

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

To what extent if at all, does our Rabbinic tradition believe in democracy- the rule of the people? Most religionists would assume that Judaism must believe in theocracy, the rule of the Divine. But how can we possibly arrive at the Divine Will if G-d is no longer clearly enunciating the decisions regarding the political and military questions at hand, neither in the form of a commanding voice heard by all as in the Revelation at Sinai nor even in the emergence of prophets who preach in His name? We don't even have an operating body of religio-legal leadership-such as a Sanhedrin (Jewish Court of 71 Rabbinic Judges) -- which could lay claim to the right of governance under the banner of monarchy or halakhacincy-the rule of the law rooted in revelation and tradition. Where must serious and well-meaning Israeli Jews go for authoritative decisions, given the wide range and sharp divergence of opinions among both rabbinic leaders as well as military spokes people!?

I believe that a careful study of our foremost theologian-jurist- philosopher Maimonides will prove conclusively that we do look to the will of the majority of our citizenry for guidance, and that the source for Maimonides' belief in democracy is a verse in this week's Biblical reading.

Maimonides, unlike most other Talmudic commentaries and codifiers, deals with many critical matters of governance, especially but not exclusively in his "Laws of Kings." (chapters 11,12) The very first Mishnah in the Tractate Sanhedrin (the Great Jewish Court) ordains that the bestowal of Rabbinic Ordination (semikhah) is effectuated by three Sages; this semikhah (literally, the laying of the hands of the elder sage upon the shoulders of the younger scholar as symbol of passing over the tradition) harks back to G-d's emanation of a portion of His Divine spirit upon Moses, who then ordained the elders. This chain of Jewish leadership came to a tragic end in the third century under the Roman rule, when the decree was made that anyone who bestowed ordination and anyone who received ordination would be killed (B.T. Sanhedrin 13b, 14a).

Maimonides, in his Interpretation to the Mishnah, writes as follows: "It seems to me that when there will be agreement from all the Sages of

Jerusalem and their disciples (on the Midrash in B. T. Bekhorot 29b, Maimonides writes: agreement by all the residents of the Land of Israel) to raise up someone to precede them (in greatness) and make him their head, and on the condition that this is in the Land of Israel, this agreed upon person shall be the central pillar of the Academy and shall become ordained; afterwards, he will ordain whomever he deems worthy" In accordance with accepted rules of Talmudic law, the agreement need not be unanimous; a majority is always considered as though it were a unanimous decision ("rubo' kekulo").

In effect, therefore, Maimonides has ruled that the Biblical-and Divinely originated-ordination, which empowered our Judges to innovate decrees and boldly interpret Jewish law, could be resuscitated by a majority vote of the population in Israel.

The rationale for Maimonides' position is clearly explicated in his commentary: "If you do not take such a stand (for such a democratic vote), a Great Sanhedrin will never again exist, since the members of such a court must be ordained. And the Holy one Blessed be He testifies that the Sanhedrin will be restored, as it is written: "And I shall restore your Judges as they were originally and your Legal Advisers as they were in the beginning; only afterwards can (Jerusalem) be called the City of Righteousness" (Isaiah 1:26). The necessity for such a democratic procedure is clear to Maimonides, because he insisted that the Messianic ere-replete with a re-instated and fully improvised Sanhedrin and a City of Jerusalem featuring the Third Holy Temple-must come about through natural, and not supernatural, means. And indeed, such a democratic procedure was instituted in 16th Century Safed, when Rav Yaakov ben Rav was "elected" Head of the Academy, and he ordained a number of outstanding scholarly pietists, foremost among whom being Rav Yosef Karo. (Unfortunately the nascent Sanhedrin was short-lived due to the opposition of Jerusalem scholars who felt overlooked by their Safed brethren, the leader of the Jerusalem group being Rav Levi Ibn Haviv).

I believe that the textual basis for Maimonides' far-reaching decision is a verse in our Biblical portion. It must be remembered that Judaism has never entertained any kind of "papal" infallibility; our Bible records that even Moses himself sinned by striking the rock, and our High Priest began the movingly dramatic Yom Kippur Holy Temple service by publicly requesting

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from G-d forgiveness for his personal transgressions. The Book of Leviticus teaches: "If the entire congregation of Israel shall err, and a matter (of proper conduct) become obscured from the eyes of the assembly... and they become guilty... the assembly shall offer a young bull as a sin offering..." (Lev 4: 13,14).

