

Drash - New

Shabbat Shalom. Today's Torah portion is Naso. It takes place when the Israelites are in the wilderness. They are on their way to the promised land, and 12 chieftains are making offerings to dedicate to the mishkan, or tabernacle, which was the holy place at the center of the Israelite camp. Each of the twelve tribes of Israel were ordered to send one chieftain to the tabernacle with some of the following offerings: rams, bulls, lambs, goats, and a long list of more things. Each of the chieftains were to get all the items from their tribe. So each tribe gave up everything from the list of items to the chieftains, to sacrifice to the tabernacle.

Now, you might have noticed that the 8 torah portions that we heard today were practically the same. It shows the same list of items in every one of them. Each chieftain brought the exact same offering. The only thing that makes them different is the day and who brought the items. Many people have asked, "What is the meaning of repeatedly listing the contributions different times when they are all the same?"

In a midrash that I read, one explanation is that each of the chieftains were their own person, and we should respect each of them as an individual. It says that the individual matters a lot, and even though God tried to equalize them by giving all 12 tribes the same list, they are not the same, and shall never be considered the same. Personally, I agree that this is very important, but I took something different away from this parsha:

In my opinion, it is about the individuals coming together and working together to create something better than anyone could do on their own. When all of the Israelites donate to the chieftain to give to the tabernacle, that is teamwork. Imagine if they did not come together, and one chieftain had to do all the work to get the long list of items. A job like that could have taken years. I think that this story is about the power we can have when we all come together, not just the power of the individual. Even if one Israelite donates a lamb, they are playing a big part in the sacrifices. Each and every part of the team is needed, and the team can not function with only one person.

As some of you might know, soccer plays a big part in my life. When I first started to think how this relates to my life, I immediately thought about soccer. On my soccer team, we need every one of our players. No matter what position you can play, we need you. Maybe you're not the person who scores the goals, but that does not make your contribution any less important. This is just like the chieftains and the Israelites. The chieftains need the Israelites and the Israelites need the chieftains. In soccer, one player can not win the game alone, but with the support of the entire team, that is how a game can be won. Of course, in this Torah portion, nobody is competing, but you get the idea: When individuals come together, you can accomplish a lot more.

Now, you might be thinking, which answer is correct, the midrash that we should respect each individual? Or my interpretation about teamwork? Can both answers be correct? In my opinion, both answers are correct because every person brings something different to the table in teamwork. For example, in soccer, everybody's personal training is different, and when different types of skills come together, it creates the magic that we use to win games. One of my teammates, August, is a defender. Since I am an attacker, we train very differently, but when the defense is strong, this gives room for the offense to have a chance at scoring. One time at

practice, August just got the ball from the goalkeeper and dribbled down the line. I made a run on the opposite side of the field and August gave me an epic ball straight toward the goal. It was just me and the goalie and with a one-touch left-foot shot, the ball was in the back of the net. While I happened to be the one scoring the goal, it could not have happened without everybody on the team. Now, you might be thinking, this play really only included me and August, but that is not true. All of the 11 players on the field made a unique contribution because they helped create space for August to dribble. August and I train differently, because our positions and duties are different. August does workouts with his dad to get strong, and he needs it in the games to physically force people out of the way. I work on dribbling for a couple of reasons: first, I love to help my team advance up the field toward the goal. Second, I like to confuse my opponents with my tricky footwork.

You may be wondering, how this relates to Judaism. When I ask myself this question, I think about how we need 10 Jewish adults to form a minyan. The significance of this is that each of the individuals have to come together as a team, so that everybody can pray. Similarly, there are 2 candles on Shabbat. I recently heard a teaching, and learned that the second candle is there only to accompany the first one. This is so a candle never stands alone, just like we shouldn't be alone in Jewish community. If you have 9 people, you cannot pray. If you have 1 candle, its not Shabbat. I have realized that it takes a community to have a Bar Mitzvah, and I could not be standing here today without my parents, my tutor, my friends, my siblings, my amitim classmates, and the entire congregation that is here supporting me. If I were to leave you with one thing to think about, it would be that each person's contribution might be small on its own, but enormous when it's a part of something greater.

Shabbat Shalom.