

Parshas Naso

May 21-22, 2021

10-11 Sivan 5781

This week's parsha is filled with many different topics. It is 176 pesukim long, the longest of any parsha, which matches the length of the longest perek of Tehillim (119) which also matches the number of dafim in the longest tractate in Talmud Bavli- Bava Basra¹. The longest parsha follows the holiday of Shavuot, because it shows our love back to Hashem being that we are willing to study the parsha at length, much like was explained by the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe about Parshas Bamidbar proceeding Shavuot as a buffer from the end of Vayikra

Naso brings us to the census of the workers of the Levi tribe. As stated in last parsha (Bamidbar), that the Levites stood alone in the census as a reward for not committing the sin of the golden calf. The counting started at age 30-50 as that is the time for "power" as stated in the 5th perek of Avos.

In Chapter 5 there is a repetition the laws of those who commit sins. The language in the posuk is interesting (chapter 5 verse 6) about all sins of "adam", that is humans, (though loosely translated as man) it is the sins relating to humanity. The sins Rashi points out are ones of deceit which are qualitatively negative acts versus quantitative (such as I ate a particular amount of non-kosher food). These are hardest to keep for they mean one has to work on himself in order to act properly in the ways of Hashem. There is another reference to "redemption" through slavery in the event someone cannot pay their debts. These laws are highlighted (and I touched upon them in parshas mishpatim and other locations), and the conditions of the sale of a Jewish slave.

Chapter 5 verse 11 begins the laws (in great detail) of Sotah, that is an adulterous woman who is humiliated through the process of ascertaining her guilt. The

Haftora is directly related to this incident, (Manoach and his wife), as she was barren, and she "forced" God's hand (knowing her innocence) to bless her with children, as a result of her innocence. When a sotah is found to be innocent she is blessed, according to something missing in her life (if she didn't have children, she'd have, if they were ugly, they'd be beautiful, if pregnancy was hard, they would be easy, if labor and birth was difficult, they would become easy).

The Sotah and adulterous ways are a result of excessive consumption of wine, which connects to the next portion of the parsha that is the promise of the Nazir, in which he abstains from material indulgences, particularly with ingesting wine. (Rashi and others highlight the direct connection between Sotah and Nazir).

There is a medrish that describes the first time we see the negative elements of wine in the Torah, and that is with Noach. Post Mabul, Noach planted a vineyard, and got drunk off its produce. Satan asked Noach for partnership in the planting, to which Noach agreed. Satan then killed a sheep, a lion, a monkey, and a pig, and spilled their blood on the vineyard. Satan explained, that after the first cup of wine, a person becomes vulnerable like a sheep, after a second cup they become proud and loud like a lion, after a third cup they become wild like a monkey, and after a fourth cup they turn into a pig and wallow in their filth.

Chassidic masters say about this medrish, that the assumption is Jews surround themselves with mundane elements through which to draw on the negative elements of wine, whereas a Jew, when the wine enters, beauty and connection to Hashem is aroused. This medrish tells us of what the outcome of wanton excessive drinking can be. Whereas elsewhere (in gemara etc.) we know of the positive outcomes of drinking wine (think Purim etc.).

¹ As told to me on Thursday night by Rabbi Yossi Holzberg

Chassidus teaches us of the duality of all things in this world. there is the power to reveal good, and or to reveal darkness. This medrish shows the potential evils of wine. The work in our lives is to reveal the good. (Much like we have 2 neshamos, and all things derive from Klipos).

The Nazir is a reflection of self-imposed abstinence in the event the person finds themselves requiring the added self-restriction. Nazirus is now a wholly lauded way to live (as reflected in the type of sacrifices brought by the Nazir when he absolves himself of the restriction period), as one ought to live a life converting bad to good, then refrain all together (such as the importance of wine in our liturgy and traditions).

Sotah also is brought about by jealousy, and includes rectifying jealous patterns, as committing the sin of jealousy is a cardinal 10 commandment sin, and the point of bringing it with Sotah and in the masculine form, is that it arouses two jealousies, one in the woman, the other in Hashem (see Rashi 5:15). Jealousy is a qualitative type of commandment, in there isn't a measurement necessarily of exactly how much jealousy one has to commit to be oiver on the lo t'aseh. Rather the result of jealousy etc. can be Sotah. Then the Nazir, an act of restriction, is a method of imposing discipline such that a person rectifies certain acts in their life in this added promissory way (in the life of a Nazir as opposed to just being a Jew).

The next portion of the Parsha (6:22-27) is the most famous and daily said blessing of "yivarechecha". An interesting insight pointed out by my father in law, on something he heard, the curious spelling of "Emor" lahem, sounds like the latin (and Italian) word for "love" – amore. Because as Rashi says, one may not bless the people unless they are settled, and not in a fight with anyone. They have to love everyone in order to properly channel Gods blessings unto the people. Amor lahem, as Rashi points out is related to Zachor and Shamor, which are spelled in the "full"

that is with the "vov". These expressions connect us to Hashem. Vov being the sign of a conduit and the drawing down of Godliness (as with Bereishis- Bara Shis).

One must have complete concentration and a full heart. And we would want to be blessed by someone who is sound, and not jealous, and not fighting with anyone (I would assume this includes a Chazzan who is not a kohen before they say the same blessing in Chazaras Hashatz²).

The conclusion of the blessing is "V'Samu es Shmi Al Bnei Yisrael". This phrase is also messianic, in that we know that when Hashem's name is on the Jews and in the world, fully, absolutely, and properly drawn down, it will be in the era of Mashiach. To part of this blessing is to be able to accomplish this goal.

The point of it all, is to make a dwelling for Hashem, the blessing of Yvarechecha covers all our material, spiritual, and emotional needs.

Finally, the parsha ends with further reference to the establishment of the Mishkan, and the sacrifices brought, and the donations made by the princes. (There is a cross reference here to the fact that when the Mishkan was to be built, and donations were solicited from the Jews, the Nesiim delayed out of the desire to make up the purported potential shortfall- which never happened, and they were criticized for this. Here the Nesiim went first.

Finally, we learn about how Moshe heard from Hashem in the "tent of meeting". That is Hashem's voice was talking to itself, and Moshe would listen, and the voice was audible.

May we have the strength and the outcome of hearing the blessings of Yivarechecha in our lives in a manifest and understood way, and may we welcome Mashiach now.

Good Shabbos!

² This is connected to the idea I explained about v'havta l'reiacha kamocha. That one must love themselves to fully

love someone else. There is a connection to this way of being here as well.