

NASO

35th of 54 sedras;

2nd of 10 in Bamidbar

Written on 311 lines in a Sefer Torah

That's a record setting 7.4 columns

26 Parshiyot; 18 open, 8 closed

Only 4 sedras have more parshiyot

176 p'sukim, 2264 words, 8632 letters

Indisputably the longest sedra in the Torah, however you count length.

Naso is well below average, though, in length of p'sukim, but not enough to affect its first place ranking.



MITZVOT

18 mitzvot; 7 positive, 11 prohibitions -

the most of Bamidbar's 10 sedras

18 might not seem to be that many mitzvot compared to the biggies, but only 9 sedras (of 54) in the Torah have more mitzvot than Naso.

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI; L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek & pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

Kohen - First Aliya 17 p'sukim - 4:21-37

[P> 4:21 (8)] The second count of Levi continues with the family unit Gei-r'shon. The first count was of males from 30 days old and up. This count is of males from 30 to 50 years of age. That constitutes the workforce for the Mishkan.

Note: The starting age for a Levi's service is 30. In the Beit HaMikdash, there is no maximum age. With the Mishkan, however, since a Levi's work required carrying Mishkan components in addition to singing and guarding, there was a mandatory retirement age of 50 for the strenuous tasks.

Also note that the family-branch of K'hat was presented and their tasks were enumerated at the end of Bamidbar (in the parsha that also began with the same words - NASO ET ROSH...)

Gei-r'shon's tasks include: the three coverings of the Mishkan - the Mishkan, the Ohel, and the Michseh; the curtain at the entrance of Ohel Moed; the linen curtain material that surrounded the courtyard, and the entrance curtain of the courtyard; the securing stakes and related tools. Leviyim were to function only as instructed by the kohanim. The supervisor of family Gei-r'shon is Aharon's son Itamar.

Question to challenge kids & guests: Look over the list of that which the Gershon family carried. Why isn't the Parochet on the list? The answer is at the end of Bamidbar.

[S> 4:29 (9)] Family Merari was also counted - males between 30 and 50 years of age. They were in charge of the wallboards of the Mishkan, beams, posts, and foundation blocks. Similarly, the courtyard posts, stakes, foundation blocks, and related tools. Itamar was their supervisor too. (Merari used 4 of the 6 wagons - see towards the end of the sedra - and Gershon, the other 2. K'hat used their shoulders.)

The counts of the workforces of Levi came to: 2750 for K'hat...

Levi - Second Aliya 12 p'sukim - 4:38-49

The position of SHEINI might vary in different editions of the Chumash.

[S> 4:38 (12)] 2630 for Gershon, and 3200 for Merari. The total workforce of Levi in the Mishkan was 8580.

SDT: LA'AVOD AVODAT AVODA VA'AVODAT MASA... Note the four words in a row with the same root. Rashi says the Avodat Avoda (kind of a strange phrase) refers to playing musical instruments. Avodat Masa is the heavy manual labor - constructing, carrying, taking apart...

Shlishi - Third Aliya 10 p'sukim - 5:1-10

[P> 5:1 (4)] People who are ritually defiled from any of three specific types (TZARAAT, ZAV, T'MEI MEIT), are to be excluded from the camp pending purification [362, A31 5:2]. We are taught that the three have different restrictions, as follows: A M'TZORA is excluded from the entire camp of Israel and must remain in isolation outside the camp until purification. The ZAV and ZAVA are permitted in the camp of Israel, but are banned from the Levite camp (and, of course, from the area of the Mikdash). [Har HaBayit today, not counting the area where the Beit HaMikdash and its courtyard stood, has the sanctity of the Levite camp (according to some authorities).] A person who came into contact with a dead body is banned only from the "Camp of the Divine Presence" (Mikdash and its courtyard) [363, L77 5:3].

[P> 5:5 (6)] A person who sins is required to verbally confess (when repenting) [364, A73 5:6]. He/she must also make restitution (if money was involved) and pay a penalty to the victim.

Take a close look at the portion in the sedra dealing with repentance. It speaks of a man or a woman sinning and of THEIR (plural, not his or her) requirement to confess and do T'shuva. It is often the case that

when an individual sins, others are somewhat responsible. Perhaps a parent who did not educate the child properly. Maybe someone who made stealing (for example) too easy and/or tempting. Does society bear some of the responsibility for a sinner's actions, because of misplaced emphasis on the wrong values? A person is primarily accountable for his own actions. But the Torah's use of the plural, reminds us of our duty to develop an environment of Torah values and ethics that will be conducive for all members of society to enthusiastically follow a Torah way of life. This is part of KOL YISRAEL AREIVIM ZEH BAZEH.

