

A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

This weekly sheet is brought to you by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman of Northwood United Synagogue in conjunction with Shapell's/Darché Noam

PARSHAT TZAV

DVAR TORAH: APPLES IN THE CHAROSET

Almost everything about charoset connects up with marror, the bitter herbs, reminiscent of the bitterness of slavery. Almost everything, except for one ingredient.

We add red wine to the charoset to remind us of the blood of the murdered Jewish children. Rabbi Yochanan (Pesachim 116a) says we should thicken it so it has the consistency of bricks and mortar. We also add spices like cinnamon or ginger that resemble straw, the necessary component of Egyptian bricks that Pharaoh wouldn't even supply us with. Scholars even record one offbeat custom to actually grind a bit of real brick into the charoset. All these ingredients reflect the bitterness of slavery, just as the marror does.

Two other details indicate that charoset is subordinate to the marror. We make a blessing over the marror, not over the charoset. And the marror is dipped in the charoset, which, the Gemara says, counteracted a dangerous ingredient in the marror called kappa. Almost everything about charoset points to it being secondary and ancillary to the marror, except, perhaps, for one ingredient, the apples.

Rabbi Levi (Pesachim 116a) says that charoset should be tart **זכר לתפוח**, to remember the apple. What is that apple we are to remember?

Rashi says that “the apple” refers to the long aggadic development on the verse in the Song of Songs (8:5), “I aroused you under the apple tree.” That aggadta tells how the Jewish women would encourage their husbands during the Egyptian slavery, bringing food to the fields, conceiving children, and later secretly giving birth “under the apple tree.” Those children of the fields were specially cared for and protected by God, and they later flocked to Egypt, building the Jewish nation, that was later redeemed.

The apples do not seem to deepen the bitterness of the marror the way the red wine or spices do. Whereas the wine and spices highlight particularly bitter details of the Egyptian slavery – the murder of Jewish babies or Pharaoh's psychological torture – the apples take charoset in a different direction.

Charoset, according to Rabbi Levi, reminds us of the hope for redemption in the midst of bitter slavery.

Charoset evokes memories of the Jewish women's trust in God and how they translated that into encouraging the men and building the Jewish nation, family by family. Charoset reminds us that God is totally with His people even while they are going through the most difficult of times. The charoset approach has kept our people alive through a history of persecutions, pogroms, crusades, and a Holocaust, and is expressed in this line: **אני מאמין באמונה שלימה בביאת המשיח ואף על פי שיתמהמה עם כל זה אחכה לו בכל יום שיבוא** – “I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Mashiach, and even though he tarries, I will wait daily for his coming.”

SOURCE GUIDE: HAFTARAH FOR SHABBAT HAGADOL

The focus of this source guide is the first verse of the haftarah for Shabbat Hagadol. That verse has been incorporated into the daily siddur: both Ashkenazim and Eidot Hamizrach say it as part of the daily Pitum Haketoret, and it is the very last verse tacked on to the end of the Ashkenazic Shemoneh Esrei. We will look at that verse and midrashim based on it. We draw from Harav Avraham Rivlin's shiur on this haftarah.

The Verse

Here is the first verse of this week's haftarah:

<p>1. Malachi 3:4 The offering of Yehudah and Yerushalayim will be pleasant to God as in the days of old and the early years.</p>	<p>מלאכי ג:ד וְעִרְבָה לָהּ מִנְחַת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַם פִּימֵי עוֹלָם וּכְשָׁנִים קְדֻמוֹנוֹת.</p>
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Why we mention it daily in the siddur seems clear – we want our prayers to be accepted by God, and our reading of the ketoret, the offering of the incense, to be accepted like a sacrifice. This verse says that our offerings are accepted by God.

This might also explain why this verse begins the haftarah for Shabbat Hagadol, the day that celebrates taking the sheep for the Pesach sacrifice in Egypt (we took it on the tenth of Nisan and offered it on the fourteenth) – we pray that our Pesach sacrifice (or our verbal or afikoman equivalent) should be accepted.

Let us take a closer look at this verse, with the hope that it will enrich our understanding of the haftarah, of Shabbat Hagadol, and its daily use in the siddur.

Two Questions:

1. Which “days of old and early years” does the verse refer to?
2. Which sacrifice of Yehudah and Yerushalayim does this verse refer to and why will they be so pleasant in God's eyes?

