

"MEAT, WINE AND BREAD"

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Shemini

"Meat, Wine and Bread"

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Today's Learning:
Nach: Zechariah 1-2
Niddah 10:1-2
O.C. 452:6-453:1
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Sanhedrin 57
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Pe'ah 20

The Midrash Rabbah at the beginning of this week's parashah cites the verses (Mishlei 9:1-3), "With all forms of wisdom did she build her house; she carved out its seven pillars. She prepared her meat, mixed her wine and also set her table. She has sent out her maidens to announce upon the city heights," and offers several interpretations. The sage Rabbi Abba bar Kahana states that the verse refers to the Ohel Mo'ed, whose dedication is described in part in this week's parashah. "With all forms of wisdom did she build her house" refers to Betzael [who built the mishkan], about whom it says (Shmot 31:3), "I have filled him with a G-dly spirit, with wisdom, etc." "She carved out its seven pillars" refers to the Seven Days of Dedication [of the kohanim], about which it says (Vayikra 8:33), "For you shall be inaugurated for a seven-day period." "She prepared her meat" refers to the sacrifices. "Mixed her wine" refers to the wine libations. "Set her table" refers to the arrangement of the lechem ha'panim. "She has sent out her maidens to announce upon the city heights" refers to Moshe Rabbeinu, as it is written (at the beginning of our parashah), "It was on the eighth day, Moshe

summoned Aharon and his sons. . ." [Until here from the midrash.]

R' Yitzchak Ze'ev Yadler z"l (1843-1917; Yerushalayim) explains: The midrash is informing us of the importance of the mishkan, for once it was completed it became the channel through which Hashem's gifts flow to the world. This was possible because Betzalel built the mishkan using the same Divine Names with which Hashem created the world. Therefore, just as the world was created in seven days, so the mishkan was dedicated in seven days. And, there were three types of services performed in the mishkan, each of which paralleled one of the three ways in which Hashem relates to the world: (1) through nature, (2) by overturning nature, and (3) through miracles.

The first service involves animal sacrifices, which parallel Hashem's acting through nature in that animals exist to sustain the natural order of the universe through doing man's work and giving strength to those who eat them.

The second service involves pouring wine, which parallels overturning the natural order in that the consumption of wine is often disruptive to man's productive activities.

The third service involves the lechem ha'panim, the bread which miraculously remained fresh and warm for seven days. This parallels G-d's miraculous actions. (Tiferet Zion)

"And when they are dead, anything upon which part of them will fall shall become tamei, whether it is a wooden vessel, a garment, leather or sackcloth -- any utensil with which work is done . . ." (11:32)

The Gemara (Chagigah 26b) derives from here that any object which is intended to remain stationary is not susceptible to becoming tamei. The Gemara itself then notes a seeming contradiction, for the shulchan / table was made to remain in the Temple at all times, yet the shulchan was susceptible to tumah. [See Chagigah 26b for the Gemara's resolution to this question.]

The Tosafot challenge the assumption behind the Gemara's question: Why does the Gemara assume that the shulchan was an object that was made to remain stationary? After all, for 40 years in the desert, the shulchan traveled with Bnei Yisrael. Even though the shulchan remained stationary once the Temple was built, the fact remains that it was a transient object for 40 years!

The Tosafot answer: Since it only traveled together with the rest of the utensils and objects of the mishkan, it is as if it was not transient.

What does the answer of the Tosafot mean? R' Avigdor Nebenzahl shlita (rabbi of the Old City of Yerushalayim) explains: The Torah (Bemidbar 11:12) describes Bnei Yisrael's journey through the desert as being "as a nurse carries an infant." R' Chaim Shmuelevitz z"l explains that when a mother carries an infant, the mother moves, but the infant does not move, for the infant is always in the same place, i.e., the mother's arms. So, too, although the camp of Bnei Yisrael wandered from place-to-place over a 40-year period, Bnei Yisrael themselves were always in the same place, i.e., under

Hashem's protection.

