

Fresh Offerings (Tzav)

Tucked away within the instructions pertaining to the sin (*chatai*) offering are the laws of ‘*kashering*’ utensils where we read: ‘*An earthen vessel in which [the sin offering] was cooked shall be broken, but if it was cooked in a bronze vessel, that shall be scoured and rinsed with water*’ (*Vayikra* 6:21). However, to fully understand this verse a little background is necessary.

Every offering has a certain prescribed time in which it must be eaten - after which all remaining food is called ‘*Notar*’ - forbidden leftover food - which may not be eaten. Here we are being taught that if any ‘*Notar*’ food (which, as Rashi notes, is not limited to leftover sin offerings but, in fact, applies to all offerings) is left in a utensil, then the utensil absorbs this forbidden flavour. In such a situation, if the utensil is made of earthenware which absorbs flavour but cannot fully exude any flavour that it has absorbed, then it must be broken. However, if the utensil is made of metal which both absorbs and exudes flavour, then it may be ‘*kashered*’ by scouring and rinsing it.

So far, all we have done is explain this verse. However, a question is raised by Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Ferber (1879-1966) in his ‘*Kerem HaTzvi*’ commentary which itself demands a further review of how halacha treats forbidden flavours.

In general, when a flavour has been absorbed into a utensil, it dulls and spoils over time to the point that we refer to that flavour as ‘*ta’am pagum*’ (spoilt flavour). This is why whenever we *kasher* utensils, we generally wait at least 24-hours between their most recent usage and *kashering* the utensils so that the flavour becomes ‘*pagum*’ (spoilt).

With this in mind, the question raised by Rabbi Ferber is why doesn’t the Torah simply instruct us to wait 24 hours after *Notar* has been placed in an earthenware vessel, at which point it should technically be possible to use earthenware vessel?

In his answer, Rabbi Ferber refers to an insight offered by Rabbi Aryeh Leib ben Shmuel Gershon (1652-1729) in his ‘*Leviyat Chen*’ commentary on *Parshat Tzav* which itself is derived from a teaching in *Pirkei Avot* 5:5 where we are taught that the meat of the sacrificial offerings miraculously stayed fresh and did not putrefy.

As Rabbi Aryeh Leib explains, if this is the case with respect to the offering itself, so too is it the case with respect to the remnant flavour of the ‘*Notar*’. Accordingly, the concept of ‘*ta’am pagum*’ does not apply to sacrificial offerings and therefore this is why an earthenware vessel that has absorbed the flavour of *Notar* must be broken. What this teaches us is that the very instruction about how we treat an earthenware vessel in which *Notar* flavour has been absorbed already hints to the miraculous way in which the sacrificial meat remained fresh (nb. if one were to ask why earthenware

vessels which have absorbed prohibited but non-sacrificial flavour are forbidden after 24 hours, it is to avoid confusion with vessels which were used less than 24 hours ago, and to avoid deliberately acting as such).

When we read about the sacrifices, we can sometimes get so engrossed in the details that we forget the majesty and miracles that took place in the *Mishkan* and Temple. But as we see from here, even the smallest of details recorded in the Torah bear witness to the miraculous events that took place in the *Mishkan*.

Overall, we learn from here that just as the sacrifices remained fresh and imbued flavour, so too, our prayers and the rest of our divine service should always be fresh, dynamic, and convey a positive 'flavour' in terms of what it means to serve God with pride.

Shabbat Shalom!