

A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

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

PARSHAT VAYIKRA

DVAR TORAH: WHEN SHOULD YOU VOLUNTEER A GRAIN OFFERING?

The Torah offers many options for voluntary offerings. But how would a person choose which one to offer?

For instance, someone who wanted to offer a voluntary minchah (grain offering) had four options: a מנחת סולת – a flour and oil mixture; a מנחה מאפה תנור – either loaves or wafers baked in an oven (some divide this into two categories – loaves and wafers); a מנחה על מחבת – dough fried in a pan; or a מנחת מרחשת – a deep fried grain mixture (all of the menachot are accompanied by oil, each with its particular type of mixture). When to offer the mandatory menachot is clear: whenever the Halachah mandates it. The Omer is brought on Pesach; the two loaves are brought on Shavuot; the Kohen Gadol offers his and the Sotah offers hers. But how would someone know how to choose from among the four voluntary offerings?

The Netziv (Harav Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, 1816-1893, זצ"ל), in his commentary on the Chumash, cites evidence that each of the voluntary offerings was connected with a particular aspect of Divine service. Even though not obligatory, a person could address a particular area of his personal life through a particular voluntary sacrifice. When would a person offer a minchah, a grain offering? And how would someone choose from among the four options?

According to the Netziv, grain offerings were brought to repair the damage done by מדות רעות – improper character traits.

He brings two proofs from Tanach: 1. David confronted Shaul: “Why does my master (Shaul) chase his servant (David)? ... אִם ה' הִסִּיתֶךָ בִּי יִרְחַם מִנְחָה – If Hashem incited you against me He will accept a Minchah offering” (I Shmuel 26:19). The Netziv explains this verse: If through your depression Hashem is inciting you to pursue me, you should offer a minchah, and it will heal your negative character trait. 2. The prophet Malachi chastised the married Jewish men who had taken non-Jewish wives. “And this second thing you do, to cover Hashem’s altar with tears (of the ignored Jewish wives), weeping and sighing מֵאֵין עוֹד פְּנוּת אֵל – such that He will no longer turn to the minchah offering ...” (Malachi 2: 13). The husband would offer a minchah to deal with the lust that drove him to take a wife from the “daughters of a foreign god” (Malachi 2: 11).

The reason there are four types of menachot, says the Netziv, is to correspond to the four general categories of bad middot. One common categorization of the character traits that appears in the moral literature divides problematic middot into four groups: sadness; frivolity; lust; and anger. In the ancient world, each was also associated with a different color: sadness with black; frivolity with white; lust with green; and anger with red. Each of the four voluntary grain offerings – grain and oil, oven-baked, pan-fried, and deep-fried – was associated with one of the four types of problematic middot.

But the Netziv closes with the following and leaves us with a challenge: “In the times of the Beit Hamikdash, they knew how to prescribe the appropriate Minchah for the appropriate character problem.” It is as if the Netziv challenges us to think: which minchah corresponds to which character trait?

SOURCE GUIDE: SITTING NEXT TO THE ARON KODESH

The Midrash points out that Moshe Rabbeinu exhibited a certain type of humility over and over again in his life – not pushing himself forward but waiting for Hashem to call him. This source guide draws on that Midrash, along with passages from Sefer Chasidim and Orchot Tzaddikim that illustrate the flip side: people too preoccupied with pushing themselves into prestigious places (like sitting next to the Aron Kodesh).

A. Vayikra, Mishlei, and the Midrash

The Book of Vayikra begins:

<p>1. Vayikra 1:1-2 (1) He called out to Moshe; and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting saying: (2) Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them ...</p>	<p>ויקרא א-א:ב (א) ויקרא אל משה וידבר ה' אליו מאהל מועד לאמר. (ב) ידבר אל בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם ...</p>
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Hashem called out to Moshe before speaking to him in the Tent of Meeting. The Midrash says that Moshe would not have approached had Hashem not called him. It opens with a quote from a verse in Mishlei (we bring it here with the previous verse to appreciate its context):

<p>2. Mishlei 25:6-7 (6) Do not aggrandize yourself before a king; and do not stand in the place of great ones. (7) For it is better that he will say to you "Come up here," than that he will lower you before a prince – as your eyes have seen.</p>	<p>משלי כה:ו-ז (ו) אל תתהדר לפני מלך ובמקום גדלים אל תעמד. (ז) כי טוב אמר לך עלה הנה מהשפילך לפני נדיב וגו' (משלי כה:ז). ר"ע מתני לה בשם ר"ש בן עזאי: רחוק ממקומך ב' ושלשה מושבות ושב עד שיאמרו לך עלה, ואל תעלה שיאמרו לך רד. מוטב שיאמרו לך "עלה עלה" ולא יאמרו לך "רד רד". וכן הלל אומר: השפילתי היא הגבהתי, הגבהתי היא השפילתי. מה טעם? "המגביהי לשבת המשפילי לראות" (תהלים קיג:ה-ו).</p>
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The message of these verses is reformulated in the following Midrash:

