

HINDSIGHT IS 20:20

Rashi

Bemidbar 33.1-16

(1) אלה מסעי. למה נכתבו המסעות הללו, להודיע חסדיו של מקום, שאף על פי שגזר עליהם לטלטלם ולהניעם במדבר, לא תאמר שהיו נעים ומטלטלים ממסע למסע כל ארבעים שנה ולא היתה להם מנוחה, שהרי אין פאן אלא ארבעים ושתים מסעות, צא מהם י"ד שכלם היו בשנה ראשונה קודם גזרה, משנסעו מרעמסס עד שבאו לרתמה, שמשם נשתלחו מרגלים, שנאמר "ואחר נסעו העם מחצרות וגומר" (לעיל יב:טז), "שלח לך אנשים וגומר" (שם יג:ב), וכאן הוא אומר "ויסעו מחצרות ויחנו ברתמה" (להלן פסוק יח), למדת שהיא במדבר פארן. ועוד הוצא משם שמונה מסעות, שהיו לאחר מיתת אהרן מהר הקר עד ערבות מואב בשנת הארבעים, נמצא שכל שמונה ושלושים שנה לא נסעו אלא עשרים מסעות, זה מיסודו של רבי משה הדרשן. ורבי תנחומא דרש בו דרשה אחרת, משל למלך שהיה בנו חולה והולכו למקום רחוק לרפאתו. כיון שהיו חוזרין, התחיל אביו מונה כל המסעות. אמר לו, פאן ישננו, פאן הוקרנו, פאן חששת את ראשך וכו' (תנחומא ג): (4) ומצרים מקברים. טרודים באבלם:

Moreh Nevuchim 3:50

It is also necessary to note the following observations. The view we take of things described by others is different from the view we take of things seen by Us as eye-witnesses. For that which we see contains many details which are essential, and must be fully described. The reader of the description believes that it contains superfluous matter, or useless repetition, but if he

1 אלה מסעי בני ישראל אשר יצאו מארץ מצרים לצבאתם ביד משה ואהרן: 2 ויכתב משה את מוצאיהם למסעיהם על פי ד' ואלה מסעיהם למוצאיהם: 3 ויסעו מרעמסס בןודש הראשון בןומשה עשר יום לןודש הראשון מןמזרת הפסח יצאו בני ישראל ביד רמה לעיני כל מצרים: 4 ומצרים מקברים את אשר הפה ד' בהם כל בכור ובאלהיהם עשה ד' עפטים: 5 ויסעו בני ישראל מרעמסס ויזנו בספת: 6 ויסעו מספת ויזנו באתם אשר בקצה המדבר: 7 ויסעו מאתם וישב על פי הזויות אשר על פי עלל צפון ויזנו לפני מגדל: 8 ויסעו מפני הזויות ויעברו בתוף הים המדברה וילכו הרה שלשית ימים במדבר אתם ויזנו במרה: 9 ויסעו ממרה ויבאו אילמה ובאילם שיתים עשרה עינת מים ושבעים תמרים ויזנו שם: 10 ויסעו מאילם ויזנו על ים סוף: 11 ויסעו מים סוף ויזנו במדבר סין: 12 ויסעו במדבר סין ויזנו בדפקה: 13 ויסעו מדפקה ויזנו באלוש: 14 ויסעו מאלוש ויזנו ברפידם ולא היה שם מים לעם לשיתות: 15 ויסעו מרפידם ויזנו במדבר סיני: 16 ויסעו ממדבר סיני ויזנו בקברת התאוה: 17 ויסעו מקברת התאוה ויזנו בןוצרת:

adapted for the habitation of man," It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates, neither is there any water to drink" (Num. xx. 5): "A land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt" (Jer. ii. 6). [In reference to the stay of the Israelites in the wilderness], Scripture relates, "Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink" (Deut. xix. 5). All these miracles were wonderful, public, and witnessed by the people. But God knew that in future people might doubt the correctness of the account of these miracles. in the same manner as they doubt the accuracy of other narratives; they might think that the Israelites stayed in the wilderness in a place not far from inhabited land, where it was possible for man to live [in the ordinary way]; that it was like those deserts in which Arabs live at present; or that they dwelt in such places in which they could plow, sow, and reap, or live on some vegetable that was growing there; or that manna came always down in those places as an ordinary natural product; or that there were wells of water in those places. In order to remove all these doubts and to firmly establish the accuracy of the account of these miracles, Scripture enumerates all the stations, so that coming generations may see them, and learn the greatness of the miracle which enabled human beings to live in those places forty years.

had witnessed the event of which he reads, he would see the necessity of every part of the description. When we therefore notice narratives in the Torah, which are in no connexion with any of the commandments, we are inclined to think that they are entirely superfluous, or too lengthy, or contain repetitions; but this is only because we do not see the particular incidents which make those narratives noteworthy. Of this kind is the enumeration of the stations [of the Israelites in the wilderness] (Num. xxxiii.). At first sight it appears to be entirely useless; but in order to obviate such a notion Scripture says, "And Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys by the commandment of the Lord" (ibid. ver. 2). It was indeed most necessary that these should be written. For miracles are only convincing to those who witnessed them; whilst coming generations, who know them only from the account given by others, may consider them as untrue. But miracles cannot continue and last for all generations; it is even inconceivable [that they should be permanent]. Now the greatest of the miracles described in the Law is the stay of the Israelites in the wilderness for forty years, with a daily supply of manna. This wilderness, as described in Scripture, consisted of places" wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water" (Deut. viii. 115): places very remote from cultivated land, and naturally not

Numbers 33.1-16

1. These are the journeys of the people of Israel, which went forth out of the land of Egypt with their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron. 2. And Moses wrote their starting places according to their journeys by the commandment of the Lord; and these are their journeys according to their starting places. 3. And they departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the next day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with a high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians. 4. For the Egyptians buried all their firstborn, which the Lord had struck among them; upon their gods also the Lord executed judgments. 5. And the people of Israel moved from Rameses, and camped in Succoth. 6. And they departed from Succoth, and camped in Etham, which is in the edge of the wilderness. 7. And they moved from Etham, and turned back to Pihahiroth, which is before Baal-Zephon; and they camped before Migdol. 8. And they departed from before Pihahiroth, and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness, and went three days' journey in the wilderness of Etham, and camped in Marah. 9. And they moved from Marah, and came to Elim; and in Elim were twelve fountains of water, and seventy palm trees; and they camped there. 10. And they moved from Elim, and camped by the Red Sea. 11. And they moved from the Red Sea, and camped in the wilderness of Sin. 12. And they took their journey out of the wilderness of Sin, and camped in Dophkah. 13. And they departed from Dophkah, and camped in Alush. 14. And they moved from Alush, and camped in Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink. 15. And they departed from Rephidim, and camped in the wilderness of Sinai. 16. And they moved from the desert of Sinai, and camped in Kibroth-Hattaavah.