

Rabbi Jonah Geffen

Arranging the Coals and Stoking the Fire

Whole Hog Barbecue and the True Jewish Soul (Food)



1. במדבר כ"ח:א-ח'

(א) וַיְדַבֵּר יְקוֹק אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: (ב) צוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אֶת־קֶרְבְּנִי לַחֲמִי לְאִשׁ יֵי רֵיחַ נִיחֹחַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ לְהִקְרִיב לִי בְמוֹעֶדוֹ: (ג) וְאָמַרְתָּ לָהֶם זֶה הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְבוּ לִיקוֹק כִּבְשִׁים בְּנִי־שָׁנָה תְּמִימִם שְׁנַיִם לַיּוֹם עֹלָה תָמִיד: (ד) אֶת־הַכֶּבֶשׂ אֶחָד תַּעֲשֶׂה בַבֶּקֶר וְאֶת הַכֶּבֶשׂ הַשֵּׁנִי תַעֲשֶׂה בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים: (ה) וְעִשִּׂירִית הָאִיפָה סֹלֶת לַמִּנְחָה בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן כֹּתִית רְבִיעֵת הָהֵי'ן: (ו) עֲלֹת תָמִיד הָעֹשִׂיָה בַהֵר סִינִי לְרֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ אִשָּׁה לַיהוָה: (ז) וְנִסְכּוֹ רְבִיעֵת הָהֵי'ן לַכֶּבֶשׂ הָאֶחָד בֶּקֶר דֹּשׁ הַסֵּךְ נִסֵּךְ שֶׁכֶר לַיהוָה: (ח) וְאֶת הַכֶּבֶשׂ הַשֵּׁנִי תַעֲשֶׂה בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים כַּמִּנְחָה הַבֶּקֶר וְנִסְכּוֹ תַעֲשֶׂה אִשָּׁה רֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ לִיקוֹק (פ)

1. Numbers 28:1-8

(1) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: (2) Command the Israelite people and say to them: Be punctilious in presenting to Me at stated times the offerings of food due Me, as offerings by fire of pleasing odor to Me. (3) Say to them: These are the offerings by fire that you are to present to the LORD: As a regular burnt offering every day, two yearling lambs without blemish. (4) You shall offer one lamb in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. (5) And as a meal offering, there shall be a tenth of an ephah of choice flour with a quarter of a hin of beaten oil mixed in— (6) the regular burnt offering instituted at Mount Sinai—an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD. (7) The libation with it shall be a quarter of a hin for each lamb, to be poured in the sacred precinct as an offering of fermented drink to the LORD. (8) The other lamb you shall offer at twilight, preparing the same meal offering and libation as in the morning—an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD.

2. Demetrius, The Areopagite (as quoted in Michael Pollan, *Cooked*)

Once men indulged in wicked cannibal habits, and numerous other vices; when a man of better genius arose, who first sacrificed [animal] victims, and did roast their flesh. And, as the meat surpassed the flesh of man, they ate man no longer...

3. Robert Gordis, *A Jewish Prayerbook for the Modern Age*, Conservative Judaism, October 1945

There will naturally be instances, however, where legitimate reinterpretation is impossible because the traditional formulation cannot be made to serve our needs. Such pre-eminently are the passages dealing concretely with sacrifices, which are central to the Musaf service... the elimination of the Musaf service as a whole means destroying the entire structure of the traditional liturgy. Moreover, it would mean **sacrificing** other important ideas contained in it which ought to be preserved, and if possible even more vividly expressed. We have noted above that Reform utilized its objection to animal sacrifices as a convenient method of eliminating prayers for the restoration of Zion. We surely cannot afford to throw out the baby with the bath! What procedure are we to adopt? A step in the right direction was made in one edition of the United Synagogue Mahzor, which changed the phrases עשו והקריבו from the future to the past נעשה ונקריב...

