

Talmud Brachot Top Ten Teachings, Daf 26:

1. **Persian and modern bathrooms.** The Shulchan Aruch says that if you're building a place and you designate it to be a bathroom, you can't turn it into a shul. Why would that be? The Shulchan Aruch is talking about old-fashioned outhouses. People would defecate into a place that was sort of in view, and then they had to gather the excrement. It was really disgusting. That kind of place should never be associated with a shul. But the gemara says this law doesn't apply to Persian bathrooms, because they are considered to be closed. In a Persian bathroom, people would sit on a sort of ledge, and the excrement would roll down a big hill and drop far away. It was concealed. In this type of place, the prohibitions against standing nearby to daven or say the Shema do not apply. Based on this, many poskim are lenient regarding bathrooms today because our toilets flush. One interesting leniency that comes out of this is based on a psak by Rav Moshe Feinstein: Say you're in a hotel room, and the only sink is in the bathroom. Normally it wouldn't be ideal to do *al netilat yadayim* in a bathroom. But because it's considered like a Persian bathroom, in certain circumstances when you have no other options this would be ok.
2. ***Avar yomo battal korbano.*** We have a concept regarding korbanot that when the day passes, the opportunity for the offering is gone. Does this apply to tefillah as well? The gemara asks: if a person missed mincha, can they daven maariv twice to make up for it? One can daven shacharit twice to make up for a missed maariv, but maybe that's different because maariv and shacharit are in the same day while mincha and maariv are not. Prayer has an element of being in place of offerings, and we know that for offerings once the day has ended the opportunity is gone. On the other hand, prayer also has an element of begging G-d to meet our needs, and one can pray for compassion at any time. Why do we reference the concept of *avar yomo battal korbano* here at all? It might apply on certain holidays, when specific offerings are brought that cannot be made up after the holiday ends, but on a regular day an opportunity can be missed even if the day hasn't ended. If you miss the morning tamid, you can't bring it in the afternoon. So why does the gemara reference *avar yomo battal korbano* in discussing a regular daily prayer that is like the daily tamid? Because when it comes to tefillah, though to some extent it is modeled after the offerings, there is something about the daily element. The gemara also references the verse *vayehi erev vayehi boker* - and there was evening, and there was morning. But this in fact does not apply to korbanot. Creation begins at night; holidays begin at night. But korbanot start in the morning. So if the gemara is drawing comparisons between korbanot and tefillah, why reference this verse about Creation? Maybe the answer to both of these questions is that there is a rhythm of time that requires prayer. *Vayehi erev vayehi boker* refers to this rhythm, which predates and is unrelated to the korbanot. Evening comes first, then morning, and these two times require two distinct types of prayer. *Lehagid baboker chasdecha ve'emunatcha baleilot* - In the morning we relate Your kindness, and in the evening Your faithfulness. These elements of prayer combined form one day, just as according to Maimonides, saying Shema at night and in the morning is one mitzvah. There is something about the 24-hour period that begins in the evening and concludes just before the next evening, something about a day that obligates a prayer. We start with darkness and then we find light. We cannot have the light without first having the night. We cannot taste freedom until we've tasted slavery; cannot have an answer until we have a question. This is more primary to tefillah than even the idea of prayer being a replacement for korbanot.
3. **Can you really make up a missed prayer?** Chabad chassidim consider personal prayer, and the preparation and meditation before the prayer, to sometimes be more important than the tzibbur and the time of prayer. They believe prayer should be about focusing on the relationship between you and G-d, and if that takes you a little extra time it's fine. But if you daven shacharit

