

Shiur L'Yom Sh'lishi¹

[Tuesday's Study]

READINGS:	<i>Torah Acharei Mot:</i>	Leviticus 17:1-16
	<i>Haftarah:</i>	Ezekiel 22:6-12
	<i>B'rit Chadasha:</i>	I Corinthians 6:12-14

It is the blood
[Leviticus 17:11]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 9:10-12;
This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition # 4, *Ga'al* [Kinsman-Redemption]

Vayedaber Adonai el-Moshe l'emor – i.e. *And the Holy One spoke to Moshe, saying*
Daber el-Aharon v'el-banav v'el kol-B'nei Yisra'el – *Speak to Aharon and his sons, and to all B'nei Yisrael* Leviticus 17:1-2a.

The Holy One is speaking *a lot* in *Sefer Vayikra* - more than in any other book of the Torah – or indeed the Biblical canon. Indeed, this book consists almost exclusively of Divine Speech. Not *inspired narrative*, as wonderful as that is; not Moshe's teachings or poetry, as valuable as both of those can be: actual *Divine Speech* - the very utterances of the Creator of the Universe . . . in Hebrew – i.e. the language He designed as the primary medium for the communication of revelation and inspiration. *Lech Lecha* messages. Burning bush downloads. 'Arise, My Love' whispers spoken by the Bridegroom-King over His Betrothed Bride. *Selah!*

The primary emphasis of all the Divine Downloads to which *Sefer Vayikra* makes us privy is on training us to *see ourselves as* – and begin to *act like* and *function as* – the legitimate successors to the Avrahamic Covenant He has called us to be - in real ways, in real time, in the face of real challenges. The Holy One's chosen methodology for this apprenticeship program is a stunning set of *Ultimate Divine Bridal Makeover Protocols*. So far in our studies we have primarily looked at those protocols as they relate to and affect *individuals*. But at each step in the protocols, once the individual in question has done all he or she can do, there has been a further step prescribed - a step outside the individual's power. That 'one step beyond' action called for by Torah is a step of *kafar* – i.e. of application by an anointed priest of a Divinely prescribed covering that will, according to the Covenant, be looked upon by the Holy One as sufficient to *make up for all deficiencies*.

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Leviticus 1:2-4 prescribed a protocol for *kafar* to cover every individual who sought to totally dedicate his heart, mind, soul and strength to the Holy One. The Holy One wanted it understood that He knew full well that our passion for holiness would come face to face sooner or later with the cravings of our fallen natures, and that our ‘*I surrender all*’ declarations to Him would therefore always be incomplete and desperately need a ‘make-whole covering’. Leviticus 4:22-26 prescribed a protocol for *kafar* to cover every chieftain or ruler among the people who had erred in the performance of his official duties. It was assumed that such errors would occur. But the Holy One wanted us all to know that He had even those persons – those whose sins were public and obvious - completely covered. Leviticus 8:1-34 even prescribed a protocol for *kafar* for the illustrious Friend-of-the-Bride Aharon, our high priest and chief diplomat of Heaven on earth, whenever – as he inevitably would - he missed the mark of the high calling of the Holy One upon his life. A similar story is set forth in Leviticus 5:6, 10, 13, 16, and 18.

When we are faithful to bring to the Betrothal Parlor the best we have in *sh'ma* response to our Divine Bridegroom’s call the Holy One is faithful to take whatever we bring and *cover it, overspreading it* with whatever our best needs to make it perfect. The Holy One always provides a *kafar* – a supernatural protocol for providing what is lacking in and insufficient about – for each individual in the camp from the least to the greatest.

***But Wait! Is There Something Much Bigger Going On Here
Than the Salvation, Redemption, and Sanctification
of Individual Souls?***

Then we came to Leviticus chapter 16. In that chapter our Divine Bridegroom pushed the envelope one step further. He reminded us that *individual atonement*, as wonderful as that is, is *only step one* of His Ultimate Plan of Redemption for mankind. In chapter 16 the Holy One made it very clear that He has also provided a means of atonement for all the progeny of Avraham *as a collective national entity*. When the entire nation of Avraham’s descendants strays, as the Holy One knew full well they would, He made sure He would not be left without a witness or a plan of redemption. As part of the fulfillment of His promise to Avraham He therefore prescribed *a protocol for kafar on a national scale*. We are not just to be *for ourselves* – we are also to be *for each other*. We are not just a *person* – we are *a people*. As the Holy One told Avram, I will make you a *great nation*. As He said through the voice of the prophet Yeshayahu: ***“Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget; yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me. Your sons will make haste;***

your destroyers and those who laid you waste will go away from you. Lift up your eyes, look around and see; All these gather together and come to you. As I live,” says the Holy One, “You will surely clothe yourselves with them all as an ornament, and bind them on you as a bride does. Isaiah 49:15-18.

