Holy Use: Relating to Resources Sustainably

Hebrew/English Source Sheet

This material was prepared by Rabbi Yonatan Neril and Evonne Marzouk of Canfei Nesharim, as part of the Jewcology project.

Outline of Topics

1. Jacob Recovering His Small Vessels
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4. Willow Branches for Matza Baking and Chametz Burning
5. Using Agricultural Waste for Covering of Sukkah

1) Jacob Recovering His Small Vessels

ברארשת פרק על פסוקים די, מספר:
ינון, שמלך חוהו, רוח עת-תקב בורי, מבחר--לושי אורות...
כב ו://${{}} set-תחתær, את-יתמה; רבי-תמי, לְדֵי וּלְדוֹת.
כב וኪ-תחתær, את-יתמה; רבי-תמי, לְדֵי וּלְדוֹת.
כִּכְלִי מְשַׁבְּרָה, לְדֵי; וֹאֵבַךְ אֵין שם, זֶה יָעל, וּלְדוֹת

Genesis chapter 32, verses 14, 22-25, Judaica Press Translation

14. So he [Jacob] lodged there on that night, and he took from what came into his hand a gift for his brother Esau...
22. So the gift passed on before him, and he lodged that night in the camp.
23. And he arose during that night, and he took his two wives and his two maidservants and his eleven children, and he crossed the ford of [the] Jabbok.
24. And he took them and brought them across the stream, and he took across what was his.
25. And Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn.

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Chulin 91:1, Judaica Classics Library translation

'And Jacob was left alone.' Said Rabbi Eleazar: He remained behind for the sake of some small jars. Hence [it is learned] that to the righteous their money is dearer than their body; and why is this? Because they do not stretch out their hands to robbery.
Pri Tzadik (Hassidic Commentary of Rabbi Zadok HaKohen Rabinowitz)\(^1\) [Translation by J. Neril]

Here, where it says that ‘for the righteous, their money is more dear to them than their bodies, so that they do not come to steal’ (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sotah, p. 12a) [can be understood] to mean that they do not take that which is not destined for them from God...[The above teaching] calls it ‘stealing,’ based on the teaching (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Brachot p. 35b) that it is as if that person is stealing from God and the Jewish people, since “to God is the land and its fullness” (Psalms). That which is not created for this specific person is like stolen property when they are in possession of it, and thus [the righteous are careful] not to take possession of it. Because of this, property that is assigned to and created for them is very precious to them—so much so that our patriarch Jacob risked his life for his property. Thus the Ishbitzer Rebbe heard from his rebbe of Przysucha who said in the name of the Yehudi Hakadosh (three generations of Hassidic rebbes of Przysucha): a righteous person is obligated to enjoy that object which is fitting for them even if it means risking their life. That is why Jacob-- who knew that the small vessels were his, appropriate to his soul, and created for him—risked his life to save them. So too with all the silver and gold that they [the Jewish people] took out of Egypt—they sought to extract the holiness that was trapped inside of [the wealth]."

Pri Tzadik (Rabbi Zadok HaKohen Rabinowitz of Lublin (Kreisburg, 1823- Lublin, Poland, 1900)) on Pesach, p. 36b, in Kol Mevaser, ed. Yehuda Menachem Boem, Raanana, Israel, 1992. At age 65, Rabbi Zadok HaKohen began to give public classes on Shabbat, Holidays, Rosh Chodesh and special occasions. The transcription of those classes were compiled into his work known as Pri Tzadik. (adapted from Wikipedia, online at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zadok_HaKohen) Kol Mevaser is a four-volume anthology of Hasidic teachings.

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Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, Likutei Moharan, Torah 54c, translation from The Breslov Research Institute, Jerusalem, reprinted with permission.

The union between the righteous person and the Community of Israel is achieved through masa u’matan (doing business). This is because everything in the world has in it sparks of holiness that fell at the time of the Shattering of the Vessels. “Shattering” is the aspect of letters that shattered and fell into each and every thing of this world. For every thing has its time: it must come at that time, to that person who shares the same root with those sparks in that thing.

