



כל צוה ה' את משה

By Yoel Gellman ('25)

The phrase "כל צוה ה' את משה" "Just as Hashem commanded Moshe" appears many times throughout this week's Parashah, Parashat Pekudei. This emphasizes that Betzalel built the Mishkan exactly as Hashem instructed him, without any differences.

The Ba'al HaTurim comments that the phrases "כל צוה ה' את משה" and "כאשר צוה ה' את משה" both refer to the fulfilling of Hashem's instructions exactly as He instructed. These phrases are mentioned a total of 18 times throughout the Parashah, representing the 18 Brachot of שמונה עשרה.

What do these two concepts have to do with each other? The connection between the שמונה עשרה and building the Mishkan precisely as Hashem commanded is based on the man who built the Mishkan, Betzalel.

The Torah says that Hashem filled Betzalel with the spirit of Hashem, wisdom, knowledge, and every form of craftsmanship. Furthermore, the Gemara says that he knew how to combine letters of heaven and earth. Betzalel created beautiful and incredible masterpieces; he could create genius and elegant art independently. But he disregarded his talent and remained focused on fulfilling the will of Hashem to the last detail. Betzalel possessed incredible abilities and innovations, but he did not stray away from what he was supposed to do.

At the same time, many of us daven שמונה עשרה, and it feels like it's a little outdated. Perhaps we could make it better by adding creative words to our davening to apply them in a relevant way. When faced with the option of adding in his own innovative supplement to the Mishkan, Betzalel held back and did precisely what Hashem commanded. We, too, should realize, just like Betzalel did, that we shouldn't stray from Hashem's words. We should try not to add to our siddur, change it,

or stray from saying the words we are supposed to say, as we are not more creative than Betzalel and certainly not more creative than Hashem. By davening with proper Kavanah and using the right words, may Hashem answer all our Tefillot for good.

From Gold to Gold: Resolving the Sin of the Golden

Calf

By Nachi Scheiner ('22)

He picked up the glass; it was water. Staring into the glass, he realized that the same water used to gruesomely drown hundreds of innocent people in the Holocaust also provides the much-needed sustenance to myriads of humans. Although it isn't the only example, water depicts the dual nature of an object, trait, or attitude.

With the principle laid out above, we may explain an obscure Midrash. The Midrash states:

אמר הקב"ה לישראל בשעה שעשיתם את העגל הכעסתם אותי באלה אלהיד, עכשיו שעשיתם המשכן באלה אני מתרצה לכם הוי אלה פקודי, "המשכן, אמר הקב"ה לישראל בעוה"ז באלה נתרציתי לכם וכן לעתיד לבא" "Hashem said to Israel when they made the calf, 'you have angered me with these gods.' Now, since you built the Mishkan, I forgive you (referring to the first Pasuk of the Parashah). I forgive you for this world and for the future" (Shemot Rabbah 51:8).

At first glance, this Midrash is startling. What is the connection between the Golden Calf and the building of the Mishkan? Why does the construction of the Mishkan atone for the sin of the calf?

Rav Preil (Sefer HaMe'or Parashat Pekudei) elaborates that the Midrash is founded upon the dual capabilities of our actions and tendencies. Rav Preil explains that the ultimate sin, the Cheit Ha'Eigel, which affects and partly causes all of the sins since the Golden Calf, was caused by Bnei Yisrael's quick, unthinking

nature. Immediately upon receiving the [false] news of Moshe's passing, Bnei Yisrael quickly sprung up and filled his place with "אלה אלהיך," "the Golden Calf" (Shemot 32:4). After realizing their egregious error and enduring severe punishments, Bnei Yisrael repented. However, their Teshuvah wasn't entirely accepted (at least according to this Midrash) until the erecting of the Mishkan. The same hastiness that caused the sin of the Golden Calf was now being used to contribute large quantities of gold and silver with extreme hastiness [to the point where Moshe had to halt their donations]. Bnei Yisrael used the same trait that caused them to sin to ultimately fulfill Hashem's will to the utmost degree. Hashem bestowed numerous capabilities and talents upon every one of us, both as individuals and as a collective whole; it is up to us how we utilize these amazing gifts.

