

Vayikra 20:1-5

ויקרא פרק כ

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| 1) Hashem spoke to Mosheh, saying: | (1) וידבר יקוק אל משה לאמר: |
| 2) "And to the Children of Israel you must say: | (2) ואל בני ישראל תאמר |
| 3) Any man from the Children of Israel, | (3) איש איש מבני ישראל |
| 4) or from the <i>ger</i> who is <i>gar</i> among Israel, | (4) ומן הגר הגר בישראל |
| 5) who shall give of his seed to the Molekh | (5) אשר יתן מזרעו למלך |
| 6) must surely die; | (6) מות יומת |
| 7) the <i>am ha'aretz</i> will stone him with rock. | (7) עם הארץ ירגמהו באבן: |
| 8) And I – I will set My face against that man, | (8) ואני אתן את פני באיש ההוא |
| 9) and excise him from the midst of his nation, | (9) והכרתי אתו מקרב עמו |
| 10) because he has given of his seed to the Molekh | (10) כי מזרעו נתן למלך |
| 11) so as to make my <i>mikdash tamei</i> , | (11) למען טמא את מקדשי |
| 12) and to profane My Holy Name. | (12) ולחלל את שם קדשי: |
| 13) And if the <i>am haaretz</i> emphatically avert their eyes from that man, | (13) ואם העלם יעלימו עם הארץ את עיניהם מן האיש ההוא |
| 14) in his giving of his seed to the Molekh, | (14) בתתו מזרעו למלך |
| 15) so that they do not put him to death, | (15) לבלתי המית אתו: |
| 16) then I will set My face against that man and his family, | (16) ושמתי אני את פני באיש ההוא ובמשפחתו |
| 17) and I will excise him and all those who stray after him | (17) והכרתי אתו ואת כל הזנים אחריו |
| 18) to stray after the Molekh | (18) לזנות אחרי המלך |
| 19) from the midst of their nation. | (19) מקרב עמם: |

Shabbat shalom! I hope each of you had a meaningful, joyful, and liberating Pesach. I'm not quite fully back into the swing of things, so I will regress this week to a very old format and simply provide a very brief background and list of questions about the section above from this week's parashah. I look forward to resuming the more extended essay format next week.

BACKGROUND:

- 1) The commentators dispute whether or not Molekh worship generally resulted in the death of the child being sacrificed.
- 2) The Halakhah is that one who sacrifices *all* of his children, rather than some, is not put to death. Several commentators suggest as explanation that such a sin

would be so heinous that its perpetrator would not deserve the atonement of execution.

- 3) The Talmud cites in order to reject what seems to have been a popular translation, which is then revived by later commentators, which understands “giving of one’s seed to Molekh” as a prohibition against sleeping with nonJewesses, rather than against a particular form of idolatry.

QUESTIONS

1. This is, so far as I can tell, the only use in Torah of the term *am haaretz* that refers to Jews. Why is this term used here? (Some suggest that it refers to a court or other official arm, but the evidence is at best equivocal. I wonder if a more likely translation isn’t a formal public assembly).

Furthermore: Why does the failure of the *am haaretz* to punish the transgressor generate Divien punishment of the *mishpachah*=family/clan of the transgressor? (Some suggest that these are the same people as the *am haaretz*, but that seems to me implausible – why not use the same word? Other suggest that these are the same people as “those who stray after him”, but this also seems to me unlikely.

2) What is the connection between Molekh-worship and the *mikdash*? Some translate *mikdash* here as referring either to the Jewish people or to the Land of Israel, but the evidence for such a usage is again limited.

3) Why does Molekh worship generate a particular concern about public refusal to punish?