Thus, when that thing comes to this person, and he receives vitality from it--i.e., from the shattered letters that are there--through this the shattered letters are encompassed in this person, in his vitality. They become a complete entity, and infuse the vitality of the entire body. Through this the letters are restored and become complete. Then that thing must stay with this person, for him to use, until the letters and sparks that are associated with his root terminate. After this it leaves his possession for someone else; the time has come for the remaining letters to have an ascent. They share the same root with that other person and so depart for his

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\(^1\) Pri Tzadik (Rabbi Zadok HaKohen Rabinowitz of Lublin (Kreisburg, 1823- Lublin, Poland, 1900)) on Pesach, p. 36b, in Kol Mevaser, ed. Yehuda Menachem Boem, Raanana, Israel, 1992. At age 65, Rabbi Zadok HaKohen began to give public classes on Shabbat, Holidays, Rosh Chodesh and special occasions. The transcription of those classes were compiled into his work known as Pri Tzadik. (adapted from Wikipedia, online at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zadok_HaKohen) Kol Mevaser is a four-volume anthology of Hasidic teachings.
possession.

Still there are times when the thing returns to that person who had it originally. Since he did not possess the components of soul-spirit-higher soul <that relate to the letters>, he was unable to complete these letters until now that these components of soul-spirit-higher soul have become his. Through them he is able to complete the remaining letters, which in the meanwhile had to remain with the other person.

And when he completes these letters, he gains illumination in his soul-spirit-higher soul because of the illuminations of these letters that came to him and which he completed. Through this illumination he illuminates the root of his soul-spirit-higher soul, which is with the righteous person and the Community of Israel; the root of all the souls <being there>, as explained above.

Discussion Questions:
1. What are these sources teaching us about the spiritual meaning of possessions?
2. How could they apply to our possessions today?
3. How would this approach affect your own purchasing patterns?

2) Reusing Bread from Eruv Ritual During Sabbath Meals

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Brachot 39b, Soncino Press translation
When Rav Ammi and Rav Assi happened to get hold of a loaf which had been used for an eruv, they used to say over it the blessing, 'who bringest forth bread from the earth', saying, Since one religious duty has been performed with it, let us perform with it still another.

Shulchan Aruch, volume Orech Chaim, section 394, subsection 2, translated by Rabbi Aviel Orenstein
The eyruv is required to be at beyn ha-shemashos [between sunset and three stars] in a place where it is fit to be taken. Consequently, if a heap of stones fell upon the eyruv and one is unable to take it from its place without the use of a hoe and a pickax, one is forbidden to rely on it.

Gloss of the Rama: The eyruv is only required to be in existence at beyn ha-shemashos, but once it is definitely dark one can eat the eyruv.

One should use the bread of the eyruv for the breaking of the bread at the morning meal of Shabbos.  This only applies in a locality where it is the practice to make an eyruv every Erev Shabbos. However, it is preferable to make an eyruv for the entire year once, as stated above in Sec. 368, in the gloss to par. 3.

3) Smelling Myrtle of the Lulav Bundle on Havdala after Shabbat

Shelach maal'ach hahavdalah, translated by Rabbi Aviel Orenstein
For allowing transport through courtyards on Sabbath.

Instead of the briar, a cypress shall rise, and instead of the nettle, a myrtle shall rise, and it shall be for the Lord as a name, as an everlasting sign, which shall not be discontinued.

**Shulchan Aruch and Rama, volume Orech Chaim, section 297, subsection 4, translated by Rabbi Aviel Orenstein**

It is the accepted practice to recite the blessing over a myrtle branch wherever this is possible. Some authorities say that a blessing should not be made over a dry myrtle-branch, which does not emit odor, but only over the spices; and so is the practice in these provinces. It appears to me that a blessing may be made over a myrtle-branch, as well, should be put together with the other spices, for then all views will have been satisfied.