Additionally, Rav Elchanan Wasserman (Kovetz Ma'amarim on Emunah entry 5) explains that sin arises from thinking we know better. Sometimes we believe that we understand what should be done, which ultimately leads to us making mistakes and sinning. Therefore, the ultimate way of achieving atonement is to Mevatel (nullify) ourselves to Hashem and realize that Hashem controls everything. Our purpose of fulfilling His will is the apex of Teshuvah. The Beit HaLevi (Al HaTorah; Ki Tisa 31:13) explains the nature of Bnei Yisrael's sin at the Golden Calf. Bnei Yisrael realized that their immediate and constant connection to Hashem was no longer with them, and they now needed a new way of having Hashra'at HaShechinah, the dwelling of the divine presence. Of their own volition, Bnei Yisrael decided that the best way to accomplish this was to build the calf. Despite their virtuous intentions, Bnei Yisrael chose to act, not based on what the Torah (and by extension, Hashem) commanded, but instead on their own intuition. This choice led to the disastrous sin of the Golden Calf. However, Bnei Yisrael achieved atonement at the moment of "אלה פקודי," "These are the records [of the Mishkan]" (Shemot 38:21). Bnei Yisrael's complete cooperation and fulfillment of whatever Hashem commanded them to build, even if it did not make sense to them, was the ultimate act of nullification to Hashem.

This notion may explain one of the most perplexing aspects of one of the holiest days. On Yom Kippur, we take a goat, and instead of offering it as a

sacrifice to Hashem, we send it off a cliff to one of the ministering angels known as Azazel (Ramban Acharei Mot 16:8). As long as one does Teshuvah, this act is known to bring atonement, whether for light or severe sins (Rambam Hilchot Teshuvah 1:2). One may be bothered by the fact that this highly significant act breaches upon the strict prohibition of Avoda Zarah. We are allowed to offer sacrifices only to Hashem, not an angel or other form of deity! Despite this, we send the goat off the cliff in the act of potential Avoda Zarah as the ultimate form of Teshuvah. By sending this goat off the cliff, we demonstrate that, according to our understanding, we should not be performing this ritual; however, since you, Hashem, commanded us to do so, we are eager and ready to fulfill your will. The nature of sin arises from too much self-reliance, and the foundation of our relationship with Hashem rests upon our nullification of this feeling.

Interestingly, the Rambam (Hilchot Teshuvah 2:1) writes that one performs complete Teshuvah when he is placed in the same situation as he sinned before and this time refrains from sinning. One may explain this Halacha in regards to the ability for one to show that he has conquered his evil inclination to the fullest extent and no longer stumbles in the same situation. However, one may still wonder why it specifically needs to be in the same situation. Why can't he just refrain from sinning to achieve complete atonement? It may be that when originally sinning, this individual forefronted his desires and wishes before Hashem's will, and the only way to fully repent from his erroneous thought process is to place himself in the same position and this time acknowledge Hashem's will. Psychologists teach that one may describe how one would act in a given situation. Still, until put in that situation, one can never fully display his true mentality. So too here, we require this person to show that he has realized that Hashem's will is first and foremost, and the only way to display that completely is by being placed in the same situation yet with a different mindset. May we all have the Siyata DeShmaya, heavenly help, to be able to nullify ourselves to the will of Hashem and perform his commandments to the utmost degree of perfection.

The Berachah on Partially Cooked Grains Part 2

By Nachi Scheiner ('22)

Methods of Cooking

Boiling

According to all Poskim, boiling grain gives it the status of being cooked. To what degree the grain needs to be boiled hinges upon the debate laid out above.

