

Blood and Bonding: Parshat Mishpatim

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

“Moshe took half the blood and placed it in the basins and half the blood he threw upon the altar. He took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people, and they said, ‘Everything that Hashem has said *naaseh venishma* – we will do and we will listen.’ Moses took the blood and threw it upon the people and said, ‘Behold the blood of the covenant that Hashem has sealed with you concerning these matters.’” This ritual cemented the relationship between Hashem and Bnei Yisroel. However, it seems enigmatic and demands elucidation. Why was the blood divided in half? Exactly where was the blood thrown?

Even more puzzling is the Medrash that states that it was not Moshe himself who collected the blood, but rather an angel that appeared like him. Rav Diskin explains that it was necessary for an angel to collect the blood since the blood had to be sprinkled from the original collection pan without being transferred. How could a human being know when to stop collecting in one pan and begin the second pan so that the two halves would be equal? While there are several answers given as to how the blood was split in exactly two halves, the only one that is not supernatural is cited by Rabbi Yishmael who explains that Moshe himself was such an expert that he knew exactly when half the blood had been collected and another vessel should be used to collect the remaining blood. He achieved this expertise through Torah study, which can lead a person to supernatural angelic mastery over nature.

The Shvilei Pinchas identifies the angel disguised as Moshe as Matatron, one of the

princes of the angels. He explains that the altar represented Hashem's role in the covenant. Half the blood was sprinkled on the altar and half was sprinkled on Bnei Yisroel, in equal amounts. This is reminiscent of two lovers in which neither is greater than the other and each half needs the other.

Moshe is called *Ish HaElokim*, The Man of God. The Maharal explains that Moshe was more than just an intermediary between man and God. He connected the two and could therefore ascend to the heavens and return to the earth. Targum Yonatan notes that also Chanoch, who is mentioned in Bereishit, merited to ascend to heaven while still alive. He became the angel Matatron, the scribe who records the good deeds of Bnei Yisroel and thereby acts as their defender and protector. Just as Moshe was an *Ish HaElokim*, incorporating both human and Godly elements, so too Matatron encompassed both elements. Just as Moshe was instrumental in creating the covenant between Hashem and Bnei Yisroel by bringing the Torah from Hashem to this people, so was Matatron instrumental in sealing that covenant in blood by assisting Moshe in the division of the blood. Chanoch, like Moshe, as much of an angel as he became, understood the challenges humans face in maintaining their spiritual purity on this earthly world.

In *Toward a Meaningful Life*, Rabbi Jacobson writes, “Remember that in the journey of life, your body is the vehicle and your soul is the compass. By following its voice, you remain focused on your destination.” Our challenge is to dedicate everything we do to the service of Hashem and to recognize that within each act we can find an element of spirituality.

The world is based on two matching halves, writes Rabbi Epstein, male and female, giver and receiver. For *chessed* to be possible, there must be both a giver and a receiver. For twenty six generations, writes Rabbi Friedlander, we were receivers, surviving only through Hashem's eternal *chessed*. Then with our accepting the Torah and proclaiming, “*Naaseh venishma*,” we too became givers, earning the ability to effect changes in heaven and on earth through our deeds.

The Shem MiShmuel quotes the Zohar that the blood intended to be sprinkled on the altar and the blood intended for the people were reversed, thereby sealing the covenant and the trust of the two parties to the covenant. Furthering this idea, Rabbi Munk notes that this covenant was sealed in blood. Whether in this covenant, or the Covenant between the Halves, or the Covenant of Circumcision, we pledge our very life force as individuals and as a nation to preserving this covenant.

The Shvilei Pinchas writes that throughout the generations, Hashem has witnessed our willingness to die for the sanctification of His name. As we read in the Passover Haggadah, “I have seen you downtrodden in your blood, and I have said to you: ‘Through your blood you shall live!’” Our bond to Hashem becomes strengthened through our blood, until the time when the Covenant of Blood will be replaced with a Covenant of Life. Hashem shares in our suffering, and He promises us that “in your blood you will live,” that the blood spilled during the many years of our exile will be replaced with a Covenant of Life in the future. May it be speedily in our day.

Honorable Mentchen: When Hatred is Beneficial

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hanoch Teller

There are not too many virtuous aspects of hatred. In fact hatred can be so destructive, that it can negatively affect the hater, not only the victim of hatred. But there are times when it is appropriate. As it says in Kohelet, “There is a time to love and a time to hate.” It is wrong to love someone who is harming you

and other innocent people. The Gemara says, “*Kol hamerachem al achzarim sofo litachzer al harachmanim.*” One who is kind to those who are cruel will end up being cruel to those who are kind. Something as evil as murder should never be tolerated.