4. ויקרא ו'א-ו'

(א) וידבר יקוק אל-משה לאמר: (ב) צו את-אֶהֱרֹן וְאֶת־בָּנָיו לֵאמֹר זֹאת תֹּרַת הָעֹלָה הוּא הָעֹלָה עַל מִזְבֵּחַ עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ כָּל־הַלֵּילָה עַד־הַבֹּקֶר וְאִשׁ הַמִּזְבֵּחַ תִּקְדָּהּ בֹּ: (ג) וְלִבְשׁ הַכֹּהֵן מִדּוּ בִדּוּ וּמִכְנָסִי־בִדּוּ לִבְשׁ עַל־בָּשָׂרוֹ וְהָרִים אֶת־הַדָּשֵׁן אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכַל הָאִשׁ אֶת־הָעֹלָה עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְשָׂמוּ אֶצֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: (ד) וּפָשַׁט אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וְלִבְשׁ בְּגָדִים אֲחֵרִים וְהוֹצִיא אֶת־הַדָּשֵׁן אֶל־מִחוּץ לַמִּחֲנֶה אֶל־מָקוֹם טָהוֹר: (ה) וְהָאִשׁ עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ תִּקְדָּהּ בֹּ לֹא תִכָּבֶה וְבִיעַר עָלֶיהָ הַכֹּהֵן יַעֲצִים בַּבֹּקֶר בַּבֹּקֶר וְעַרְךְ עָלֶיהָ הָעֹלָה וְהַקָּטִיר עָלֶיהָ חֲלָבֵי הַשְּׁלָמִים: (ו) אִשׁ תָּמִיד תִּקְדָּהּ עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא תִכָּבֶה: (ז)

4. Leviticus 6:1-6

(1) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: (2) Command Aaron and his sons thus: This

is the ritual of the burnt offering: The burnt offering itself shall remain where it is burned upon the altar all night until morning, while the fire on the altar is kept going on it. (3) The priest shall dress in linen raiment, with linen breeches next to his body; and he shall take up the ashes to which the fire has reduced the burnt offering on the altar and place them beside the altar. (4) He shall then take off his vestments and put on other vestments, and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place. (5) The fire on the altar shall be kept burning, not to go out: every morning the priest shall feed wood to it, lay out the burnt offering on it, and turn into smoke the fat parts of the offerings of well-being. (6) A perpetual fire shall be kept burning on the altar, not to go out.

5. משנה תמיד ב"א'

(א) ראוהו אחיו שיירד, והם רצו ובאו. מהרו וקדשו ידיהן ורגליהן מן הכיור, ונטלו את המגרפות ואת הצנורות ועלו לראש המזבח. האברין והפדרין שלא נתאכלו מבערב, סונקין אותם לצדדי המזבח. אם אין הצדדין מחזיקין, סודרין אותם בסובב על הכבש:

5. Mishnah Tamid 2:1

(1) His brothers [the other priests] saw him go down [from the altar] and they would run; they hurried and sanctified their hands and feet from the laver [and] took the shovels [used to scoop ash] and the forks [used for moving sacrificial parts] and go up to the top of the altar. The limbs and the fats that weren't consumed [by the fire] the previous evening, would be moved to the sides of the altar. If the sides of the altar could not hold them, they would arrange them around the altar [on the ledge surrounding it].

6. Michael Pollen, *Cooked*

The vestibule of hell. The pit room was in fact an infernal chamber, and not a place likely to stimulate an appetite for cooked pig in many people. The residues of fires big and small were everywhere, blackening the bricks, charring the ceiling, puckering the plywood walls... It was difficult to regard this pit room, filthy and littered with cinders as a *kitchen*, but of course that is what it is...

7. משנה תמיד ב"ב'

(ב) החלו מעלין באפר על גבי התפוח. ותפוח היה באמצע המזבח, פעמים עליו כשלש מאות כור. וברגלים לא היו מדשגין אותו, מפני שהוא נוי למזבח. מימיו לא נתעצל הכהן מלהוציא את הדשן:

7. Mishnah Tamid 2:2

(2) They [the priests] began heaping the ash onto the *Tapuach* [heap of ashes on the top of the altar in the Temple courtyard] The *Tapuach* was in the middle of the top of the altar. Sometimes there was approximately three hundred *kor* [measurement of volume] on it. During pilgrimage festivals, they would not remove its ash, because it was a decoration for the altar [to show that it was being used frequently]. During the days [of the Temple], the priests were never lazy about removing the ash [when there was too much].