at 2:00 in the afternoon, are you actually davening shacharit or are you just davening mincha? According to the Rambam you can continue to say the brachot surrounding the Shema all day. So if you're saying them in the afternoon, it would feel like shacharit but theoretically the Shemonah Esrei should be for mincha, since it is the time for mincha. Another justification for missing the zman tefillah, according to Chabad, is that if you start preparing to daven during the right time, even if you finish late, you are still considered to have davened at the right time. A *beraita* says, "What is a crookedness that can't be made straight or a lack that can't be made full? Someone who misses the Shema or the evening or morning davening." But that doesn't make sense, because we've already established that you can make up a missed davening. The gemara explains that a missed prayer can only be made up if it was missed by accident. If you had the time to pray and deliberately chose not to, you cannot make up the prayer. Not caring enough is not an excuse. If making up your missed prayer is an option, when can you do it? The Rambam says you should do tashlumin (say Shemonah Esrei twice) at the next prayer, and if you don't do it then you won't get another chance. The Raabad says if you don't have time to do tashlumin right away, you can do it even a day later as long as you do not skip any prayers in between. A third opinion says that tashlumin can be done any time, because G-d is a merciful father.

4. **The Patriarchs established the prayers.** Rabbi Yose says prayer was instituted by the Patriarchs, and a *beraita* supports this claim. The *beraita* says that Avraham established the morning prayer, based on the verse, "Avraham woke up early in the morning to go to the place where he had stood"; Yitzchak instituted the afternoon prayer, based on the verse, "Yitzchak went out *lasuach* in the field", and Yaakov established the evening prayer, based on the verse, "*vayifga* in the place and rested there." Let's explore this further. When G-d told Avraham He was going to destroy S'dom, Avraham started to pray for the cities. The next day, he went back to the same spot to continue praying. Real prayer isn't over after the first time. It's when you don't know what to do, so you keep going back and praying more. Like Avraham, we stand every day and keep asking for G-d to do what's just. Yitzchak's prayer happened when Eliezer was coming back with Rivkah. The gemara explains that *lasuach* means to pray. The word *vayifga*, used for Yaakov, also refers to prayer. All of the patriarchs had multiple encounters with G-d, so why are these specific instances chosen as the sources for our own prayers? Because these were consequential moments. Avraham was praying on behalf of wicked people, Yitzchak was praying for himself and his father to find loving partners, and Yaakov was running away from his brother and going to a strange new land. But their prayers in these moments were not limited. They prayed for humanity, for the place the Temple would be established, and for *tikkun* in the world. What came from them was the establishment of regularity. Regularity can be dangerous because our prayers can become routine and lose meaning. But we want prayer to become a good habit. It's about training people to do good regularly and not just at important moments. We pray every day so that when it's truly needed we know how to pray. It's a habit that contains within it the passion and power that comes from our Patriarchs and Matriarchs.
5. **Tefillah is in place of korbanot.** Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says that prayers are in the place of the daily offerings. A *beraita* was taught: "Why do we say that we can do morning prayer until midday? Because the morning tamid could be brought until midday. Rabbi Yehuda says only until the fourth hour. Why do we have until evening to say mincha? Because the afternoon tamid could be brought until evening. Rabbi Yehuda says only until *plag hamincha* (about three quarters of the afternoon). Why do we say maariv doesn't have an established time? Because certain parts of offerings that weren't burned during the day would be burning on the altar all evening. Why do we have all day for mussaf? Because the mussaf offering could be brought all day. Rabbi Yehuda says only until the seventh hour." The word korban comes from the root

kiruv, which means to bring close. Bringing an offering is a way of bringing oneself close to G-d. When someone used to bring a korban he would say, "This is in the place of my physical body." What does that mean? We do what we do because our bodies aren't always able to integrate into our spiritual pursuit. We need to bring our bodies closer to G-d, like a korban. Bringing a korban merges the animal into the Divine will. We try to take the will of our bodies and align it with the Divine will as well. Davening doesn't just mean prayer; it means service. Instead of bringing a korban to transform our will, we pray. It can't just be about words, it needs to be visceral, raw, passionate, transformative. It should involve the whole physical being. "Prayer" is perhaps an inadequate word to describe this kind of service.

