



The Prohibition of Dam (Blood)

The Torah commands us in four different places (three times in *Sefer Vayikra* and once in *Sefer Devarim*) not to consume *dam* (blood). Various reasons are provided for this prohibition. The *Rambam* (*Moreh Nevuchim* 3:46) relates the prohibition to ancient idol worship, in which people believed that eating blood would connect them with powerful spirits. (See *Ramban Vayikra* 17:7,11) *Sefer HaChinuch* (148) explains that the Torah prohibited consuming blood in order to teach us mercy and compassion. Blood is the life force of living beings and consuming it may seem cruel.

Our Sages provide two methods in which blood can be removed. Either by salting the meat after slaughtering or by high-temperature roasting.

Which blood is prohibited?

In *Vayikra* (9:26) we read: וְכֹל־דָּם לֹא תֹאכְלוּ בְּכֹל מוֹשְׁבֵי־בְתוּכֵיכֶם לְעֵינֵי וְלִבְהֵמָה:

And you must not consume any blood, either of bird or of animal, in any of your settlements.

From this verse, we learn that blood from kosher fowl and mammals is prohibited by the Torah. The *Mishna* in *Keritot* (5:1)

states that blood from other types of animals, such as fish blood, is not biblically prohibited. However, on a rabbinical level, fish blood remains questionable. (This topic will be further discussed in future articles).

When is blood prohibited?

On Shabbat there is a prohibition of *muktzeh*, handling objects that have no use or are connected to a Shabbat prohibition. The *gemara* in *Shabbat* (128:a) states that one may handle raw, unsalted meat on Shabbat, meaning that it's not *muktzeh*, since it was then common to consume such meat. The *Tosfot* on this *gemara* questions how one can eat raw unsalted meat when it is full of blood, thereby transgressing *isur dam*?! *Tosfot*, based on this and other sources, rules that blood is only prohibited when it has been removed from its original source in the animal. However, blood that remains in the flesh is not included in the prohibition of *dam* and may be consumed.

In halachic terms, *dam* that has left the flesh is known as *dam shepiresh*. In turn, *Tosfot* explains the above *gemara*, that raw meat is not *muktzeh* on Shabbat and is permitted to eat. Many early authorities agree with *Tosfot's* ruling regarding *dam shepiresh* (*Rosh Chulin* 1:19, *Ran* on *Rif Chulin* 4:a). *Maharach Ohr Zarua* (24) disagrees, and explains the *gemara* in *Shabbat* in a



different manner. Halachic authorities also disagree about the *Rambam's (Ma'achalot Asurot 6:4)* position on this issue (see *Kesef Mishna Ibid* and *Aruch Hashulchan YD 67:7-10*). Rav Yosef Karo summarizes the dispute in his *Beit Yosef* and clearly rules like *Tosfot (Shulchan Aruch YD 67:2)*, which is the majority opinion. Later *poskim* concur with the *Shulchan Aruch's* ruling (*Levush* and *Pri Chadash Ibid*).

Eating raw meat and steak tartare

When preparing cooked kosher meat, removing the blood beforehand is essential. This is due to the fact that during the cooking process the blood is released and then reabsorbed into the meat. In order to consume raw meat that was neither salted nor roasted, halachic authorities require other preparations to remove blood. Although blood **within** the flesh is not halachically prohibited, external blood must be washed and removed. If raw meat is cut and blood is released on the surface, that blood must also be removed, since it is considered *dam shepresh* (see *Pri Chadash YD 67:2*, *Pri Megadim SD 67:1*) . *Poskim* add that before eating any raw meat, one should remove any veins in the meat, since the blood in the veins is accumulated, and is also considered *dam shepresh* (*Ran* on the *Rif Chulin 30:b*).

Steak tartare, presumed to have originat-

ed in France, is a dish in which diced, raw beef is served together with spices and raw eggs. If the meat was properly slaughtered and the proper preparations were done as explained above, it may be eaten without concern (see responsa *Sridei Esh 2:15*). However, in modern cuisine it can be made in different formats which might be problematic. As such, steak tartare should have proper kosher certification.

In summary:

- It is biblically prohibited to consume *Dam* (blood)
- Only blood from fowl or mammals are included in the prohibition.
- Blood is only prohibited once it has left its source in the animals' body, known as *dam shepresh*.
- Raw meat that still has blood inside it may be consumed on two conditions. Blood on the surface must be washed off and the veins removed.
- Steak tartare and other raw meat products may be consumed if they are produced under strict kosher supervision. ■

Kashrut Questions in Israel?

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