

**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 - Part II**

In the last shiur, we introduced a basic question about the role of chafina, the scooping of ketoret (incense) on Yom Kippur, performed immediately by the kohen gadol before he entered the inner sanctum to burn these spices upon the aron ha-kodesh. We inspected several issues about the format of this scooping hoping to uncover its essential nature. This shiur will further broaden that analysis and deal with the related issue of how often was the chafina performed?

The gemara in Yoma 49a cites a position that chafina was actually performed twice. The kohen gadol would scoop two handfuls of ketoret before entering the kodesh ha-kodashim. However, before doing so, he had already gathered a pan of coals on which to burn these spices. These coals also had to be transferred into the kodesh ha-kodashim at the same time as the ketoret. To free one of his hands to carry these coals, he transferred the spices to a 'spoon' which he carried with his left hand, while carrying the coals with his right. Once entering the kodesh ha-kodashim, the kohen gadol placed the pan of coals on the aron (or the 'even ha-shtiya' (foundation stone) located on the floor during the second beit ha-mikdash when there was no aron ha-kodesh). However, according to one position, the ketoret is not poured directly from the spoon onto the coals, as we might have expected. Instead, the kohen gadol performs a SECOND chafina scooping 'two-handfuls' from the spoon and pouring them onto the coals. Our understanding of the role of the chafina cannot be complete until we assess the need for TWO chafinot.

Tosafot claim that the latter chafina was, in fact, unnecessary according to the Torah, and was only a rabbinic addition to assure that the original quantity of ketoret had arrived safely within the kodesh ha-kodashim. The wind might

have strewn some ketoret along the way and the kohen gadol must assure that the original measurement is still intact. Thus, Tosafot believe that:

- 1) the second chafina is rabbinic in nature
- 2) it plays no independent or fundamental role but merely rechecks the original measurement.

Tosafot Yeshanim (47a s.v. She-lo) (a variant text of Tosafot printed on the margin of the gemara Yoma) take a fundamentally different approach. They write "the reason that a second chafina is performed is because the Torah writes 'a full two-handfuls should be brought within the parokhet,' meaning that he should transfer the two handfuls with his HANDS and not with a utensil." Evidently, the re-scooping is not merely a final check but plays some more essential role. Understanding this role requires inspecting a broader issue – the role of the spoon in this transfer process.

The gemara in Yoma (47a) describes the spoon as a temporary carrier introduced simply to free one hand to carry coals. This introduction of the spoon is puzzling since the gemara labors to base this allowance upon a textual source (the use of spoons to carry the tribute offered by the nesi'im (tribal leaders) during the inauguration of the mikdash). Had the spoon allowance been merely a 'last resort' or 'no choice' option why does the gemara base its use upon precedent? This question helps us confront a central issue regarding the burning of the ketoret: does the spoon serve as an essential part of the spice-offering avoda just as other utensils served as vessels from which blood or water was offered upon the altar? Or as the spice-offering basically performed with the kohen gadol's hand while the spoon serves as merely a temporary container when one of his hands are occupied?

This issue brings to mind some very interesting possibilities. What happens if a kohen, while entering the kodsh ha-kodashim the first time, neglected to bring spice and only transported the coals. He must return to retrieve the spices. At this stage, when he has two free hands should he still pour the spices into the spoon? Or should he just carry the spices in his two

empty hands? This question crystallizes our above issue. Was the spoon introduced as a secondary, practical measure or does it become 'mapped' onto the actual avoda (sacrificial ritual), required even when both hands are unoccupied? The Rishonim themselves do not discuss this issue but do raise more subtle issues which reflect the very same factor. What happens if while carrying the spoon the kohen has impure thoughts? Generally, a kohen who maintains inappropriate thoughts during part of the actual avoda can render the sacrifice invalid. Does the carrying of the spoon constitute part of the avoda (parallel to carrying the blood to the altar) and would such thoughts during this juncture invalidate the sacrifice? See the Ritva Yoma 48a for a discussion of this issue.

To return to our point of departure – according to the Tosafot Yeshanim this question - whether the ketoret becomes an avoda of a vessel (spoon) or remains an avoda of the hands – was in fact the foundation of the argument whether or not the kohen gadol performed a second chafina. Tosafot themselves saw this second chafina as technical - to assure that the original quantity remained intact. According to the Tosafot Yeshanim, though, the ketoret is meant to be an avoda of the kohen's hands and the spoon merely served as temporary carrier. To reestablish the ketoret as an avoda of the hands it was scooped again inside the kodesh ha-kodashim.

Having understood the Tosafot Yeshanim we can now reflect upon our original question - is the scooping merely to generate the desired quantity or does it participate in the actual avoda. According to Tosafot Yeshanim, at least one opinion in the gemara (that which requires a second scooping) viewed it as part of the avoda. That is precisely the reason that it had to be performed a second time – so that the hands themselves should pour the ketoret onto the coals. At least the second chafina was performed not merely to collect the necessary volume but as an integrated aspect of the avodat ketoret.

It should be noted that we still are unable to conclude the nature of the original scooping; was it a fundamental part of the avoda or merely to

separate the required shiur? We have, however, determined a possible fundamental role for the second scooping.

There is one final question to consider in our attempt to analyze the nature of chafina. What would happen if a kohen gadol, during the scooping of the ketoret, were to intend to burn the spices outside of the mikdash rather than in the kodesh ha-kodashim? Such thoughts, occurring during standard avoda, generally would render a korban "pigul," invalidating it. Does chafina qualify as an avoda during which these thoughts would blemish a korban?

The gemara in Yoma (48a) raises this question and on first glance this is the issue being considered. The Rav zt"l (in his Sefer "Avodat Yom Ha-kippurim, page 48) discusses this gemara and suggests that even if the chafina were intended to merely quantify a shiur, it could possibly serve as the context for the harmful effects of improper thoughts. The Rambam in Hilkhos Avodat Yom Ha-kippurim (5:27) rules that pigul thoughts during chafina do in fact affect the korban for "chafina is considered an avoda."

A similar opinion is expressed by the Ritva (Yoma 48) who claims that "chafina is parallel to shechita" (slaughtering). Just as the shechita begins the process of separating the part which will be burned on the mizbei'ach from that which will remain (and will generally be eaten), so too chafina designates some ketoret for burning and excludes the rest from this process. One can be fairly certain from both their halakhic positions (that pigul does apply) and more compellingly from the language which the Rambam and the Ritva employ, that chafina is not merely the technical manner of arriving at the necessary quantity of ketoret, but constitutes an elementary part of avodat Yom Ha-kippurim

May the Ribono Shel Olam grant us all a Ketiva Va-chatima Tova, and may He allow Am Yisrael to once again witness the grandeur of Yom Kippur in the Beit Ha-mikdash.