

With 176 verses, *Naso* is the longest single *Parashah* in the Torah. R' Yitzchak Meir Rotenberg-Alter z"l (1799-1866; first *Gerrer Rebbe*, known as the "*Chiddushei Ha'Rim*") observes that the *Midrash Rabbah* on this week's *Parashah* is significantly longer than on any other *Parashah*. Also, the *Zohar* on this week's *Parashah*, while not the longest, contains some of the most noteworthy sections (known as the "*Idra Rabbah*").

The *Chiddushei Ha'Rim* explains: *Parashat Naso* is nearly always read on the *Shabbat* after *Shavuot*. Every year, on *Shavuot*, *Hashem*, in His goodness, renews the Giving of the Torah for the coming year. This renewal enables us to plumb the depths of the Torah, as recorded in the *Midrash*, and to see the light of the Torah, as reflected in the *Zohar*. (The *Chiddushei Ha'Rim* notes that the *Zohar* frequently uses the expression "*Ta chazi*" / "Come and see," in contrast to the *Talmud Bavli*'s "*Ta shema*" / "Come and hear.")

The *Chiddushei Ha'Rim* continues: Referring to the Torah's "light," we say in the blessing before *Kri'at Shema*, "Enlighten our eyes in Your Torah." However, our intention is not to derive personal benefit from that "light." Rather, we continue, "Attach our hearts to Your *Mitzvot*." (*Sefer Ha'zechut*)

R' Tzaddok Hakohen Rabinowitz z"l (1823-1900; *Chassidic Rebbe* in Lublin, Poland) adds: *Parashat Naso* includes "*Birkat Kohanim*" / the blessing the *Kohanim* give to the Jewish People. When one gives a blessing, he gives what is at the root of his soul. The *Kohanim* are meant to be the teachers of the nation; thus, their blessing leads to increased Torah study, as reflected in a longer *Midrash* and a very deep section of the *Zohar*. (*Pri Tzaddik: Naso 7*)

## Tefilah

This year, we will *iy"H* devote this space to discussing various aspects of our prayers. This week, we continue discussing the thirteen types of prayer identified by the *Midrash Rabbah* and *Midrash Yalkut Shimoni*.

R' Yitzchak Ze'ev Yadler z"l (1843-1917; Yerushalayim) offers the following definitions for the sixth and seventh types of prayers. (The first through fifth types were discussed last week.)

- "*Bitzur*" (ביצור) (*Tehilim* 18:7)
- "*Keri'ah*" (קריאה) (*ibid*)

The cited verse states: "*Batzar* / In my distress *Ekra* / I will call to *Hashem*, I will cry out to my *Elokim*. From His temple, He will hear my voice; my cry to Him will reach His ears." R' Yadler writes: The Name "*Hashem*" refers to G-d's Attribute of Mercy. Thus, our verse refers to someone who calls out to *Hashem* when he is in distress, but does so with a recognition that his distress is a reflection of *Hashem's* mercy; for example, because it atones for that person's sins.

R' Yadler continues: The other form of prayer referred to here is prayer that recognizes that the *Shechinah* is, so-to-speak, "suffering" with us. [This refers to the fact that G-d wants to be good to us, but we "frustrate" Him by not deserving His goodness.] The person referred to in our verse prays to "my *Elokim*," *i.e.*, he has a personal relationship which causes him to put G-d's "feelings" first. [R' Yadler does not explain which of these forms of prayer is "*Bitzur*" and which is "*Keri'ah*."]

(*Tiferet Tziyon Al Midrash Rabbah*)

R' Chaim Tirer z"l (1760-1818; rabbi of Czernowitz) writes: In connection with the prayer called "*Keri'ah*," we read (*Tehilim* 20:10), "The King will answer us on the day we call ('*Kor'enu*')." This may be understood in light of the statement of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa (*Berachot* 34b), "If my prayer flows smoothly, I know it has been accepted." Often, we pray for things that are in the distant future. Nevertheless, we sometimes can know on the day that we call whether we have been answered, *i.e.*, if our prayer flows smoothly.

