



DIVREI MENACHEM

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Take Not the Bloody Path

In this week's Parsha, we are introduced to sacrificial offerings where the blood of animals is sprinkled in the Inner Sanctuary or on various parts of the altar. Aharon, for example, was to take a bull – part of his atonement on Yom Kippur – and sprinkle its blood upon the eastern front of the Ark cover eight times in a whip-like fashion.

Later, we are introduced to the prohibition of eating the blood of ritually slaughtered animals, unconsecrated animals, and even the blood of fowl and kosher animals unfit for offerings (Kerissot 20b). Notably, the punishment for doing so was very severe – *Karet*, being cut off from the people.

However, how can blood be sprinkled on the altar if it is forbidden to be consumed? Moreover, how can we consider blood, so freely spilled in our time, to be the instrument of atonement! Indeed, just the thought of “blood” upsets our sensibilities, conjuring up primitive practices, Draconian crimes, and heinous bestiality.

The Torah, however, explains – “For the soul of the flesh is in the blood” (Vayikra 17:11). Rashi elucidates: Our lives are dependent on blood. Blood is the medium

that goes on the altar, as if to say, “Let one life (of an animal) be offered to atone for the other.” Consequently, it is inappropriate that the animal's blood be eaten.

Less one should think otherwise, Sforno points out that because blood represents the “life-giving force” in animals (and humans), it signifies man's dedication of his life to God's service – and NOT God's desire for blood!

Blood is representative of life! So, no wonder that when a woman loses blood during the monthly cycle, she becomes ritually unclean – for an opportunity for life has passed. No wonder at a Brit Milah, a drop of blood is extracted from the infant to symbolize a life to be dedicated to Hashem's service. No wonder we must be stringent to remove any traces of blood from our meat and fowl and cover the spilled blood of slaughtered animals.

No wonder, then, that blood expiates for sin! But more so, we are commanded: “not to stand idly while your neighbor's blood is shed” (Vayikra 19:16). Therefore, at this time, let us respect our souls, the life-giving side of ourselves that incorporates our divinely inspired attributes. Concomitantly, let us protect humanity from vain and sadistic bloodshed, whether on the individual plane or in the international arena. ■

Shabbat Shalom!

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