In his book, *The Sunflower*, Simon Wiesenthal tells how he was a prisoner in a death camp in Germany. One day he was selected out of his group to join a labor battalion which was sent to an SS hospital. There, a Red Cross volunteer ordered him to go to the room of an SS officer who was on his deathbed. The man

Continued on page 2



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Continued from Page 1

visibly in the throes of death, asked Wiesenthal for forgiveness in the name of all Jews, for having shot and burnt a great number of Jews. Wiesenthal refused to do so and left the room. Many years later he asked a distinguished group of people if he had acted correctly. All the non-Jews said he should've forgiven. All the Jews said he should've not.

What in fact should he have done? The answer is hidden in the following story. Rav Chaim Brisker was a towering giant amongst the leaders of Lithuanian Jewry. As great as he was, he was equally humble and when he traveled he would not wear Rabbinic clothing. One day, a group of inebriated Jews on a train car mistook him for a poor, simple, Jew. They insulted him and then threw him out of the car. After arriving in Brisk and finding out who he really was, the group of Jews were overcome with shame. One of them was selected to beg Rav Chaim for forgiveness but Rav Chaim refused. He went again before Rosh Hasha-

na, but still Rav Chaim declined to forgive them. Before Yom Kippur, all three Jews came together to ask forgiveness but Rav Chaim held fast. Finally his son Rav Velvel asked him, "Father why don't you forgive them?" Rav Chaim answered, "They thought I was an ordinary peasant Jew. Had they known I was Rav Chaim they wouldn't have done it. So I wasn't the one who was hurt, they insulted the simple Jew. How can I forgive?"

Who was Wiesenthal to forgive? Was it his child who was burned alive? Was it his wife who was shot? Forgiveness here would have been pitiless because it would have forgotten the victims. When a child comes in the house with muddy boots and sullies the carpet, he can be forgiven because next time he'll remember to wipe his boots. But death is irrevocable. There is no place for forgiveness. What Wiesenthal did was correct and Rav Chaim taught us why. If the SS would've killed a group of Armenians instead of Jews, we

would have said the same thing. Who are we to forgive?

There's something backwards in tolerating a barbaric act. "*Ohavei Hashem sinu ra.*" A part of loving Hashem is hating evil. It says, "Do not hate your brother in your heart." And the Rambam says the operable word is *bilvavecha*. In your heart you may not harbor hatred. You have to express and articulate it. Confucius asks a question, "If we repay evil with good with what shall we repay good?" The answer must be, we have to repay good with good and evil with justice. But this can only be when we know what's right and what's wrong and not when things are homogenized. Jews love goodness and hate evil. If everything is just reduced to love, justice never becomes an issue. All actions are equal without concern. So we have to understand that although hatred is repugnant when it isn't called for, there are times when it is surely appropriate.

Parshat Mishpatim: The Seventh Point

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur on Chassidut by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

The *eved ivri* (Jewish slave) was a rare occurrence during the Temple era and is certainly not relevant today. Why then is it discussed first in this parsha?

Chassidut teaches that space consists of six sides, namely: up, down, left, right, front, and back. There is an epicenter within this three dimensional cube, which is the seventh point. This parallels the human experience. Most of our life encounters touch us externally. However there are certain experiences that are so profound that they affect our inner core. This, the Avnei Nezer explains, is why the *eved ivri* works six years and goes free in the seventh year. The *eved ivri* is a common criminal or at best a social outcast, sold into slavery to repay his debts. He is bound to serve his master six years, signifying the six external points of his life that have experienced a terrible breakdown. Yet his inner seventh point remains pure and indestructible.

This is why he is set free in the seventh year.

What is the secret of this indomitable inner core? At *Har Sinai*, Hashem said, "*Anochi Hashem Elokecha.*" I am Hashem who redeemed you from Egypt. This seems strange. The redemption was certainly incredible, but the creation of the world was even more so. Why does Hashem specifically introduce himself as our redeemer rather than our Creator?

The Shem MiShmuel notes that in *halacha* something that is *hekdesh* (sanctified) is not subject to human claim. When the Jews became a nation, they reached the level of *hekdesh*, and therefore the Egyptians could no longer have a hold on them. Our special relationship with Hashem over and beyond the other nations is the *kedushat yisrael*, the seventh inner indestructible point which connects us as a people to Hashem.

At Matan Torah, when the Jews said *naaseh v'nishma* they became entirely sanctified. All seven levels were freed and no nation could dominate them. After *cheit haegel*, the six external sides were contaminated again, but the seventh inner core remained pure. This state has stayed with us until today. The vagaries of life cannot affect us because inwardly we are eternally free. Even the *eved ivri* retains his pure core. Externally, he may have been broken, but his inner seventh point remained untouched, and that is why he is eventually set free.

Similarly, the Rambam notes that the world will exist for six thousand years. In the seventh year, we will be redeemed. Mashiach will come and the world will finally recognize the unique bond between us and Hashem that has kept us strong and indestructible throughout our long exile.