**Mishnah Berura, volume Orech Chaim, section 297, subsection 4, translated by Rabbi Aviel Orenstein**

Over a myrtle branch. i.e., one taken together with a lulav on Sukkos. For since one mitzvah was already done with the myrtle-branch, one should use it for another mitzvah...

Gloss of the Rama: Some authorities say that a blessing should not be made over a dry myrtle-branch, which does not emit odor, but only over the spices; and so is the practice in these provinces. It appears to me that a blessing may be made over a myrtle-branch, as well, should be put together with the other spices, for then all views will have been satisfied.

**Shulchan Aruch and Rama, volume Orech Chaim, section 664, subsection 9, translated by Rabbi Aviel Orenstein**

There is an authority who says that one is forbidden to benefit from the willow branch after it has been taken hold of in fulfillment of the mitzvah, unless a stipulation was made at the outset over benefit from it. He reasons that it will have been set aside for the entire day to serve for the mitzvah.

Gloss of the Rama: It is the practice to put away the hoshanos [willow branches] to be used for the baking of matzos, in order to perform a mitzvah with them.

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4 Op cit, volume III (B), p. 145
5 Op cit, volume III (B), p. 145
6 Op cit, volume VI (D), p. 107
The Prophets instituted a custom that each person take on that day a special willow branch, besides the one which is on the lulav. Whatever disqualifies the willow on the lulav also disqualifies this willow. Therefore, a Jew should not cut it himself for his own use, and the only difference between these two willows is, that in this one, even if most of its leaves have fallen off, and even if there is only one leaf left on the stem, it is valid. Nevertheless, to show regard for the precept, it is best that the willow should have many leaves and a long stem. It is a fine custom to take for this occasion five twigs and tie them together with the frond of a lulav (not the one used for the precept).

The willow branch should not be taken together with the lulav. When reciting, Taaneh emunim (may You answer the faithful), the lulav and the etrog are put down, and the willow is taken, for then we pray for water. Concluding the Hoshanot [encircling the Bima], we wave the willow branch and then beat it on the ground five times, which number is sufficient even if its leaves are not shed thereby. After the beating, the willow branch should not be cast away, because it would show contempt for the precept. It is best to save it and cast it into the furnace where the matzot are baked for the following Passover, for, since one precept has been performed with it, it is fitting that another precept be performed with it.

Discussion Questions:
1. Why should we save something used for one mitzvah for another mitzvah?
2. What does this tell us about the sanctity which can become embued on certain objects?
3. Can you think of parallels in your life?

5) Using Agricultural Waste for Covering the Sukkah

Deuteronomy 16:13, Judaica Press translation
You shall make yourself the Festival of Sukkoth for seven days, when you gather in [the produce] from your threshing floor and your vat.

Rashi to Deuteronomy 16:13, Judaica Press translation
when you gather in [the produce]: [i.e.,] at the time of the ingathering, when you bring the summer fruits into the house. Another explanation: “when you gather in [the produce] from your threshing floor and your vat” teaches that we should cover the sukkah [only] with the waste products that come from the threshing floor and the vat

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8 Translator’s note: i.e., with things that have grown from the ground, have become detached, and are not susceptible to ritual uncleanness. Since they are not foods and are not vessels, they are not susceptible to spiritual uncleanness. -Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Rosh Hashana 13a and Tractate Sukkah 12a
Exodus 23:16, Judaica Press translation
and the festival of the ingathering at the departure of the year, when you gather in [the products of] your labors
from the field.