Perhaps the mitzva of EGLA ARUFA illustrates this point - part of the procedure required upon finding a dead body - that met with foul play, as they say - is for the elders of the town closest to the body to proclaim that they didn't kill the person. There is an implication of involvement in the person's death. So too, the fact that the death of a Kohen Gadol releases "inadvertent killers" from their cities of refuge, implies responsibility on the part of the spiritual leader of the people for the carelessness that leads to SHOGEG deaths.

MITZVAnotes

According to Rambam (and others?), this is the one Torah mitzva among the components of repentance. The Rambam does not say - if a person sins, he must repent... He writes, If a person sins, WHEN he does T'shuva, (recognizing the act as a sin, stopping from doing it, regret for the past, acceptance for the future, changing one's ways,) the repentant individual MUST verbally confess his sins before G-d.

One can suggest that Rambam holds that T'shuva itself is not one of the 613 mitzvot, but rather a natural result of a Jew's accepting G-d's gift - the opportunity for a second chance. When a person sins and does T'shuva... The mitzva is to confess verbally to G-d (as part of the process of T'shuva) and not to let the process be exclusively in one's heart and mind.

Other mitzva-counters do include T'shuva among the 613 mitzvot. The whole process of T'shuva should be instinctive and not even require a command -- except for the verbal component of the mitzva. G-d knows our thoughts; why do I need to verbalize them? Therefore, VIDUI needs to be and is a command.

Another way to explain why the mitzva of T'shuva per se is not on Rambam's list of 613 is because it

spans all mitzvot, rather than being a specific mitzva on its own. For example... The Torah forbids doing melacha on Shabbat. If one violates this prohibition, he is required to repent. Repentance is part of the mitzva prohibiting melacha on Shabbat. So too for all mitzvot, positives as well as prohibitions.

Bench after a meal; if you don't, repent your non-fulfillment of this mitzva and now be careful to bench after every meal.

T'shuva can be viewed as a VAT tacked on to every other mitzva. As such, it does not get counted on its own among the Taryag mitzvot. (The specific command to verbally confess as part of the T'shuva process does get counted among the 613, because it is specific).

On the other hand, others disagree with Rambam and DO count T'shuva as one of the 613. Some include VIDUI in the mitzva of T'shuva and some count it separately.

Whichever approach to T'shuva, the least instinctive or logical component is Verbal Confession.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya 48 p'sukim - 5:11-6:27

This long portion primarily contains the topics of the SOTA (wife suspected of infidelity and duly

warned), the NAZIR (one who vows abstinence of a specific type), and Birkat Kohanim.

[P> 5:11 (21)] If a wife is unfaithful to her husband, and there is no proof of her adultery -or- if a man suspects his wife of unfaithfulness, even if it is unwarranted, he may formally warn her in front of witnesses not to be seen in the company of a specific man. This warning is a precondition to the whole topic of Sota. Suspicion alone, or even actual adultery, does not produce the conditions for Sota without a formal, witnessed warning by the husband. Once the warning is issued, it is a mitzva (requirement) to proceed with the Sota-process [365, A223 5:12]. The husband must bring his wife to the kohen at the Beit HaMikdash. A barley-flour offering is brought. No oil [366, L104 5:15] or spice [367, L105 5:15] is used with it, since the issue at hand is so unpleasant before G-d.

The kohen prepares a potion consisting of water from the KIYOR (the washing basin in the courtyard of the Beit HaMikdash), earth from the floor of the Mikdash, and the dissolved writing of this portion of the Torah. (Parshat Sota is written on klaf and then the writing is dissolved in the Sota potion.) The kohen administers an oath to the woman asking her to swear to her innocence, if that be the case, or to admit her guilt. The woman is warned of serious adverse effects of the potion which she will be given to

drink, if in fact she has committed adultery, and of the favorable effect of the potion if she is innocent.

The seriousness with which the Torah treats the issue of Sota is motivated by G-d's desire (so to speak) to bring harmony between husband and wife (when feasible) and the notion that doubt is extremely detrimental to a relationship. G-d, so to speak, permits (nay, requires!) His Name to be written and then erased in order to advance the cause of marital harmony.

There are many other details, too numerous to include here, concerning the conditions necessary for the Sota-process to go through to its end. In other words, there would be many situations when the oath and potion would not be used.

