Insights from the Meshech Chochma
רב מאיר שמחה הכהן מדווינסק זצ"ל
פָּרָשַׁת תּוֹלְדֹת תשפ"ז

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...אָמַר ה' צְבָקוֹת לָכֶם הַכֹּהֲנִים בּוֹזֵי שְׁמִי וַאֲמַרְתֶּם בַּמֶּה בָזִינוּ אֶת שְׁמֶךָ? מַגִּישִׁים עַל מִזְבְּחִי לֶחֶם מְגֹאָל וַאֲמַרְתֶּם בַּמֶּה גֵּאַלְנוּךָ? בֶּאֱמָרְכֶם שֻׁלְחַן ה' נִבְזֶה הוּא. (מלאכי א' ו-ז)

(The *Navi* declares:) *"...Hashem, Master of Legions, says to you, 'O Kohanim, who scorn My Name-yet you say, 'How have we scorned your Name?' You bring abominable bread upon My Altar, and you ask, 'How have we abominated You?'-by your saying, 'The Table of Hashem is scorned.'"*

Our *Haftarah* is the opening chapter of Sefer מלאכי. The Artscroll Stone Edition Chumash editors provide a wonderful backdrop to the message being imparted by the *Navi* and its relevance to our Parsha. "The *Haftarah* says at the outset that G-d's choice of Yaakov was a sign of His love for him and His hatred for Eisav. Because of this hatred, the *Navi* states that Edom, the nation that stems from Eisav, will not prosper eternally; that it is doomed to destruction, as indeed the evil that is incarnated in Edom will ultimately be destroyed… Like most prophecies, we do not know when this one will be fulfilled; we know only that it will. But this is not enough. Israel cannot achieve its destiny merely because of Eisav's downfall. A chosen people must deserve its chosenness. Thus, the *Navi* chastises Israel severely for the hypocrisy of those who think that they, encouraged and abetted by their self-serving priests, can turn the service of G-d into an insincere practice. How dare they offer their old, crippled, and ill animals as offerings to Him, while retaining the best for themselves? Would they dare do the same for their human rulers? In closing, the *Navi* exhorts the Kohanim to live up to their calling. They must be the teachers and models. Only if they live up to their responsibility can they pull the people up with them. The same remonstrance applies to all leaders-they have the duty to teach and lead by example." Indeed, very powerful.

A straightforward interpretation of the phrases מַגִּישִׁים עַל מִזְבְּחִי לֶחֶם מְגֹאָל and שֻׁלְחַן ה' נִבְזֶה הוּא is awkward, for if the שֻׁלְחַן ה' is referring to the שֻׁלְחַן in the הֵיכָל, the לֶחֶם מְגֹאָל is then referring to the twelve לֶחֶם הַפָּנִים brought every *Shabbos*, why would the pasuk say **מִזְבְּחִי** עַל מַגִּישִׁים i.e., they were placed on the שֻׁלְחַן, *not* the מִזְבֵּחַ? Furthermore, what scorn was heaped upon the bread that it should be called לֶחֶם מְגֹאָל? Because of these difficulties, Rashi, as well as many other Mefarshim, abandon this פְּשַׁט entirely and explain that these pesukim are indeed referring to the מִזְבֵּחַ, as it is referred to in יְחֶזְקֵאל מא' כב, אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי ה' זֶה הַשֻּׁלְחָן/*This is the **table** that is before Hashem* and that לֶחֶם is really a pseudonym for קָרְבָּנוֹת, as the Torah told us אֶת קָרְבָּנִי לַחְמִי. Malbim elaborates: "'וַאֲמַרְתֶּם בַּמֶּה בָזִינוּ אֶת שְׁמֶךָ... בַּמֶּה גֵּאַלְנוּךָ/*How have we scorned your Name*?... *How have we abominated You*?' By saying, שֻׁלְחַן ה' נִבְזֶה הוּא'/*The Table of Hashem is scorned* i.e., you admit that the sacrifices brought upon the מִזְבֵּחַ are contemptible,

because of the (old, crippled, and ill animals and) unsuitable fat and blood offered upon it. By this *you* belittled His name and His honor!'"

How does Rav Meir Simcha approach our pesukim? He refers us to פסחים ג: where we read that there were these three priests in the *Mikdash*, each of whom received the weekly portion of the לֶחֶם הַפָּנִים divided among the Kohanim. Since there were many, each received only a small amount. "One said: 'I received a bean-sized portion.' And one said: 'I received an olive-size.' And one said: 'I received a portion the size of a lizard's tail.' They investigated the background of the latter Kohen, who used the imagery of an impure creeping animal, and found a *shemetz* of disqualification in his (priesthood) background." Continues Rav Meir Simcha: Having to divide the לֶחֶם הַפָּנִים among so many Kohanim could lead to derogatory remarks about it and hence, the *Navi* rightfully refers to it as לֶחֶם מְגֹאָל. And therefore, שֻׁלְחַן ה' *can* refer to the שֻׁלְחַן in the הֵיכָל. What about מַגִּישִׁים עַל מִזְבְּחִי? In מנחות צט:, the Mishna describes the manner in which it is ensured that the לֶחֶם הַפָּנִים is constantly on the שֻׁלְחַן: "And four Kohanim enter, two with the two arrangements of the new לֶחֶם הַפָּנִים in their hands and two with the two בְּזִיכִין/*bowls* of frankincense in their hands. And four Kohanim precede them, entering the *Mikdash* before them, two to take the two arrangements of the old לֶחֶם הַפָּנִים from the שֻׁלְחַן, and two to take the two בְּזִיכִין of frankincense." Next, the Mishna informs us of the manner in which the לֶחֶם הַפָּנִים was distributed: "The Kohanim who carried the old לֶחֶם הַפָּנִים loaves came out of the *Mikdash* and placed them on the table of gold that was in the אוּלָם, the Entrance Hall. The Kohanim then burned the frankincense that was in the בְּזִיכִין on the מִזְבֵּחַ. And the loaves were subsequently distributed to the Kohanim." It appears then that it was this burning of the בְּזִיכִין of frankincense on the מִזְבֵּחַ which allowed the Kohanim to eat of the לֶחֶם הַפָּנִים. If the Kohanim were disparaging the bread, by ridiculing the amount they received, they were simultaneously scorning the בְּזִיכִין-as Rav Meir Simcha puts it, אִם הֵן מַלְעִיגִים מִן הַלֶּחֶם תּוּ גַּם הַבְּזִיכִין הַוֵי מְגוֹאָלִין. According to Rav Meir Simcha, when נִבְזֶה הוּא שֻׁלְחַן ה' i.e., when the bread on the שֻׁלְחַן ה' is ridiculed by the Kohanim, and it becomes לֶחֶם מְגֹאָל, it goes without saying that the מַתִּיר of the bread, the בְּזִיכִין, which are burnt on the מִזְבֵּחַ, are also denigrated and thus מַגִּישִׁים עַל **מִזְבְּחִי** לֶחֶם מְגֹאָל!

Another wonderful example of our author's passion for sticking to פְּשׁוּטוֹ שֶׁל מִקְרָא i.e., שֻׁלְחַן is *The* שֻׁלְחַן and לֶחֶם is לֶחֶם, and uncannily, always with the help of תּוֹרָה שֶׁבְּעַל פֶּה!

לזכר נשמת אבי מורי ר' ישראל מנחם בן ר' שלום ז"ל
לזכר נשמת אמי מורתי רחל בת ר' אלחנן אביגדור ע"ה
לזכר נשמת חמי מורי ר' 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