A Midrash

To begin addressing these issues we'll see a Midrash that explains our verse:

<p>2. Eichah Rabbah 5:21 “Return us to You, Hashem, and we will return; renew our days as in previous times” (Eichah 5:21) ... Another explanation of “Renew our days as in previous times”: It is to be explained according to the verse, “The offering of Yehudah and Yerushalayim will be pleasant to God as in the days of old and the early years.” ‘The days of old’ refers to the days of Moshe, as it is written, “He remembers the days of old, His nation's Moshe,” and ‘the early years’ refers to Shlomo. Rabbi says, ‘The days of old’ refers to the days of Noach, as it is written, “For this is to me like the waters of Noach,” and ‘the early years’ refers to the years of Hevel, when there was not yet idolatry in the world.</p>	<p>איכה רבה פרשה ה פסקה כא הַשִּׁיבֵנו ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְנִשְׁוֹבָה חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם (איכה ה: כא) ... ד"א חדש ימינו כקדם כמד"א (מלאכי ג') "וערבה לה' מנחת יהודה וירושלים כימי עולם וכשנים קדמוניות." כימי עולם – זה משה דכתיב (ישעיה ס"ג) "ויזכור ימי עולם משה עמו," וכשנים קדמוניות – כשנות שלמה. רבי אומר כימי עולם – כימי נח שנא' (שם נ"ד) "כי מי נח זאת לי," וכשנים קדמוניות – כשנות הבל שלא היתה עבודת כוכבים עדיין בעולם.</p>
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Moshe and Shlomo, Noach and Hevel

The sacrifices at the dedication of Moshe's Mishkan were visibly accepted:

<p>3. Vayikra 9:24 Fire went out from before God and consumed the burnt offering and fats on the altar, and the entire nation saw, and they called out and fell on their faces.</p>	<p>ויקרא ט:כד וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי ה' וַתֹּאכַל עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֶת הָעֹלָה וְאֶת הַחֲלִבִּים וַיֵּרָא כָּל הָעָם וַיִּרְגְּזוּ וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל פְּנֵיהֶם:</p>
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There was also a supernatural stamp of approval at the dedication of Shlomo's Temple. After Shlomo and the nation offered sacrifices the Divine cloud filled the sanctuary with such a powerful revelation that the kohanim could not enter the Temple (Melachim I 8:10-11), Shlomo prayed and God told him that his prayer was accepted (Melachim I 9:3):

<p>4. Melachim I 9:3 God said to him, "I heard your prayer and your supplication that you made before Me. I have sanctified this house that you built for My Name forever, and My eyes and heart will be there for all days.</p>	<p>מלכים א ט:ג וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵלָיו שְׁמַעְתִּי אֶת תְּפִלָּתְךָ וְאֶת תַּחֲנֻנְךָ אֲשֶׁר הִתְחַנַּנְתָּה לְפָנַי הַקְדַּשְׁתִּי אֶת הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר בָּנִיתָ לְשֵׁם שְׁמִי שָׁם עַד עוֹלָם וְהָיוּ עֵינַי וְלִבִּי שָׁם כָּל הַיָּמִים:</p>
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The same is true of Noach's and Hevel's sacrifices:

<p>5. Bereishit 5:20-21 Noach built an altar to God and took from all of the pure animals and birds and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And God smelled the fragrant smell.</p>	<p>ספר בראשית פרק ח:כ-כא וַיִּבֶן נֹחַ מִזְבֵּחַ לַה' וַיִּקַּח מִכָּל הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּהוֹרָה וּמִכָּל הָעוֹף הַטְּהוֹר וַיַּעֲלֵה אֹתָם בַּמִּזְבֵּחַ. וַיִּרַח ה' אֶת רִיחַ הַנְּיָחֹחַ:</p>
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<p>6. Bereishit 4:4 And Hevel offered also of the first born of his sheep and their fat, and God turned towards Hevel and his offering.</p>	<p>בראשית ד:ד וְהֶבֶל הֵבִיא גַם הוּא מִבְּכֹרוֹת צֹאנוֹ וּמִחֵלְבֵהֶן וַיִּשַׁע יְדֹד אֶל הֶבֶל וְאֶל מִנְחָתוֹ:</p>
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Moshe and Shlomo are each models of God accepting sacrifices at the beginning of an era, and at the dedication of the Sanctuary – Moshe's Mishkan and Shlomo's Beit Hamikdash. Each led a unified and righteous nation, and their sacrifices were pure. Noach and Hevel are models, as Rebbi says in the midrash, of pure sacrifices in a pure world, free of any idolatry.

The Messianic Era

The third chapter of Malachi, say Ibn Ezra, Radak, and Metzudot, refers to the messianic era. "I will send my messenger," (Malachi 3:1) refers to Mashiach ben Yosef, "the master that you seek" is Mashiach ben David, and "the angel of the covenant that you desire" is Elisha the Prophet. After a purification of the Jewish people "like fire that refines and soap that cleanses" (Malachi 3:2), only then will our offering be acceptable and pleasant in God's eyes as those sacrifices of old.