Similarly, R' Nebenzahl writes, the shulchan did travel during the 40 years in the desert. However, the Tosafot are explaining that since it always traveled with the other implements of the mishkan, it was stationary relative to the mishkan. Possibly, R' Nebenzahl adds, the shulchan even traveled to the northwest of the golden altar, just as its place in the mishkan and Temple was slightly to the northwest of the golden altar. (Yavinu Ba'mikra)

Pirkei Avot

"Shimon, his [Rabban Gamliel's] son, says: 'All of my days I was raised among the Sages and I found nothing better for oneself [literally, 'one's body'] than silence; not study, but practice, is the main thing; and one who talks excessively brings on sin'." (1:17)

What is the connection between Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel's first statement (regarding the virtue of silence) and his second statement (regarding the importance of deeds)? R' Avraham Azulai z"l (1570-1643; Morocco and Eretz Yisrael) explains: There is no better way to improve one's character traits than by remaining silent. Lest one object: "How will I make friends if I remain silent?" Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel states that the quality of one's deeds will cause others to come close to him or distance themselves from him.

R' Azulai offers several other interpretations as well: "Silence" refers to patience and restraint in the face of insults. It is not enough to study about the merits of patience and to know that silence is good in such a situation; one must put that knowledge into practice. In this vein, R' Azulai quotes a popular proverb, "A person who cannot take one insult will hear many insults."

Alternatively, the "body" refers to the unlearned masses who occupy themselves with material concerns. For them, silence is preferable, since they have nothing worthwhile to say.

Alternatively, R' Azulai writes, the mishnah can be read as follows: "I found nothing good for one's body from silence." According to this interpretation, it is good for the masses to speak in front of wise men so that the latter can correct the errors of the former and set them on a straight path. (Ahavah Ba'ta'anugim)

R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (1865-1935; Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael) also interprets the mishnah as teaching that no good comes from silence. He explains: The Zohar teaches that teshuvah / repentance is incomplete if it is not articulated. We might have thought otherwise, since the ability to think intelligently is man's crowning trait; nevertheless, speech is an essential element of teshuvah. Thus Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said, "All of my days I was raised among the Sages." Being Sages, they had very well developed powers of thought. Even so, "I found no good coming to the body- i.e., the material part of man which is the cause of sin-from silence."

On the other hand, Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel cautions, do not overestimate the importance of speech. "Not study, but practice, is the main thing." The importance of action is demonstrated by the fact that we eagerly await techiyat ha'metim / the resurrection of the dead, when the body and soul will be reunited. Although the soul is already immortal, it is helpless to act without a body. (Olat Re'iyah II p.162)

Shabbat

The Midrash Rabbah teaches that just as a king does not build a palace without hiring an architect who brings plans to the construction site, so Hashem consulted a plan, i.e., the Torah, when He created the world.

R' Yehuda Ashlag z"l (1885-1954; Poland and Eretz Yisrael) asks: How can Hashem be compared to a mortal king? A mortal king needs plans in order to build a palace, but Hashem has no such need! Furthermore, who created the Torah if not Hashem? He explains:

Hashem created this world as a place where we can overcome challenges posed by the yetzer hara and thus earn eternal reward in the World-to-Come. In order for man to have free will (without which he would have no challenges), however, Hashem had to conceal His "Light." Indeed, the word "olam" / "world" comes from the root which means "concealment." When we say that Hashem looked in the Torah and created the world, we mean that the Torah is the plan He used to conceal His Light. Where is His Light concealed? In the mitzvot of the Torah! It is in this sense that Creation was the invention of something new ("yesh m'ayin"), i.e., He created the constriction of His Light, which was a new concept.

Viewed from this perspective, everything that was created during the Six Days of Creation is a deficiency, for it impedes G-d's Light, but it also is a potential source of blessing. When will this blessing be realized? At the end of 6,000 years when, say our Sages, the world as we know it will come to an end. Why? Because no later than that time our task of revealing the Light hidden in Creation will have been completed. Paralleling that seventh millennium, when the Light will be unconstricted, is the Shabbat, when nothing was created to constrict the Light. (Ma'amar Ha'Torah Ve'ha'Shabbat)

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adira'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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