6. **Tefillah is in the time of korbanot.** In the Rambam's list of the 613 mitzvot, he links the mitzvah of kriyat Shema with daily prayer and says that prayer follows the times of the Temple offerings. Our prayers are not exactly a replacement for the offerings, but they do follow the same schedule. Elsewhere, the Rambam says that the Patriarchs prayed shacharit, mincha, and maariv. Our prayers are based on what the Patriarchs established, and the timing that we use for the prayers is based on the timing of the korbanot. This fits in with the *beraita* we just learned linking the prayers to the times of the korbanot. But does that mean that Rabbi Yose was wrong in saying that prayer was instituted by the Patriarchs? Rabbi Yose clarifies: It's really both. The Patriarchs instituted prayer, but that wasn't enough. The rabbis had to link prayer to the Temple offerings.
7. **Dispute about the time for mincha.** The rabbis say mincha can be said until the evening, while Rabbi Yehuda says we have only until *plag*, which is something like an hour and a quarter before nightfall. The afternoon is split in two sections. The first half is mincha gedola, and the second half is mincha ketana.
8. **More about mincha gedola and mincha ketana.** The Rambam says that it's a positive mitzvah to bring two olah offerings every day, and these are called tamidim. The morning tamid was slaughtered before sunrise, and the afternoon tamid was slaughtered after midday when the sun wasn't directly overhead. The time for that was between six hours and the end of the day. Sometimes it needed to be done at the later end of the range because other offerings had to be brought first. So normally, the afternoon tamid was brought sometime after nine and a half hours, and that is the main time frame that we use for mincha. But on Erev Pesach they would do it at six and a half hours, and therefore in theory we can daven mincha starting at that time, half an hour past midday. This early time, which is not the primary time for mincha, is called mincha gedola. The later time, from nine and a half hours, is called mincha ketana. Some commentaries allow for one to daven mincha gedola as well as mincha ketana, with one being a required prayer and one permitted. If you do want to say an additional mincha, you should do it in the earlier time. But if you already davened mincha early with the intent to fulfill your obligation, you don't have to daven again later. Individuals only have a requirement to say one mincha, and that obligation could be fulfilled at either the early time or the late time. But because we have two distinct times for mincha, we can say that they are technically different obligations and therefore there could actually be a minhag to do both, though one would only count as reshut. We don't see this by any other tefillah. However, nobody today really does this.
9. **Maariv's relationship with mincha.** We tend to think of maariv as distinct from mincha, but is it really? Tosfot is bothered by the fact that we often daven maariv early, and decides that one way to explain this is to see maariv as related to mincha. Remember that maariv corresponds to the parts of the offerings that were not burned during the day, which continued to burn at night. Perhaps the time for maariv isn't so much "evening" as it is "after mincha." Another possibility is that when we daven maariv early we are following the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda, who says that the time for mincha ends well before nightfall. The proper time for maariv would

begin immediately after the time for mincha ends, and so according to Rabbi Yehuda maariv could be before nightfall.

10. **More about the Patriarchs and the offerings.** Avraham was the embodiment of *chesed*, Yitzchak was the embodiment of *gevura*, and Yaakov was the embodiment of *tiferet*. Reb Levi Yitzchak asks a question about the first blessing of the Shemonah Esrei: We say "*Baruch atah Hashem Elokeynu v'Elokei avoteinu, Elokei Avraham, Elokei Yitzchak, v'Elokei Yaakov*" - Blessed are You Hashem, our G-d and the G-d of our Patriarchs, the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak, and the G-d of Yaakov. Why do we keep repeating G-d's name? Because each of the Patriarchs had a full relationship with G-d. This plays out in the institution of our prayers. The morning is *chesed*, the afternoon is *gevura*, and the evening is *tiferet*. Tefillah is meant to be in place of the tamid offerings in the Temple, but it can have some of the same pitfalls. We relied so much on the Temple that we felt invincible and became complacent, which led to sin. The prophets decried the false piety of people who didn't do justice or charity and thought they could simply buy G-d off with offerings. We can fall into the same trap with prayer. But G-d can't be tricked or bought off. We cannot rely on prayers and forget to do good.