



Yeshivat Ma'alot

Parashat Nasso

Rav Yehoshua Weitzman shlit"a

ישיבת מעלות

פרשת נשא

רב יהושע ויצמן שליט"א

Different Intentions

This week's parasha, Parashat Nasso, is the longest parasha in the entire Torah. Reb Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin also notes that the Midrash and Zohar on the parasha are especially lengthy. One explanation for this is that every year, Parashat Nasso is read the Shabbat after Shavuot. The spiritual abundance that is brought into the world on Shavuot, reliving Matan Torah, is expressed in the length of the parasha and the wealth of Divrei Torah within it.

The main bulk of the Parasha is taken up by what is known as the Parashat Hanesi'im. Parashat Hanesi'im relates the gifts that each prince, Nasi, brought after the dedication of the Mishkan. Each Nasi brought the same gift on his appointed day, for twelve consecutive days. Although each one brought the exact same gift, the Torah still goes through great length to write out the entire list of gifts for each and every Nasi.

Chazal¹ shed light onto the reason why the Torah seems to be so repetitive. They explain that although the Nesi'im brought identical gifts, each one had his own unique kavannah. This kavannah, intention, was rooted in the distinctive essence of each tribe. The Midrash explains what the different intentions of each tribe were. Yehuda offered their gifts because the line of royalty came from them. Yissachar offered their gifts with the Torah in mind, for they loved the Torah more than any of the other tribes. Zevulun brought their contributions with the tribe of Yissachar in mind. Zevulun was blessed with financial prosperity, and with this they supported Yissachar, who spent their time learning Torah. Reuven had the kavannah of their tribe in mind when their gift was brought, while Shimon's focus was placed on the Mishkan when their donation was brought. Gad brought their offering with the exodus from Egypt in mind. Efraim meditated on the fact that Ya'akov gave them precedence over Menasheh when they were blessed, while Menaseh meditated on the fact the birthright was revoked from Reuven and given to their ancestor Yosef. Binyamin focused on their mother Rachel, who was Ya'akov's favorite wife. Dan had kavannah for Shimshon when they brought their contribution, because Shimshon was a descendant from their tribe. When Asher brought their gifts they had in mind the fact that Hashem chose Bnei Yisrael over all of the other nations, and when Naftali brought their gift, they had in mind the holy patriarchs and matriarchs.

¹ Bamidbar Rabbah 13, 14

What is the deeper meaning behind the fact that all the Nesi'im brought identical gifts with diverse intentions? Heavenly abundance, gifts from Hashem come down to this world evenly; all of what Hashem has to bring down to us is, in its root, the same. Yet once it enters this world it takes different forms. For one person, this abundance can come in the form of great wealth, while for another person it can be translated as health, while for a third person it can be revealed as wisdom or knowledge. The great kabbalist, Rabbi Moshe Kordovo explained this idea through two different parables². If a person takes water and puts it into different sized and different colored glasses, the water appears to be tall or short, dark or bright. Yet in truth the water remains exactly the same. The only difference is the vessels in which the water is placed. So too, if light is shone through different colored windows, the light appears to be different colors. Yet in truth, the light that shines through one window is the same as the light that shines through a different window; the only difference is the colors of the windows.

These ideas can be elaborated even further. Not only does the shape and color of the water change, depending on type of vessel it's put into, but also the use for the water differs. The water can be used to drink, to clean, to water a field, or to purify a person. The water is the same water, yet depending on its vessel it has a different function. So too with regard to the light, depending on how it is received it can be used for different functions. So too is correct with regard to heavenly abundance, shefa, which Hashem gives to mankind. The shefa itself is the same, yet it is translated differently in this world based on the vessels which receive it.

The same is true of learning Torah. Although there is only one Torah, due to the fact that each person is unique, the Torah is transmitted differently through each individual. Harav Kook writes³ that each time the Torah is transmitted through a different individual, a new kind of light is brought into the world, because each individual is a different vessel for the Torah. Therefore, when a person learns Torah, he is literally expanding and broadening the definition of Torah. All the more so when a person contributes new ideas to Torah. Consequently, when a person learns Torah, he should learn with great joy and love for the Torah, because he is able to reveal more and more of Hashem's light in this world.

This concept can also be applied to the Nesi'im. The shefa that was brought down to the world during the dedication of the Mishkan was the same shefa; therefore all the Nesi'im brought the same gifts. Yet because it was brought down through different individuals, each Nassi had different kavannah behind each gift. From this we are able to discover great depth in this week's parasha from p'sukim that ordinarily look repetitive. As we deepen our understanding of the Torah, may we all merit to bring down heavenly abundance, shefa, to the greatest of our potential. Shabbat Shalom.

² Pardes Rimonim, Sha'ar 4, chapter 4

³ Orot Hatorah 2, 1