(*Sha'ar Ha'Tefilah* VI ch.1)

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**“The Kohen shall inscribe these curses on a scroll and erase it into the bitter waters.” (6:23)**

The *Gemara* (*Sukkah* 53a-b) relates: When King David excavated for the foundations of the *Bet Hamikdash*, he reached the water table and displaced a shard of pottery on which *Hashem’s* Name was engraved and which had been there since the time of Creation. Immediately, the waters rose and threatened to flood the world. King David asked: “Does anyone know whether it is permissible to write *Hashem’s* Name and throw it into the water?” An advisor named Achitophel knew, but he did not answer, because he was angry that King David had not appointed him to a position of honor. King David then pronounced a curse on anyone who knew but did not speak up. Hearing that, Achitophel responded, “If *Hashem’s* Name may be erased to bring about peace between a husband and wife [referring to our verse], it certainly may be erased to save the entire world!” [Until here from the *Gemara*]

*Rashi z”l* writes that King David also knew this *Halachah*, but he did not want to issue a *Halachic* ruling in the presence of his “teacher,” Achitophel. R’ Yerachmiel Shulman *z”l Hy”d* (*Menahel Ruchani* of the *Bet Yosef-Novardok Yeshiva* in Pinsk, Poland; killed in the Holocaust) observes: The *Mishnah* (*Avot* ch.6) says that King David learned only two things from Achitophel; nevertheless, King David honored Achitophel as if the latter were his teacher. As such, R’ Shulman writes, the above *Gemara* is teaching us the extent to which a person can be influenced by jealousy and a desire for honor, on the one hand, and by *Mussar* / working on refining one’s character, on the other hand.

He explains: The waters were rising from the excavation, and they were threatening to destroy the world. Nevertheless, Achitophel would not come to King David’s aid until he was threatened by King David’s curse. At the same time, King David would not cross the bounds of proper behavior by ruling in the presence of his teacher, even a minor teacher, even to save the world! [Generally, saving lives supersedes nearly all *Mitzvot*, but not if the same goal can be accomplished without transgressing, as was the case here.]

Logic would dictate that the flood should have been stopped as quickly as possible. However, writes R’ Shulman, man’s natural instinct to seek honor and to be jealous is stronger than logic; thus, Achitophel did not respond at first. Likewise, the demands of character refinement go beyond what man’s logic dictates; thus, King David refrained from saving the world in order not to rule in the presence of his teacher. The practical lesson for us is that we cannot rely on our own intellects to determine the demands of character refinement. (*Peninei Ha’shlaimut*: Introduction p.4-5)

**“This is the work of the families of Gershon--to work and to carry.” (4:24)**

R’ Moshe Sofer *z”l* (1762–1839; rabbi and *Rosh Yeshiva* in Pressburg, Hungary) writes that the names of Levi’s three sons--Gershon, Kehat, and Merari--allude to different periods in Jewish history. “Gershon” alludes to the period of exile, since the root of that name (גֶּר) means to expel.

As such, writes R’ Moshe Gruenwald *z”l* (1853-1910; rabbi of, and *Rosh Yeshiva* in, Huszt, Hungary), our verse can be understood as follows: The task of a Jew in exile is to “work”--serve *Hashem*--and “carry”--be patient. Even when we see that the nations are successful and their cities are built up, while the Jewish People are downtrodden and the cities of *Eretz Yisrael* are in ruins, we should not question G-d’s ways. (*Arugas Ha’bosem*)

**“They shall confess the sin that they committed; he shall make restitution for his guilt in its principal amount and add its fifth to it, and give it to the one to whom he is indebted.” (5:7)**

Our verse speaks of a thief who repents and pays back what he stole (“He shall make restitution . . .”). Why, then, is the first part of the verse in the plural form (“They shall confess the sin that they committed”)?

R’ Chaim Zaichyk *z”l* (1906-1989; *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Bet Yosef-Novardok in Buchach, Poland; later in Israel) explains: How does a person succumb to the temptation to steal? Sometimes, it is because his business failed due to unfair competition, leaving him no obvious way to provide for his family except by stealing. Other times, it is because his wife and family members make him feel like an inadequate provider, leading him to steal so his family can keep up with the Joneses. Or, perhaps his business was struggling, and no one stepped forward to fulfill the *Mitzvah* (*Vayikra* 25:35): “If your brother becomes impoverished and his means falter in your proximity, you shall strengthen him--proselyte or resident--so that he can live with you.” In short, R’ Zaichyk writes, only one person is the actual thief, and he is the one who has to pay restitution. Nevertheless, there may be many people who need to confess an indirect part in this sin. Therefore, our verse says, “They shall confess . . .”

R’ Zaichyk adds: A precedent for this explanation is found in the *Mitzvah* of *Eglah Arufah*. When a murder victim is found on the highway, the elders of the nearest city must proclaim (*Devarim* 21:7), “Our hands have not spilled this blood . . .” The *Gemara* (*Sotah* 45b) asks: Would I have thought that the elders did spill this blood? Rather, the Torah is teaching that the elders are at fault because they failed to ensure that the traveler had provisions, which may have led him to attempt to steal and to be killed in that attempt. (*Ohr Chadash*)