<p>3. Vayikra Rabbah 1:5 Rabbi Yehoshua of Sichnin quoted Rabbi Levi to explain the following verse: "For it is better that he will say to you 'Come up here,' than that he will lower you before a prince – as your eyes have seen" (Mishlei 25:7). Rabbi Akiva teaches this in the name of Rabbi Shimon son of Azai: Distance yourself from your place two or three seats and sit until they tell you to go up. But do not go up with the understanding that they [might] tell you to go down. It is better that they tell you "Go up, go up," and not tell you, "Go down, go down." Thus, said Hillel: "My descent is my elevation and my elevation is my descent." What is the reason? "He elevates to sit [one who] is lowly to see" (Tehillim 113:5-6).</p>	<p>ויקרא רבה א:ה רבי יהושע דסכנין בשם רבי לוי פתר קרא: "כי טוב אמר לך עלה הנה מהשפילך לפני נדיב וגו'" (משלי כה:ז). ר"ע מתני לה בשם ר"ש בן עזאי: רחוק ממקומך ב' ושלשה מושבות ושב עד שיאמרו לך עלה, ואל תעלה שיאמרו לך רד. מוטב שיאמרו לך "עלה עלה" ולא יאמרו לך "רד רד". וכן הלל אומר: השפילתי היא הגבהתי, הגבהתי היא השפילתי. מה טעם? "המגביהי לשבת המשפילי לראות" (תהלים קיג:ה-ו).</p>
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This illustration appears in Sefer Chasidim (authored by Harav Yehudah son of Shmuel, זצ"ל, of Regensburg, 1150-1217 – known as Rabbi Yehudah Hachasid [the Pious]):

<p>4. Sefer Chasidim #759 There was an episode where a person said, "I want to sit next to the Aron so my prayer will be better received." The wise man said to him, "Behold, it is written, 'Do not aggrandize yourself before a king; and do not stand in the place of great ones. For it is better that he will say to you 'Come up here,' than that he will lower you before a prince – as your eyes have seen.' And it is immediately followed by, 'Do not go out quickly to quarrel.' When you sit next to the Aron the people sitting there will argue with you. Better for you to sit far away, so there should not be an argument. And your prayer will also be better received when you avoid causing a dispute in the synagogue." He did not listen to the wise man's advice, and it was decreed that he should end up sitting in mourning, so he never sat in that place. It is, therefore, better that a person should sit far away without causing an argument; he should not cause dissent.</p>	<p>ספר חסידים סימן תשנ"ט מעשה באחד שאמר אני רוצה לשבת אצל הארון שתהא תפילתי יותר נשמעת, א"ל החכם הרי כתיב, "אל תתהדר לפני מלך ובמקום גדולים אל תעמוד, כי טוב אמר לך עלה הנה מהשפילך לפני נדיב" (משלי כה:ז), וסמוך ל"א"ל תצא לריב מהר" (משלי כה:ח), וכשתשב אצל הארון יתקוטטו עמך היושבים, ומוטב לך לשבת ברחוק, כדי שלא תהא מריבה, ויותר תהא תפילתך נשמעת כשלא תגרום מחלוקת בבית הכנסת. ולא שמע לעצתו, ונגזר שנתגלגל הדבר שישב באבילות, ולא ישב מעולם שם. לכך טוב לאדם שישב ברחוק בלא מחלוקת, ולא יגרום מחלוקת.</p>
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The Vilna Gaon (Harav Eliahu ben Shlomo Zalman, זצ"ל, 1720-1797), in his commentary on Mishlei, cites the following anecdote as a positive example. Rabbi Meir first learned with Rabbi Akiva; but realized he could not properly understand him. Therefore he went to learn from Rabbi Yishmael and then later returned to Rabbi Akiva:

<p>5. Sotah 20a Initially, he came before Rabbi Akiva. When he saw that he was not able to understand properly, he came before Rabbi Yishmael and learned Gemara. Later he came before Rabbi Akiva and learned Sevara.</p>	<p>טוטה כ. מעיקרא אתא לקמיה דר' עקיבא כיון דלא מצי קם אליביה אתא לקמיה דר"י וגמר גמרא הדר אתא לקמיה דר"ע סבר סברא.</p>
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The Midrash applies the verse in Mishlei to Moshe:

<p>6. Vayikra Rabbah 1:5 You find that when the Holy One, blessed be He, was revealed to Moshe at the Burning Bush he hid his face from Him, as it says, "Moshe hid his face ..." (Shemot 3:6). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, "Go and I will send you to Pharaoh" (Shemot 3:10). Rabbi Elazar said: The Hei at the end of the word (לכה) meant to say, "If you do not redeem them no one else will redeem them." At the Sea, he stood on the side. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, "You, lift up your staff and split it" (Shemot 14:16). This was as if to say, "If you do not split it no one else will split it." At Sinai, he stood by the side. Hashem said to him, "Go up to Hashem," (Shemot 24:1). This was as if to say, "If you do not go up no one else will go up." In the Tent of Meeting, he stood on the side. The Holy One, blessed be He, said, "How long will you lower yourself? The hour waits only for you." You should know that this is so, for of all of them the Divine speech only called out to Moshe: "He called out to Moshe" (Vayikra 1:1).</p>	<p>ויקרא רבה א: אתה מוצא בשעה שנגלה הקב"ה למשה מתוך הסנה היה מסתיר פניו ממנו שנאמר, "ויסתר משה פניו וגו'" (שמות ג:ו). "אל הקב"ה, "לכה ואשלחך אל פרעה וגו'" (שמות ג:י). "אל ר' אלעזר ה"א בסוף תיבותא לומר שאם אין אתה גואלם אין אחר גואלם. בים עמד לו מן הצד אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא, "ואתה הרם את מטך ובקעהו" (שמות יד:טז). לומר שאם אין אתה בוקעו אין אחר בוקעו. בסיני עמד לו מן הצד. אמר לו, "עלה אל ה'" (שמות כד:א). לומר שאם אין אתה עולה אין אחר עולה. באהל מועד עמד לו מן הצד. "אל הקב"ה, "עד מתי את משפיל עצמך? אין השעה מצפה אלא לך." תדע לך שהוא כן שמכולן לא קרא הדיבור אלא למשה: "ויקרא אל משה" (ויקרא א:א).</p>
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The author of Orchot Tzaddikim illustrates this with a story he heard from a certain wise man:

<p>7. Orchot Tzaddikim – Gate of Arrogance He said that there was a king who was sitting on his royal throne. Before him, there were a number of chairs, one above another in status (and a number of his subjects were sitting in the chairs). The king said to them, "How did you sit, one above another without my permission?" The first responded, "My aristocratic lineage caused me to sit before my friends." The second said, "I went before the one beneath me because of my great wisdom." The third one answered, "My lowly spirit and subjugated heart caused me to sit after them." The king elevated that third one and made him great. Concerning this, it says, "For it is better that he will say to you "Come up here," than that he will lower you before a prince."</p>	<p>ארחות צדיקים שער הגאווה ואמר, שהיה מלך אחד יושב על כסא מלכותו, ולפניו היו כסאות זה למעלה מזה, ואמר להם המלך: איך ישבתם זה למעלה מזה בלא רשותי? והשיב העליון: גודל יחוס משפחתי הושיבני על ריעי. ואמר השני: עליתי על אשר תחתי מפני רוב חכמתי. וענה השלישי: שפלות נפשי ודכאות לבי הושיבוני תחתיים. והעלהו המלך וגידלו. ועל זה נאמר (משלי כה ז): "כי טוב לך עלה הנה מהשפילך לפני נדיב."</p>
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In the presence of the king all others' importance pales. The king determines status. He tells people where to sit and it is meaningless to push one's self forward in his presence. Perhaps this story gives us an insight into Moshe's character. Moshe, likewise, did not push himself forward. He was so conscious of the presence of the King of Kings that he realized that anyone other than the King Himself does not call a person to greatness.

FIVE CUPS OF REDEMPTION? BY RABBI SHIMSHON NADEL

The Four Cups of Wine at the Pesach Seder correspond to the Four Expressions of Redemption (or, Four Redemptions), found in Shemot 6:6-7: “ וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם; וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעֲבֹדָתָם; וְגָאֵלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּזְרוּעַ – I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt; I shall rescue you from their labor; I shall redeem you with an outstretched arm and great judgements; and I shall take you to Me as a nation” (See Rashi to B. Pesachim 99b; Cf. Yerushalmi Pesachim 10:1; Bereishit Rabbah 88:5).

What follows, however, is a Fifth Expression: “וְהֵבֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל הָאָרֶץ” – And I will bring you to the Land...” (Shemot 6:8).

So why don't we drink a fifth cup of wine at the Seder?

According to one version of the Baraita cited on Pesachim 118a, Rabbi Tarfon teaches that indeed we should drink five cups – the fifth accompanying Hallel ha-Gadol (Psalm 136). In fact, some of the major Geonim and Rishonim record the practice of drinking Five Cups at the Seder (Saadiah Gaon, Amram Gaon, Hai Gaon, Rambam, Rif, Ran, Ba'al HaMaor, Ramban, Rashbetz, Ra'avad's Commentary to the Rif, Sefer HaPardes l'Rashi, Ba'al HaRokeach, Rabbeinu Channanel, Rosh cited by Maharil, Meiri, and others).

Why wasn't the custom of a Fifth Cup adopted by all?

Some explain that whereas the Four Expressions of Redemption were lasting, the Fifth Expression was temporary as we were eventually exiled from our Land. Today, the Cup of Elijah represents this "Fifth Expression." We long for his arrival to herald in the Final Redemption.

But according to Da'at Zekeinim, the Fifth Expression, "And I will bring you to the Land," is the fulfillment, or basis for the other four. It does not need its own cup of wine as all the other Expressions of Redemption are predicated upon it: Hashem took us out of Egypt to give us a Torah and bring us to the Land of Israel.

The gift of the Land of Israel represents the intimate relationship between Hashem and His people. It is so fundamental, so basic, that it doesn't require its own expression through a cup of wine.

שבת שלום ומבורך

*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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