

# Insights from the Meshech Chochma

## רב מאיר שמחה הכהן מדווינסק זצ"ל

### פרשת במדבר תשפ"ג

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וּפְקֻדַת אֶלְעָזָר... שֶׁמֶן הַמָּאֹר וְקִטְרֵת הַסַּמִּים וּמִנְחַת הַתְּמִיד וְשֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה פְּקֻדַת כָּל הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְכָל אֲשֶׁר  
בו... (פרק ד' טז)

*The charge of Elazar... is the oil of illumination, the incense spices, the meal-offering of the Tamid-offering, and the anointment oil-the charge of the entire Mishkan and everything in it...*

Our pasuk informs us that in addition to Elazar overseeing *the entire Mishkan*, he had a more direct involvement with the four items listed in the first part of the verse. How so? With regards to the *הַמִּשְׁחָה* וְשֶׁמֶן הַמָּאֹר וְקִטְרֵת הַסַּמִּים וּשֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה, Rashi tells us that “he was assigned to carry them” when they traveled. With regards to the *מִנְחַת הַתְּמִיד*, Rashi is more ambiguous. “(Elazar’s responsibility) was to issue orders, to urge (the others) and to offer it (on the Altar) when they camped.” Gur Aryeh, Mizrahi and Sifsei Chachomim see Rashi as *excluding* the *מִנְחַת הַתְּמִיד* from among the items which Elazar carried. Sifsei Chachomim elaborates: “Even though (Rashi uses) the word ‘carry’ (which) appears to refer to all of them, even to the *מִנְחַת הַתְּמִיד*, it is impossible to say this, for it was flour that was offered *with* a sacrifice-an *issaron* for the sheep-and the flour was only termed a *מִנְחַת הַתְּמִיד* at the time when it was brought together with the *קֶרֶבַן הַתְּמִיד*. This was only when they camped, for then they would offer, but not at the time of traveling... Consequently, Rashi explains that Elazar was responsible only for issuing orders (concerning the *מִנְחַת הַתְּמִיד*) and did not carry it himself.”

Ramban’s initial explanation of our pasuk is as Rashi. He continues and tells us that “according to the opinion of the Yerushalmi, cited in Rashi’s commentaries, Elazar did indeed carry these (four) items-it was a great load that he bore.” Ramban is referring to Yerushalmi שבת י' ג which tells us that “the *שֶׁמֶן הַמָּאֹר* was in his right hand, the *קִטְרֵת הַסַּמִּים* in his left and the *מִנְחַת הַתְּמִיד* was hanging on his arm. Where was the anointing oil? R’ Abun says, ‘in a small flask he had on his money belt.’” So that this Yerushalmi is certainly not like our Rashi. (It is unclear what Ramban is referring to when he says, “cited in Rashi’s commentaries.” Perhaps he means Rashi in שבת צב. where this subject is also discussed, and Rashi there quotes this Yerushalmi.)

Rav Meir Simcha’s piece on our pasuk begins with a question: What *קְדוּשָׁה* did the flour of (the not yet offered) *מִנְחַת הַתְּמִיד* possess that required it to be carried by the Elazar? In a complicated presentation, he proposes the following: יג ויקרא ו' יג tells us that Aharon and his sons, on the day of their anointment as Kohanim, brought a tenth of an *eipah* of flour, as the pasuk there refers to it, for a *מִנְחָה תְּמִיד*; half of it in the morning and half of it in the evening. This continued as a daily ritual for the Kohen Gadol and was called the *מִנְחַת חֲבִיתִין*. As mentioned before, Rashi in שבת צב. references our Yerushalmi but with the following important change: Elazar carried the *חֲבִיתִין בְּכַתְּפוֹ* i.e., on his shoulder and so our pasuk’s *מִנְחַת הַתְּמִיד* is in fact referring to Elazar carrying, when the Mishkan was traveling, the *מִנְחַת חֲבִיתִין*. However,

this novel interpretation of מְנַחֵת הַתְּמִיד is problematic as per מנחות צה. When the Nation would travel from one place to another in the Midbar, the Mishkan would be dismantled, and any קֶדְשֵׁי קֶדְשִׁים e.g., קֶרְבָּנוֹת within it, would be disqualified, since they “left the boundaries of the Mishkan”. The Kohen Gadol would sanctify his מְנַחֵת חֲבִיתִין and present half of it in the morning. If the Mishkan traveled during the day, the other half of the מְנַחֵת חֲבִיתִין could not be presented later that day because it would have left its boundary while the Mishkan was traveling? Based on this, Rav Meir Simcha suggests, the Gemara in מנחות is forced to say that the camp traveled, and therefore the Mishkan was dismantled, either in the early morning, *before* the Kohen Gadol offered his מְנַחֵה or in the evening, *after* the second half of the מְנַחֵת חֲבִיתִין was presented.

And yet, Rashi in שבת צב. telling us that the מְנַחֵת הַתְּמִיד is the מְנַחֵת חֲבִיתִין does not resolve Rav Meir Simcha’s initial question i.e., regardless, if they traveled in the morning, before the חֲבִיתִין was brought, or if they traveled in the evening, after the second half was brought, what קְדוּשָׁה did the flour have that required it to be carried by Elazar himself? Continues Rav Meir Simcha: There is another Yerushalmi, in מנחות ד' ו, which tells us that R' Yehoshua ben Levi believes that with regards to the לֶחֶם הַפָּנִים, and presumably all קֶדְשֵׁי קֶדְשִׁים, they do not become disqualified when the Mishkan was taken apart. According to him then, the Mishkan *could* travel any time of the day, for if it traveled after the morning חֲבִיתִין was presented, the other half could still be offered later, if the Mishkan was re-assembled before evening. Because the other half of the חֲבִיתִין had special קְדוּשָׁה, Elazar himself was designated to carry it. So that Rashi on our pasuk is working with the Bavli, while Rashi in שבת צב. was utilizing R' Yehoshua ben Levi to help explain the Yerushalmi’s understanding of the מְנַחֵת הַתְּמִיד!

Rav Meir Simcha offers us another approach to the Yerushalmi in which it could agree that while traveling, the קֶדְשֵׁי קֶדְשִׁים became disqualified and yet the Mishkan could be dismantled even during the day. He takes us to the opinion of R' Elazar in מנחות ה. “Since the חֲבִיתִין is sacrificed in halves..., it may likewise be sanctified in halves.” According to this opinion, the Kohen Gadol would bring the *issaron* of flour in the morning, sanctify half and present it, and if the Mishkan traveled that day, Elazar would “keep an eye” on the other half *issaron* by carrying it, so that when the Mishkan was re-assembled it could *then* be sanctified and brought as the other half of the חֲבִיתִין. In fact, the Yerushalmi in ג' ש' quotes this as the opinion of R' Yochanan-that the Kohen Gadol divides the *issaron* in half and then sanctifies each half as it is offered.

When studying the Meshech Chochma, one must be ready to travel many roads but rest assured, Rav Meir Simcha will always direct us to an extremely rewarding destination!

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