

Meshech Chochmah Parshas Pinchas

Nisuch Hamayim on Succos

וּבַיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי פְּרִים בְּנֵי בָקָר שְׁנַיִם עֶשֶׂר... וּמִנְחָתָם וְנִסְכֵיהֶם...

מִלֶּבֶד עֶלְת הַתְּמִיד וּמִנְחָתָהּ וְנִסְכֵיהֶם.

And on the second day [of Succos,] you shall offer twelve bulls, two rams and fourteen lambs... And their meal-offerings and their libations. (29:17-18)

[These are] aside from the continual [daily] burnt-offering, its meal-offering and their libations. (Ibid. 19)

Who are “they”?

Perek 29 deals with the additional mussaf offerings of Succos describing which animals should be offered, as well as their accompanying *menachos* (meal-offerings) and *nesachim* (libations of wine which are poured out on the mizbeach). If we look at the final word of pasuk 19 – “וְנִסְכֵיהֶם” – their *nesachim*, we will have a question: Seeing as there is only one korban referred to in that phrase (i.e., the daily burnt offering), why does it conclude with a *plural* possessive pronoun – “their *nesachim*”? While it is true that the earlier pesukim refer to “their *menachos*,” and “their *nesachim*” in the plural, this is because those pesukim mentions numerous korbanos. However, since our pasuk deals with only one korban,¹ it should have said “its *nesech*,” as surely as it said “מִנְחָתָהּ” – its *minchah*!

Understanding Nisuch Hamayim

The Meshech Chochmah explains. As we know, throughout the seven days of Succos, in addition to the *nesachim* of wine which accompany the various korbanos, there is also a special mitzvah to pour water out on the *mizbeach* –

¹ The chatas (sin-offering) mentioned in the beginning of the pasuk does not have an accompanying minchah or *nesech*.

known as “*nisuch hamayim*.” It is worthwhile contemplating: What type of korban is this *nesech* of water?

Should we ask, how many possibilities are there? The answer is, two:

A: It is an additional *nesech* accompanying the daily *tamid* offering. Throughout the year, the *Tamid* is accompanied only by one *nesech* – of wine, while for the seven days of Succos, it has two *nesachim* – one of wine and one of water.

B: It is a separate obligation of the day. As surely as there are additional mussaf offerings to be brought during Succos, there is also an additional korban in the form of a *nesech* of water.

Should we then proceed to ask, does it make a difference what type of korban *nisuch hamayim* is? The answer is, yes, for the designation of this *nesech* will affect its halachos in a number of ways. To cite one straightforward example:

- A *nesech* which accompanies a korban cannot be offered before the korban itself. If *nisuch hamayim* is connected to the *tamid* offering, then it will be unacceptable to perform it before offering the *tamid*.
- If it is an obligation of the day itself, one could perform this *nesech* even prior to offering the *tamid*.²

Back to Our Pasuk

And so, having outlined the question as to what type of korban *nisuch hamayim* is, how are we to set about answering it? The Meshech Chochmah explains that the answer is actually right in front of us, in the final word of pasuk 19 – “וְנִסְחֵיהֶם” – and *their nesachim*! We asked, seeing as there is only one korban, should it not have said “*its nesech*”? However, firstly, the reason the pasuk refers to *nesachim* in the plural is because it refers to two *nesachim* that are offered every day of Succos:

1. The *nesech* of wine accompanying the *tamid*

² An additional difference would be that, when one offers an animal as a korban, he can bring its minchah and *nesech* even on a subsequent day if necessary (see Temurah 14b). Therefore, if *nisuch hamayim* is attached to the *tamid*, it could be brought on a subsequent day, while if it is an independent obligation for that day of Succos, it could not be brought after that day has passed.