Our Sages query as to how the entire nation can commit an unwitting transgression, and conclude that it must be the result of a mistaken ruling of permitting the prohibited which emerged from the Sanhedrin; this conclusion demands that the Biblical phrase "Entire congregation of Israel" (adat Yisrael) must mean the Sanhedrin (Torat Kohanim 4, 241, B.T. Horayot 6b). If, then, the Great Sanhedrin is Biblically equated with the congregation of Israel, the way of re-instituting the ordination which is necessary in the formation of the Sanhedrin must be by agreement of a majority of the nation; the congregation of Israel is also defined by the Sages of the Talmud as referring to the Congregation of Jews living in Israel (B.T. Horayot 3b).

On this basis, it becomes almost obvious that Maimonides further rules that in the absence of Sanhedrin or prophet, it is the people who must elect the King or Prime Minister of Israel (Interpretation of the Mishnah, Kritut, chapter 1, Mishnah 1). The 16th Century authority Rabbenu David b. Zimra agrees with this position (Commentary to Maimonides, Laws of Kings, 3, 8), and so did the first Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rav A.Y. HaKohen Kook, who declares such an elected Prime Minister as having all the laws ascribed to a King of Israel (Mishpat Kohen, Responsum 144, 15, 1). Indeed, our Biblical source which equates the Sanhedrin with the congregation of Israel would seem to confirm that in the absence of a Sanhedrin, the national opinion- by referendum or election-should be considered authoritative.

Hence, it is no wonder that throughout the Middle Ages, the Jewish communities-both in Europe and the Orient-were run in a purely democratic fashion in accordance with the decisions of the Seven Good Councilmen chosen by popular election. Such a procedure was ordained by the Hoshen Mishpat-as long as the decisions of the Council were not in opposition to absolute Torah law. This fundamental acceptance of government for and by the majority of

the people-as well as the Jewish principle of human freedom which emanates from the Biblical doctrine of all human beings having been created by G-d in His image and underscored by our Divinely-aided freedom from Egyptian bondage- made Judaism the model for the democratic governance established by the founding fathers of the United States of America. © 2006 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

DR. AVIGDOR BONCHEK

What's Bothering Rashi

This week we start the third book of the Torah, Vayikra. The book is referred to as the Laws of the Priests, since it deals to a great extent with the sacrifices in the Temple (or Mishkan) and other laws of purity and impurity.

Let us look at the following comment by Rashi on the meal offering. "And if you offer a meal-offering of first grains to Hashem, then of newly ripened crops, roasted over fire ground kernels, shall you bring your first grain meal-offering." (Leviticus 2:14)

"And if (Hebrew = 'im') you offer"-RASHI: "The word 'im' here means 'when' (not 'if') for this is not a voluntary offering, since the verse deals with the Omer meal-offering, which is obligatory (brought every year on the 16th of Nisan). Similarly, "if" (which really means 'when') there will be a jubilee year..."

Rashi tells us that although the word 'Im' usually means 'if,' in this verse it cannot mean that. The bringing of the first fruits offering is not optional nor conditional on our desire. It must be brought. So in this case the word 'im' must mean 'when.'

The Ramban differs with Rashi and says that one need not change the ordinary meaning of 'im' in this verse. He knows of course that the first-fruits offering is obligatory. But he says we must see the whole chapter here to get the correct understanding of this verse.

Chapter 2 begins by discussing the meal offerings. Then it describes various types of meal offerings. Verse 5 says, "If your offering is a pan-baked meal offering, then it shall be etc." Verse 7 says, "If your offering is a deep-pan meal offering, then it shall be etc." We see, says the Ramban, that the Torah is outlining the requirements of different types of meal offerings. The first-fruits meal offering is but one of the possible meal offerings. So, when the word 'im' (if) is used, it means "if the meal offering that is being brought is the first fruits offering, then it must be etc." This does not mean that the offering is optional, it only means that 'if' we are discussing the first-fruits offering, then it must be such and such.

The Ramban seems to have a point.

Can you defend Rashi's position against the Ramban's attack, that the word 'im' here must mean 'when' and not 'if'?

An Answer: If you read verses 5 and 7 carefully, you will see that they differ from our verse in a significant way. Both those verses begin "If your offering is etc.," which means it is discussing a choice of possible types of meal offerings. But our verse is different; it begins, "If you will offer etc." But we cannot say 'If you will offer,' because you must offer the first-fruits offering. Rashi was sensitive to this slight difference in phrasing which gives a different emphasis to the words. Therefore he says here 'im' must be interpreted to mean 'when' not 'if.'

