

Last week's *Parashah--Bemidbar--* seems to end, and this week's *Parashah--Naso--* seems to begin, in the middle of a subject: the roles the different families in the tribe of *Levi* had in transporting the *Mishkan* / Tabernacle when *Bnei Yisrael* traveled. Specifically, at the end of *Bemidbar*, the family of *Kehat* is commanded to carry the *Aron Ha'kodesh*, the *Shulchan*, the *Menorah*, and the other holiest items in the *Mishkan*. In *Parashat Naso*, in turn, the families of *Gershon* and *Merari* are commanded to carry other, less holy parts of the *Mishkan*. Why are the *Parashot* broken up this way?

R' Yechezkel Hartman *shlita* (Lawrence, N.Y.) suggests: *Parashat Bemidbar* discusses things that the Jewish People have as an "inheritance"--in particular, their division into tribes and their placement around the *Mishkan*, which mimicked the placement of *Yaakov Avinu's* sons around his coffin when they carried it from *Egypt* to *Eretz Yisrael*. In contrast, R' Hartman writes, *Naso* is about Divine service and the Jewish People's role in the world. It begins with the service of the *Levi'im* from the families of *Gershon* and *Merari* (4:21-49), continues with a *Mitzvah* to keep the camp pure (5:1-4), and then the *Mitzvah* to return items one has stolen and to confess one's sins (5:5-8), the commandment to give the *Kohen* gifts to which he is entitled (5:9-10), and other commandments that follow logically. (A detailed explanation is beyond the scope of this page.) The role of the family of *Kehat* does not fit into this list of services to *Hashem* because, our Sages say, "The *Aron* carried those who carried it." Unlike the families of *Gershon* and *Merari*, who were actually exerting effort when they transported parts of the *Mishkan*, the family of *Kehat* was not doing so. Therefore, their role fits better in the *Parashah* that discusses things that "came" to *Bnei Yisrael* rather than the *Parashah* that discusses things *Bnei Yisrael* are supposed to do. (*Ma'aneh Yechezkel*)

## Shabbat

It is customary in most Jewish communities to recite *Kabbalat Shabbat* on Friday night, beginning with six chapters of *Tehilim* (95-99 and 29), followed by *Lecha Dodi*, and culminating in chapter 92 of *Tehilim* ("*Mizmor shir le'yom ha'Shabbat*"). R' Uri Weisblum *shlita* (*Mashgiach Ruchani* of *Yeshivat Nachalat Ha'levi'im* in Haifa, Israel) writes: Some explain that the six chapters of *Tehilim* recited before *Lecha Dodi* represent the six workdays, while *Mizmor Shir* represents *Shabbat*. But why were these six chapters of *Tehilim* chosen?

R' Weisblum answers: Commentaries interpret these six chapters as speaking of the future redemption. For example, R' Ovadiah Seforno *z"l* (1470-1550; Italy) writes that chapter 95, which begins, "Come! Let us sing to *Hashem*," is referring to the era of the ingathering of the exiles. Because these chapters speak of the future redemption, it is appropriate to recite them before *Shabbat*, which is "*Me'ein Olam Ha'ba*" / "a taste of the World-to-Come"--*Olam Ha'ba* being the climax of the future redemption.

In addition, R' Weisblum writes, R' Meir Leibush Weiser *z"l* (1809-1879; Poland, Romania, and Ukraine; known as "*Malbim*") writes that these six chapters speak of the two ways in which *Hashem* manages the world: (1) through the laws of nature and (2) miraculously, not through the laws of nature. For example, *Hashem* is described (96:4) as being "awesome above all heavenly powers." This refers to the fact that even though He appointed angels over each natural force, they are all subservient to, and in awe of, Him, the Creator. We can thus understand the relevance of these psalms to *Shabbat*, R' Weisblum writes, for *Shabbat* is the day that affirms that *Hashem* created the world.

In addition, R' Weisblum notes, the *Gematria* of the initial letters of these psalms is 430, which equals the *Gematria* of "*Nefesh*," alluding to the "extra soul" each person receives on *Shabbat*.

