

Lesson 5 – Appointing Judges – 1:9-18

Objective:

1. To start thinking about structure: how each section fits in the whole.
2. To appreciate that Debarim is not a word for word repetition of the rest of Humash but rather a speech which uses historical events to deliver a message.
3. To understand that Judaism is both a nation and a religion and therefore requires many layers of leadership.
4. To develop the skill of comparing many parallel texts and find their similarities and differences.

Background:

Only four *pesukim* into Moshe's first speech, we already encounter a digression concerning the appointment of judges. This is the first major event that Moshe chooses to discuss. Why is it so important to this introduction? The answer may be found by comparing this story with Shemot 18 and Bemidbar 11. Ramban and Abarbanel address the contradictions between Debarim and Shemot but this lesson does not use their approach. Instead, we show that Debarim is a conflation of two stories concerning both the judicial leadership (Shemot) and the spiritual leadership (Bemidbar). Therefore Moshe here reminds Bnei Yisrael of being not only just but also holy.

This also serves as a good introduction to studying Torah in general. As Americans, we are brought up with a strong sense of social justice and morality. However, the secular world lacks the spiritual goal of having consciousness of God and living in a sanctified manner. We learn *humash* not only to know right and wrong, reward and punishment, but also to be inspired by the prophetic messages of the Torah.

Notes on Peshat:

9. בעת ההיא occurs frequently in Dt 1-11 (2:34, 3:4, 18) and usually introduces a tangent. Here too it interrupts the story of the journey from Horeb which only resumes in pasuk 19.

Activity: (2-3 periods)

1. Have students fill out this worksheet in small groups.

Worksheet for Debarim 1:9-18 - Appointing Judges	
1. What is this digression doing here? Why do you think it is important for Moshe to bring up this event? (Opinion question. There is no one right answer so just give it your best shot.)	_____
2. Moshe, in this final speech, reminds Bnei Yisrael of many incidents that happened before. Where are we told about the appointing of judges in the first four <i>sefarim</i> of the <i>humash</i> ? (If you don't know then just continue.)	_____
A. Read Debarim 1:6-18 and answer the following questions. Cite the <i>pasuk</i> in Debarim where you found the answer.	
3. When are the judges appointed? Before or after Matan Torah? _____	_____
4. Whose idea is it to appoint them? _____	_____
5. What are the qualifications to be a judge? _____	_____
B. Read Shemot 18:14-26 . For each question, cite the <i>pasuk</i> that proves your answer and compare with what it says in Debarim.	
6. When are the judges appointed? Before or after Matan Torah? _____	_____
7. Whose idea is it to appoint them? _____	_____
8. What are the qualifications to be a judge? _____	_____
9. What other similarities or differences do you notice between Shemot and Debarim? _____	_____
10. Can you give an explanation for any of the differences? Why would Moshe change the details of the story? _____	_____
C. Now look at Bemidbar 11:4-34 (especially 11-17) and answer the same questions as above.	
11. When are the judges appointed? Before or after Matan Torah? _____	_____
12. Whose idea is it to appoint them? _____	_____
13. What are the qualifications to be a judge? _____	_____
14. What other similarities or differences do you notice? _____	_____
15. Can you give an explanation for any of the differences? Why would Moshe change the details of the story? _____	_____
16. What is the difference between Shemot and Bemidbar. If Moshe already has a system of judges, why can't they help him with the Bemidbar complaints? _____	_____

[L05 Perek 1 - Judges - Worksheet.doc](#)

Answer Key:

1. Don't go into this at the beginning. The answer will become clear in the end. This question is first just so that we keep it in mind.
2. Shemot 18 and Bemidbar 11.
3. After – pasuk 6.
4. Seemingly Moshe's own idea but not mentioned explicitly – pasuk 13.
5. Intelligent, wise, and well-known (respected) – pasuk 13.
6. Before. Matan Torah is in next chapter. (This answer is according to order of chapters - Ramban, not according to Ibn Ezra.)
7. Yitro – pasuk 21.
8. Capable men, who fear God, trustworthy men who hate bribes – 21.
9. This question is only meant to encourage students who finish more quickly to continue analyzing. There are many other differences but they will not be addressed in this lesson.
10. Ramban and Abarbanel suggest possible explanations.
11. After – this story takes place while wandering the desert.
12. Hashem – pasuk 16.
13. Elders whom are known as elders and officers – pasuk 16.
14. see 9 above.
15. Rishonim don't compare this story with the others but see what students come up with.
16. Bemidbar leaders fulfill a different purpose than Shemot judges. Judges of Shemot teach the law and decide court cases. Elders in Bemidbar bring prophetic inspiration to the people. Debarim recalls the importance of both types of leadership.

This example also serves as a good example into the concept of “history” in Debarim. Notice how Moshe here joins together two separate incidents. The important point here is not to record the details of exactly what happened at each time but rather to summarize what is necessary to deliver this lesson about the importance of all kinds of leadership. Especially since Moshe is about to die, he reassures the people that they are in good hands.

Discussion: Are there any times when you feel holy? Are there times when you feel you want to grow spiritually? Who do you look to for spiritual leadership? In the absence of prophets today what can we do to find inspired guidance? (Learn the words of the prophets...like Debarim.)

Quiz:

במדבר יא	שמות יח	דברים א	
			When are the judges appointed – before or after מתן תורה?
			Whose idea is it to appoint them?
			What are the qualification to be a judge?

[L05 Perek 1 - Judges - Quiz.doc](#)