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sukkah, p. 12a, Soncino Press translation and footnotes
...And if [you will suggest]: Just as the Festival offering was a live animal so the Sukkah must be [of something
which is] alive, [it may be replied that] when Rabin came, he said in the name of R. Johanan, Scripture says,
"After that you have gathered in from your threshing-floor and your winepress" (Deuteronomy 16:13). The
verse thus speaks of the leavings of the threshing-floor and wine-press.9 But perhaps it means the actual
threshing-floor and the actual wine-press?10 - Zera answered. It is written 'winepress', and11 it is impossible to
cover the Sukkah with this! R. Jeremiah demurred: But perhaps it means the solidified wine that comes from
Senir, which resembles fig-cakes?12 R. Zera observed, We had something in our hands, and R. Jeremiah came
and cast an ax at it.13 R. Ashi replied, 'From your threshing-floor,' [implies] but not the threshing-floor itself,14
'refrom your wine-press', [implies] but not the wine-press itself. R. Hisda replied,15 The deduction is made from
this verse, “Go forth to the mount and fetch olive-branches, and branches of thick trees” (Nehemia 8:15).
Are not myrtle-branches, the same as
branches of thick trees?17— R. Hisda answered: The wild myrtle18 [were to be fetched] for the Sukkah, while
the branches of thick trees,19 for the lulav.

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Rosh Hashana 13a, Soncino Press Translation
For it is written, and the feast of ingathering [asif] at the end of the year. (Exodus 23:16) Now what is
‘ingathering’? Shall I say it means the feast which comes at the time of ingathering? This is already signified in
the words [of Exod. 23] when you gather in. What then must be meant here by asif? Harvesting; ...R. Hanina
objected strongly to the statement made above. Can you, he said, maintain that this ‘asif’ is ‘harvesting’, seeing
that it is written, when you gather in from your threshing floor and from your wine press, (Deuteronomy 16:13)
and [commenting on this] a Master has said, The verse speaks of the waste of the threshing floor and the wine

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9 Which grow from the ground and are unsusceptible to ritual uncleanness.
10 Which includes the grain and the grapes both of which are susceptible to ritual uncleanness.
11 Since it contains only a liquid.
12 And is, therefore, suitable as a roof covering.
13 I.e., R. Jeremiah has destroyed what the former thought was a satisfactory explanation of the ruling in our Mishnah.
14 Hence the deduction that the text ‘speaks of the leavings of the threshing-floor’ etc.
15 In reply to the question, Where does our Mishnah deduce that whatever is susceptible to ritual uncleanness etc.
16 All the varieties enumerated are unsusceptible to ritual uncleanness and grow from the ground.
17 ‘Branches of thick trees’ in Leviticus 23:40 is regarded as referring to myrtle. Why then should the same thing be mentioned
twice?
18 This is the species referred to in ‘myrtle branches’, which has only one or two leaves in each row and is, therefore, invalid for the
lulav.
19 Having three leaves in each row.
Rebbe Natan of Breslov, Likutei Halachot, Choshen Mishpat, Hilchot Mekach u'Memkar, halakha 4, section 8, translation by Yonatan Neril

“And this (the aforementioned) is the sense of the essential part of the Sukkah coming from the [agricultural] waste of the threshing floor and wine vat, as the Sages of the Talmud say (in Tractate Rosh Hashana 13a) on the verse (from Exodus ch. 23), “in your gathering” etc.—that the verse is speaking about the [agricultural] waste of the threshing floor and wine vat. Because in this is repaired that which Adam corrupted or anyone in their sin when they fell to the abundance [fitting] for animals by being drawn after the animal desires. Because now [in using agricultural waste for the Sukkah covering] a person raises and elevates the abundance [fitting] for animals, which is the aspect of the [agricultural] waste of the threshing floor and wine vat, and a person makes from it the Sukkah... It is thus found that in that which a person corrupted is repaired, which is how it must be for the repair of every person, to repair in that which one corrupted.”

Discussion Questions:

1. According to R' Yochanan and R' Hisda (Talmud, Tractate Sukkah 12a), which items would be used as the covering for the Sukkah?
2. How did these items serve as a spiritual repair for the person who used them?
3. What can this teach us about what we consider to be waste?

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20 To show that it may be used for covering the sukkah; and the phrase, Festival of ‘asif’ (‘ingathering’) here too has the same signification — the festival that comes at the time when people ‘gather in’ the waste products for the sukkah. (Soncino footnote)