2. The additional *nesech* of water.

Moreover, by saying “*their nesachim*,” the pasuk is indicating that these two *nesachim* actually “belong” to two different entities:

1. The *nesech* of wine is attached to the *tamid*, and is *its nesech*.
2. The *nesech* of water is an obligation of that particular day of Succos, and is *its nesech*.

Since these two *nesachim* derive from two different entities (the *tamid* and the day), they are referred to collectively as “*their nesachim*”!

The Letter Vav and the Future of the World

וּבְיּוֹם הַרְבִּיעִי פְּרִים עֲשָׂרָה ... מִנְחָתָם וְנִסְכֵיהֶם...

And on the fourth day, ten bulls... their meal-offerings and wine-libations... (29:2-24)

Attention to Detail: One Rule and Two Exceptions

We have seen consistently that a trademark of the sefer Meshech Chochmah is R' Meir Simcha directing our attention to subtle nuances and anomalies within pesukim with which we are familiar, and then proceeding to illuminate them, bringing to bear his mastery of halachah, *machshavah* and *parshanut*.

As noted above, Perek 29 of our parsha discusses the mussaf offerings of Succos, with each of the *korbanos* accompanied by a minchah (meal offering) and *nesech* (wine-libation). The Meshech Chochmah notes that the way these accompanying offerings are presented in pesukim for most of the days is with the words “וּמִנְחָתָם וְנִסְכֵיהֶם – *and their menachos and nesachim*,” with a vav. The exceptions to this rule are the fourth day and the eighth day (Shemini Atzeres), where it says “מִנְחָתָם וְנִסְכֵיהֶם – *their menachos and nesachim*.” What is behind the missing vav on those two days?

Explaining the Rule

He explains: As we know, a prominent feature of the *mussafim* of Succos are the seventy bulls offered over the course of the chag, which the Gemara tells us correspond to the seventy nations of the world, while the one bull offered on Shemini Atzeres corresponds to the Jewish people themselves.³

The Gemara elsewhere⁴ states that although a gentile can bring *korbanos*, he can only bring *menachos* and *nesachim* in conjunction with an animal offering, but not by themselves. This is in contrast to Bnei Yisrael, who can bring these as independent *korbanos*. It is for this reason the pesukim describing the *mussafim* of Succos state “וּמְנַחֲתָם וְנִסְכֵי־הֵם,” with a *vav* – “and their *menachos* and *nesachim*”. Since these *korbanos* correspond to the nations of the world, their presentation in the pesukim reflects the way a gentile can bring those *korbanos*, i.e. specifically with the *menachos* and *nesachim* attached to the *korbanos* themselves.

Explaining the Exceptions

Having explained the rule, we now come to the exceptions. To begin with Shemini Atzeres: based on the above, we can understand why its *menachos* and *nesachim* are not introduced with a *vav*. Since the one bull-offering on Shemini Atzeres corresponds to Bnei Yisrael – who can bring those items separately – their presentation in the pasuk is likewise detached from the preceding *korbanos*.

But what about the fourth day? The *korbanos* of that day are also part of Succos, corresponding therefore to the nations of the world. Why, then, are their *menachos* and *nesachim* written without the *vav*?

The answer, says Meshech Chochmah, lies in the fact that ten of the seventy root nations of the world originally lived in land which is ultimately promised to the Jewish People as the Land of Israel.⁵ These ten nations are represented by the ten bulls which are offered on the fourth day of Succos. Indeed, it is appropriate that the fourth day, which is the middle of the seven days of Succos, should parallel the land of Israel which is the center of the world.⁶ In light of the fact that the

³ See Succah 55b.

⁴ *Menachos* 73b.

⁵ See Bereishis 15:19-20 with Rashi.

⁶ See Midrash Tanchuma Parshas Kedoshim sec. 10.

land associated with those ten nations will ultimately be inherited by the Jewish people, they have a significant connection with the *korbanos* offered on that day. This connection is reflected in the *menachos* and *nesachim* of that day being written in a “Bnei Yisrael” way – without a *vav*!