

The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Week of 20-26 Av 5756 / 5-11 August 1996

Menachos 93-99

Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

What the Show Breads Showed

The Show breads in the Beis Hamikdash were arranged, says the Torah (Vayikra 24:6), "on the pure table before Hashem."

In his Chumash commentary on this passage, Rashi cites two interpretations of the word "pure". One refers to the purity of the gold used to coat the wood of the table in the Sanctuary. The other hints to the requirement that the bottom bread lie on the purity of the table itself and not on the rods which supported the higher ones.

Rabbi Shimon be Lakish, in our section of the Talmud, infers from the word "pure" that there was a theoretical possibility for the Sanctuary table to be impure and unfit for its service. How could this be, he asks, since the table was made of wood and a wooden vessel can only contract a state of ritual impurity if it is made to be carried? Was there ever any situation in which the sacred table before Hashem, whose function was to display the twelve show breads, was removed from its designated place in the Sanctuary?

Yes, says this sage, the table was sometimes removed from its place. When Jews made their pilgrimage to the Beis Hamikdash during the three festivals the kohanim would carry the table with its show breads out to the Temple courtyard and show it to them and say: "See how much you are beloved by Hashem!"

How did the show breads reflect this love?

A great miracle, says Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, occurred each week in regard to the show breads. Although a week passed from the time they were placed on the table they were as fresh and warm on the day they were removed as they were on the day they were arranged.

When the table was carried out to them and the Jews saw how miraculously fresh the week-old breads were they realized how beloved they were before their Creator.

Menachos 96b

Your Table is Your Altar

How is a table like an altar?

The Prophet Yechezkel (41:22) describes the dimensions of the altar in the Beis Hamikdash of the future and concludes the passage with the words: "And he said to me 'This is the table which is before Hashem.'"

Beginning with the altar and ending with the table communicates a message. Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Elazar offer this interpretation:

When there was a Beis Hamikdash the altar, upon which sacrifices were brought, achieved atonement for man. Now that there is no Beis Hamikdash it is man's table which achieves atonement for him.

How does the table achieve atonement for him?

In Mesechta Brachos (55a), Rabbi Yehuda states that one who lingers long by his table will be blessed with long life because he increases the opportunity of a poor man coming along to join him in his meal.

Rabbeinu Bachya, in his commentary on Chumash, writes that it was a custom amongst pious Jews in Europe that when a person who had been distinguished for his hospitality to the needy died they would form his coffin from the wood of the table at which his acts of kindness had been performed so that he could take this merit with him on his final journey.

Menachos 97a

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