

SLOW FINISHES

by Nechama Stampler

Slow Finishes ¹

When a woman conceives and bears a male child...

Rashi: Rav Simla'i said, "In the same manner that Man's creation followed that of the animals, beasts and birds, so are his Torah-rules recorded after those of all the animals.

Gur Aryeh: Our parshah comes on the heels of a parallel section that details the rules that govern the animal kingdom. We would have expected something different. The Torah usually places the most important first. Shouldn't the laws that apply to Man's body precede those that deal with animal flesh? This is the question that moved Rashi to comment - and Rav Simla'i to provide his answer. The order of sections mirrors the chronicle of Creation, wherein Man's appearance must wait patiently until that of the lower creatures.

This does not seem persuasive. The reasons for Man's late-blooming role in the creation story do not apply to the order in which species-specific mitzvos are given. We are told that Man was created last in order to promote humility. Should Man become too full of himself, the creation story reminds him that he is a Johnny-come-lately; that the lowly gnat can claim pride of place relative to Man. Other reasons are also given. None of them would predict that the parshah of rules about Man should wait until after that of the various animals. (You might be tempted to argue that Rav Simla'i's point is simply stylistic. Having once - for good cause - placed the animals before Man, the Torah follows the same order elsewhere, even where this ordering does not make sense. Paying careful attention to Rav Simla'i's words, we see that this was not his intention. Had Rav Simla'i said that since Bereishis places Man in the last position, so does Vayikra, we would have been correct. But this is not what Rav Simla'i said. Rather, he spoke of Man of Vayikra tagging along after the animals "in the same manner" that he does in Bereishis. "In the same manner" - kesheim - implies that Vayikra and Bereishis share a common reason for the ordering of its subjects.

This is what Rav Simla'i means: The Torah of some thing is similar to its creation. Hashem's rules governing some thing are its ultimate tikun, its spiritual completion. If it was meant for Man to be created last, then his Torah should also come last.

This idea should not be unfamiliar to us. The Torah famously adds a heh - the direct article - to the sixth day, the day of Man's creation. Chazal tell us¹² that by speaking of "the" sixth day, the Torah

alludes to another sixth - the sixth of Sivan, on which the Torah was given at Sinai. The very process of creation was incomplete until the arrival of that day. This is not only because the world's existence was predicated upon Man's eventual practice of Torah, but because Torah spells out the proper conduct and use of all things. It is therefore an essential part of the existence of all things; it is the completion in principle of what had previously been created in form.

You might object that the topics within our parshah are then misordered. Chavah was created after Adam; the mitzvos that apply to women should have come last, rather than first, in our parshah.

This is not entirely true. According to Chazal ³, Man was first created with both masculine and feminine elements coexisting within one being. Male and female were therefore sourced in a single point of creation. Now that they have been separated, it makes sense to place the male mitzvos last. The male element represents tzurah - the communication of functional form and purpose - relative to the chomer - material and substance - represented by the female. The later maturation of males relative to females follows from the more advanced role represented by the male, consistent with the general finding that simpler means earlier, while complexity takes more time. The upshot of this is that the Torah of the woman ought to precede the Torah of the male, just as it does in our parshah.

One might still object that the topics in Parshas Shemini now seem jumbled. If Vayikra follows the order of creation, then the laws of fish should have preceded the laws of land animals, since they were created on an earlier day. This, however, is not the case.

The objection is misplaced. When we speak of the ordering of topics following the order of creation, we mean topics whose details were conveyed in separate communications from G-d, i.e. different dibros. The laws of animals were included in one dibur, apart from separate dibros for the laws of women and men. Each dibur represents a different topic; those dibros are indeed organized according to order of Creation. Within a single dibur, however, the most prominent and important ought to be featured first. Fish and animals are not separated into distinct dibros, but are part of a single dibur about the infra-human species. Within that dibur, the Torah puts land animals first, since they are more important than the fish.

We have not really done justice to Rav Simla'i. His words contain another level of depth that we should explore.

Man appears last - both in his physical creation, and in his spiritual completion through the Torah laws that apply to him - not only because there was some ethical lesson for us in his coming after the animals. Man stands apart from all the animals because he possesses a neshamah, a soul that has no external manifestation, but is hidden and secreted within him. That soul is not made of the same stuff and substance as everything else in creation. It is a portion of Hashem Himself, placed within Man as the final step in his creation - indeed, as appropriate only after everything else in our world had first been readied for its appearance. The laws that apply to all other creatures reflect their nature as they are. What they are is fixed, defined, hard-wired. The element that makes Man unique

is a neshamah that is not fixed, but must develop, blossom and mature.

Man's creation, in regard to both his physical creation and his special Torah laws, cannot be seen, therefore, as on the same continuum as all other creatures. His creation is discontinuous - and more refined and elevated. He therefore waits for all simpler creatures to come into being first.

Sources: 1. *Based on Gur Aryeh, Vayikra 12:2; Chidushei Aggados, Shabbos 84A* 2. *Shabbos 88A* 3.

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