We have a glorious collective – as well as an exciting individual and family – covenant calling. And we have many collective – as well as individual and family – covenant responsibilities as well. It is our appointed time to think and act like a Bride-People, instead of just a bride.

Though intensely moving and personal, you see, the *moed* of *Yom Kippur* was never intended to be primarily about your or my one-on-One relationship with the Holy One. It was instead designed to make sure that, by Heavenly provision, the relationship between the God of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov with the *collective national entity* consisting of those patriarch’s household and progeny would never be forgotten, forsaken, abandoned, supplanted, or replaced. He knew the nation of Israel would never be able to do complete righteousness. So He provided a way they could cover their inadequacies, insufficiencies, and sins just as Noach covered the cracks and seams in the inside and outside of the walls of the ark with a supernatural substance which could withstand the worst judgment that could be thrown against it.

***It Is Not Just – or Even Primarily - About You and Yours –
It Is Primarily About the Grand Redemptive Plan of the Holy One!***

The provision of *kafar* – or if you prefer, *atonement* - on this *national scale* was precisely what those Divine Instructions we studied yesterday concerning the *moed* of *Yom Kippur* were designed to deal with. Though intensely moving and personal, you see, the *moed* of *Yom Kippur* was never intended to be primarily about your or my one-on-One relationship with the Holy One. It was instead designed to make sure that, by Heavenly provision, the relationship between the God of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov with the *collective national entity* consisting of those patriarch’s household and progeny would never be forgotten, forsaken, abandoned, supplanted, or replaced. He knew the nation of Israel would never be able to do complete righteousness – so He took the responsibility upon Himself. He provided a way all Israel’s inadequacies, insufficiencies, and sins could be covered, much the way Noach covered the cracks and seams in the inside and outside of the walls of the ark with a supernatural substance – a substance that could withstand the worst judgment that could be thrown against it.

It is now time that we all quit focusing only on our own salvation and relationship with the Holy One, and got in touch with our ‘collective soul’. The instruction the

Holy One gives us today will both set us apart from all other peoples on earth and tie all of our tribes together as a nation forever. We are part of something much bigger than ourselves. We are part of something that spans hundreds of generations. We are truly part of a great cloud of witnesses. We have been called and commissioned – and through the Kedusha Discourse are being trained - to serve the nations of the world as a *Kingdom of Heaven Scented Counterculture that will model His holiness* [perfectly counterbalanced with His 24/7/365 accessibility], *His righteousness* [perfectly counterbalanced with His new every morning manifestations of boundless mercy]; *His unflinching goodness*; *His tireless, unselfish love*; *His winsome gentleness*; *His sweet shalom*; *His unshakeable joy*; and *His longsuffering patience*.

Getting In Touch With the Substance of Our Collective Soul

The Holy One *knows* us intimately and loves us passionately One-on-one, of course. He *pursues* us gently and *woos* us lovingly and *redeems* us powerfully as individuals. He took special care to create each and every one of us to be *unique* and *special* and to relate to Him in a way no other human being could ever do. Each of us is therefore truly His ‘favorite’ in some way. Each of us is designed to be a ‘private garden’ for Him, uniquely qualified to enjoy a rich, full, intimate one-on-One relationship with Him at a level no one else can experience. As amazing as that is, however, we are discovering this week that His love for us as individuals is *by no means the end of the story*. Behold - there is an even *greater mystery*. He also sees us all as something more than individuals. He also sees us as part of a potentially great – indeed *world changing - collective entity*. Thus while He knows, watches over, protects, blesses, and trains as a son [or daughter] each and every one of us *individually*, He also sees all who are in covenant with Him – be we natural or engrafted branches - as part of *a very special people-group*. He sees us collectively as the mysterious ‘*offspring*’ of Avraham to which He mysteriously alluded in Genesis 12:7. As a group we comprise the ‘*descendants like the dust of the earth, to that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted*’ that the Holy One promised to Avraham in Genesis 13-16. Together we represent the *sons and daughters as numerous as the stars in the heavens* which the Holy One promised Avraham in Genesis 15:5. We collectively make up the covenantal ‘*descendants after you*’ the Holy One promised Avraham three times in Genesis 17:7-8. We are, as a group, the ‘*household after*’ Avraham of which the Holy One prophesied in Genesis 18:19. We are, as a collective entity, the answer to the ‘*who is this coming up from the desert, leaning on her lover*’ question posed in Song of Songs 8:5.