Steaming

Steaming is a common method used to puff grains. The hot steam enters and bloats the endosperm causing it to puff. There is a debate whether cooking through steam is considered Bishul, boiling. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach¹ holds that steaming is not considered boiling and thus would not constitute Bishul. Sefer Mekor HaBerachah² following Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv³ holds that no distinction should be made between steaming and boiling⁴.

Baking/Toasting

Although the Shulchan Aruch and many subsequent halachic authorities stated that toasting grain does not transform the grain into a Mezonot dish, there are those who hold that the definition of Bishul can change over time. Rav Elyashiv⁵ holds that the definition of Bishul, with regards to Berachot, has the ability to change over time (see the opinion of the Rambam above). Since toasting grains has become a normal medium to make significant dishes, he held that one would make a Mezonot on them. However, Rav Elyashiv holds that in order for toasting to be considered a method of cooking that transforms the grains, the grains must be cooked to the point where they are sticky⁶.

Granola

Over the past few years, a new snack has taken over supermarkets, granola bars. According to the Orthodox

Union,⁷ modern-day granola bars are made by steaming (or boiling) whole grain oats until soft and then rolling them into flakes. These flakes are then combined with oils, sugars, and other ingredients then baked. Normally, the five grains, in which oats are included, receive a Mezonot and an Al HaMichyah. However, since the grain is not cooked and mashed together, the oats may not be sufficiently cooked to warrant a Mezonot and an Al HaMichyah. What Berachah do we recite on these delicious snack bars?

Contemporary Poskim - The Berachah on Granola Bars?

For granola bars made of rolled oats, there seemingly is no reason to make a Mezonot: the grain is whole and toasting is not defined as "Bishul", cooking (as per the Shulchan Aruch above). For this reason, Rav Belsky⁸, Rav Schachter⁹, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach¹⁰, Rav Bodner¹¹ and Rav Moshe Feinstein¹² all hold that on granola oats one recites a Ha'Adamah.

Rav Moshe Sternbuch and Rav Pinchas Scheinberg¹³ hold that if the oats are fit for eating after they are steamed/boiled then one can say Mezonot. However, if the oats are not fit for eating after the steaming/boiling the Halacha is otherwise. VeZot HaBerachah writes that since the steaming/boiling process is meant only to soften the grains for rolling, and not for eating, one makes a Ha'Adamah.

As noted above, there are those who hold that the definition of Bishul, in the context of Hilchot Berachot¹⁴, adapts to changing circumstances. They hold that due to toasted oats being a normal cooking method¹⁵, we may change the Berachah. Furthermore, since the oats are first cooked in a water medium, we are more inclined to

¹As quoted by Rav Binyamin Forst on page 273 of "The Laws of Brachos". Rav Binyamin Forst concurs.

² Ibid.

³ VeZot HaBerachah page 288.

⁴ This debate has many applications and is much more nuanced than I laid it out to be. For applying the Sugya to other areas such as Bishul Akum please be sure to ask your local Orthodox Rav.

⁵ As quoted in VeZot HaBerachah page 284.

⁶ One may be able to align this with the strict understanding of the Rabbeinu Yonah (as quoted by the Mishnah Berurah 208:4) that the grains must stick together.

⁷ See OU Kosher staff's article on this topic: [What Berachah Does One Recite on a Granola Bar? - OU Kosher](#)

⁸ OU Kosher staff's article above.

⁹ OU Kosher staff's article above.

¹⁰ VeZot HaBerachah page 288.

¹¹ VeTein Berachah page 505.

¹² Igrot Moshe O'C 4:45

¹³ As quoted in VeZot HaBerachah page 288

¹⁴ Regarding other areas of Halacha, such as Hilchot Shabbat we are less inclined to change the definition of cooking as we do regarding Berachot because Berachot have to do with the significance of the food and with time that significance potentially changes.

