Keeping it in the Family

“In one house shall it (the Pesach sacrifice) be eaten; you shall not carry any of the flesh out of the house.”

(Shemos 12:46)

The Torah prohibits carrying meat of the Pesach sacrifice outside of the company to which one has subscribed for partnership in the offering and eating of this sacrifice. One who premeditatedly does so is punished by flogging.

The term “carrying out” used by the Torah in regard to this prohibition endows us with two interesting dimensions seemingly unrelated to the Pesach laws.

One is the rule stated by Rabbi Ami about the manner in which this carrying out is considered a violation punishable by flogging. Since the term “carrying” is used, we equate this prohibition to the Shabbos prohibition of carrying from a private to public domain or vice versa. Just as on Shabbos it is not considered a violation unless one uproots an object from its static position in one domain and restores it to a static position in the other, so is one who carries the Pesach sacrifice meat out of his company considered guilty only if he actually puts the meat down in the other company.

The second dimension is the result of the term “out” which conjures up the association with other sacrifices which have been removed, intentionally or unintentionally, from the precincts assigned them by the Torah. Such sacrificial flesh, such as the more sacred categories which must not leave the precincts of the Beis Hamikdash, or the less sacred ones which must remain within the walls of Jerusalem, are called “yotzei” (went out) and are forbidden to eat. In the case of the Pesach sacrifice, the precinct dictated by the Torah is the company which has formed for the offering and eating of the sacrifice. Once meat of this sacrifice has been removed from the company, it is considered “yotzei” and if one eats it he has violated the prohibition against eating any “yotzei” and is punished by flogging.

Pesachim 85a
To Avoid Embarrassment

If any of the meat of the Pesach sacrifice was not consumed on Pesach eve it had to be burned on the first of the intermediate days of Chol Hamoed (unless that day was Shabbos, in which case it would be burned the next day). This burning may be done either in the Beis Hamikdash area or in the privacy of one’s yard.

The type of wood used as fuel for such burning depends on where it is done. If one burns it in his own yard, he must use his own wood, while if he burns it in the Beis Hamikdash area he must use the wood which has been consecrated for use in maintaining the fire on the sacrificial altar.

There is a fairly obvious reason why Beis Hamikdash wood is not allotted for home burnings. There is always the danger that some of this wood will be left over and used for private purposes, in violation of the law banning such use of sacred property. But why should one not be permitted to supply his own wood for the burning in the Beis Hamikdash area?

The Sage Rava states the reason: We are concerned that if someone brings his own wood to the Beis Hamikdash and subsequently takes home any leftover wood, he may be falsely suspected of absconding with Beis Hamikdash wood. According to this approach, one may bring those types of wood which are never used on the altar (because of their inability to sustain a fire for very long) since no one will suspect that he is using Beis Hamikdash wood.

Rabbi Yosef, however, contends that the ban on private wood extends to any sort of wood, because the reason for this ban is to avoid embarrassing the impoverished Jew who cannot afford his own wood, but must rely on wood from the altar supply. A similar concept is found in regard to the celebration of the Jewish maidens on the Fifteenth of Av described in Mesechta Taanis (31b). Every girl, rich or poor, borrowed a dress from others before going out, in order to avoid embarrassing those who did not have impressive dresses of their own.

Pesachim 82a