

Lesson 22 – Perek 12:20-28 – Eating Meat Outside the Bet Mikdash

Objective:

To demonstrate how the Torah uses repetition as a device to refer to something mentioned previously and expand upon it.

Background:

The rest of parashat Re'eh consists of a series of paragraphs which refer back to the centralization of worship section and expands upon various parts of it. This section picks up on the law of eating meat for someone who lives far from the Bet Mikdash.

Activity:

Go back and read pesukim 15-16. Then read pesukim 20-24.

<u>Eating Meat Outside the Bet Mikdash</u>	
<u>שחיטת חולין</u>	
Expanded Repetition	Original
<p>(יב:כ) פי ירחיב זה זה אל הייך את ג בלך פאשר דבר לך ואמרת א כלה בשר פי תאנה נפשך לאכ ל בשר בכל אנת נפשך ת אכל בשר: (כא) פי ירחק ממך המקום אשר יבחר זה זה אל הייך לשום שמו שם תבחת מבקרך ומצא אנה אשר נתו זה זה לך פאשר צויתך ואכלת בשעריך בכל ל אנת נפשך:</p>	<p>(יב:טו) רק בכל אנת נפשך תזבח ואכלת בשר כברכת זה זה אל הייך אשר נתו לך בכל שעריך</p>
<p>(כב) אך פאשר יאכל את הצבי ואת האיל תטמא ונתהור יתנו י אכלנו:</p>	<p>הטמא ונתהור י אכלנו כצבי וכאיל:</p>
<p>(כג) רק תזק לבלתי אכ ל הדם פי הדם הוא הנפש ול א ת אכל הנפש עם הבשר: (כד) ל א ת אכלנו על הארץ תשפכנו כמים:</p>	<p>(טז) רק הדם ל א ת אכלו על הארץ תשפכנו כמים:</p>

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These two laws look strikingly similar. We wonder why almost the exact same law is repeated word for word within just a few pesukim. First let us learn the contents of this law and then we try to figure out why it is repeated.

The new law of centralized worship presented in the previous lesson could present a future problem. The law in the desert, according to Vayikra 17:1-4 (See Ramban there), was that if anyone wanted to slaughter an animal to eat it, he had to bring it to Ohel Mo'ed, sacrifice part of it, and only then were they allowed to eat the rest. This law worked well in the desert when all Bnei Yisrael were in one camp. However, now that Bnei Yisrael will be spread throughout the country, and since they could only sacrifice in Jerusalem, this law would require them to travel to Jerusalem anytime they wanted to eat meat – which would be very difficult.

Now read pesukim 20-28. From now on, if someone lived far away from the Jerusalem Bet Mikdash, they no longer are required to bring a sacrifice just to eat meat. They may now slaughter the animal in any place as long as they don't eat the blood which symbolizes its life. This had always been the law for deer and gazelle, since those animals are not fit for sacrifice. Now all animals can be eaten בהולין as well. The *humra* of centralized sacrifice requires a *kula* of being allowed to eat non-sacrificial meat.

One important limitation on the allowance to eat animals without bringing a sacrifice is that one may still not eat its blood. When all animals were sacrificed, the slaughterer was very aware about the seriousness of his action which involved taking a life because of all the detailed rituals concerning the sacrifice. One of the most important steps in bringing a sacrifice was collecting the blood and sprinkling it on the Mizbeah. Now that people are allowed to slaughter animals without making it a sacrifice, there is a danger that they will take their right to kill animals for granted and not realize the severity of such action. Therefore, the Torah commands to spill the blood, which symbolizes the life, onto the ground so that we recognize that we have just taken a life.

Why is this law repeated twice? Rashi (on pasuk 15) had this question and explains that since eating meat voluntarily outside Jerusalem is already addressed in pasuk 20, pasuk 15 must refer to another case. Pasuk 15 therefore teaches that if a sacrifice becomes *pasul* and is redeemed then it can be eaten by anybody in any place. This explanation is difficult in peshat, however, because there is no mention of such a circumstance in this chapter. Rather, following Ibn Ezra (on pasuk 20-21), this section (pesukim 20-28) this section picks up on a law only hinted to in pesukim 15-16 but now repeats it goes into more detail.

In the previous section concerning centralized worship, the Torah wanted to get all the major points into one paragraph without going on tangents. But since this new law has such far-reaching consequences, the Torah uses the next few chapters to elaborate on various other laws effected by this law but only briefly mentioned.

This structure is similar to the world wide web where there is one home page containing the most important information and many links from there to pages which expand on the details. Another analogy is to the brain where each neuron is connected to many others to create a complex network of connections. Similarly, key phrases in the first section connect to similar phrases in the next sections such that the later sections comment upon the earlier ones. In fact, the entire book of Debarim is built around such a structure so that the main page, or central neurons, are the ten commandments, and each commandment is then elaborated upon in its own section.

As a class project, have students create a WWW simulation of this chapter and continue adding to it as they learn the next chapters.