[P> 6:1 (21)] A man or a woman may make a Nazirite vow to G-d. This is usually, but not always, for a period of one month. A Nazir is forbidden to drink wine **[368, L202 6:3]**, eat grapes **[369, L203 6:3]**, raisins **[370, L204 6:3]**, grape seeds **[371, L205 6:4]**, and grape skins **[372, L206 6:4]**. A Nazir may not cut his hair **[373, L209 6:5]**, but rather must let his hair grow long **[374, A92 6:5]**. A Nazir may not come into contact with a dead body **[375, L208 6:6]**, nor become ritually defiled even from contact with the body of a close relative **[376, L207 6:7]**.

If a Nazir does become defiled, he must purify himself (over a 7-day period), shave his hair, bring two doves and a

lamb as korbanot, and begin his period of Nazir anew. When a Nazir successfully concludes the term of his vow, he brings two lambs and a ram plus various types of flour-oil offerings and wine for libation **[377, A93 6:13]**. Included with these korbanot is a sin offering. (This implies that it is not entirely proper for one to accept upon himself a Nazirite vow. The Torah sometimes provides extreme measures for one who feels he must live a stricter life in order to correct certain short-comings, but still reminds us that it is not a preferable way of life.) Part of this mitzva is for the Nazir to shave off his hair, which is put into the fire under his korban. Afterwards, he may drink wine.

[P> 6:22 (2)] Next, the Torah presents the "three-fold blessing" which forms the text of "Birkat Kohanim". **(We also say these p'sukim every morning as part of Birchot HaTorah, and we "borrow" the bracha for our children and grandchildren on Leil Shabbat, even though we are not all Kohanim.)** When the kohanim pronounce this blessing, G-d will bless them and the people of Israel. Birkat Kohanim is a mitzva upon kohanim, daily **[378, A26 6:23]**. Unusual as this might seem, each pasuk of Birkat Kohanim is a separate parsha (s'tuma).

[S> 6:24 (1)] The first pasuk: May G-d bless you, and keep you;

[S> 6:25 (1)] The second pasuk: May G-d make His face to shine upon you,

and be gracious to you;

[S> 6:26 (1)] The third pasuk: May G-d lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

[S> 6:27 (1)] And the final statement on this issue from G-d: And they (the kohanim) will place My name on Bnei Yisrael, and I will bless them (either the people or the kohanim or both).

FYI - When two or more kohanim are blessing the people, they do not begin to recite their preliminary bracha until a Yisrael calls out KOHANIM! True, Birkat Kohanim is the kohen's 'job', but he needs permission of the congregation, so to speak, before he can utter the blessing.

Similarly, in the Beit HaMikdash, the kohanim on duty in the morning prepare themselves to offer the morning sacrifice, they then wait for sunrise, and then they wait for a Yisrael to tell them to begin their Avoda.

As we know, the chazan prompts the kohanim for each word of Birkat Kohanim. This is more than just keeping the kohanim from getting mixed up in their recitation. Sources teach us that the chazan is instrumental in bring the bracha from HaShem, so to speak, to the kohanim, so that they can properly bless the people. It is G-d's bracha, brought down via the chazan and administered by the kohanim that results in

Bnei Yisrael to be blessed each day (or whenever there is duchening).

It follows from this, that the chazan should say the words of Birkat Kohanim in a loud voice (like the rest of his repetition) and not in a low voice directed only at the kohanim. It is part of CHAZARAT HASHATZ, and it has a key role in the B'rachot, as above.

Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 41 p'sukim - 7:1-41

From this point until the end of the sedra and into the beginning of the next sedra are the readings for the 8 days of Chanuka. (Some start from the Birkat Kohanim portion at the end of R'vi'i. Some communities also read "the gifts of the tribal leaders" on the first 12 days of Nissan, but at the end of davening, not like a regular K'ri'at HaTorah.)

[S> 7:1 (11)] On the day the Mishkan was completed, it and its furnishings, altars and its utensils, were anointed and sanctified. The tribal leaders gave to the Mishkan six covered wagons and twelve oxen, two to pull each wagon. The wagons were to be distributed to the Leviyim proportional to the tasks of the different families. Gershon received two wagons and four oxen. Merari received four wagons and eight oxen (because their loads were considerably heavier and bulkier). No wagons were given to K'hat, since they were responsible for the sacred articles which had to be carried by

shoulder. That the Aron was to be carried on the shoulders of Leviyim from family K'hat is a mitzva [379, A34 7:9].

Next follow 12 portions of 6 p'sukim each, which are practically identical. Each portion contains the name of a tribal leader and a description of the gifts of gold and silver vessels and animals for sacrifices that were presented on one of the twelve days of dedication of the Mishkan.

[S> 7:12 (6)] Nachshon b. Aminadav of Yehuda was the first to present his gifts. Although the gifts were identical, some of the wording is curiously different, aside, of course from the different day, tribe, and leader. For example, the words VAYHI HAMA K'RIV precede BAYOM HARISHON. This is different from the other 11 days. And Nachson ben Aminadav is described as being of the tribe of Yehuda. See other days to compare and contrast.

