

Parshat Naso 5777

Naso in Numbers-connections with Shavuot

Naso is the longest sedra in the Torah in terms of pesukim. It has 176. Bava Basra is the longest tractate of Shas and contains 176 dafim. The longest of all the Tehillim is number 119 which has-you guessed it-176 pesukim. So what's so special about the number 176?

Of course sefirah has only 7 weeks, but if we kept on counting, Naso would be in the 8th week. The Maharal refers to the number 8 as meaning lifnim mishurat hadin representing something beyond nature, whereas the number 7 represents this world.

The world was created in 7 days. The rainbow has 7 colours. 70 korbanot are offered up on Succot representing the 70 nations of the world but on Shemini Atzeret there is just one more korban-a korban that goes beyond the number 7- representing the chosen people who are ein mazal l'Yisrael.

Brit mila is lechatchila performed on the 8th day as we "perfect creation" by going beyond the natural. The word Shemona (8) is linked with the word shemen (oil). Oil when mixed with other liquids such as water will separate and rise to the top as if to confirm that the number 8 is above and beyond the norm.

The Aron, with the Luchot placed inside was situated in the center of the camp of Bnai Yisrael. The 22,000 leviim surrounded the Aron. There are 22 letters in aleph bet and those 22 letters are the raw material from which the Torah is written.

22 times 8 equals 176

When the number of letters from which the Torah is written are multiplied by the power which is above and beyond nature, we find one of the many connections between matan Torah and this week's sedra.

Everlasting blessings

Introducing the beracha of Birchat Kohanim in this week's parsha, chapter 6:23 states:-

דַּבֵּר אֶל אֶהֱרֹן וְאֶל בָּנָיו לֵאמֹר כֹּה תְבָרְכוּ אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אָמֹר לָהֶם

"Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying: This is how you shall bless the children of Israel, saying to them"

Rashi on the words אָמֹר לָהֶם "saying to them" says that the word אָמֹר is of the same form as זָכוֹר "remember" and שָׁמֹר "safeguard". What can this mean?

Rav Soloveitchik says that the reason the Torah uses the word zAchor and not the word zEechor is because zEechor implies something immediate and limited in scope. The word zAchor implies long lasting and multi-dimensional. He explains that the effect of each Shabbat should also be felt during the week leading up to it, and extend beyond into the following week. Shabbat is therefore being compared by Rashi to Bircat Kohanim. The impact of the beracha is not meant to be momentary. Rather, its effect should be everlasting. That is why the beracha adds the word be'ahavah "with love" which is not found with other berachot generally. That is also why in chutz la'arezt we only have Bichat Kohanim on Yom Tov, as that is when we are in a state of simcha to properly receive a beracha which lasts forever.

But what happened to שָׁמֹר? Why does Rashi also compare this word to אָמֹר?

זָכוֹר refers to the negative mitzvot of Shabbat. Such mitsvot play a crucial role in preserving the kedushah of Shabbat. This teaches that you can't have the long lasting positive aspects of Shabbat without the everlasting safeguards that preserve the kedushah of Shabbat.