The Ramban often picks up on issues that Rashi seems to have been unaware of. Upon closer analysis we often find that Rashi took these points into account and can reasonably withstand the attack.
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RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

The Book of Leviticus opens with the word Va-yikra, "and He [the Lord] called." (Leviticus 1:1) Rashi points out that va-yikra is a term of endearment. The text tells us that God spoke to Moshe (Moses) from the Tent of Meeting. Rashi understands this to mean God's calling came from the two cherubs atop the Ark.

The Talmud explains that the cherubs were in the form of children embracing with wings at their sides lifting towards each other, heavenward. (Hagigah 13b) What is the significance of this image and what does it mean in light of the fact that it was the seat of God's endearing love?

The Hagaddah, which is read at the seder a few days after reading the portion of Va-yikra, may offer the answer. On that night, we relate to God through two different types of love.

On the one hand, there is the love described in the book Shir Ha-Shirim, The Song of Songs, recited by many after the seder. It is the type of love of a lover for his beloved, reflective of God's intense love for the Jewish people. There is no love more powerful, there is no love more deep.

But even that intense love has its limits. Spousal relationships are humanly made and can also be terminated. In fact the Torah tells us that if a woman divorces and marries another, she can never return to her first husband. What would happen when the Jewish people rebel against God for other beliefs? If reconciliation is not possible, how can they reunite with the Lord?

Thus, in the Haggadah, another form of God's love emerges. It is the love of a parent to a child. This is the love accentuated at the outset of the seder through the presentation of the four children, the four questions and the telling of the Exodus story. Perhaps this love is not as passionate as spousal love, but it contains a quality that spousal love does not have, the element of eternity. It lasts forever. A parent child relationship

can never terminate. The love of parent to child expressed at the seder is a reflection of God interacting with his people as the parent par excellence.

This then can be the meaning of the cherubs, of the little children embracing. It is symbolic of two loves, the spousal love of embrace and the parent/child unbreakable love. Together, these two types of love lifts one heavenward, much like the wings of the cherubs pointing to the sky.

The seder actually balances these two loves. Before the meal we emphasize parental love, which moves us to remember our past, as father and mother share the Passover story. After the meal we emphasize spousal love, the love of Shir Ha-Shirim, with all its trappings of bride and groom under the chupah with a dream of a beautiful future. We will be praying for the time when we hear God's voice in the spirit of the cherubs, of va-yikra, the language of true, authentic endearment. © 2006 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The opening word of this week's parsha and of the entire book that we now begin to read raises a basic question. Vayikra means that God, so to speak, called and spoke to Moshe. The rabbis discuss in their commentaries how this communication between God and man took place and also as where this "conversation" took place. The rabbis also took notice that the word vayikra as it is spelled in the Torah ends with a small-sized alef. Though this is apparently not connected with the problem of where and how God spoke to Moshe, I feel that there is a definite connection as to the question of why God spoke to Moshe and chose him to be the great lawgiver of civilization.

The rabbis inform us that the small alef in vayikra is indicative of the great modesty of Moshe. Unwilling to overly aggrandize himself by writing in the Torah that God actually called out particularly to him, and yet he was forced to do so because of God commanded him how to actually write the Torah, Moshe compromised, so to speak, and wrote the word vayikra with a small alef indicating that he was not really worthy of the honor that God bestowed upon him. That very modesty and humility, the feeling that one should not overly indulge in self-aggrandizement no matter what position of public importance one fills, is the main reason that God "speaks" to people and guides them in their leadership roles. The Talmud teaches us that God abhors arrogance, hubris and unnecessary self-aggrandizement in human beings generally and in public leaders especially.

God Himself, so to speak, relates to man, as he informed the prophet Elijah, "in a still, small voice." If one can use such a term about the Almighty, God is modest in His revelation to humans. All of the prophets of Israel from Moshe onwards were aware that God, so to speak, limited his voice to them in terms of volume and space. Rashi points out in this week's parsha that God's voice did not leave the sanctuary of the mishkan even though it was of unlimited and infinite volume. This is not merely a description of an event that happened long ago in the desert of Sinai but it is an attribute of the Almighty - the firm representation of the "small, still voice" that characterizes His revelation to humans. The prophet Isaiah has his lips burned by the heavenly coal because he spoke against Israel in heaven, allowing himself to become a judge of others instead of being purely an instrument of God's will and instructions.

