



DVAR TZEDEK TEXT STUDY

Parashat Emor 5773

April 27, 2013

This week's Dvar Tzedek takes the form of an interactive text study. We hope that you'll use this text study to actively engage with the *parashah* and contemporary global justice issues.

Consider using this text study in any of the following ways:

- Learn collectively. Discuss it with friends, family or colleagues. Discuss it at your Shabbat table.
- Enrich your own learning. Read it as you would a regular Dvar Tzedek and reflect on the questions it raises.
- Teach. Use the ideas and reactions it sparks in you as the basis for your own *dvar* Torah.

Please take two minutes to share your thoughts on this piece by completing this [feedback form](#).

Introduction

Towards the end of *Parashat Emor*—a *parashah* focused on the regulations governing the lives and service of the priestly class—comes a description of the *lechem ha-panim*, “the bread of display” that was placed on the table in the Tabernacle every Shabbat for the week and was eaten by the priests. Although the relevance of this ritual may seem limited to the lives of the priests, a deeper look at the symbolism of the bread can reveal a much more universal message about how we can build supportive communities that strive for justice.

The Torah describes the *lechem ha-panim* as follows:

Leviticus 24:5-9

You shall take choice flour and bake of it twelve loaves, two-tenths of a measure for each loaf. Place them on the pure table before Adonai in two rows, six to a row. With each row you shall place pure frankincense, which is to be a token offering for the bread, as an offering by fire to Adonai. He shall arrange them before Adonai regularly every Sabbath day—it is a commitment for all time on the part of the Israelites. They shall belong to Aaron and his sons, who shall eat them in the sacred precinct; for they are his as most holy things from Adonai's offerings by fire, a statute for all time.

ויקרא כד:ה-ט

וְלִקְחֵת סֹלֶת וְאִפִּיתָ אֹתָהּ שְׁתֵּי עֶשְׂרֵה חֲלוֹת
שְׁנֵי עֶשְׂרֵינִים יְהִיָּה הַחֲלֵה הָאֶחָת : וְשָׂמֵת
אוֹתָם שְׁתֵּי שָׁרֵי מַעְרְכֹת שֵׁשׁ הַמַּעְרֶכֶת עַל
הַשֻּׁלְחָן הַטֹּהָר לִפְנֵי ה' : וְנָתַתְּ עַל הַמַּעְרֶכֶת
לְבִנָּה זֶכֶה וְהִיתָה לְלֶחֶם לְאֻזְכָּרָה אֲשֶׁה לֵה' :
בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת יַעֲרֹכְנוּ לִפְנֵי ה'
תִּמְיֵד מֵאֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרִית עוֹלָם : וְהִיתָה
לְאֹהֶרֶן וּלְבָנָיו וְאָכְלוּהוּ בְּמִקְוֹם קֹדֶשׁ כִּי קֹדֶשׁ
קֹדְשִׁים הוּא לוֹ מֵאִשֵּׁי ה' חֶק עוֹלָם :

Guiding Questions:

- What do you think is the significance of the different numbers in this passage—12 loaves, two-tenths of a measure, two rows, six to a row?
- If you were to assign symbolic meaning to the *lechem ha-panim*, what would it be?

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, a 19th-century German rabbi and Jewish philosopher, interprets the *lechem ha-panim* as symbolizing the material wealth of the Jewish community and the financial responsibility Jews have for one another. He analyzes each element of the preparation and display of the *lechem ha-panim*, drawing lessons about communal unity and responsibility:

