

**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**  
**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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TALMUDIC METHODOLOGY  
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**Chafina of Ketoret on Yom Kippur**

One of the central components of the Yom Kippur ceremony in the Beit Ha-mikdash entailed burning spices in front of the aron ha-berit. The Torah relates that the kohen would carry a 'complete two-handfuls' of the ketoret spice into the Holy of Holies and pour this spice on top of burning coals. This week's shiur will address the exact role which 'scooping up' these handfuls played.

The first thought which comes to mind concerns an analogous scenario: that of the 'full kometz.' A kometz represents the portion of a mincha offering (flour either raw or baked) which fits into the 3 middle fingers when clenched. The kohen separated this amount from the rest of the korban mincha and burnt it on the altar. It is very clear that the actual 'skimming' of this volume of mincha was an essential feature of the mincha ritual. Hence the 'kometz' did not merely represent the AMOUNT of flour intended to be burnt. Rather, the ACT of kemitza or skimming a kometz was part of the ceremony and loosely comparable to the shechita of a sacrificial animal (the act immediately prior to sprinkling the blood on the mizbei'ach). Having determined this about the act of kemitza, can the same be said about chafina, the act of separating a quantity of "melo chofnav" – two handfuls? Is this process also an integral aspect of the avoda or is it merely intended to separate the requisite quantity? Is it an 'avoda' or just a technical means to designate a desired amount?

Keep in mind that when referring to kemitza, the Torah repeatedly uses an active verb "ve-komat" the kohen should separate, indicating that the act itself is crucial. By contrast, regarding the Yom Kippur ceremony, the Torah specifically avoids using a verb to describe the act of separating two handfuls of ketoret. Instead, the Torah writes (Vayikra 16:12): "He (the kohen gadol) should take a full pan of coals from the mizbei'ach before Hashem as well as two handfuls of ketoret spice, and he should bring them within the parokhet (the curtain separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the mikdash)." This textual variance might support a distinction between chafina and kemitza: whereas kemitza is an integral part of the avoda in the mikdash, chafina is a technical step necessary ONLY to arrive at the desired quantity.

Apparently, the gemara itself deliberates concerning this issue. The gemara in Yoma (47a) questions the possibility of replacing the manual measuring of the ketoret by the kohen gadol's hands with a measuring cup.

Though the gemara cites a verse to reject this possibility, the very raising of this option seems striking. Furthermore, we are left uncertain as to why this idea was ultimately rejected. Does the gemara view the chafina (skimming of the handfuls) as part of the avoda and therefore not to be replaced by a measuring cup? Or perhaps the gemara insists that even though the scooping isn't part of the avoda nevertheless the act itself must be performed? The volume of chafina - (2 handfuls) - is unlike other purely quantitative volumes, because here the volume must be generated by actual human hands. Indeed, it could be that this scooping is NOT considered part of the avoda but still the two scoopfuls must be a volume designated by actual manual separation and therefore, no measuring cup could be used in substitution.

A second question which might bear upon our issue concerns the status of the spice which was picked up but doesn't sit within the handfuls themselves. This question is referred to by the gemara as 'bein ha-beinayim,' namely spice which was drawn up by the kohen gadol's hands but isn't contained within them; rather, the spice is held by the backs of his fingers. Is this quantity to be considered part of the chafina which is burnt in the kodesh ha-kodashim? This question is raised by Rav Pappa in the gemara Yoma (47b). Here, the particles of spice are clearly integrated into the QUANTITY of two-handfuls; however, they were not actively picked up by the kohen's hands but rather were swept up by other particles or by the back of his fingers. If chafina is merely functionary to arrive at the desired quantity, we might consider including these particles as they are contained within the volume. If, however, the chafina entails a distinct ACT – part of the avoda - we might be able to include only those particles upon which the ACT of chafina was performed.

So far, we have examined two issues raised by the gemara which could potentially shed light on our original inquiry concerning chafina. We wondered if the scooping was an integral part of the avoda on Yom Kippur, or merely a technical step necessary to generate the desired volume of ketoret to be burnt? One issue involved using a 'pre-measured' quantity of spice while the second pertained to particles which become part of the quantity without, however, undergoing any decisive act of chafina.

A third question (which might be structurally similar to the previous ones) can be found in the gemara Yoma (49a). What would happen if a different kohen were to perform the ACT of chafina and then pour the pre-measured quantity into the kohen gadol's hands immediately prior to the latter's entry into the kodesh ha-kodashim? This case also describes an instance in which the quantity of 'two-handfuls' is acquired, even though the kohen gadol does not perform the ACT of chafina. In fact, this case is so reflective of our basic inquiry and so similar to the previous examples that the Rishonim question the gemara's raising it as a separate issue. In theory, if spices which were gathered by another kohen are included, so should spices which are swept up between the backs of the kohen gadol's fingers. Conversely, if the spices MUST be scooped by the kohen gadol and not his colleague, then these 'peripheral spices' should also be invalid. See the Ritva

and Tosafot for discussions as to how these questions are truly distinct. Though each expresses some disagreement regarding the relationship between these two questions, they both agree that the cases are structurally quite similar.

In the same vein the gemara proceeds to raise an additional scenario: What happens if the actual kohen gadol scooped the quantity of ketoret but then passed away? The first mishna in Yoma informs us that a 'backup' kohen gadol was designated should the primary one pass away or become impure. If the kohen gadol passed away AFTER he had scooped - is the replacement required to perform a new act of chafina, or could he just proceed with the 'two-handfuls' which were already scooped? Seemingly, this question also mirrors our inquiry: if chafina is a vital part of the Yom Kippur ceremony, then we might require that the kohen who burns the spices also has scooped them prior to his offering the ketoret. If, however, the scooping merely generates the required quantity, then we might suffice with the scooping of the previous kohen gadol. As opposed to the use of a measuring cup, spices between the fingers and even the scooping of a regular kohen, in this final case the scooping WAS performed by a kohen gadol within the context of the Yom Kippur ritual and the quantity WAS generated by the actual hands of the kohen gadol during this avoda. Of all cases, this might be the most acceptable - but only if we do not view the scooping as an integral stage of the avoda.

In the next shiur I'll continue to assess the nature of the chafina on Yom Kippur.