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Searching for Yerushalaim and the Temple Mount

Tiferes Shlomo on the Parsha

לא תוכל לאכול בשעריך

In Parshas Reeh, the Torah teaches that one may not eat certain sacred foods outside of the city of Yerushalaim. These include Maaser Sheini, firstborn animals, Shelamim offerings and the like. They may only be eaten within the walls of the Holy City.

The Torah phrases this prohibition in a strange manner. Instead of saying “do not eat it in your gates”, which would be the standard formula for a prohibition, the Torah says “you are no able to eat it in your gates”.

The Tiferes Shlomo explains that when a person would eat in the holy city of Yerushalaim, the Kedusha of the city would permeate the very food that one was eating, giving it a unique flavour and experience that could not be replicated outside of the Holy City.

We find a basis for this in the Gemara that describes a special flavour that is imbued into food that is prepared for and eaten on Shabbos.

This is the inner meaning of the verse “you are not able to eat the Maaser of your grain in your gates” - meaning that even if one was eating holy food like Maaser, one would not be able to eat it in the same heightened state and holiness as one would experience in Yerushalaim.

As a result, this would ensure that the Jewish people would feel the uniqueness of the Holy City and constantly yearn to return there and experience its flavour.

The Tiferes Shlomo connects this to the Chassidic practise of eating from the Tish of the Tzaddik. Like food eaten in Yerushalaim, the holiness of the Tzaddik’s presence imbues this food with holiness and enhanced flavour.

The city of Yerushalaim and the Temple Mount as the site of the Beis Hamikdash and the Mizbeach, are central to observance of many of the Mitzvos of the Torah, many of which are found in Parshas Reeh. These include the building of the Beis Hamikdash, the bringing of Korbanos, observing the pilgrimage festivals and consuming the sacred foods such as Maaser Sheini and various sacrifices.

Yet, the city of Yerushalaim and the location of the future Beis Hamikdash, is not mentioned explicitly in the Torah even once.

Rather, the Torah refers to “the place that Hashem your G-d will choose to rest His Name there” or “the place that Hashem your G-d will choose”. This is why the Rambam refers to the Beis Hamikdash as the Beis Habechira, the House of Hashem’s choosing.

The sanctity of the Temple Mount as the future site of the Beis Hamikdash was already determined at the outset of Creation. Our sages teach that the *Even Hashetsiya*, the stone that stood in the Kodosh Hakodoshim, was the foundation from which the world was created. Adam’s body was formed from the earth of the future site of the Mizbeach. It was on this Mountain that Hashem commanded Avraham to bring Yitzchak to the Akeidah and it was here that Yaakov had his dream and declared “this is the House of G-d and this is the gateway to Haven”.

So why does the Torah not specify this as the designated place? Instead, the Torah says “Only at the place that Hashem your G-d will choose from among all of your tribes to rest His Name there, shall you seek out His Presence and come there” - לשכנו תדרשו - ובאה שמה.

From these words we learn that even though the place of the future Temple was already chosen by Hashem, He commands us to seek out the place where the Temple should be built.

This Mitzvah was practically observed by King David. After subduing his surrounding enemies, Dovid Hamelech set his sight on building the Beis Hamikdash. The sages describe how together with Shmuel Hanavi, Dovid spent the entire night interpreting the Pesukim of the Torah and the Book of Yehoshua, to determine the precise site of the Holy Temple.

On the above-quoted verse, the Sifri teaches that “The place that Hashem your G-d has chosen” is determined according to the word of a prophet. One may think that they must wait until the Novi tells you the

location? Therefore the verse adds “you shall seek out His Presence and come there”. From this we learn that one must seek and find the place and afterwards it will be confirmed by a Novi. This is why after purchasing the site of the future Beis Hamikdash, Dovid only built an altar after he was directed by Gad the prophet.

If the site of the Beis Hamikdash was already chosen by Hashem, why did He not tell us explicitly and if the site has to be confirmed by a Novi, what is the purpose of us having to search for it?

Searching (Derisha), as opposed to finding (Metzia), refers to a yearning that leads to a concerted effort and desire to find something. A Metziah is something that one finds with no forethought or effort.