The rule in modesty is not to prejudge others and not to assume that one somehow can be certain of God's true intentions. Humans are fallible. God is infallible. This alone should engender a feeling of humility and modesty in humans. The small alef of vayikra should remain a constant reminder to us of our relationship to our Creator and to our fellow human beings as well. © 2006 Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory.

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT" A

Sammarized by Shaul Barth

Translated by Kaeren Fish

“He called to Moshe, and God spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying..." (Vayikra 1:1).

Rashi explains: "He called to Moshe"-the Divine voice reached his ears, but the rest of Israel did not hear it...

"From the Tent of Meeting"-this teaches that the Voice stopped and did not emerge outside of the Tent. Perhaps this was because it was a weak voice? [Surely not; therefore] it is written, "the Voice" (Bamidbar 7:89) -- what is this voice? It is the voice of God described in Tehillim (29:4-5): "The voice of God in strength, the voice of God in splendor; the voice of God breaks cedars." But if this is so, why does the Torah say, "from the Tent of Meeting"? This teaches that the voice stopped.

Similarly, we find written, "The voice of the wings of the keruvim was heard until the outer courtyard" (Yechezkel 10:5). Perhaps this was because the voice was weak? [Surely not; therefore] it is written, "like the voice of the Almighty God speaking" (ibid.).

Chazal emphasize the fact that the voice that Moshe heard in the Tent of Meeting did not emerge outwards. Why is this so?

The Gemara (Berakhot 28a) recounts that when Rabban Gamliel was the Rosh Yeshiva, he placed a guard at the entrance to the beit midrash and instructed him that only those people whose "inside was like their outside" should be allowed to enter. In other words, only those who were learned scholars not only outwardly, but also in their innermost personality, would be allowed to study Torah. The Gemara goes on to record that when Rabban Gamliel was replaced as Rosh Yeshiva by Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria, the latter had the guard removed and allowed anyone who wanted to enter and learn, to do so. On that very day, the Gemara records, many more benches were brought into the beit midrash; some say four hundred benches, and some put the figure at seven hundred. When Rabban Gamliel heard this, his heart fell, because he feared that he had prevented all these people from learning Torah by placing the guard. That night he had a dream that informed him that those who were entering were not worthy of learning Torah-but the Gemara testifies that this dream was only a gesture in honor of Rabban Gamliel, and meant merely to placate him.

From this anecdote, we see that it is important that a beit midrash be open to all who wish to learn. It should not limit its population to a small group of learned scholars, who alone will understand the language and methodology of Torah study.

Elsewhere, the Midrash (Tanchuma, Bechukotai, 3) recounts that Rabbi Shemuel bar Nachmani saw Rabbi Yonatan bar Elazar in the marketplace, and requested that he teach him Torah. The latter replied that they should go to the yeshiva and he would teach him there. Rabbi Shemuel asked what was wrong with teaching in the marketplace; is it not written, "Wisdom cries out in the streets, she lifts her voice in the squares" (Mishlei 1:20)? Rabbi Yonatan replied that the proper interpretation of the verse views the words, "lifting her voice in the squares (rechovot)" to mean, "in a place where people broaden (marchivin) wisdom-these are the synagogues and batei midrash."

This explanation seems problematic: clearly, the literal meaning of the verse is not that Torah should be studied only in the beit midrash, but rather that it should be taught to the masses-outside, in the streets and squares! The midrash's interpretation does not mean to tell us that Torah's voice should not emerge outwards. Rather, it means that the voice should emerge and influence the outside specifically by means of, and by virtue of, the study that goes on inside beit midrash, in "the place where Torah is broadened."

The messages arising from these two anecdotes are important ones. Inside the beit midrash it is necessary that the voices from outside manage to

enter, and that the study that goes on inside is aware of and sensitive to the sound of the "infant's cry." At the same time, it is necessary that the voice that emerges from the beit midrash should also pertain and belong to the outside, the street, and not stop at the door of the beit midrash.

Only in the Tent of Meeting, in the encounter between God and Moshe, was there a miracle whereby the Divine voice stopped at the curtain of the Tent. But everywhere else, the voice must burst through the walls and reach the marketplace, the people outside.

In prewar Lithuania, there was a clear separation between the Torah scholars and the regular folk-to the extent that the term "balebatim" became an expression of scorn, referring to people who were not learned and who therefore were not deserving of one's attention and respect. I saw the negative consequences of this hierarchical approach. However, styles of Jewish study that directed their messages also towards the street, towards the simple people, succeeded and remained strong.

