

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XX: Tetzaveh (Ex. 27:20–30:10)

Essay 2. The olive oil required for the menorah and the meal offerings

This parsha includes the verses:

“You shall further instruct the Israelites to bring you clean oil of beaten olives for the light, to cause a lamp to burn continually” (Ex. 27:20).

“There shall be a tenth of a measure of choice flour with a quarter of a *hin* of beaten oil . . .” (Ex. 29:40).

The Mishnah of Menachot 8:4 (Menachot 86a) explains that after olives are harvested, they are beaten in a mortar to break the skins, and they are then stacked along the walls of a basket. Some oil is expelled by gravity, and is filtered and collected. This first oil has no sediment. After the collection of the first oil, the olives are taken and are pressed, either with a beam or with stones, and more oil is expelled. This is second oil. Finally, the olives are ground between millstones, and third oil is obtained.

פְּסוּק "פְּתִית לְמָאוֹר", פֶּרַשׁ רַש"י הַזֵּיתִים כּוֹתֵשׁ בְּמִקְתָּשֶׁת נֹכוֹ' וְהִשְׁגִּי פְסוּל לְמִגְדָּרָה וְכִשֶּׁר לְמִנְחֹת שְׁנַאֲמַר "פְּתִית לְמָאוֹר" וְלֹא "פְּתִית" לְמִנְחֹת.

The first **verse** of the parsha reads: “You shall further instruct the Israelites to bring you clear oil of **beaten** olives **for the light**, to cause a lamp to burn continually” (Ex. 27:20). This refers to the gold menorah of the Tabernacle and later the Temple. **Rashi explains: “One pounds the olives in a mortar** and must not grind them in a mill, so that there may be no sediment; and after he has thus extracted the first drop of oil he may bring [the olives] into the mill and grind them [to obtain a second oil].¹ **The second oil is unfit for the menorah but is permissible for the meal offerings** [which were brought in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple, which had to be mingled with oil], **as it is said, ‘beaten for the light,’ and [it does] not [say] ‘beaten for the meal offering.’ ”**

The word פְּתִית (*catit*) means “beaten in a mortar.” Rashi interprets this as representing first oil. Ex. 27:20 includes the term “beaten for the light,” whereas Ex. 29:40 discussing meal offerings states that the oil must be from beaten olives, but it does not use the term “beaten for the meal

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¹ Rashi does not distinguish between second oil that is derived from pressing the olives and the third oil that is derived from grinding the olives. He only discusses grinding the olives, and refers to this as second oil.

offering.” Rashi thus draws a distinction that the menorah must use first oil, whereas the meal offering does not necessarily need first oil.²

ולקמן גבי מנחות פרש רש"י על פסוק "ויעשרון סלת בלול בשמן פתית" וכו', לא נאמר פתית לחובה, אלא להקשיר, לפי שנגאמר "פתית למאור". יכול לפוסלו למנחות, תלמוד לומר כאן "פתית", ללמד דקתי [ת] נמי פשר, ולא נאמר "פתית למאור" אלא למעט מנחות, שאין צריך "פתית" עכ"ל.

Later in our parsha, regarding meal offerings, Rashi explained the verse, “There shall be a tenth of a measure of choice flour with a quarter of a *hin* of oil [of] beaten [olives]” (Ex. 29:40) as follows:

“Beaten” wasn’t said to make it obligatory, but to make it permissible, as it is stated, “beaten for the light” (Ex. 27:20), and the meaning is that for the light [it must only be first oil, which is beaten but not pressed or ground] but [that is] not [the case] for the meal-offerings. Possibly [one would understand the intent of “beaten for the light” is to reserve all first oil for the menorah, so as] to render [first quality oil] unfit for the meal offerings; therefore [to teach that isn’t the case,] it states here “beaten,” to teach that [oil of] beaten [olives] is also fit [for the meal offerings], and it is only said “beaten for the light” but it doesn’t say “beaten for the meal offerings,” to exclude meal offerings from the command, for they do not require [oil of] beaten [olives].

- Rashi on Ex. 27:20

מקשים דלא ליכתוב קרא לא ה"א ולא נ"ו, דלא ליכתוב "פתית" במנחות, ולא ליכתוב "למאור" במנורה.