Remember, Beloved, the Holy One has made it very clear that the Exodus was not just about the deliverance of a bunch of oppressed slaves from slavery in Egypt.

Ultimately, what the Exodus was really all about was ‘nation-building’. Hence, as soon as we reached Mount Sinai the Holy One had Moshe declare to our forefathers that His plan was to transform the rag-tag group of refugees who had followed His prophet and His pillar of fire and cloud away from Egypt into an ***am segulah*** [a specially-treasured people], a *mamlaket kohanim* [a kingdom of ambassadors/diplomats], and a *goy k’dosh* [a set apart nation]. **Exodus 19:5-6**. We were thereby called to share a collective identity as a ‘people’ [from the Hebrew word *am*]. We were thereby commissioned to share a collective inheritance as a ‘kingdom’ [from the Hebrew word *mamlakah*]. We were thereby empowered to share a collective mission as a ‘nation’ [from the Hebrew word *goy*].

Our collective identity was thus *stated thrice*, and *established on earth as it was envisioned in Heaven*. As Anglican preacher John Donne wrote: “*No man is an island, entire of itself. . . and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.*” I hear *bells ringing Beloved* – how about you?

Defining the Characteristics Of our Collective Soul

As pointed out in some detail above, by the time we get to today’s aliyah of Torah there should no longer be any question in our minds that – at least in the eyes of our Divine Bridegroom - we have a *collective soul*. There is however quite a mystery remaining concerning what *defining characteristics* which that collective soul is designed to *possess* and exhibit. The instructions the Holy One gives us this entire week – and indeed through the rest of the book of Leviticus - are designed to *define* our *nationhood* and our *collective role in the redemptive plan of the Holy One*. The Holy One is about to pull the curtain back and begin to reveal exactly what kind of ‘nation-building’ He has in mind. He is about to take us far beyond yesterday’s discussion of ‘*national atonement*’ - to an in depth discussion of the most important facets of our ‘*national identity*’.

Beginning in chapter 17 of *Vayikra* the Holy One is going to prophetically impart to us as a redeemed community some of the *most fundamental characteristics* that He has instilled in our collective soul. The instructions the Holy One gives us over the next few chapters will *both set us apart from all other peoples on earth*, and establish our *unique identity as a nation*, forever. Open your heart and your mind to the vision of you that your Divine Bridegroom sees, Beloved. Believe no longer the lies the secular and religious worlds have told you about who you are and who your people are. Let the power and artistry of the Holy One’s Word concerning you work in you a Divine makeover – and engraft you into the collective soul like unto Avraham He is calling forth to bring light, hope, and shalom to the earth at our collective such-a-time-as-this. We are not to consider our primary identity to flow from our skin color, our ethnicity, our native language, or the geographical or

cultural milieu in which we live. We are to ‘go out’ from these things – from our country, our family, our father’s house, and the land of our birth. The ‘one new man’ we are being empowered to become, you see, is a son and heir of *Avraham*. *E Pluribus Unum* – out of many, one.

Collective Characteristic #1:

Respect for Life – and Careful Guardians of Life-Blood

What are to be characteristics of the collective entity into which we are being formed by the Holy One? First and foremost the Holy One’s Word declares that we *the people He has redeemed are to be a people group who recognizes not only human life, but all life forms of Creation, as very, very precious*. We are therefore Divinely called to become a people who take the act of *shedding of blood* very, very seriously. Indeed, the Holy One begins His prophetic description of our collective soul by telling Moshe:

Ish ish mibeit Yisra'el asher yishchat shor o-chesev o-ez
If any member of the household of Israel slaughters an ox, sheep or goat,

b'machaneh o asher yish'chat michutz l'machaneh
whether in the camp or outside the camp,

V'el-petach Ohel Mo'ed lo hevi'o
and does not bring it to the Tent of Meeting

l'ha-k'riv korban l'Adonai l'fnei Mish'kan Adonai
and make an approach to the Holy One before His sanctuary,

dam y'chashev l'ish
that person is considered a blood-spiller.

hahu dam shafach
That person has committed an act of blood wasting,

v'nichrat ha-ish hahu mikerev amo
and he shall be cut off from among his people.