[P> 7:18 (6)] On the second day, the leader of Yissachar presented his gifts to the Mishkan. Here we also find a different wording. On the second day, HIKRIV Netanel b. Tzu'ar, the leader of Yissachar. Then it continues with HIKRIV ET KORBANO. Nachshon was called a MAKRIV, noun, bringer of a gift. For Netanel, the verb HIKRIV is used twice. No one else has that word. Rashi explains that Reuven wanted to go second (probably first, but Yehuda had that honor). Moshe said that it was G-d's command that the gifts be in order of camps. That is, Degel Machane Yehuda was first, meaning Yehuda, then Yissachar, then Zevulun. Then came

Reuven and his camp-partners, etc. Rashi points to the "missing" YUD in HIKRIV, allowing the word to be read HAKREIV, a command to bring his offering on the second day. Rashi further says (from Rabbi Moshe HaDarshan), that Yissachar got second honor because he was the one who suggested that the Nesi'im bring gifts.

[P> 7:24 (6)] On the third day, the leader of Zevulun offered his gifts. This wording - on the so-and-so day, NASI (leader) of the children of so-and-so (tribe), Ploni ben Ploni. His korban... now follows through the rest of the days. From day 3 to 12, the wording fits the same pattern. The differences are found only on the first two days.

[P> 7:30 (6)] Reuven's leader is on the fourth day.

[P> 7:36 (6)], and Shimon's is on the fifth day.

The gifts of the fifth day conclude the fifth Aliya, CHAMISHI.

Shishi - 6th Aliya - 30 p'sukim - 7:42-71

[P> 7:42 (6)] And the gifts of the sixth day begin the SHISHI Aliya. Finishing off the South Camp of Reuven and Shimon is the tribe of GAD, whose leader brings his gifts on the sixth day.

[P> 7:48 (6)] On the 7th day, the leader of Efrayim, Elyasaf b. D'u'el.

[P> 7:54 (6)] On the 8th day, Menashe's NASI, Gamliel b. P'datzur.

[P> 7:60 (6)] The camp of the children of

Rachel Imeinu conclude their offerings with Binyamin on the ninth day.

[P> 7:66 (6)] The final camp - the north Dan camp, begins its gifts on the tenth day with Achiezer b. Amishadai.

Sh'VII Seventh Aliya 18 p'sukim - 7:72-89

[P> 7:72 (6)] On the 11th day, Asher's leader brought his gifts.

Notice that for 10 days, the format is the same - BAYOM HA-(RISHON, SHEINI... ASIRI...). For the 11th day, it is B'YOM ASHTEI ASAR YOM.

[P> 7:78 (6)] Finally, the leader of Naftali presents his gifts B'YOM SH'NEIM ASAR YOM...

[P> 7:84 (6)] Which brings us to the final parsha of NASO, the final six p'sukim, which summarize the gifts of the 12 leaders of the tribes.

General comment: Although the gifts are identical, there are sources that teach that each leader brought his gifts with special kavanot and symbolisms unique to his tribe. No competition on the outside, but different meanings on the inside.

Then the Torah presents totals and summaries of the "Dedication" gifts. ZOT CHANUKAT HAMIZBEI'ACH...

The last pasuk seems to go beyond the summary. When Moshe came to Ohel Mo'ed to speak to HaShem, he heard the Voice speaking to him from the KAPORET (lid of the ARON), from

between the two K'RUVIM (Cherubs), and that is how G-d spoke to Moshe. All aspects of getting the Mishkan to function are completed. Then the Torah tells us how G-d communicated with Moshe.

The last three p'sukim are repeated for the Maftir.

Haftara - 24 p'sukim - Sho-f'tim 13:2-25

The sedra teaches us the laws of the Nazir. The haftara tells us of a famous Nazir, Shimshon. The nazirship of Shimshon is not typical. His was "ordered" by G-d via a heavenly angel and was to be a Nazir from birth, for Shimshon's entire life. "Regular" nazirship is proclaimed by a vow and is for a limited time, usually one month. The nazir's outward appearance - his unshorn hair - should be the external evidence of an inner sanctity. In Shimshon's case, his nazirship was accompanied by miraculous feats and heroic achievements against the Philistines who were Israel's major adversaries of the time.

The angel instructs Shimshon's mother (wife of Mano'ach of the tribe of Dan) as to how she must behave when she becomes pregnant. She must not drink wine nor eat anything Tamei.

The part about drinking wine is good advice to pregnant women today, too, more than 3000 yrs since Shimshon's birth.