[People] question on this teaching of Rashi:³ let Scripture not write the letter *heh* and not the letter *vav*, i.e., the rabbis say that the Torah does not have any superfluous word, or even a letter,⁴ and it wouldn’t unnecessarily include a limitation such as a prefixed *heh*, indicating the definite article, or a prefixed *vav*, indicating the word “and.”⁵ Thus, let Scripture not write *catit* for the meal offerings, and not write “for the light” for the menorah. I.e., let Scripture just say “pure beaten” oil for the menorah, and just say “oil” for the meal offerings? That would have avoided Rashi’s argument that “beaten for the light” might lead one to believe that all first oil should be reserved for use in the menorah, and that’s why it was necessary to add “beaten” to the discussion of meal offerings.

² The Mishnah learns that first oil is needed for the menorah but not for the meal offerings because the word *zch* (*zach*) (clean, pure) is included in Ex. 27:20 (discussing the menorah) but not in Ex. 29:40 (discussing the meal offering). Rashi on Ex. 27:20 notes that *zach* means “without sediment,” but he does not follow the Mishnah in relying upon the word *zach* to learn that first oil is needed for the menorah but not for the meal offering. Instead, he learns this because Ex. 27:20 says “beaten for the light,” while Ex. 29:40 does not say “beaten for the meal offerings.”

³ Rabbi Yisroel ben Binyomin, *Chidushei Agados: She’arit Yisroel* (Williamsdorf 1729).

⁴ Rabbeinu Bahya on Gen. 47:28.

⁵ The example of a *heh* and *vav* are not relevant in our verse, but come from Pesachim 5a, discussing Lev. 23:39.

ועוד קשה דמנא ליה לרש"י למילף הקא מ"פתית למאור" שהשני פשר למנחות? דילמא במנחות "פתית" הוא דלא בעינן, אכל אין הכי נמי שהשני נמי לחודיה אסור? דלא הכשירה התורה במנחות אלא כשטוחנו בנחד ומעורב השמן הראשון עם השני, אבל כשפבר ניטל מן הזית השמן הראשון, הנשאר ממנו לא יהיה פשר למנחות?

Another question⁶ is how did Rashi learn here from the fact that it's written "beaten for the light" and not "beaten for the meal offering" that the second [oil] is fit for the meal offering? Perhaps for meal offerings, it is not necessary to use only the "beaten" first oil, and indeed the second oil by itself is also prohibited, and the Torah only allowed [second oil] for meal offerings when ground together without first beating the olives, such that the first oil is mixed with the second?⁷ But when [the second oil] is separated from the first olive oil, the remainder of it would not be suitable for meal offerings?

ונש לומר דלפי זה היו בקאן שתי סברות הפוכות, דאחר שכתב במנורה "פתית למאור", אי לא הנה פתיב פתיב במנחות הייתי יכול לומר שהפתית יהיה פסול למנחות, כמו שכתב רש"י על פסוק "ועשון סלת". ולפי סברא זו צריך לומר שהקשוב דהיינו השמן הראשון פסול, וממילא שלמנחות צריך הגרוע דהיינו השמן השני, ואם כן אין עוד סברא לומר שהשמן השני יהיה פסול.

One can say that according to this second question—that one might think that second oil could not be used alone for meal offerings, but could be used in combination with first oil—we have here two opposing points of logic. For after it says, regarding the menorah, "beaten for the light," if it had not been written "beaten" for the meal offering, I would have been able to say that the intent of Scripture is that the beaten [oil] would be reserved for the menorah and thus would be unfit for the meal offering, as we quoted above what Rashi wrote on the verse "a tenth of a measure of choice flour" (Ex. 29:40). According to this logic, that perhaps the first oil was to be reserved for the menorah, then a mixture of first and second oils for meal offerings would be problematic, for it should be said that the important part of such a mixture of oils, which is the first oil, is invalid for a meal offering. It's understood from this that the meal offerings need the inferior oil, that is, the second oil. If so, with the inclusion of "beaten" for the meal offering, we understand that the first oil is fit for the meal offering, otherwise there is no longer a logical basis to say that the second oil, even if not mixed with the first oil, will be invalid.

⁶ Also from *Chidushei Agados: She'arit Yisroel*.

⁷ As explained, the standard practice was to first beat the olives in a mortar to break the skin and to collect the first oil. That was the best economic practice, as the first oil was more valuable than the second and third oil. But in theory, one could skip that step and proceed to press the olives, and thus collect a mixture of first and second oils, or skip both the beating and pressing steps and proceed to grind the olives between millstones, and thus collect a mixture of first, second, and third oils.

