

בַּפְרָשָׁה IN THE PARASHAH

(2)

מִנְחָה

Minhah

What does the name mean? "Gift."

What was offered? Something made of flour, raw or baked, sometimes with oil.

Who ate it? Some was burnt on the mizbei'ah, the rest was eaten by כֹּהֲנִים (kohanim, priests).

How did it feel? A minhah was not very expensive, so it was probably a more common kind of korban. It was less dramatic than an olah because it wasn't an animal sacrifice. It was also a little less private because it was shared with the kohanim, so it was similar to sharing a religious moment together with a rabbi or a teacher.

ויקרא ב:א

וְנֶפֶשׁ כִּי תִקְרִיב קָרְבָן מִנְחָה לַה' סֶלֶת יִהְיֶה קָרְבָנוֹ וְיִצַק עָלֶיהָ שֶׁמֶן וְנָתַן עָלֶיהָ לְבִנְהָ:

Vayikra 2:1

When a nefesh (soul) brings a minhah to God, it will be made of good flour. They will pour oil on it and place levonah (frankincense) on it.

Why does the Torah describe a person who brings this sacrifice as a nefesh?

Talmud Bavli Menahot 104b

R. Yitzhak says: What makes the minhah different, that the Torah calls a person who brings it a nefesh (soul)?

The Holy Blessed One said: "Who normally brings a minhah? Someone who is poor. I consider their minhah to be as if they offered their nefesh to Me."

תלמוד בבלי מנחות קד:

אמר ר' יצחק מפני מה נשתנית מנחה שנאמר בה וְנֶפֶשׁ?

אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: מי דרכו להביא מנחה? עני. מעלה אני עליו כאלו הקריב נפשו לפני.



A minhah is a grain sacrifice, so it was less expensive than an animal sacrifice. The midrash notices that this kind of korban would usually come from someone who didn't have a lot to give. According to this midrash, the word **nefesh** teaches that God really values this kind of korban, even though it's inexpensive. God considers it like the ultimate sacrifice: the sacrifice of a person's soul.

THINK ABOUT IT!

- ♦ The fanciest korban is not necessarily the best. Why does God value the minhah so highly, even though it's the cheapest korban?
- ♦ Can you apply this idea to other mitzvot? What makes a person's mitzvah worth a lot? What are some mitzvot that might not look fancy or important, but can have a big impact?
- ♦ Have you ever received a gift that was meaningful to you even though it was small? What besides money can make a gift valuable? What is this midrash teaching us about how to judge the value of a gift?
- ♦ Can you imagine being in a situation where you weren't sure you'd have enough food to eat—but you still chose to give some of your flour to God? Why would you do this? What is the role of faith in this kind of sacrifice?



בפרשה IN THE PARASHAH

Insects are kosher if they are the kinds of grasshoppers or locusts listed in the parashah.

ויקרא יא:כא

אך את זה תאכלו מכל שרץ העוף ההלך על ארבע אשר לו כרעים ממועל לרגליו לנתר בהן על הארץ:

Vayikra 11:21

But these you may eat among all the winged swarming things that walk on fours: all that have, above their feet, jointed legs to leap with on the ground.

Our parashah tells us that kosher insects must have four legs plus an additional set of legs used for jumping. Hazal add another two kosher signs for bugs:



Some bugs are kosher?!?

Mishnah Hullin 3:7

For locusts, anything that has four legs, four wings, leaping legs, and wings covering the greater part of its body (is kosher).

R. Yose says it also has to be called "locust."

משנה חולין ג:ז

ובחגבים, כל שיש לו ארבע רגלים, וארבע כנפים, וקרטלים, וכנפיו חופין את רבו.

רבי יוסי אומר, ושמו חגב.

Our parashah lists some names of insects that would fit into these categories (11:22), but most communities believe we aren't totally sure how to identify them. It seems they are all some type of locusts, crickets, or grasshoppers.

The Shulhan Arukh (Yoreh De'ah 85) teaches two halakhot about kosher insects:

- 1) You cannot rely on the signs alone. They also must be called locusts or have a tradition that they were called locusts and that they are kosher.
- 2) Locusts, just like fish, do not need to be slaughtered and are categorized as pareve.

Certain Moroccan and Yemenite communities have passed down traditions that identify which locusts are kosher. Even though the custom in other communities has been not to eat locusts, they can rely on those traditions and eat those locusts!

THINK ABOUT IT!

- ♦ Would you like to try locusts?
- ♦ What special kosher foods are you familiar with from your family or community? How can keeping kosher help us stay connected to our traditions?

דקה של דיון ONE-MINUTE DEBATE

You are what you eat.

Agree!

- ♦ Eating healthy makes you healthy, and eating junk food is not good for you. Pretty simple!
- ♦ Spinach made Popeye strong.

Disagree!

- ♦ If you eat a banana, you don't actually become a banana!
- ♦ Any food is ok in moderation (as long as it's kosher).

Maybe both?

בפרשה IN THE PARASHAH

The beginning of Parashat Tazria is about what happens when a woman gives birth to a new baby.

ויקרא יב:ב

אשה כי תזריע וילדה...

Vayikra 12:2

When a woman becomes pregnant and gives birth...

This major event causes the mother to become טמא (tamei, impure) for one week if she had a boy, and two weeks if she had a girl. After that, she would be טהור (tahor, pure) for a long time: 33 days for a boy, and 66 days for a girl. In the time of the Mishkan, she would bring some קרבנות (korbanot, sacrifices) after this.

Last week's parashah ended with kosher and non-kosher animals. Are kashrut and childbirth somehow connected?

This kind of question notices something with a special name: סמיכות פרשיות (semikhut parashiyot, the closeness of two sections together). It's always interesting to notice when side-by-side sections in the Torah are connected and to wonder why. Sometimes we can learn a lesson from the order in which things are told.

Vayikra Rabbah 14:1

R. Simlai said: People were created after animals in Bereishit, and the laws for people also come after the laws for animals in Tazria.

That's why it says, 'This is the law about animals...' (Vayikra 11:46), and only afterwards, 'When a woman becomes pregnant...' (Vayikra 12:2).

ויקרא רבה יד:א

אמר רבי שמלאי, כשם שיצירתו של אדם אחר בהמה חיה ועוף, כך תורתו אחר בהמה חיה ועוף,

הדא הוא דכתיב: זאת תורת הבהמה (ויקרא יא:מו), ואחר כך אשה כי תזריע (ויקרא יב:ב).

THINK ABOUT IT!

- ♦ What does it mean to be last? Could that be a place of importance, like saving the best for last? Or could it be a place of humility, like letting others go before you in line? Or both?
- ♦ What is the Torah trying to tell us about ourselves by placing our creation and our laws of purity **after** the animals?
- ♦ How can we act with more humility when we interact with the rest of creation?

According to R. Simlai, our parashah reminds us of the creation story. The Torah teaches the laws of people being tamei or tahor right **after** teaching the laws of kosher and non-kosher animals, just like the Torah taught about the creation of people **after** the creation of animals.

