

## 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 *chesed* 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 *chesed*. 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.



## The Art of Jewish Parenting: The Path of God

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

The first reference to Jewish parenting we find in the Torah is when Hashem explains that he had chosen Avraham. *"Ki yedatev l'maan asher yetzave et banav...v'shamru et derech Hashem.* For I know that he will command his children... to keep the ways of Hashem." We see that the essence of Jewish parenting is training children to follow the path of Hashem. The Rambam quotes the Gemara in Shabbat that says the positive commandment of, *"V'halachta b'drachav,"* (You shall walk in His ways) tells us that we are meant to imitate the attributes of Hashem. *"Mah hu rachum, af ata tehei rachum.* Just as He is merciful so too should you be." Every Jewish parent has a special *mitzvah* to teach his children the ways of Hashem. One who traverses this path brings blessing and goodness to his family.

Hashem is omnipotent and beyond anything we can fathom. How is it possible to imitate His ways? Hashem fashioned us in His divine image. He gave us the ability to train ourselves and our children to follow His ways. In the book of *Shemot*, Moshe asked Hashem to explain to him the way He conducted His world. There are so many inscrutable things, such as why the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper. Hashem told Moshe, "You will see My back but not My face will not be seen." He would reveal a part of His essence, but not everything. Then Hashem passed in

front of Moshe and called out the 13 Attributes of Mercy. We repeat these attributes again and again on Yom Kippur. They contain the secret of our ability to receive atonement and forgiveness and the qualities we are meant to model. Just as Hashem is merciful and gracious, so too should we be.

The 13 Attributes begin with the words, *"Hashem, Hashem."* The four letter name of Hashem denotes Hashem's role as the source of all of existence. Everything exists because Hashem wills it to be. Just as Hashem is the source of all existence in this world, parents are the source of their children's lives. It is both a privilege and an awesome responsibility. When we create life we become a reflection of Hashem Who produces life. Yet it does not stop there. We say every day in *Shachrit*, *"Hamechadesh b'tuvo b'chol yom tamid.* Hashem renews the world constantly through His goodness." He is continuously breathing new life into the universe and enabling it to exist. We are meant to follow His ways, not just by producing life but by continuously giving life to our children. We have a responsibility to provide for our children on both a physical and spiritual level. One of my great teachers once said, "We don't graduate from parenting. It's a lifetime commitment." Just as Hashem never abandoned his commitment to us, so too must we remain committed to our children.

We say in our daily prayers, *"Magen yisheinu misgav b'adeinu.* Hashem is our shield who saves us, our bastion." Just as Hashem is our fortress, every parent must be a source of stability and strength for his children. No matter how badly we behave, Hashem remains our source of reliance and protection. Similarly, a parent's commitment to his child must be total, absolute, and unshakeable. One could think that a sinner disappoints Hashem's expectations of him. Hashem expects us to be righteous, kind, and moral and unfortunately we let Him down sometimes when we give in to our evil side. Yet He does not say, "This sinner betrayed my trust. I will abandon my trust in him." He remains faithful to him.

The prophet Malachi explains the double expression of Hashem in the 13 Attributes, *"Hashem, Hashem."* Malachi explains, quoting Hashem as saying *"Ani Hashem lo shoniti.* I am Hashem, I do not change." I am the same Hashem before the person sins and after he sins. My commitment never wavers. Similarly, no matter how badly a child has betrayed the trust of his parents, they must never abandon him. We have to keep our instinctive belief in our children alive always.

## Ask The Dayan #4

Based on a Naaleh.com Q&A Series by Dayan Shlomo Cohen

### Question:

A week before Rosh Hashana, Sarah bought a bag of vegetables for 20 shekels. When she came home she realized that the expiration date on the package had already passed. She had no time to return it that day so she waited till after the holiday. When she finally got to the store and asked for a replacement, the owner said he could not give her anything, as the Shemitta year had already started. All the vegetables in the store were imported and now cost double the price. Sarah argued that had she had been sold something unfit for use. The fact that the owner only had costly vegetables on hand was not her problem. He

was obligated to recompense her with the produce he had in his shop. Whose claim is correct?

### Answer:

If all that happened between the time that Sarah bought the vegetables and the time she came to return it, was that the price of vegetables had gone up, maybe Sarah would have been right. The fact that the produce costs more now is the owner's problem, not hers. However, since the Shemitta year had begun, the vegetables in the shop are considered a totally a different product. Imported produce cannot compare to home grown produce. Therefore the owner has no

obligation to give Sarah the imported vegetables. He is however obligated to refund her the money she paid. This is because in Jewish law, any case of an invalid sale obligates the seller to return the money. Nowadays it may be that the accepted custom amongst shops is to provide a replacement product in place of the one that was faulty. This may obligate the customer to accept the product in place of cash. However, if the owner doesn't believe that Sarah bought the vegetables from him, the onus is on Sarah to prove it. If she cannot, the shop owner has no obligation to repay her.