

Parashat Re-eh 5778

Menucha and Nachala

Sefer Devarim largely consists of Moshe's valedictory speech, which guides and warns the people how they should behave when they are in their own land.

Enigmatic verses require explanation

Part of this week's Parasha discusses where sacrifices may be brought. There are two enigmatic verses that require careful explanation. The ArtScroll Stone edition translation reads: "You shall not do like everything that we do here today – [rather,] every man what is proper in his eyes – for you will not yet have come to the resting place or to the heritage that Hashem, your G-d, gives you." (12:8-9)

The plain meaning of the words – Ramban vs. Rashi

Ramban interprets the plain meaning of the words "every man what is proper in his eyes" as referring to the time in the desert, before they enter the Land, as many of the laws regarding sacrifices did not become applicable until they entered the Land. Rashi on the other hand takes the plain meaning as referring to voluntary offerings that are made in the fourteen years after entering the Land before erection of a *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) in Shiloh. ArtScroll follows Rashi by inserting the word "rather" [in square brackets], and through the translation "you will not yet have come", as against the simpler "you have not yet come", which would support Ramban's plain explanation.

Ramban acknowledges Rashi's explanation (which is based on the Sifrei and Gemara Zevachim) from which is drawn the halacha that when there was a national *Mishkan* in Shiloh or temple in Jerusalem, sacrifices on a private altar were forbidden. But in the first fourteen years before the *Mishkan* was erected in Shiloh, voluntary offerings could be brought on a private altar. Ramban does not dispute the learning of the halacha from this verse, but does not read that as the plain meaning of the text.

Understanding the words HaMenucha and HaNachala in 12:9

My focus in this Parasha Sheet is not on halacha. Rather it is on the words *HaMenucha* and *HaNachala* in verse 9, which ArtScroll translates as "the resting place" and "the heritage" respectively, based on the normal meanings of the words *menucha* and *nachala*.

Gemara Zevachim 119a-b takes these words to refer to the actual places Shiloh and Jerusalem, but without agreement as to which is which.

- R' Yehuda states that Menucha refers to Shiloh and Nachala to Jerusalem.
 - R' Shimon states that Menucha refers to Jerusalem and Nachala to Shiloh.
 - R' Yishmael states that both Menucha and Nachala refer to Shiloh.
 - R' Shimon ben Yochai states that both Menucha and Nachala refer to Jerusalem.¹
- R' Yehuda brings support from Jeremiah 12:8-9. R' Shimon brings support from Tehillim 132:13-14. The Gemara supports R' Yishmael on the basis that at Shiloh there was rest from enemies, and because Joshua apportioned each tribe's inheritance in Shiloh. It supports R' Shimon ben Yochai on the basis that the Ark rested in Jerusalem, and Jerusalem is our eternal inheritance.

While verses and concepts can be brought in support of all four possible explanations, Rashi's commentary on our Parasha brings the plain meaning according to R' Yehuda. Rashi is supported by the Gur Aryeh who comments that peace and rest can be temporary achievements that are later set aside, but a heritage is permanent. The peace and rest from our enemies that was represented by Shiloh is temporary, and we seek it still today. But Jerusalem is our eternal and permanent heritage.

R' S. R. Hirsch further builds on Rashi and the Gur Aryeh. He notes that at the time that Moshe was speaking, right through to the building of the Mishkan at Shiloh, neither temporary political rest from enemies (*menucha*) nor permanent heritage (*nachala*) had been established. Temporary rest from fighting was then established in Shiloh, when the greater part of the Land had been taken into possession under the leadership of Joshua. The Mishkan in Shiloh was itself correspondingly built only as a temporary structure: a solid building at the base, covered above this only by the curtains of the Tabernacle. It was therefore called both a house (I Samuel 1:24) and a tent (Tehillim 78:60).

Jerusalem in contrast was and still is our eternal heritage. Even at the time of the destruction, G-d still calls Jerusalem His heritage (Jeremiah 12:7-9).

This is an important lesson and comfort to bear in mind as we are comforted by the seven weeks of comfort between Tisha b'Av and Rosh Hashana.

¹ If R' Shimon and R' Shimon ben Yochai are the same person, there must be two versions of his view.