

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: *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*. (He 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*)

Shabbat

"Tzav et / Command Bnei Yisrael that they shall send out from the Camp anyone with Tzara'at, anyone who is a Zav, and anyone who is Tamei / ritually impure because of a human corpse." (5:2)

Literally, this is a commandment to send out of *Bnei Yisrael*'s camp individuals with certain forms of *Tum'ah*. However, R' Moshe Yehoshua Hager z"l (1916-2012; *Vizhnitzer Rebbe*) writes in the name of his father, R' Chaim Meir Hager z"l (1887-1972; *Vizhnitzer Rebbe*), that this verse also contains a lesson about *Shabbat*. He explains:

The *Gematria* of "*Tzav et Bnei Yisrael*" (with the addition of 12, the number of Hebrew letters in the phrase) equals the *Gematria* of "*Shabbat Kodesh*," while the word "*Tzav*" hints at a "*Tzavta*" / a gathering. Thus, the verse is teaching that by gathering together with friends on *Shabbat*, we can push away many forms of impurity. The initial letters of "*Et Bnei Yisrael*" (*Aleph, Bet, Yud*) have the same *Gematria* as "*Ahavah*" / love. This teaches that the participants in the gathering must be full of love for each other in order to achieve the maximum benefit.

The *Vizhnitzer Rebbe* continues: We read (*Tehilim* 133:1), "Behold! *Mah* / How good and how pleasant is *Shevet Achim* / the dwelling of brothers together." "*Mah*" is the *Gematria* of one of the Names of *Hashem*, while "*Shevet*" has the same letters as "*Shabbat*." Thus, this verse teaches: If one wants to know how good and pleasant *Hashem* is, he should gather together with friends on *Shabbat*. Of course, these gatherings should not be an occasion for frivolity. Rather, you shall "*Achim*"--the Aramaic word for "warm up." The purpose of these gatherings should be to create a "warm" *Shabbat* full of Torah study, prayer, and lively singing of praises to *Hashem*.

We read (*Bereishit* 37:16), "*Et achai anochi mevakesh*"--literally, Yosef said, "I am seeking my brothers." However, this verse can also be translated: "*Et achai*" / When I am with my brothers, "*Anochi*" / I become a "*Mevakesh*" / one who seeks G-d. In contrast--making a play on *Bemidbar* 33:23--when one sits alone, he becomes haughty and thinks that all is well with him spiritually, even when it is not.

(*Yeshe'ot Moshe: Ma'adanei Ha'shulchan*)

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“Speak to Aharon and his sons, saying: ‘So shall you bless *Bnei Yisrael*, *Amor*/ say to them’.” (6:23)

The *Berachah* the *Kohanim* recite before performing the *Mitzvah* of *Birkat Kohanim* / the Priestly Blessings is different in several ways from all other *Birchot Ha'mitzvah* / blessings recited before performing *Mitzvot* (e.g., *Lulav*, *Tefilin*, *Tzitzit*, *Shabbat* Candles). One of these differences is that the *Kohanim* say: “He commanded us to bless His nation *Yisrael* with love.” No other *Mitzvah* is expressly required to be performed “with love.” What is the source that the *Kohanim* must bless the nation “with love”?

R' Yissachar Ber Eilenburg z"l (Central Europe; 1570-1623) writes: *Midrash Tanchuma* teaches that the word “*Amor*” in our verse is “full”--i.e., spelled with a “*Vav*” (וָ) --as if to say: “Do not bless *Yisrael* in a hurried fashion. Rather, bless them with *Kavanat Ha'lev* / fully focusing your heart.” [Until here from the *Midrash*]

This, writes R' Eilenburg, is the source of the obligation to bless the nation “with love.” (Be'er Sheva: *Sotah* 39a)

R' Avraham Abele Gombiner z"l (Poland, died 1682) writes in his *Halachic* work “*Magen Avraham*” that the requirement to bless “with love” is based on the *Zohar*, which states: “Any *Kohen* who does not love the people, or the people do not love him, may not bless the nation.”

