

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	RENEWED
Naso	26 May 2018	12 Sivan 5778	Num. 4:21-7:89	Judg. 13:2-25	Luke 1:11-20

This week's Torah portion, Naso has the longest verse of all the Torah portions. It has as many verses as Psalms 119 and Bava Batra which also has 176 pages. It also contains many different subjects that appears to be unrelated to each other. The dates of these events jump back and forth from Sivan (Third month) 2448 to Iyar (Second month) 2449 after creation. If this wasn't enough, why did last week's Torah portion, Bamidbar concluded with the duties of Kehite, the Levite clan. And this week, we start a new portion for the other Levite clans, Gershon and Merari? What was the reason for this? If this wasn't confusing enough, how could a man bless another man? Doesn't the blessing come from Hashem? What is Hashem trying to teach us?

The outline of this week's Torah portion, Naso:¹

1. the conscription of the Levite clans of Gershon and Merari into the Temple,
2. the exclusion of defiled people from the camp,
3. details of the laws of theft,
4. the procedure for testing a suspected adulteress,
5. the laws of the Nazirite,
6. the priestly blessings,
7. the installation offering of the leaders of the tribes,
8. the manner in which Hashem spoke with Moshe in the Tabernacle.

The time period of these events:²

1. the continuation of the preceding parashah's narration of the census, taken on the first of Iyar, 2449,
2. returning to the narration of the events of a month previous, the first of Nisan, 2449,
- 3-5. legal material (given between Sivan 2448 and Iyar 2449),
- 6-8. returning again to the narration of the events of the first Nisan, 2449.

Gershon was the oldest³ of the sons of Lewi, but with the sacred duties Kohath⁴ comes first, since the most important tasks, that is carrying the Ark of the Covenant were theirs. Abarbanel commented that the most prestigious tasks were given to the Kohathites because Moshe and Aaron were Kohathites themselves. This weekly portion starts with Gershon to restore the honor that was lost to the Kohathites.

The name *Gershon* is derived from the verb "to banish" (לְגַרֵשׁ, *le-garesh*), signifying the necessity to banish evil. Their service was the outer coverings of the Tabernacle, which protected it from the elements. Thus, it is our "job" of avoiding harmful activities and influences.

The name Kehat derived from "gathering". It was their tasks to carry the furnishings of the Tabernacle, which has a positive work embodying the task of pursuing positive energy. So, it is necessary to rid or block negative elements by removing ourselves from evil to pursue good.

¹ Chumash Bemidbar, The Lubavitcher Rebbe, p. 25

² ibid

³ Genesis 46:11

⁴ Numbers 4:2

After completing the census, the Torah now returns to the first day of Nissan, 2449 when the Tabernacle was erected. Hashem, then commands Moshe to purify the camp by casting out people with *tzara'at* (leprosy) beginning next month (Iyar). This is necessary as the camp is now the Shekinah (Glory) was within their camp whether they moved or camped.

On the 1st of Iyar, 2449 the Torah adds additional laws that was given earlier in Leviticus 5:20-26 to teach us in detail. The following laws were added: (1) the offender is only liable to pay a surcharge and bring a guilt-offering if he/she confesses on his/her own, but not if he is convicted by Beit Din (House of Court)⁵, and if the victim was a convert with no heirs and he/she has died since the crime, the offender must pay the priests instead.⁶

In Numbers 5:9, Hashem adds other laws that was read earlier in Exodus 23:19 which says, "The choicest first-fruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of YHWH your Elohim." The Torah is telling us in the verse to bring our first fruits "to the house of Elohim." In essence, this means we are to abandon the perception that the first fruits are ours. Hashem is telling us that we are merely a trustee and we are not to seek ways to benefit from it personally as well as seek benefit from other's donations.

The suspected adulteress: On a *pashat* level, it reads how to deal with the suspected adulteress as the Torah sees the marriage of a man and a woman as sacrilegious. Midrashically, it is a marriage between Hashem and us. When we sin, we believe that a sin will not affect our relationship with Hashem and it would not deviate from Hashem whether big or small. Hashem is telling us otherwise. A sin affects our relationship with Him for it is a betrayal of our "marriage" to Hashem, thus deserving punishment.

Having dealt with an adulteress, the Torah now describes what it means to be a Nazirite. Since indiscretion of drinking too much wine can lead to adultery (sin). For this reason, the Nazirite is to refrain from drinking wine for the duration, so he can strive for a higher spiritual level that can transcend the worldliness.

Now, Hashem commands how Aharon and his sons to bless the children of *Yisrael*. "YHWH bless you and keep you,"⁷ means extra material blessing and protecting you from others attempting to take away your possession. This blessing includes children, health, wisdom, long life, and greatness⁸ wherever you go. And Hashem will protect the blessings given to you permanently not just in this world but as well in the World to Come as Solomon said, "When you lie down it will preserve you."⁹

"YHWH make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you,"¹⁰ means when you ask for something, He will give it to you immediately. In Proverbs 16:15 says, "In the light of the king's countenance is life; and his favor is as a cloud of the latter rain." We have discussed previously, the pipelines of blessing flows unrestricted from Him, but we are restricting His blessings by drinking too much wine (sin). "And be gracious to you," as you make your request (prayer) at a time of trouble, may He ease your pain as said in Job 19:21, "Pity me, pity me!"

⁵ Numbers 5:7

⁶ Numbers 5:8

⁷ Numbers 6:24

⁸ The Commentators' Bible, Numbers, p. 43

⁹ Proverbs 6:22

¹⁰ Numbers 6:25

“YHWH lift up His countenance upon you,”¹¹ applies whenever you turn to Him, may His face turn toward you. “And give you shalom (peace),”¹² from your troubles. You will not be troubled by *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) or by any enemies. You will have peace in this material world and also peace of mind.

The Zohar teaches¹³ these three verses contains all twenty-two attributes of Hashem. The first 13 attributes were revealed¹⁴ when Moshe prayed for the Israelites for sinning by worshipping the Golden Calf. The second 9 attributes were revealed¹⁵ when Hashem threatened to destroy the Israelites for complaining against Moshe after hearing the report of spies sent to Canaan.

Chapter 7 lists each prince bringing his offerings on the first of Nissan, 2449. They were honored for bringing their personal offerings for each day, thus it lasted 12 days. Who were these princes? They were the foreman appointed by the Egyptian taskmasters who suffered beating on the account of the people during their slavery period when their quota was not met. These princes are now being honored. Furthermore, when Moses asked for donations to build the Tabernacle in Exodus 35:27-28, it was the people who brought the donations first. They, the princes learned from their mistakes and brought their personal offerings first, even though the offering was made on behalf of the whole tribe. Their offerings were an expression of unity of the Israelites as well as showing their unity that in spiritual level we are all one essence.

Why did the Torah list all the offerings individually rather than lumping them together? The answer is in conformity. We recite the same words in our prayers. We pray together as a unit. We perform same mitzvot (deeds). We are a unit, and yet at the same time we are an individual (by bringing separate offering) to express our own feelings without causing harm to others.

¹¹ Numbers 6:26

¹² ibid

¹³ The Zohar, 3:147a

¹⁴ Exodus 34:6-7

¹⁵ Numbers 14:18