8. משנה תמיד ב:ג'

(ג) החלו מעלין בגזרין לסדר אש המערכה. וכי כל העצים כשרים למערכה, הין, כל העצים כשרין למערכה, חוץ משל זית ושל גפן. אבל באלו רגילין, במרביות של תאנה ושל אגוז ושל עץ שמן:

8. Mishnah Tamid 2:3

(3) They [the priests] began transferring the [wood] logs to arrange the pyre [on the altar]. But are all [types of] wood valid the pyre? Yes, all [types of] wood are valid for the pyre, except wood from an olive [tree] and from a vine. It was [the wood] of these [trees] they was commonly used, branches of a fig tree, walnut [tree] or an oil [tree].

9. משנה תמיד ב:ד'

(ד) סדר המערכה גדולה מזרחה, ונחיתה מזרחה, וראשי הגזרין הפנימים היו נוגעים בתפוח. ורוח היה בין הגזרים שהיו מציתים את האליטא משם:

9. Mishnah Tamid 2:4

(4) He [the priest] arranged the large pyre towards the east [side of the altar], and it "looked" [small openings] towards the east [side] and the ends of the inner logs would touch the *Tapuach*. There was space between the logs from where they would ignite the twigs.

10. Michael Pollan, *Cooked*

After the hogs are on, [James Henry] Howell [pit master, Skylight Inn, Ayden, NC] begins shoveling wood coals underneath them, transferring the smoldering cinders, one spade full at a time, from the hearths, now glowing a deep red, across the room to the pits. Carefully pouring the incandescent coals between the iron bars, he arranges a line of fire roughly around the perimeter of each hog...

11. במדבר כ"ח:א'-ח'

(א) וידבר יקוק אל-משה לאמר: (ב) צו את-בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם את-קרבני לחמי לאש יריח ניחחתי תשמרו להקריב לי במועדו:

11. Numbers 28:1-8

(1) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: (2) Command the Israelite people and say to them: Be punctilious in presenting to Me at stated times the offerings of food due Me, as offerings by fire of pleasing odor to Me.

12. Michael Pollan, *Cooked*

The perfume is what I could smell from the road, and what I was beginning to smell again. Even now, standing here in the middle of this sepulchral chamber slightly

starved for oxygen, hemmed between these two serried ranks of the porky dead, I was more than a little surprised to register somewhere deep in my belly the first stirrings of... an appetite!

13. Janet A. Flammang (as quoted in Michael Pollan, *Cooked*)

Food is apprehended through the senses of touch, smell, and taste which rank lower on the hierarchy of senses than sight and hearing, which are typically thought to give rise to knowledge. In most of philosophy, religion and literature, food is associated with body, animal, female, and appetite - things civilized men have sought to overcome with knowledge and reason.

14. Michael Pollan, *Cooked*

The idea that cooking is a defining human activity is not a new one. In 1773, the Scottish writer James Boswell, noting that "no beast is a cook," called Homo sapiens "the cooking animal,"... Fifty years later, in "The Physiology of Taste," the French gastronome Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin claimed that cooking made us who we are; by teaching [people] to use fire, it had "done the most to advance the cause of civilization." More recently, the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, writing in 1964 in "The Raw and the Cooked," found that many cultures entertained a similar view, regarding cooking as a symbolic way of distinguishing ourselves from the animals. For Lévi-Strauss, cooking is a metaphor for the human transformation of nature into culture, but in the years since "The Raw and the Cooked," other anthropologists have begun to take quite literally the idea that cooking is the key to our humanity.

15. חולין קל"ב ב:נ"א-נ"ג

אמר רב חסדא: מתנות כהונה אין נאכלות אלא צלי, ואין נאכלות אלא בחרדל. מאי טעמא? אמר קרא (במדבר יח, ח) "למשחה" - לגדולה. כדרך שהמלכים אוכלים...

15. Chullin 132b:51-53

Rav Chisda said: The gifts of the kohanim may only be consumed roasted, and only with mustard. How do we know? The Torah says (Bamidbar 18), 'I have given these for anointing,' meaning for greatness, as [anointed] royalty consumes.