(*He'arat Ha'tefilah: Shabbat* p.36)

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**“This shall be the *Torah* of the *Nazir*--on the day his abstinence is completed, he shall bring himself to the entrance of the *Ohel Mo'ed* / Tent of Meeting.” (6:13)**

R' Ovadiah Seforno *z"l* (1470-1550; Italy) writes: Elsewhere in the Torah, we find commandments for one person to bring another person somewhere (e.g., *Shmot* 21:6, *Vayikra* 13:2, our *Parashah*--5:15). Here, there is no one more distinguished than the *Nazir* to bring him, so “he shall bring himself.” [Until here from *Seforno*]

R' Shmuel Yaakov Borenstein *z"l* (1946-2017; *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Kiryat Melech in Bnei Brak, Israel) explains: All the restrictions that apply to a *Nazir* originate from his initiative. Many people happen not to drink wine or not cut their hair for 30 days, but the *Nazir* took the initiative to do this “for *Hashem*.” Like Avraham Avinu, the *Nazir* went against the grain and found a whole Torah within himself, and that sets him apart. (Of course, one may not “find a new Torah within himself” except where the Torah made room for such an idea, as in the case of *Nazir*.) (*V'zot Le'Yaakov*)

**“The one who brought his offering on the first day was Nachshon ben Aminadav, of the tribe of Yehuda.” (7:12)**

**“On the second day, Netanel ben Zu'ar offered, the *Nasi* / leader of Yissachar.” (7:18)**

**“On the third day, the *Nasi* of the children of Zevulun, Eliav ben Chelon.” (7:24)**

Why is Nachshon ben Aminadav not given the title “*Nasi*,” while the representatives of all the other tribes are? And, why is the leader of Yissachar identified first by name and then as “*Nasi*,” while the remaining leaders are first identified as “*Nasi*” and only then named?

R' Zvi Hirsch Kalischer *z"l* (1794-1874; German rabbi; leading advocate both for resettling *Eretz Yisrael* and for renewing the Temple service) explains: Some people are so distinguished in their own right that having a title adds nothing to their prestige. Nachshon was such a person, so the Torah does not give him a title.

Others are distinguished in their own right, but having a title adds prestige. Netanel was such a person. Specifically, *Rashi z"l* writes, Netanel was distinguished because (1) he was a Torah scholar and (2) the whole idea for the *Nesi'im* (plural of *Nasi*) to offer sacrifices at the dedication of the *Mishkan* was his. Nevertheless, he gained additional prestige from being named a *Nasi*, so he is named first and afterward given a title.

Finally, there are people who are relatively undistinguished until they are appointed to a position of honor. The other *Nesi'im* were such people, so the Torah first calls them “*Nasi*” and only then names them.

(*Sefer Ha'berit*)

**“The man shall bring his wife to the *Kohen* and he shall bring her offering for her, a tenth-*Ephah* of barley flour; he shall not pour oil over it, and he shall not put *Levonah* / frankincense upon it . . .” (5:15)**

*Rashi z"l* writes: Because the Matriarchs are symbolically termed “*Levonah*,” as it is written (*Shir Ha'shirim* 4:6), “I will take myself to the hill of *Levonah*” (which our Sages interpret as a reference to the Matriarchs), whereas the *Sotah* deviated from the Matriarchs' paths. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Eliezer Ben-Zion Brok *z"l* (1904-1985; founder and *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Novardok-Bet Yosef Yeshiva in Yerushalayim) writes: Many people think that because they are on a relatively low spiritual level, they will only be held accountable for the spiritual accomplishments they failed to achieve on that level, but not for not attaining higher levels. For example, a person who currently transgresses *Shabbat* may understand that he will be held accountable for that transgression, but he surely does not believe that he will be held accountable for not being a *Tzaddik* like the *Chafetz Chaim*.

This is a fundamental error, R' Brok writes, and it is not the Torah's viewpoint. Our Sages say that the *Sotah*'s offering is barley, which is animal feed, because her behavior was not worthy of a human being. At the very same time, her offering is designed to remind her that she failed to behave like a daughter of the Matriarchs--Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah. This is quite surprising, R' Brok writes, but it is the Torah's message. As such, R' Brok concludes, why doesn't every person just aim higher?!

(*Hegyonei Mussar* p.13)

**“Speak to *Bnei Yisrael* and say to them, ‘A man or woman who shall set himself apart by taking a Nazirite vow of abstinence for the sake of *Hashem*.’” (6:2)**

*Rashi z"l* writes: Why is the section dealing with the *Nazir* placed next to the section dealing with the *Sotah*? To tell you that he who has once seen a *Sotah* in her disgrace should abstain from wine, which may lead to immorality. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Zvi Yisrael Thau *shlita* (founder of Yeshivat Har Ha'mor in Yerushalayim) writes: At first glance, a man may say, “What does the lowliness of the *Sotah* have to do with me?” The Torah is teaching us, however, that even events that appear to be irrelevant and do not seem like a direct threat to all of society may require society to take notice and to respond with sensitivity, nobility of character, purity, and holiness.

(*Kovetz Sichot L'bein Ha'mitzarim* p.100)