



**Acharei Mos – Pouring and Planting**

Rabbi Shmuel Silber

There are many prohibitions in the Torah. Refraining from violating these prohibitions and maintaining our allegiance to God can be challenging at times. Yet, there are other prohibitions that seem a bit less complicated and tempting.

*“For regarding the soul of all flesh its blood is in its soul, and I said to the children of Israel: You shall not eat the blood of any flesh, for the soul of any flesh is its blood all who eat it shall be cut off.”*

*(Vayikra 17:14)*

I don't know of anyone who struggles with blood consumption. Yet the Torah hands down such a stiff penalty. Jewish law tells us that if an animal is slaughtered for sacrificial purposes, the blood must be applied to the altar, and if the animal is slaughtered for regular consumption, the Torah commands us, “.... you shall spill it on the ground like water.” (*Devorim 12:16*) The Torah repeats the prohibition of consuming blood multiple times, each time with a reminder of punishment. Why such severity regarding the consumption of blood? What is the deeper message?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe provides an incredible insight. Blood symbolizes passionate and vibrant life. Blood courses through our veins and allows us to engage in dynamic activity. Blood represents vitality. This life vitality is actualized through the skills, abilities, and strengths given to us by God. If one were to ingest blood, it would represent taking of this vitality and only using it for personal advancement. If we consume blood, we are making the statement that our individual strengths and abilities are only for ourselves. But God wants us to think bigger and become better. For sacrificial animals, blood is applied to the altar symbolizing the need to use our abilities for some higher purposes. We cannot simply use our talents solely for our own personal self-advancement; we must use them in a holy, spiritual, and uplifted fashion. We must utilize our strengths to forge deeper connections with God and discover our own personal holiness. We must find a holy application for all our skills and abilities. For non-sacrificial, mundane animals, the Torah commands us to spill the blood on the ground like water. Why does the Torah use this verbiage? Why not just tell us that we can't eat it? What does it matter if we spill out on the ground or dispose of it in some other way? Water is used to nurture growth. When you plant seeds, the fertile soil is not enough, you must water them to enable their growth. The Torah is conveying an incredible lesson to us. Take the blood, which represents the totality of your abilities, strengths, and dynamic potential, and pour it on the ground like water; use it to facilitate growth in the world around you. Use your *kochos* to cause the ground around you to bring forth beautiful life. Use your blood to enable growth in others; use your blood to make the world around you more vibrant and holy. Don't ingest the blood, don't keep your abilities for yourself, pour it on the earth around, and use it to enable growth all around you. Find a way to use your abilities to make the world and the people around you better.

What begins as a simple prohibition, teaches us a dramatic life lesson. Put your abilities on the altar of God and find a way to use your strengths to discover and amplify your personal holiness. Pour



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your heart, soul, and arsenal of talent and strength into the earth around you and facilitate growth in your friends, family, and humanity.