R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv z"l (1910-2012; Yerushalayim) asks: Is this only a concern regarding *Birkat Kohanim*? Is it otherwise permitted to hate another Jew?

R' Elyashiv answers: The simplest explanation is that it is not adequate for a *Kohen* to not hate his fellow Jews. Rather, he must develop a great love for the Jewish People! (He'arot: *Sotah* 39a)



“When Moshe arrived at the *Ohel Mo'ed* to speak with Him [*Hashem*], he heard the Voice speaking to him from atop the Cover that was upon the Ark of the Testimony, from between the two *Keruvim*, and He spoke to him.” (7:89)

R' Yitzchak Arieli z"l (1896-1974; *Mashgiach* of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav; author of *Enayim La'mishpat*) writes: It is fitting that the *Mishkan* was dedicated in the month of *Nissan*, the month in which the Patriarch Avraham was born. As our verse indicates, the *Mishkan* was the place from which prophecy emanated. Avraham was the first person to demonstrate the “legitimacy” of prophecy -- to the extent that he was willing to offer his son Yitzchak as a sacrificial offering at the behest of a prophecy.

(Haggadah Shel Pesach Shirat Ha'geulah p.5)

“A man or woman who shall dissociate himself by taking a Nazirite vow of abstinence for the sake of *Hashem*.” (6:1)

The *Gemara* (*Nazir* 4b) relates that Shimon *Ha'tzaddik*, the *Kohen Gadol*, said: I never ate from an *Asham* offering brought by a *Nazir* who became *Tamei* / ritually impure except once, when a man came from the south with beautiful locks of hair, neatly arranged. I saw that he was very handsome, and I asked him, “My son! Why did you decide to destroy your beautiful hair?” [A *Nazir* must shave his head completely at the end of his term of *Nezirut*.] He answered: “I was a shepherd for my father in his city. Once, I went to draw water from the spring and I saw my reflection. My evil inclination immediately became impulsive and sought to uproot me from the world. I said to him (the *Yetzer Ha'ra*), ‘Evil one! You take pride in a world which is not yours? I swear that I will shave my hair for the sake of Heaven!’”

Shimon *Ha'tzaddik* concluded: Immediately I stood up and kissed him on his head, and I said, “May there be many *Nezirim* like you in the world!” [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R' Isaac Sher z"l (1875-1952; *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Slobodka Yeshiva in Lithuania and Bnei Brak) asks: If the “man from the south” thought that his beautiful locks would lead him to sin, why did he not just cut them off? Why did he need to take a vow to be a *Nazir*?

R' Sher answers: At the root of the *Mitzvah* of *Nezirut* is *Kedushah*/holiness. A *Nazir* is not someone who accepts upon himself not to drink wine; not drinking wine is just one of the laws that applies to a *Nazir*. Another law is that a *Nazir* may not come in contact with the deceased. These two laws are meant to distance the *Nazir* from extremes--from the extreme levity that can come from drink, and from the extreme sadness that can come from contact with the dead. But those are tools, not the essence. The goal is to rise above the mundane aspects of this world in order to assume a holier existence.

R' Sher continues: When one feels his *Yetzer Ha'ra* pulling him down, it is not enough to fight back and repel the evil inclination. One must also crown himself (a play on the words *Nazir* and *Nezer* / crown) with a crown of holiness--i.e., he must accept upon himself some act of holiness as a weapon against the *Yetzer Ha'ra*. That is why the man from the south did not just cut his hair, but rather became a *Nazir*.

Elsewhere, R' Sher writes: In fact, drinking wine also can be an act of holiness. Thus, the *Gemara* (*Yoma* 71a) states that giving wine to a Torah scholar is equivalent to pouring a wine libation on the *Mizbei'ach*. When a person understands that his true identity is his intellectual soul, not his body, then his mundane acts assume a holy nature.

(Lekket Sichot Mussar III p. 652 & 585)