחַבֵּא הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ | and they sewed together fig-leaves | וַיִּתְפָּרוּ עֲלֵה תְאֵנָה |
| from the presence of the Lord God | מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים | and made themselves aprons. | וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם חִגְרֹת: |
| amongst the tree(s) of the garden | בְּתוֹךְ עֵץ הַגָּן: | 8. And they heard | 8 וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ |
| 9. And the Lord God called | 9 וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים | the voice of the Lord God | אֶת-קוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים |
| unto the man | אֶל-הָאָדָם | walking in the garden | מִתְהַלֵּךְ בַּגָּן |
| and said unto him: | וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ | toward the cool of the day; | לְרוּחַ הַיּוֹם |

Rashi — רס"י

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| and our Rabbis have already arranged them | וּכְבָר סְדָרוּם רַבּוֹתֵינוּ | but they stripped [deprived] themselves of it (B. R.). | וַנִּתְעַרְטְלוּ הַיְמִנָה (ב"ר): |
| in their place in B.R., and in other Midrashim. | עַל מְכוּנָם בְּב"ר וּבִשְׂאֵר מִדְרָשׁוֹת | Fig-leaves | עֲלֵה תְאֵנָה. |
| I have come only | וְאֲנִי לֹא בָאתִי אֶלָּא | That is the tree of which they had eaten. | הוּא הָעֵץ שֶׁאָכְלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ. |
| [to teach] the plain meaning of the passage | לְפִשׁוּטוֹ שֶׁל מִקְרָא | By the very thing by which they were corrupted | בְּדָבָר שֶׁנִּתְקַלְקְלוּ בוֹ נִתְקְנוּ (סְנֵה' ע'). |
| and such Aggadah which sets forth the words of the Scripture | וְלֵאגְדָה הַמִּישֻׁבֶת דְּבַרֵי הַמִּקְרָא | were they rectified (Sanh. 70b); | אָכַל שְׂאֵר הָעֵצִים |
| each word in its proper way. | דְּבַר דְּבוּר עַל אָפְנוֹ: | but the other trees prevented them from taking their leaves. | מִנְעוּם מִלְטוֹל עֲלֵיהֶם וּמִפְּנֵי מָה |
| And they heard | וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ. | And why | לֹא נִתְפָּרְסָם הָעֵץ? |
| What did they hear? | מָה שָׁמְעוּ? | was the tree not identified? | שְׂאִין הַקֶּבֶ"ה הַפֶּץ לְהוֹנוֹת בְּרִיָּה, |
| They heard the sound of the Holy One Blessed Be He | שָׁמְעוּ אֶת קוֹל הַקֶּבֶ"ה | For the Holy One Blessed Be He does not wish | שֶׁלֹּא יִכְלִימוּהָ וַיֹּאמְרוּ: זֶהוּ שֶׁלְקָה הָעוֹלָם עַל יְדוֹ. |
| who was walking in the garden. | שֶׁהָיָה מִתְהַלֵּךְ בַּגָּן: | to grieve any creature; | מִדְרַשׁ רַבִּי תַנְחֻמָּא: 8 וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ. |
| Toward the cool of the day | לְרוּחַ הַיּוֹם. | that people should not shame her and say, | יֵשׁ מִדְרָשֵׁי אַגְדָּה רַבִּים, |
| In that direction [interpreting רוח as "direction" instead of "wind"] [towards] which the sun comes, and that is, the west. | לְאוֹתוֹ רוּחַ שֶׁהִשְׁמַשׁ בָּאָה לְשָׁם, וְזוֹ הִיא מִעַרְבֵיבֵית; | "This is the one through which the world was afflicted"; | |
| For towards evening the sun is in the west, | שֶׁלְפִנּוֹת עֶרֶב חֲמָה בְּמַעַרְב, | So in the Midrash of Rabbi Tanhuma. | |
| | | 8 And they heard | |
| | | There are many interpretations of the Aggadah | |