God will rejoice in the dedication of the third Temple like He did at the dedication of Moshe's Mishkan and Shlomo's Beit Hamikdash. And in a world cleansed of idolatry, the sacrifices will be as pure as those in the times of Noach and Hevel.

Israel in that generation had questioned Divine justice. They challenged God by saying, "Anyone bad is good in God's eyes. Where is the God of justice?" (Malachi 2:17). But in the end of days everything will be clear:

<p>7. Malachi 3:18-20 And you shall return and see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between him who serves God and him who has not served Him. For behold the sun comes, blazing like a furnace, and all the sinners and evildoers will be like stubble. And the sun that comes will burn them up, leaving neither root nor branch, says the God of Hosts. And for you, those who fear My Name, the sun of mercy shall rise with healing in its wings. Then will you go forth and be fat as fatted calves ... Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of God, and he will return the heart of the fathers to the sons and the heart of the sons to the fathers ...</p>	<p>מלאכי ג:יח-כג, כד (יח) וְשִׁבְתֶּם וּרְאִיתֶם בֵּין צַדִּיק לְרָשָׁע בֵּין עֶבֶד אֱלֹהִים לְאֲשֶׁר לֹא עֲבָדוֹ: (יט) כִּי הִנֵּה הַיּוֹם בָּא בְּעֵר פֶּתַח וְהָיוּ כָּל יְדָיִם וְכָל עֵשָׂה רָשָׁעָה קֵשׁ וְלִהְיוּ אַתֶּם הַיּוֹם הַבָּא אֲמַר יְדֹד צְבָאוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא יַעֲזֹב לָהֶם שָׂרֵשׁ וְעֵנָף: (כ) וַיִּרְחַח לְכֶם יְרֵאֵי שְׁמִי שְׁמֵשׁ צְדָקָה וּמְרַפָּא בְּכִנְפֵיהָ וַיִּצְאֲתֶם וּפְשָׁתֶם כְּעֵגְלֵי מְרֻבָּק ... (כג) הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי שֹׁלֵחַ לְכֶם אֶת אֱלִיָּה הַנְּבִיא לְפָנָי בּוֹא יוֹם יְדֹד הַגְּדוֹל וְהַגּוֹרָא: (כד) וְהָשִׁיב לֵב אֲבוֹת עַל בְּנֵי וְלֵב בְּנֵי עַל אֲבוֹתָם ...</p>
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Shabbat Hagadol, even before Pesach begins, primes us for the final redemption and the Messianic Era.

YESTERDAY'S ASHES BY RABBI AVRAHAM FISCHER

Every day before dawn, a Kohen selected by lot would enter the sanctuary, lit only by the still glowing fire on the altar. First he immersed himself in a mikveh, and sanctified his hands and feet to perform the terumat hadeshen, offering some of the ashes of the sacrifices brought the day before and which had burned throughout the night. The selected Kohen took a special silver ash shovel from its place between the ramp and the southern side of the altar, dug out a scoop of ashes from the heart of the glowing embers, brought it down the ramp and deposited it in an open pit in the floor of the sanctuary on the eastern side of the ramp. There, Rashi explains, all of the ashes are absorbed in their place.

What is the nature of this offering, terumat hadeshen?

Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsh observes that terumat hadeshen is the final conclusion of the service of the preceding day. He says, "The Jewish 'today' has to take its mission from the hand of its 'yesterday.'"

According to Rav Hirsh, terumat hadeshen teaches us to not forget yesterday's sacrifices as we offer today's. But it teaches an additional lesson. The most perplexing part of terumat hadeshen is where it is placed, in the earth. Instead of raising its sanctification level we place it on the ground. In fact, this placing in the earth is its elevation. Rather than being a step downward, placing the terumat hadeshen in the earth is actually a step up.

Rav Meir of Premeshlan owned a cow. Every week he would sell the milk and distribute the money to the poor. One Wednesday, however, the poor were particularly in need so he had the cow slaughtered and distributed the meat. When his wife came home and could not find the cow she exclaimed, "Our cow is lost!" "No, dear wife," answered Rabbi Meir, "It has gone to Heaven."

There is no higher sanctity than when the values of the sanctuary permeate our daily life. The goal of sacrifices, of prayer, indeed, the goal of all acts of holiness is for the ideals of sanctity to be absorbed into our everyday existence. We must not forget yesterday's ashes as we offer today's sacrifices; and we certainly must not forget today's sacrifices when we leave the sanctuary.

This issue is dedicated in memory of
Morris Caskey ל"ת

*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples' programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at www.darchenoam.org +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

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