

א ביסל תורה!

The Maimonides School Parsha Newsletter

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צו

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קרבן מנחה and the Community

By Hayim Sims

This week's reading consists of פרשת צו, which discusses the differences between all of the קרבנות which אהרן and his sons would bring during their appointments as משכן כהנים servicing the משכן. The פרשה discusses how each of these קרבנות are made up of many different acts and qualities, making each קרבן unique, each one serving its own purpose. In the beginning of the פרשה, within the discussion of the קרבן מנחה, some interesting wording is used to refer to the כהנים participating in the offerings. When discussing the כהן's ability to consume the מנחה קרבן, ויקרא 10:14 states that "כָּל-זֶרֶךְ" "כל זרע" speaks of the ability granted to all children and descendants of אהרן to take part in the consumption of the offering, throughout all times and expressions which they had been given. While the message of the text speaks well, when placed into context it raises some peculiar points: previous פסוקים had discussed the distinction between functioning כהנים and those unfit to serve in the משכן, so why does this deliberately refer to the "כל זרע בבני אהרן" as a group? Additionally, why should this portion of the text be necessary at all, when the nature of the כהנים consuming portions of the offerings had been discussed multiple times?

Many מפרשים are quick to notice the strange discrepancies between the passage of text found in ויקרא 10:14 and the texts which preceded it. רשב"ם notes the difference found in the word "יקדש" seen in the final word of the text, and states the significance of the text originates from that phrase. Discussing the text, רשב"ם notes "קודם הנגיעה יהיה טהור," that before taking part in consuming the offering any כהן must make certain to purify themselves. While the רשב"ם chooses to take the text as a further description of the process which כהנים used in their daily services, other מפרשים focus more towards the beginning of the passage rather than the conclusion. מלבי"ם notes the text's meaning lies in the phrase "כל זרע בבני אהרן" that "לרבות שגם בעל מום אוכל," or that referencing the children of Aaron additionally refers to the fact that the blemished כהנים could eat the מנחה, which מלבי"ם also notes in ויקרא 21:20 - in accordance with the passage, even they may partake in the meal, should they show themselves willing. Both opinions note the ramifications of the text, and mention the discrepancies, but it is in the words of רש"י that the most startling revelation may be found. ואפלו בעל מום... להיות כמוהו, שאם פסולה יפסלו, ואם "כל זרע" in the text, saying "כשרה יאכלו כחומר המנחה" רש"י also notes that the text as is including the blemished כהנים, but he clearly distinguishes it as being different from ויקרא 21:20. In understanding the text, רש"י instead points to the insight that the כהנים may take in the bread should they wish, and that they are *entitled* to the קרבן should they wish to.

The nature of כהנים and partaking in קרבנות may not seem initially connected to what we deal with in the modern day, but taking into account the message relayed by the passage we may draw a startling conclusion about tolerance and understanding between individuals. The commandment to allow people to partake does not distinguish between groups, ideologies, or even natural states beyond the simple concept of holiness, and wills us all to take should we wish to indulge in such an offering. The great gifts of life are presented to us daily, and in being with people when we act the part the wideness of the world opens itself in opportunity - should we act the part befitting our status and being, there are no limits to what we can achieve.

The True Reason Why We Don't Eat Blood

By Binyamin Orkaby

This week is פרשת צו in which we learn about the many different types of קרבנות that there are. After telling us about the types of קרבנות that there are the תורה goes on to list the things which one may not eat from the קרבנות. The תורה tells us “כָּל־דָּם לֹא תֹאכְלוּ”, that all blood should not be eaten, and anyone who does “וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא מֵעַמִּיהָ”, he will be cut off from the nation. But why should this be? Why is eating blood such a bad thing that one would receive כרת for eating it?

One explanation brought down by the מעם לועז is that the blood is sprinkled around the מזבח as part of the קרבן process and as such ה' prohibited us from eating it as it is seen as part of the מזבח. This opinion, while nice as an idea, does not explain fully why one may not eat the blood. Today, when we don't have קורבנות, what is the reason for not eating blood?

A second explanation given by the מעם לועז is that הדם הוא הנפש, that the blood is like the soul of a person. ה' only allowed us to eat the body of an animal, not its soul. Furthermore, every animal's body is supported by the blood within it. Without the blood inside their bodies they would not be able to survive. As such, if one were to eat the blood of an animal it would make our body similar to that of an animal, thus lowering us below the status of a sentient being to that of an animal. An animal doesn't think about what it eats. A lion takes down its prey and then eats the animal's blood, and all without a thought, for the animal is only for the lion's sustenance. Humans who are able to make conscious decisions, beyond just the need to eat, must elevate themselves beyond the low level of an animal who doesn't think about what it eats. Thus we are prohibited from eating the blood of an animal to show that we are above the animals and can make conscious decisions as to what we put inside ourselves.

ה', in his infinite wisdom, prohibited us from eating the blood of animals to show that we are more than just beings who need to eat, sleep and procreate. We are sentient beings who can make decisions about what we do in life. Human beings have two halves; the animal and the angel. The animal half of the human is the primal instincts within each human - the drive to eat or sleep, fight, or flee. But human beings also have an elevated consciousness which allows us to think and make decisions. While not perfect in our actions like the angels, humans still have the ability to speak and learn which elevates us beyond simple animals. The ability to make choices is what separates us from angels who have no free will. By choosing what we eat, what we put into our bodies, and even more so who and what we are around, we can become the best people that we can be. May we always be able to think for ourselves and be able to make good choices, with the help of רבונו של עולם, so that we may be the best people that we can be.

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