

Insights from the Meshech Chochma

רב מאיר שמחה הכהן מדווינסק זצ"ל פרשת בהעלותך תשפ"ב

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דָּבַר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אִישׁ אִישׁ כִּי יִהְיֶה טָמֵא לְנֶפֶשׁ אֹ אוֹ בַדֶּרֶךְ רְחֹקָה לָכֶם... וְעָשָׂה פֶסַח לֵה' (פרק ט' י')
(Hashem said to Moshe:) *“Speak to the Children of Israel, saying: If any man will be contaminated through a human corpse or is on a distant road... he shall make the (second) Pesach-offering to Hashem.”*

וְהָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הוּא טָהוֹר וּבַדֶּרֶךְ לֹא הָיָה וְחָדַל לַעֲשׂוֹת הַפֶּסַח וּבְנִיבְרָתָהּ הִנָּפֵשׁ הֵוא מְעַמְיָה... (פרק ט' יג)
But a man who is pure and not on the road and had refrained from making the Pesach-offering, that soul shall be cut off from its people...

Our first pasuk outlines the criteria which permits one to participate in the Pesach Sheni. The second presents the conditions for which, having *not brought* the Pesach-offering, one incurs *בְּרָת*. Rav Meir Simcha, reinforcing his approach that there is not a word or even a letter in the Torah that is written or omitted without consequence, questions the absence in our second pasuk of the word *וּבַדֶּרֶךְ לֹא הָיָה* from the condition of *וּבַדֶּרֶךְ לֹא הָיָה* and *not on the road* i.e., should it not have written *וּבַדֶּרֶךְ לֹא הָיָה* like our first pasuk? To fully understand the depth of what is bothering him, an introduction is necessary.

The Mishna in *פסחים* צג: discusses the definition of *וּבַדֶּרֶךְ רְחֹקָה* which exempts one from observing the first Pesach. R' Akiva feels that it is anywhere from the city of Modi'im and beyond, and therefore equally from anywhere located this distance from Yerushalayim. (This would be between 8.5-11.3 miles.) Halachically this means that at sunrise on the fourteenth of Nissan, the person was too far away to arrive at the Temple by noon, when the Pesach-offering service would begin. R' Eliezer says: "From the threshold of the Temple courtyard and beyond is considered *וּבַדֶּרֶךְ רְחֹקָה*. Therefore, anyone located outside the courtyard at the time that the Pesach lamb is slaughtered, is exempt from observing the first Pesach." R' Yosi said to him: "Therefore, the word is dotted over the letter ה i.e., *וּבַדֶּרֶךְ רְחֹקָה*, to say that the meaning of the word should be qualified-it is not because he is really distant; rather, it includes anyone located outside the threshold of the Temple courtyard."

According to R' Akiva then, one who was ritually pure *and* within the Modi'im distance from the Temple *and intentionally* did not bring the Pesach on the fourteenth of Nissan would be punished with *בְּרָת* and could not bring the Pesach Sheini. According to R' Eliezer, even if someone was just outside the Temple and decided "not to go in", he would be entitled to perform the Pesach Sheini in Iyar because he would be considered "on the road". In Yerushalmi *פסחים*, R' Ze'ira explains that R' Eliezer derived this from the fact that our first

pasuk, “when Hashem warns us, it says רַחֵקָה, but when He punishes, there is no רַחֵקָה.” Rav Meir Simcha is bothered with the idea that our pasuk’s omission of רַחֵקָה seems to be pointing to R’ Eliezer’s opinion as the correct one, when we know the Halacha is according to R’ Akiva.

To answer this, he takes us to Ibn Ezra’s interpretation of our phrase: “וְהָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הוּא טָהוֹר וּבִדְרֹךְ” לא הִיָּה is to be rendered, *or is not on the road* i.e., the ו' in וּבִדְרֹךְ is to be understood as *or*, not *and*.” As usual, Ibn Ezra’s brevity leaves us a bit bewildered, and many dismiss what he writes as שבוש. Rav Meir Simcha, with a little (bit of his brilliant) imagination, believes that his words are an attempt at answering our confusion with וּבִדְרֹךְ לא הִיָּה. He explains that in fact there are two situations for which a person would incur כְּרַת: 1. He was *ritually pure* and was within the boundaries of R’ Akiva’s “map”, and intentionally did not perform the first Pesach. 2. He was *impure*, but so was the majority of ישראל כלל, who would therefore be allowed to bring the Pesach on the fourteenth of Nissan (utilizing the exemption of בטוּמָא הוּתְרָה בצְבוּר), and yet he knowingly did not join them. About this latter situation, the violator had to be close enough to Yerushalayim to know that this was the case. Had he been out of “earshot” of what was going on in the Temple i.e., that this year they were presenting the Pesach even though most of them were impure, he would not be required to “go and check it out”. This “earshot distance” could have been very close to the Temple, for as we are told in פסחים ז"ל: תדל, פסחים ז"ל: תדל would follow the purity status of the majority of those *standing in the courtyard*, and not the people who were even in Yerushalayim but did not come to the courtyard. If he was טמא and was not in the Temple area proper on the fourteenth of Nissan, he does not have to do any more due diligence to investigate whether it was a הוּתְרָה year. Rav Meir Simcha feels that R’ Akiva would agree to this, and it is all based on the Torah’s omission of the word רַחֵקָה! Ibn Ezra is telling us that the ו' in וּבִדְרֹךְ is a המחלק and, according to Rav Meir Simcha, this allows us to interpret the phrase even according to R’ Akiva, who the Halacha follows.

Rav Meir Simcha concludes by telling us וברור בדבריו i.e., this is clear in Ibn Ezra’s words. That is because Ibn Ezra adds that “our phrase is similar to the pasuk in Shmos, וּמַכֵּה אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ מוֹת / *One who strikes his father or mother shall be put to death*” where everyone agrees that the ו' is מחלק. In general, after reading an Ibn Ezra I am never quite sure if I really “got” what he said. It is refreshing to every so often be presented by Rav Meir Simcha with a clear understanding of this Master Parshan who he obviously treated with the utmost respect.

לזכר נשמת אבי מורי ישראל מנחם בן ר' שלום ז"ל
לזכר נשמת אמי מורתי רחל בת ר' אלחנן אביגדור ע"ה
לזכר נשמת חמי מורי יעקב נתן בן ר' ישראל שלמה ז"ל
ולזכר נשמת הרב יהודה בן ר' אברהם שמחה (קופרמן) זצ"ל
מחבר הגהות על ספר משך חכמה