Today there exists an entire sector that does not direct the voice of its beit midrash outwards. This Torah study uses codes and language that anyone outside of the clique cannot understand, and obviously they will not feel any attachment towards it. We have tried, here in our beit midrash, to create a style of learning that can be understood on the outside, too. It is for this reason that we instituted serious study of Tanakh and Jewish philosophy, we publish books, and we see that, indeed, the voice that emerges from the beit midrash is meaningful to people outside, too.

When we planned our beit midrash, the architect wanted to build it without windows; she wanted all the light to come from inside. I insisted that there be windows. When she asked why, I told her that once there was a Rebbe whose disciples came to him and told him that the Messiah had arrived. He poked his head outside the window, sniffed the air, and announced decisively that the Messiah had not yet come. I told her that I needed a window so I could know when the Messiah arrived.

There is great depth to this story. When the Messiah comes, his presence will be felt not only in the beit midrash. It will be felt in all circles, on all levels—even in the very air outside. It is for this reason that it is necessary that the voice of Torah be felt on the outside, and not only within the walls of the beit midrash; and conversely, that the beit midrash have a sense of what is going on outside.

Moshe Rabbeinu indeed experienced a unique phenomenon whereby the Divine voice did not emerge outwards; God spoke to him alone, privately, with no interruptions. But in general, it is vital that the voice also make itself heard outside, and belong to all sectors of society. *[This sicha was delivered at seuda shelishit, Shabbat Parashat Vayikra 5765 (2005).]*

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“**A**nd Aharon's sons shall burn it (the peace offering) on the altar, on the burnt offering which is on the wood which is on the fire" (Vayikra 3:5). Rashi explains "on the burnt offering" to mean "besides the burnt offering," teaching us that the [morning] daily burnt offering (the "karban tamid") precedes every [other] offering." If this offering must be placed "on the burnt offering," which is already there, obviously the burnt offering has to come first. However, although this is true, this verse is not really the source for this requirement.

Later (6:5), Rashi quotes the Talmud (Pesachim 58b), which learns from that verse that nothing precedes the morning "tamid" offering. In Zevachim (89a) the Talmud uses a verse from Bamidbar (28:23) to teach us the same thing. Tosfos in Pesachim explains why the Talmud needed two verses; one (in Bamidbar) was taught by the additional offerings the nation brought on Pesach, while the other teaches us that the same holds true by the voluntary offerings brought by an individual. In other words, between the two verses, we know that no offering can be brought before the morning "tamid" was brought. Which still leaves us with the question of why the Torah had to teach us this in our verse as well.

Rabbi Menachem Kasher z"l (Torah Shelaimah, Milu'im 8:2, suggests that Rashi is not telling us that the *purpose* of this verse is to teach us this law, as we can (and do) learn it from other places. Rather, it is the norm for the Torah to mention that the morning "tamid" had to be brought first. In fact, besides the 3 verses cited above, there are no less than 13 other times, regarding the extra offerings ("musafim") brought on special occasion, where the morning "tamid" is mentioned in conjunction with the offering being described (see Bamidbar 28:10, 28:15, 28:31, 29:6, 29:10, 29:16, 29:19, 29:22, 29:25, 29:28, 29:31, 29:34 and 29:38). Therefore it is not out of the ordinary for the Torah to mention it here as well. It just so happens that we can learn this law from our verse as well, so Rashi points it out to us (perhaps because it is the first verse that can teach us this).

Our question now changes from why the Torah teaches us this here, to why the Torah feels the need to mention the daily morning offering so often.

As Tosfos pointed out, offerings can be voluntary (as the beginning of our Parasha describes), or mandatory (as the latter part of our Parasha describes). The desire to bring offerings was very great, which is (at least according to the Rambam) one of the reasons G-d had to create (or allow) a kosher vehicle to channel this desire. We see throughout Tanach that there was constantly a problem of "bamos," unauthorized altars upon which people

brought offerings (including offerings to the One True G-d), as it was difficult to control this innate drive to bring offerings to the One above. Being able to travel to Jerusalem to bring an offering in the Temple wasn't always enough of an "outlet" for this desire, hence the widespread use of "bamos."