¹⁵ There is a little bit of proof from the words of the Rambam above.

make a Mezonot. Rav Moshe Heinemann¹⁶ concurs based on the fact that, overall, the oats are sufficiently processed to render them a significant dish warranting a Mezonot. However, Rav Dovid Heber explains that according to Rav Heinemann only on Quaker and Nature Valley bars¹⁷ one makes a Mezonot, but on Kellogg's Granola¹⁸ one would make a Ha'Adamah as the cooking that occurs is only to neutralize enzymes.

Mezonot, Ha'Adamah, or None?

Although not all disagreements create doubts on how to rule, in a case where there is no clear consensus on how to rule we are left to deal with the Safeik. There is considerable debate¹⁹ whether Mezonot is effective for anything considered Mazon, satiating (i.e., everything except water and salt²⁰). On the other hand, once the grain has been transformed into a more significant dish requiring a Mezonot, it is not clear that one can make a Ha'Adamah.²¹

Although a SheHaKol would be effective, albeit BeDi'avad, it is unclear if it is fitting to make a SheHaKol. Regarding the Berachah on Crispix, as noted in our previous article²², one may be able to claim that there is a Safeik about the food itself due to the 50/50 nature of its ingredients; therefore, for Crispix, SheHaKol is the appropriate Berachah. However, regarding granola, the food deserves one Berachah of which we are unsure how to understand the level of processing the Halchah requires it to go through to merit a Mezonot. The issue is not inherent in the food, it is in our understanding of the food. Since the issue lies in our understanding, one

should follow the majority view's understanding and recite Ha'Adamah.

One might take a different approach: since the granola bars are substantial snacks and are filling, unlike raw grain which is not considered a satiating food, they are fit for a Mezonot.²³

Practical Guidance

Due to the increase in popularity of breakfast and snack bars, there are many different varieties on the current market. In this article, we focused on Nature Valley and Quaker oats as the paradigm for rolled oats. However, any bar that contains rolled oats as the main ingredient would be subject to the debate outlined above. However, any bar that does not contain oats as a main ingredient, would get whatever Berachah is fit for its primary ingredient.²⁴ Please be sure to check the ingredient list and consult your local Orthodox Rabbi regarding which Berachah is fitting²⁵.

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¹⁶ As quoted in Rav Dovid Heber's article for the Star-K: [Brochos for Breakfast | STAR-K Kosher Certification](#)

¹⁷ Along with Nature Valley Granola Clusters, majority (not all) of Cliff Bars, Kind Healthy Grains Bars (majority of the other Kind bars are Ha'Eitz), Oola Bars, Trader Joe's Granola bars, and others.

¹⁸ Some Kellogg's breakfast bars are made with flour and according to everyone would get a Mezonot

¹⁹ See Birkei Yosef 167:10, Chayei Adam 58:3, Bi'ur Halachah 167:10, Kaf HaChayim 202:9, 206:5 who rule leniently. However, the Aruch HaShulchan (Orach Chaim 167:13) and the Sdei Chemed (5:261) disagree.

²⁰ Eruvin 26b.

²¹ See Nishmat Adam 58:2 and Birkei Yosef, Shi'urei Berachah 167:5, 207:1 who rule leniently. However, the Ritva (Hilchot Berachot 2:16) rules strictly. Later authorities have not issued a clear ruling on this matter.

²²

<https://jewishlink.news/divrei-torah/46902-what-bracha-does-one-make-on-crispix>

²³ See Igrot Moshe (O"C 4:45)

²⁴ Although the Shulchan Aruch (208:3) rules that even when one of the five grains are not the main ingredient one still makes a Mezonot, that is only in the case when the grain was added as an integral part of the food and adds taste. However, with some granola bars, usually, when the main ingredient is not oats it is because the focus of the bar is on fruits or proteins thus the Berachah we recite follows the primary ingredient.

²⁵ See the following list for helpful guidance:

https://halachipedia.com/index.php?title=Granola_Bar_Bracha_Chart