The Chassidic Masters explain that Hashem does not desire a dwelling in this world that He imposes from Above. Hashem wants us to desire that He rest His presence amongst us as an expression of our yearning for connection to Him. If so, the Beis Hamikdash must come through our efforts and our yearning...

With this understanding, the words לשכנו תדרשו - Seek out His presence, is not limited to determining the physical site as a preparation to fulfilling the Mitzvah of building the physical Beis Hamikdash. Rather, the searching and yearning is a Mitzvah in its own right as the Ramban explains, that we are obligated to await and yearn and thirst with fiery desire, for the opportunity to go up to the Beis Hamikdash.

Whilst we do not have the Beis Hamikdash now and ascending the Temple Mount is not a simple matter with the majority of Poskim writing that we are not permitted to do so nowadays, this Mitzvah still applies. We must yearn for the coming of Moshiach and the Final Redemption and the rebuilding of the Third Beis Hamikdash, so that we merit the opportunity to go there and to experience the revelation of the Shechina and be inspired in Torah and Yiras Shamayim.

It also includes our desire to attend our Shules and Beatei Midrash which are called a “Mikdash Me’at” - minor Sanctuaries, to connect to Hashem through Torah and Tefillah.

Parshas Re’eh is the Shabbos that blesses the month of Elul. The sublime revelation of the Yomim Noraim is like being in the presence of the Beis Hamikdash. In the month of Elul we have the Mitzvah of Derisha, to seek out Hashem through our own efforts and to prepare ourselves with anticipation and yearning for the impending Yomim Noraim.

Permissible Blood - Fish, Human and Raw Meat

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

The prohibition against eating blood is enumerated numerous times in the Torah and is repeated in Parshas Reeh.

The Torah provides the reason for the prohibition “for the life-force of all flesh is in the blood and I have assigned it to you as an atonement for your lives upon the altar”. The Ramban¹ explains that this is like the forbidden fats (Cheilev) which are prohibited because they are dedicated to Hashem on the altar. Additionally, it is not proper for man to eat the life-force or soul of another living being.

The Rambam in Moreh Nevuchim² explains that the Torah forbids us to eat blood as this was a pagan or idolatrous practise.

In Parshas Re’eh, the prohibition on eating blood is repeated in 3 consecutive verses.

23 Only be strong not to eat the blood, for the blood is the life-force and you may not eat the life-force with the flesh. 24 Do not eat it, you shall pour it on the ground like water. 25 Do not eat it, in order that it be good for you and your children after you, when you do what’s right in the eyes of Hashem.

From the repetition, our sages conclude that there are different types of blood, each subject to a different law. The most serious level of prohibition is on the Dam HaNefesh, the life-blood. This is the blood which spurts out at the time of Shechita³. Consuming Dam HaNefesh is forbidden on punishment of Kareis - spiritual disconnection. This is the blood mentioned in verse 23 as being the life-force.

The second type of blood, referred to in verse 24, is Dam Tamtzis. This is the blood which slowly ebbs out from the incision after the Shechita. Dam Tamtzis is also Biblically forbidden to be eaten, but not punishable by Kareis.

The final type of blood is referred to as Dam HaEivarim, the blood which remains absorbed within the organs and flesh of the animal after Shechita. Our sages make a further distinction within this category: Only once the blood has separated and moved from the capillaries is it forbidden. This happens when the meat is cooked.

This is why meat that is going to be cooked needs to be Kashered through Melicha (salting) to remove its blood. Additionally, some of the veins in which the blood is trapped need to be removed and some need to be cut open prior to Melicha⁴. Like salting, roasting over fire also removes the blood from the meat.

The prohibition on blood applies to both the blood of a kosher or non-kosher animal⁵. But the Torah⁶ limits the prohibition to animals and birds. The sages explain that the prohibition

only applies to animals that require Shechita – domesticated animals, venison and birds⁷.

Fish Blood

The blood of fish is Biblically permitted⁸. However, if the blood is collected in a vessel, it is Rabbinically forbidden on account of Maris Ayin⁹ – that someone may believe that it is forbidden blood.

If it is recognisable that the blood is from fish, there is no Maris Ayin. The Shulchan Aruch¹⁰ gives the example of where there are fish scales in the blood, evidencing that it is the blood of fish¹¹.