<p>Samson Raphael Hirsch, Commentary on Leviticus 24:5-6</p> <p>“They were kneaded one by one and baked two by two (Menachot 94a).” Each challah—representing each tribe—in its foundational stage (of kneading) merited the same degree of individual attention; but they were solidified (baked) only two at a time. This one with that one and this one for the sake of that one.</p>	<p>רש"ר הירש, ויקרא כד:ה-ו</p> <p>”נילושות אחת אחת ונאפות שתיים שתיים” (מנחות צד ע"א). כל חלת - שבט זוכה ביסודה לאותה מידה של תשומת לב; אך הן נעשות מוצקות רק שתיים שתיים כאחת: זו עם זו וזו למען זו:</p>
<p>Samson Raphael Hirsch, Commentary on Exodus 25:29</p> <p>The bowls (molds)¹ gave the structure to the <i>challot</i> that allowed them to serve their purpose: that each one held up the next and thus symbolized unity and friendship.</p>	<p>רש"ר הירש, שמות כה:כט</p> <p>הקערות נתנו וקבעו לחלות אותה צורה שהכשירה אותן לתעודתן: להיות כל אחת נושאת את חברתה ולסמל בכך אחדות ואחוהה. . .</p>

Guiding Questions:

- What do you think is the significance of the *challot* being kneaded individually but baked in pairs?
- Rabbi Hirsch offers these interpretations in the context of his broader analysis of the *lechem ha-panim*, which is focused on our financial responsibility for one another. In what other ways are we responsible for one another?
- To what extent does Rabbi Hirsch’s interpretation of the *lechem ha-panim* resonate with you? What does it add to your understanding of the biblical text?

In Rabbi Hirsch’s interpretation, the images of the *challot* being baked in pairs and physically holding each other up evoke the strong sense of connection and responsibility that can exist between two people. In social science experiments, this power of partnership and support has been shown to have a measurable impact on people’s behavior. The following text describes an experiment that demonstrates the power that someone modeling a behavior can have on the people around him.

Pamela Mae Pickens, Community-Based Social Marketing as a Planning Tool²

The male shower room had a sign that encouraged the showers be turned off while users soap up. More specifically the sign read: ‘Conserve water: 1. Wet down. 2. Water off. 3. Soap. 4. Rinse.’ This sign apparently had little effect on behavior. On average, only 6% of users were found to comply. One possibility was that people didn’t see the sign. However, a survey of a random sample of students demonstrated that 93% were aware of the sign and its message.

Elliot Aronson and Michael O’Leary (the researchers) reasoned that students might be far more likely to comply with the sign if they observed another student following its instructions. To test this possibility, an accomplice entered the male shower room in the athletic complex and proceeded to the back of the room and turned on the shower. When another student entered, the accomplice turned off the shower, soaped up and then turned on the shower once more to rinse off. All this was done with his back to the other student and without eye contact. When the accomplice modeled water conservation in this way, the percentage of students who turned off the shower to soap up shot up to 49%. Furthermore, when two accomplices modeled water conservation, the number of people who followed suit rose to 67%. ... While the sign by itself was ineffective in altering the behavior of those using the shower room, when it was combined with the norm, behavior changed dramatically” (McKenzie-Mohr and Smith, p. 74).

¹ The bowls were among the vessels that were to be constructed along with the table on which the *lechem ha-panim* were displayed.

² Pamela Mae Pickens, *Community-Based Social Marketing as a Planning Tool*, September, 2002, p. 12. Available at http://www4.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexlakes/ecology/shorelands/com_based_social_market/pdf_docs/cbsm_as_a_planning_tool_pmp.pdf



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Guiding Questions:

- To what extent do the results of this study resonate with you? How much do the behaviors of others influence your actions? How much power do you believe you have to influence the actions of others?
- Who in your life models behaviors that you strive to emulate? For whom do you or could you serve as a model? What behaviors would you want to encourage in others?
- How could you use the lessons of this study to promote more social justice activism in your own community?

Conclusion

As the shower experiment demonstrates, we have the power, and therefore responsibility, to influence the behavior of those around us, even people we don't even know. The *lechem ha-panim* communicates this message as well: the bread that was on display all week prompts us to recognize that our actions are always on display and can serve as a powerful model for others. As we work to build communities that pursue justice and human rights for all, let us model behaviors that will inspire others to act in ways that bring this vision closer to reality.

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