Wanting to show appreciation and thanks to the Creator is certainly a positive thing, but it cannot be done without restraint or guidelines. Similarly, the voluntary offerings cannot supercede the mandatory offerings, and "extra" offerings cannot replace the basic daily offerings. Perhaps the reason why the Torah makes a point of mentioning the daily offering so often, pointing out numerous times that they must come first, is to make sure we are aware that as holy as the voluntary offerings are, as special as the extra offerings brought on the holidays are, first and foremost we have to keep in mind that the daily required offerings are the starting point, and everything else can only be in *addition* to them, not *instead* of them. © 2006 Rabbi D. Kramer

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Weekly Insights

by Rabbi Meir Goldwicht

Parashat VaYikra opens with Hashem commanding Moshe Rabbeinu to tell B'nei Yisrael, "A man, when he sacrifices from you (adam ki yakriv mikem) an offering to Hashem, from the animals, from the cattle and from the flock shall you bring your offering." This passuk could have been written more succinctly as follows: "When you bring a sacrifice to Hashem...", leaving out the superfluous words "adam, a man," and "mikem, from you." Why does the Torah add these words?

Rashi explains that the word "adam" teaches us that, like Adam HaRishon, who sacrificed animals belonging to him, we must not bring sacrifices from stolen animals. Rashi does not, however, address the superfluousness of "mikem." What is the reason behind the Torah's uncharacteristic verbosity here at the beginning of VaYikra?

Additionally, in next week's parasha, Tzav, the Torah discusses the daily service of the kohen, beginning with the siluk hadeshen (removal of the ashes and leftovers of the korbanot), as it says, "And he shall separate the ash (deshen) of what the fire consumed" (VaYikra 6:3). The question that must be asked is why the daily service of the kohen doesn't begin in an active, positive way, such as sacrificing a korban or lighting the Menorah. Why does the daily service of the kohen begin with the removal of the deshen?

To answer these two questions, it is helpful to understand the following: After we eat a k'zayit of bread, we recite Birkat HaMazon, consisting of four brachot. After eating any one of the seven species for

which Eretz Yisrael is praised (grapes, figs, pomegranates, etc.), we say only one bracha, the bracha achat me'ein shalosh. Why the difference? R' Soloveichik explains that bread represents a partnership with HaKadosh Baruch Hu. We actively participate in the "creation" of bread, planting, plowing, harvesting, etc. This enables us to recognize our Partner that much more, and our gratitude is therefore much greater. For fruit, on the other hand, our input is much less significant. We plant the tree and HaKadosh Baruch Hu basically does the rest. Our partnership is much less recognizable and therefore so is our gratitude.

If we develop the Rav's reasoning a bit further, it becomes clear that HaKadosh Baruch Hu wants us to be His partners in all acts of creation. This is perhaps the reason why the first mitzvah a Jew does is brit milah- through this act, HaKadosh Baruch Hu allows us to complete ourselves, so to speak, thereby completing our own creation.

But in order to truly be partnered with Hashem, we must make room for Him in our lives. This is why the first part of the daily service in the Beit HaMikdash was the siluk hadeshen, making room both literally and figuratively.

This may explain why the Torah says, "Adam ki yakriv mikem korban laShem, A person, when he sacrifices from you an offering to Hashem." Everyone must sacrifice of himself, a part of himself, to make more room for HaKadosh Baruch Hu in his life.

This is why the midrash homiletically derives from the word "mikem," which totals 100 in gematria, that one who recites 100 brachot per day is as if he offered a sacrifice. The Tur explains in Orach Chaim that in the time of David HaMelech there was a terrible plague during which 100 people died mysteriously on a daily basis. David didn't know how to end the plague, until it was revealed to him through ruach hakodesh that the plague would end if he instituted the practice of saying 100 brachot per day. The Tur's explanation poses some difficulty, however, because the gemara in Menachot (43b) suggests that this practice was already instituted in the time of Moshe Rabbeinu. What did David HaMelech add? The answer is that in the time of Moshe Rabbeinu, every person would make 100 brachot of his choosing. David HaMelech instituted a specific set of 100 brachot to be recited over the course of the day, realizing that the brachot would then "escort" a person from the moment he woke up until he went back to sleep that night, protecting him from danger and granting him long life.

Chazal say on the words "lech lecha," again totaling 100 in gematria, that when a neshama descends to this world, HaKadosh Baruch Hu tells it to remember one thing: I give you 100 "keys of brachot," with which you must open doors for Me to make room for Me in the world. This is how our lives begin.