The Gemara only mentions the concern of Maris Ayin in relation to fish blood. There is a dispute whether the blood of grasshoppers is also subject to Maris Ayin. The Pri Chadash¹² rules that the same concern applies. Others suggest that since it is uncommon to collect the blood of grasshoppers in this manner, they were not included in the Rabbinic concern.

Human Blood

Like the blood of fish and grasshoppers, human blood is not subject to the Biblical prohibition. Nonetheless, the Gemara¹³ teaches that if a person bit into bread and there was blood on it, the blood must be scraped off or removed because of Maris Ayin. In contrast, blood that is between one’s teeth may be swallowed and the concern of Maris Ayin does not apply.

What is the reason for this distinction? Rashi explains that it is his is because the blood between the teeth is hidden from view. According to Tosfos, the permissibility is because it is evident that it is the blood of a person.

The Poskim¹⁴ draw on this dispute when addressing whether one may suck the blood from a wound elsewhere on the body, such as one’s finger.

According to the reasoning of Rashi, the leniency is limited to blood that is in one’s mouth that is hidden from view. Blood from a wound anywhere else on the body would be visible and hence subject to Maris Ayin. However, according to Tosfos, the blood from a wound elsewhere on the body is also evidently human blood and hence permissible.

The Minchas Yaakov¹⁵ leaves the matter unresolved. However other Poskim¹⁶ are lenient. There are also Poskim¹⁷ who rule stringently. This all applies to swallowing the blood. One may suck the blood and spit it out¹⁸.

The blood of fish, grasshoppers and humans is not intrinsically forbidden. Therefore if they became mixed into other food – for example if one cut their finger while making food, the food will be permissible (as long as know redness is visible).

Raw Meat

Even when discussing the meat of an animal or

bird, there is a scenario in which one may eat the meat without having to Kasher it to remove the blood. This is where the meat is eaten raw¹⁹.

As discussed above, the blood within the flesh (Dam Haeivarim) is only forbidden if it has not separated or moved to come out. This happens once the meat is cooked. It also applies to blood that is trapped in a bruise²⁰.

However, when eating raw meat, the blood is considered as not having moved from its place and hence the meat can be eaten raw, provided that it has been thoroughly rinsed to remove any surface blood²¹. Any of the veins in which blood is trapped must also be removed.

According to the Rambam²², one may not eat raw meat without salting.

In the laws of Shabbos, the Alter Rebbe²³ writes that on Shabbos, a healthy person may eat the meat that was slaughtered for a sick person if they eat it raw and unsalted, since salting meat is forbidden on Shabbos.

The Chavas Daas questions this permissible ruling, because when one bites into the raw meat, the pressure of biting draws out the blood, which should now be forbidden. He suggests that the permissibility only applies when swallowing a piece whole, but not if one bites or chews it. However, the Shulchan Aruch does not mention any such qualification. The Acharonim explain that the blood that emerges through biting is not considered as Dam Shepresh.

1. Vayikra 19:26
2. 3:46
3. It also includes the blood that remains collected in the heart.
4. See Yoreh Deah 65
5. Yoreh Deah 66:1. Even though the blood of a non-Kosher animal is already forbidden under the general prohibition of easting non-Kosher animals, the blood is subject to a further penalty of Kareis (Yad Yehuda).
6. Vayikra 7
7. Chullin 117a. Yoreh Deah 66:1.
8. Kerisus 21
9. Kerisus 21b as explained by Rashi
10. Yoreh Deah 66:9
11. From the Ram”o 87:3, we can infer that the scales may be deliberately placed into the blood for this purpose.
12. Yoreh Deah 66:14
13. Kerisus 21b
14. Michas Yaakov Klal 62, Darkei Teshuvah 66:68
15. Klal 62
16. See also Haflaah Kesubos 60
17. Kneses Hagedola quoting Damesek Eliezer
18. Kaf Hachaim Yoreh Deah 66:47
19. Tosfos, Ra”n Chullin 14a
20. Yoreh Deah 67:1
21. Yoreh Deah 67:2
22. Maachalos Asuros 6:12
23. 318:5, following the Magen Avraham