ואם תומר סבָּרָא אַחֲרָת, שֶׁהַשְּׁנֵי פָּסוּל לְמִנְחוֹת בְּשִׁבִיל שְׂאִין מְעוֹרָב בְּתוֹכּוֹ שֶׁמֶן הָרֵאשׁוֹן הַמְּשׁוּבָּח, אִם כֵּן לְמִנְחוֹת לֹא בְּעֵינֵינוּ גְרוּעַ. וּמִכָּל שֶׁכֵּן שִׁיְהִי כֶּשֶׁר הַשְּׁמֶן הָרֵאשׁוֹן, וְלֹא הִיָּה צוֹרֵךְ כָּלֵל לְכֶתוּב "כֶּתִית" בְּמִנְחוֹת. וְלִיכָּא לְמִימַר דְּבְּעֵינֵינוּ דְּנִקְא כֶּתִית, שֶׁהִרִי בְּמִנְחָה כֶּתִיב לְמֵאֹר, דְּמִשְׁמַע וְלֹא לְמִנְחוֹת.

What if you'll say another logical basis pertaining to the suggestion that first oil is not mandatory for the meal offerings, but that second oil alone is invalid, and that second oil would only be valid if mixed with first oil? If you'll say **that the second [oil alone] is invalid for meal offerings because there is no superior first oil mixed into it, then** the answer would be that **for meal offerings we don't need any inferior oil**. That is, under such a hypothetical, first oil is not required, but could be used, as it is not reserved for the menorah. **Since the first oil would be valid** for meal offerings under such a logical basis, **there was no need at all to write "beaten" for meal offerings. There's no need to say that for meal offerings we specifically need "beaten" first oil, because for the menorah it is written beaten "for the light," with the meaning being [first oil] is not required for meal offerings.**

אַלָּא וְדַאי צְרִיךְ לומר שֶׁהַכֶּתוּב בָּא לְהַכְשִׁיר הַכֶּתִית לְאִפּוּקֵי הַסְּבָרָא שֶׁהִיָּה לְנוֹ שֶׁהַכֶּתִית יְהִיָּה פָּסוּל, וְכִשְׂיֵשׁ סְבָרָא זֶה בְּעוֹלָם, עַל פְּרֻחָהּ לומר שֶׁהַשְּׁנֵי כֶּשֶׁר לְמִנְחוֹת. וּמִמִּילָא אִימְעֵיטָא הַסְּבָרָא הָאֲחֲרָת לומר שֶׁהַגְרוּעַ פָּסוּל, דְּהֵינּוּ הַשְּׁנֵי.

Rather, certainly there is no need to invalidate second oil by itself for the meal offering, but rather **it is necessary to say that the Scripture comes to render fit the [oil that is only] beaten, i.e., the first oil, to exclude the opinion that we had that the beaten oil** would be reserved for the menorah and **would be invalid** for meal offerings. **When such an opinion exists, that an inferior oil is required for the meal offering, you must say that the second oil is fit for the meal offerings** even if it stands alone, without any first oil mixed into it. **In any case, to diminish the other opinion saying that the inferior oil is invalid, which is to say the second oil.**

וְאִי לֹא הִנֵּה כֶּתִיב לֹא כֶּתִית בְּמִנְחוֹת וְלֹא לְמֵאֹר בְּמִנְחָה, הֵייתִי אומר בְּמִכָּל שֶׁכֵּן שְׂאִף בְּמִנְחוֹת בְּעֵינֵינוּ כֶּתִית דְּנִקְא, כְּדִתְנֵנוּ בְּפֶרֶק ח' דְּמִנְחוֹת וּמָה אִם הַמִּנְחָה שְׂאִינָה לְאֲכִילָה טְעוּנָה שֶׁמֶן זֵית יַד הַמִּנְחוֹת שֶׁהֵן לְאֲכִילָה וְכוּ'.

If it was not written in Scripture **"beaten" for meal offerings, and "for the light" for the menorah**, I wouldn't have known there was no obligation to use first oil for meal offerings. **I would have said that for the menorah, "beaten" first oil is specified, as taught** in the Mishnah **by the eighth chapter, fourth Mishnah of Menachot** (chapter 9, page 86a in the Gemara). **Then, by a fortiori**, I would have said that **if what is required for the menorah, which is not to be consumed [on the altar], requires clean olive oil, then meal offerings, which are to be consumed [on the altar], should require refined olive oil.** [To dispel this notion,] the verse states: 'Clean beaten olive oil for illumination,' [which indicates that the high-quality, clean, beaten oil is required for the menorah,] but there is no [need for] clean beaten [olive oil] for meal offerings."

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