The first to harness the power of the 100 brachot was Avraham Avinu, who opened doors for the Creator in places His Name had never been. Therefore "Hashem blessed Avraham with everything (bakol)"-bet kol, twice kol, again totaling 100. The reason why the recitation of this passuk after Hallel on Rosh Chodesh is a segulah for longevity is now quite clear.

One who recites 100 brachot per day is as if he offered a sacrifice because through the 100 brachot, this person realizes that his task in this world is to increase the glory of Hashem and to make more room for Him, even if this requires sacrificing of himself. This is the very idea that lies behind bringing a korban in the Beit HaMikdash.

This is also the meaning of the gemara in Sanhedrin (7a): "When the love between my wife and I was strong, we were able to lie together on the blade of a sword." In other words, neither of us took up space, each of us giving space to the other. "But when our love was weak, there was not enough room for us to lie together even in a bed of 60 amot." The more we let HaKadosh Baruch Hu into our lives, into our world, the more room we will have with which to continue to sanctify His Name in all of our actions.

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RABBI ARON TENDLER

Rabbi's Notebook

From the very start of this week's Parsha, the beginning of Sefer Vayikra, Dam-blood is central to the sacrificial ceremony. Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch writes, "The blood, which is present throughout the body, is the visible messenger of the soul, which is also present throughout the body and controls the body but cannot be seen. It is indeed fitting, therefore, that the blood as the visible substance representing the soul, should be used in the offerings to symbolize the elevation and devotion of the soul to G-d, and the soul's steadfast adherence to Him.

Furthermore, the laws of Kashrus concerning Dam are more stringent than the laws pertaining to other parts of an animal. Whereas proper slaughtering of an animal renders its flesh kosher and therefore edible, it does not extend to the blood itself. The blood remains prohibited for human consumption and must be removed from the meat prior to cooking and eating.

Additionally, if the meat is from a species determined to be "Chayah-wild animal or Ohf-fowl", the initial blood that drains from the slaughtered animal or bird must be covered with "dirt", both above and below the blood. This law does not extend to domesticated animals such as steers, sheep, or goats, and it does not extend to birds that were offered on the Mizbeach (alter) as a sacrifice. (There is no instance when a Chayah is offered on the Mizbeach) The law of Keesuy Hadam (ancient Chinese recipe available on request) -- covering the blood only applies to "wild" animals such

as deer and antelope. (The law of Keesuy Hadam applies even if the "wild" animal is raised on farms for domestic use and consumption.)

(Vayikra 1:5) "...And the Kohanim should throw the blood (of the Korban) on the Mizbeach..."

(Vayikra 7:26) "Do not eat any blood..."

(Vayikra 17:13) "...If you should hunt or catch a wild animal or bird (kosher)... pour out the blood and cover it with dust." Why did the Torah designate blood to be used in the sacrificial process? Why is blood treated with greater deference in regards to human consumption? Why does the Torah command that the blood of a Chayah and Ohf be covered? Why doesn't Kisuy Hadam apply to birds that are used as Korbanos (sacrifices)?

In stating the prohibition against blood consumption, the Torah states, "Because the blood is the life force." The Chinuch explained that humans and animals share the life-force contained in blood, and it is therefore improper for the human to consume that which is the essence of his own life. The consumption of blood is a level of predatory gluttony and insensitivity that is dehumanizing.

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch writes, "The nature of blood and its close relation to the soul make it fitting that the blood of an animal should serve as the symbolic expression of the soul of a man. But precisely for this reason, the physical absorption of the blood into the human body, which is the physical aspect of the human soul, is forbidden. The purpose of this prohibition seems to be not only to counteract the pernicious illusion- which might be encouraged by the symbolism inherent in the offerings- that the animal soul is identical with the soul of human being, but also to avert physical threat to the spiritual character of man. The solemnity of the warning as well as the urgency of the admonition repeated again and again would indicate that the consumption of animal blood could so endanger a human being, or at least so corrupt his nature, that it could prevent him from attaining the moral level of the Jew's calling as set forth in the Law of G-d."

(In my first trip with One Israel Fund four years ago, we visited with Uri Tal (The Lone House) one of the first settlers to develop the Shomron. To date, Mr. Tal is the single largest land owner in all of Israel, having legally purchased thousands of dunim from the Arabs. Mr. Tal explained to us that he was raised with Arabs and had lived among them all his life. Attempting to explain the antithetical values of the Arabs blood thirst and culture of death in contrast with our love of life and the sanctity with which life is regarded, Mr. Tal described how Arab fathers bring their young sons to the slaughter houses and force them to wash their hands in the fresh hot blood streaming from the necks of the slaughtered animals.)

