

Introduction to מסכת זבחים

מדרש הלכה takes us into an entirely different world of study – not only contextually, but methodologically as well. The cornerstone text of *מדרש הלכה*, also known as *תורת כהנים* – the Halakhic exegesis of *ספר ויקרא*. As such, the *משניות* in *סדר קדשים*, which begins with *מסכתות זבחים ומנחות*, are deeply anchored in text and its interpretation; as such, the starting point of analyzing a dispute will be the text and the various methods used to analyze it. *מסכת זבחים* is devoted, by and large, to the *הלכות* governing animal offerings – the word *זבח* literally means “slaughter”; whereas *מנחות* focuses, with significant tangents, on avian, grain, wine & oil offerings. One prefatory note – there are, generally speaking, four types of animal offerings:

- 1) *עולה* – which is fully burnt up – this might be from the flock, the herd – or a bird (*ויקרא א'*) and may be brought voluntarily (*נדר/נדבה*)
- 2) *חטאת* – the meat of which is eaten by *זכרי כהונה* – and may also come from the flock, the herd (in some cases) and a bird (*העוף*) but may only be brought if such obligation exists
- 3) *אשם* – the meat of which is eaten by *זכרי כהונה* – and may only come from the flock – and may only be brought if such obligation exists
- 4) *שלמים* – some of which is given to *כהנים*, the rest eaten by donors and their entourage – this may only come from flock or herd and is nearly always brought voluntarily (*נדר/נדבה*)

Each animal offering goes through four *עבודות* – worship-stages – which are critical points in the offering, as we will see:

- 1) *שחיטה* – this may be done by anyone, male or female, *כהן* or otherwise, providing no *טומאה* obtains
- 2) *קבלה (קבלת הדם)* – receiving the blood of the animal in a chalice – from this point on, the *עבודות* must be performed by male *כהן*
- 3) *הולכה* – bringing *דם* to *מזבח* for sprinkling
- 4) *זריקה* – sprinkling the *דם* on the *מזבח*, each offering according to its prescribed location and number

It is recommended to read one of the several introductions to *סדר קדשים* – the *דמב"ם*'s introduction in his *פירוש המשניות* is clear and comprehensive

28.1.1

2a (משנה א) → 3a (הרי את מותרת לכל אדם)

1. מוצא שפתיך תשמר ועשית כאשר נדרת לה' אלהיך נדבה אשר דברת בפיך: דברים כג:כד

- I 'א: status of a זבח that was נשחט שלא לשמה (i.e. intent for another type of קרבן)
 - a any: קרבן that was slaughtered שלא לשמה is still כשר, however it is no longer reckoned for the donor
 - i comment on language: אלא (“however”) – demonstrates that קרבן maintains קדושה and further שינויים are אסור
 - 1 rationale: no reason to add violation OR
 - 2 source: v. 1 – if done properly, נדר; if not, still נדבה, which still has איסור of בקדשים
 - b exceptions: פסח (in its time –i.e. the afternoon of the 14th) and חטאת (at all times)
 - c dissent: ר"א adds the אשם to the list, as it comes to expiate like a חטאת
- II 'ב: additional formulae
 - a יוסי בן חוני: if any other offering is brought לשם פסח or לשם חטאת – invalid
 - b שמעון אחי עזריה: if any קרבן is brought for a higher status (e.g. קדק"ד mis-directed as קדק"ל) – valid
 - i but: any offering brought for a lower status (e.g. קדק"ל for קדק"ד) – invalid
- III ר'בא's successful night of “conflict resolution” (part 1)
 - a default of קדשים is לשמה (w/o errant thought – כשר); default of גט is לא לשמה (w/o correct intent (פסול גט))
 - i Source for קדשים: cannot be our משנה, as parallel language is used in re: גט (א: ג)
 - 1 Proposal: א: ד → לשמן and then סתם is כשר
 - (a) Rejection: perhaps there the reason is עושה הוא ראשונה
 - 2 Proposal: א: ד → סתם and לשמן is כשר
 - (a) Rejection: perhaps there the reason is תחילתו על סופו
 - 3 Rather: ו: ו – the six intents necessary, and ב"ד ordained that to avoid problems, כהן should say nothing
 - (a) Explanation: only if סתם is valid would ב"ד forbid saying aloud
 - ii Source for גיטין: cannot be א: ג, each clause has local reason (not written for גט, written for this man/woman, בריה)
 - 1 Rather: שמואל's dictum that הרי את מותרת... cannot be written in advance → must be לשמה
 - b Resolution:
 - i סתם:: לשמן → שחיטה the unspecified purpose of the קרבן is
 - ii סתם:: לא לשמן → גיטין the unspecified goal of the relationship with the woman is not divorce