

PLAY IT AGAIN, SCHLOOMIEL

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Naso is the longest portion in the Torah. It did not have to be that way, but the Torah chose to include seventy verses that say the same thing -- over and over again.

The end of the parsha discusses the dedication of the Mishkan (Tabernacle). It describes the offerings that every Nasi (prince) brought in honor of the auspicious occasion. Each Nasi brought the same items.

Numbers 7:12: "On the first day, Nachshon the son of Aminadav brought his offering. It was (comprised of) one silver bowl that weighed a hundred and thirty shekels; one silver basin that weighed seventy shekels. Both were filled with fine flour and oil. One golden ladle filled with incense. A young bull, a ram, a sheep, and so on." The Torah uses six verses to expound, in precise detail, the exact measurements and components of the offering.

On the second day, Nesanel ben Tzuar of the tribe of Yissachar brought the exact same offering. On the third day Eliyav of Zevulun performed the same ceremony. Elitzoor ben Shdayoor of Reuvain repeated the same ritual on the fourth day, and on the fifth day of the dedication, Shimon's prince Schloomiel, repeated the same. This was repeated twelve separate days, by twelve different N'siim (princes). And each day the Torah repeats verbatim the entire offering, changing only the name of the presenter and his tribe.

Normally, the Torah is concise and abbreviated. It leaves us to expound the hidden and to deduce the conclusions. In fact, the two Talmudic Tractates that explain the intricate laws of marriage and divorce are derived from only a handful of verses in Deuteronomy. Why, if all twelve brought the exact same gifts, is each and every Nasi's offering detailed over and over?

The Torah should simply say the following: the daily offering was brought on twelve consecutive days. It consisted of the following: "one silver bowl that weighed a hundred and thirty shekels one silver basin that weighed seventy shekels filled with fine flour and oil. One golden ladle filled with incense a young bull, a ram, a sheep, and so on."

Next, the Torah should list the names of the twelve princes who brought the offerings. The first day... Nachshon of Yehudah; the second day... Nesanel of Yissachar; and so on. That way, seventy verses would be compacted into no more than ten or fifteen! And Parshas Naso would be fifty verses shorter.

A noted American Rabbi was invited to address two major cities in South Africa. Since the cities were hundreds of miles apart, he only prepared one speech for both events. It was a wonderful lecture. It encompassed a wide spectrum of Jewish ideas and was filled with Midrash and Jewish law. Informative, enlightening and entertaining, it was the best speech he had ever prepared.

The first night's audience attested to that. They sat with their mouths open, taking in every nuance and motion of the dramatic presentation. After the lecture a crowd gathered around the Rabbi to both praise him and hear variations on his poignant theme.

After such a wonderful reception, the Rabbi thought that the second evening on the other side of the country should be a breeze. As he walked up to the podium to deliver his magnum opus he looked at the crowd and froze. He spotted at least fifty faces of people he was sure had attended the previous night's speech.

Stunned, he quickly ruffled through the index cards of his mind. He pieced together parts of an old High Holy Day speech, added little from Chanuka, Purim, and the Hagadah. What resulted was a scattered array of varying thoughts. To say the least, it was not his best performance.

After the speech the same faces of the previous evening gathered once again around the Rabbi. "I'm sorry," he stammered to them, "I had originally planned to repeat last night's speech. Seeing your faces, I hastily arranged a piecemeal lecture based on some previous talks. Had I known you were coming, I would have prepared a totally new talk. I am sorry for my poor performance."

"But, Rabbi," they replied. "That is exactly why we came! Last night's talk was the most fascinating we had ever heard. We expected you to repeat it. We came all the way to hear it over again word for word!"

The Torah, in repeating the twelve offerings, and spending six verses on each one, leaves us with a message that is as powerful as it is pertinent. Many of our deeds are repeats of generations passed. Many are repeats from yesterday. They are all beloved and cherished. Day after day after day... Hashem wants to hear and see the exact same prayer, blessing charitable action over and over again. It is as dear as the first time.

Good Shabbos!

Copyright © 1997 by [Rabbi M. Kamenetzky](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

If you enjoy the weekly Drasha, now you can receive the best of Drasha in book form!

Purchase **Parsha Parables** - from the Project Genesis bookstore - **Genesis Judaica** - at a very special price!

The author is the Dean of the [Yeshiva of South Shore](#).

Drasha is the e-mail edition of FaxHomily, a weekly torah facsimile on the weekly portion which is sponsored by ***The Henry and Myrtle Hirsch Foundation***

Books by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky:

