

וכי יזד איש על רעהו להרגו (21:14): מצוות משפטים, פרשת משפטים - If a person is a מזיד and he kills somebody with trickery, obviously intentionally, מעם מזבחי תקחנו למות - if he runs, as the famous גמרא says, when יואב killed, he ran to the מזבח and held on like a sanctuary city. So if he grabs onto the מזבח, thinking that he's going to be safe because he's holding onto the מזבח, the תורה says, take him away and take care of him.

The אפיריון, the famous ספר which I've quoted here many a time, from R' Shlomo Ganzfried, the author of the much more famous קיצור שולחן ערוך, brings out a fascinating insight and I thought it would be worthwhile to share it. He says לפי עניות דעתי, [which is such a wonderful phrase, עניות דעתי], in my small and humble thoughts, it's brought down in the מדרש רבה, that the last פסוק in פרשת יתרו and the opening פסוק of משפטים are connected. The closing פסוק of יתרו is (20:23): ולא תעלה במעלות על מזבחי - You should not ascend the מזבח using steps. Instead, the כהנים used a ramp, the כבש. The very first pasuk in משפטים is המשפטים.

The מדרש poses two key questions:

1. What is the connection between המשפטים and ולא תעלה במעלות על מזבחי?
2. Why was there a need for this איסור that the מזבח should have a ramp and not steps?

The פסוק says (28:42): ועשה להם מכנסי בד לכסות בשר ערוה - the כהנים wore מכנסי בד to cover their ערוה. So then why did the תורה have to give you a separate, additional אזהרה, a warning, that you have to walk up a ramp, and be careful not to be מגלה בשר ערוה, the בגדים were made to cover up those private parts of the body which have to be covered, and couldn't be seen anyway?

in the מדרש רבה explains that just as הקדוש ברוך הוא instructed the כהנים to take small, deliberate steps when ascending the כבש - walking גודל עקב, heel to toe - so too, דיינים in בית דין must exercise extreme care when rendering משפט. They should not rush to conclusions with פסיעות גסות, assuming familiarity with a הלכה simply because they've encountered similar cases in the past. Instead, every דין requires meticulous scrutiny and thoughtful deliberation.

This insight sheds light on the פסוק we began with: וכי יזד איש על רעהו להרגו בערמה מעם מזבחי תקחנו למות. Even if all evidence, עדים, and accumulated data, point conclusively to the fact that this person committed murder בזדון and בערמה, the דיינים are warned: אל תמהרו לדון למיתה - Don't rush to him to מיתה. Just as ascending the מזבח requires deliberate care, so too must דיינים exercise caution and diligence before passing judgment.

(Now what's fascinating is that where is this אמינא that they would take steps to the point of being מגלה ערוה? There's a very famous גמרא in ברכות, that used to do a גורל in the המקדש to pick which כהנים did עבודה. Why? Because before they had a גורל, one time they were rushing up to do תרומת הדשן and one כהן was running after the other one in such a hurry to do this מצוה that he pushed the other כהן, and he knocked him down and he hurt him. So after that they made a גזירה that they should do a גורל. So I thought about it, you can't run in כהונה. One would think that they would have to lift up the hem of their garment, to run up that מזבח as fast as they could. So there was indeed a tremendous concern, that there could be some element of walking up improperly, and being מגלה בשר ערוה. So therefore, I think it's a relevant הלכה, I think



it is something which could possibly happen, despite the fact that they're supposed to walk up very, very carefully and slowly.)

So what is the lesson for us? We should never rush to judgment. Always be זכך לך. Although we are not דינים in a בית דין, we make judgments every day - about family members, friends, and even strangers. There's a famous story about a child who saw a man entering his car on שבת. "Daddy, that man is driving on שבת," the child exclaimed. The father calmly responded, "He's probably in Hatzalah, rushing to save a life - סכנת נפשות." Always be זכך לך, and you will be happy that you did. Good Shabbos!