As the Chinuch and Rav Hirsch explained, the prohibition against eating blood is a symbolic statement of sensitivity and awareness to the gift and uniqueness of life. Life is not granted to us as a personal right. Life is granted to us from the Creator as a responsibility and obligation. Life is given to us to use in the best way we can to serve G-d. Doing so demands that we learn what He wants us to do and by following His laws convey purpose and meaning to everything in our lives.

Following the Mabul (great flood), humans were granted permission to eat other living animals. However, the Torah was concerned that because humans and animals share blood as the essential life-force, allowing humans to eat animals could taint the human soul with insensitivity to the preciousness of human life. Therefore, the Torah prohibited the consumption of blood as a statement of sensitivity and awareness of the preciousness of human life. Additionally, it focuses us on realizing that consuming animal flesh demands purpose and meaning which can only be attained through the restrictions of kashrus. Restrictions equal controls and controls equal sanctification, purpose and meaning.

Regarding the Mitzvah (commandment) to cover the blood of a Chayah or Ohf, Rav Hirsch explains the added concern which demands the extra restriction and control. The animals concerned are designated with reference to their natural existence in the free state away from the power of Man as animals of the open...

We have been told that the wild animal and the bird represent the ideal of a free untrammled animal life, a life that is most alluring to the sensuality of Man. It is understandable, that at the moment when animals of this sphere are consumed by human beings, the prohibition of blood and the intended separation of animal nature from Man's nature which it presents, should be given a further special mark of emphasis.

Fundamental to human nature, especially in males, is the desire for freedom. We do not want to be restricted and we do not want to be told what to do. Rather than embrace the Talmud's adage, "The freest of all is the one who is engaged in Torah," we imagine that true freedom is the absence of all responsibility and obligation. Just like the wild animal in the field is free of all mastery except the inherent limitations of its physical being so too the human should be free of all mastery other than those imposed by physical limitations.

The falsehood of the illusion is obvious to the discerning mind. As humans we assume that our inherently physical abilities are unrelated to our essential spirituality. Furthermore, we assume that our intelligence is unique to the physical construction of our beings rather than a reflection and consequence of our free will. As such, living like an animal without the obligation to convey meaning and purpose denies the

essence of who we are and why we were created. We were not created to simply be another species of animal. Had we been so created we would not have been endowed with the unique ability to think and choose. Without our free will and the intellectual capacity that accompanies it we would have been the sorriest of all G-d's creations. Smaller, slower, weaker, and more vulnerable than the dumbest of all animals we would have been food and fodder for every beast in the forest. The freedom we envision is that of the beast but the beast is not the human. The beast is inherently limited because it can never become more than its physical reality. Had the human been another beast he too would not have the capacity to be more than his physical reality. Only the free willed human is gifted with the ability to become far greater than his or her physical being.

The wild animal and bird represent the primal urge of every human to be an animal and run masterless across the fields unburdened by obligations and restrictions. Therefore, specifically in regards to the Chayah and the Ohf, the Torah added the obligation of "covering the blood." It demands that we show our understanding and respect for the uniqueness of being human rather than animal. It demands that we express our appreciation for the freedom of intellectual and spiritual attainment that transports us beyond who we are.

Regarding why the Mitzvah of Keesuy Hadam does not apply to birds offered on the Mizbeach, the Chinuch explains as follows. "Because the soul is found in the blood it is proper to cover the "soul" and hide it from sight prior to consuming the flesh. Otherwise, the consumption of flesh in the presence of the soul-blood will adversely affect and dehumanize our souls. However, this law does not apply to animals that are offered on the Mizbeach because the blood is essential to the process of atonement and cannot be used if covered with dirt. Once the Torah did not demand Keesuy Hadam in the Temple He did not demand it in any instance. The Temple became the rule and there was no reason to make any exceptions.

Regarding birds that are also offered on the Mizbeach, yet G-d demands Keesuy Hadam for the consumption of a non-sacrificial Ohf, the reason is that only a very limited number of birds are acceptable as offerings. The vast majority of Kosher birds are not permitted as Korbanos. Therefore, the Torah viewed the bird offerings as exceptions to the rule rather than the rule. © 2006 Rabbi A. Tandler & torah.org

