



Sicha Summary

Chelek 17 | Vayikra | Sichah 4

The Sages:

From the verse in our *parshah*, “When a person will bring a *minchah* offering...,” *Toras Kohanim* infers that an individual can also pledge wood. *Toras Kohanim* continues: “Just as two people cannot bring a voluntary *minchah* jointly, so too, they cannot bring wine, frankincense, or wood.”

The Question:

A *mishnah* in *Taanis* mentions a “wood offering of *kohanim*” which was offered nine times annually, and was considered a minor holiday. The *Talmud* explains:

“When the people of the exile ascended, they did not find wood in the Temple chamber. These families came forward and donated their own wood...”

This implies that the descendants of those families brought the wood together, as a joint offering of the family.

Attempted Explanation:

Perhaps we can draw the following distinction: The wood offering mentioned in *Toras Kohanim* was an individual offering like any other sacrifice. Thus, it could not be offered jointly. The wood offering of the families, however, was not a sacrificial offering, but a donation to supply the Altar pyre with wood for burning. Because it was not a conventional “sacrifice,” it could be offered jointly.

This suggestion is difficult to accept, however, because the Talmud records a dispute which implies that there is no such distinction between the individual wood offering and the families' offering:

Our Rabbis expounded: “A {*minchah*} offering — This teaches that wood may be donated.... And so it says in another verse: ‘We cast lots for the wood offering (referring to the families’ offering).’ Rebbi said: An offering of wood is an actual offering, and therefore, it requires salt and requires that it be brought near to the altar.”

If the two offerings mentioned here — given by an individual and by a family — are the same type of offering, then how could the family offering be brought jointly? And if these two offerings do have the above-mentioned distinction, how could the Rabbis cite the verse from the family offering as support in the case of an individual's offering?

The Explanation:

Rambam explains what the wood offering of the families actually was: “On the day designated for a family to bring their wood, they would bring voluntary *olos*.... This day resembled a festival for these families; as such, they were forbidden to eulogize, fast, or labor on this day.”

Ritva offers a different understanding: “They would burn some of the extra (alternate version: “donated”) wood by itself on the altar. This was the wood offering.”

We can posit that this dispute between the Rabbis and Rebbi is based on the consistently held positions of Rebbi and the Rabbis: When we analyze a term from Torah, do we understand it literally and with all of its details, or can the term be interpreted in a more abstract fashion, containing even just one of the elements usually associated with this term?

In our case: According to Rebbi, since we infer from the phrase, “a *minchah offering*” that wood “**is called an offering,**” we interpret this term

literally. That is, the wood itself is the sacrifice, and in all aspects, the sacrificial laws apply to it.

However, the Rabbis maintain that although we expound: “*an offering* — this teaches that we may donate wood,” nonetheless, this does not mean that wood is to be considered a sacrifice in all respects. It is sufficient for the wood to share common to sacrifices, namely, getting burned on the altar.

Rambam’s ruling aligns with the Rabbis — that the wood was not itself a full-fledged sacrifice. Rambam was troubled as to why the days on which “wood offering of *kohanim*” were brought were so significant to the point of each being a minor holiday. Therefore, Rambam concluded that the families would bring other sacrifices on their day, thus making the day into a minor holiday featuring full-fledged sacrificial offerings. According to the Rabbis, because the wood was not a full-fledged sacrifice, it could be brought jointly.

Ritva, however, maintains, like Rebbi, that the wood was an actual sacrifice — not a mere donation to the altar pyre, but a separate offering of wood that was treated as any other sacrifice. Thus, aside from the families contributing toward the wood supply for the altar pyre, they also donated wood as a separate offering. It was this offering of wood as a sacrifice that was not brought jointly. This is also why the Talmud can cite the verse pertaining to the families wood offering in the context of the individual wood offering — because the families did not only donate to the altar pyre, they also gave individual offerings of wood as a sacrifice.