[Leviticus 17:1-4]

Of course, when these instructions were given the redeemed community was still encamped at Sinai. Every morning except on Shabbat supernatural food fell in abundance from Heaven. There was in this environment no necessity for killing animals for food. What possible reason therefore -- other than as part of the Divine Passion Play at the *Mish'kan* -- would anyone in the camp have for slaughtering an ox, sheep or goat?

The main point the Holy One appears to be driving home is that we are not to be a

people who take killing lightly. We are instead to be a people who understand that the life of every living creature is in its blood – and that it is through blood that atonement is made. We are to be a people who *think of the Messiah every time we see blood spilled*.

I will have much more to say on this later. First however I want to address two more ‘collective characteristics’ that Torah indicates our Divine Bridegroom desires us – and wants to empower us -- to have.

Collective Characteristic #2:

Unity In Devotion to and Relationship with the Creator of the Universe

Likewise we are to be a people who acknowledge *only one God*, *only one altar* and *only one protocol of approach*. We are not to be a people who considers the spiritual side of life a ‘personal thing’ as to which each is entitled to his opinion or to do ‘what works for’ him. This does not mean we are expected by the Divine Bridegroom to be identical in either belief, in mode of expression, or in *halakah* – but it does mean that we are not to build competing systems of religious organization and structure. We are to have ONE AND ONLY ONE GOD. We are to have ONE AND ONLY ONE ALTAR. And we are ALL TO RESPOND WITH BRIDAL PASSION TO ONE AND ONLY ONE VOICE. The ‘voice of another’ we are to *lo sh’ma*.

For us, contrary to the way of the pagans, there is not to be an altar, priesthood, and a unique worship-protocol for each *family*. While each father and mother are to build a home based upon the foundation of Torah, center the activities and interests of the family around the Torah, and diligently teach the words of Torah and what they mean in practical terms to their children, the family is not ‘all there is’. There is also not, contrary to the way of the pagans, to be an altar, priesthood, and a unique worship-protocol for each *community*. We are not to build little sanctuaries or shrines, and establish little priesthods and ecclesiastical authorities, in the local communities or neighborhoods where we live. Other religions do that. We are not to imitate them.

Likewise, there is not to be an altar, a priesthood, and a unique worship-protocol for each little group of like-minded worshippers. That would cause us to break up into little splinter groups, and compete with each other rather than cooperate with each other.

There is not to be an altar built *on every high hill* or *under every spreading tree*. There is not to be an altar *for each clan or tribe*. We are a *nation*. We are all equal partners in our ancestor Avraham’s *covenant with the Holy One*. We are

inextricably bound together – wherever we live, however far apart we are, whatever language we speak. And we are all to share one – and only one – altar.

Collective Characteristic #3:

We Are Not to Make ‘Animal Sacrifices’ At Our National Altar

The Holy One also made it clear that what was to be done at the one national altar was not ‘animal sacrifice’ as practiced by the Egyptians, Kena’ani [Canaanites], and pagans. “Animal sacrifices”² are like “*strange fire*”, and are not to be part of the worship of His People. The only killing of animals by the Holy One’s people (other than strictly for food, or for protection of human life) is to be done at the *Mish’kan*, in the presence of the Kohen, as a sign on earth of something that occurred outside of time, in Heaven – the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

That is because the Holy One does not desire – has *never* desired - the blood of bulls and goats. The *korbanot* which the Holy One directed be made at the *Mish’kan* were designed not to *appease God* [the reason pagans make animal sacrifices]. Nor do I believe for one second that the *korbanot* were designed to *cover sin* [as some Christian theologians have taught]. The *korbanot* were radically different than anything present in any other religion. They were designed as acts of a great “passion play” in which all the Holy One’s people were to participate. The goal of the passion play was ***to focus the attention of first His People, and then all mankind, on the eternal reality after which the Mish’kan was patterned – the reality that a lamb has been slain from the foundation of the world.***

Think about it. Had the Holy One just wanted a blood covering for sin, He would have instructed His People to kill animals wherever they went, and sprinkle the blood on themselves and their families. The more blood, the better, right? That is not however what the Holy One instructed. That kind of *blood abuse* would have been repugnant to Him.³ It would have been an abomination – a perverse form of *strange fire*.

So the Holy One makes it clear in today’s aliyah He does not want, and will not tolerate, such bloodguilt. He says:

Whatever man there is of the house of Yisra'el,

² For a thorough explanation of the difference between “animal sacrifices” [the pagan way of dealing with their ‘gods’], and the making of approach to the Holy One through surrogates, at the brazen altar of the *Mish’kan*, see Monday’s Study of parsha *Vayikra*.

³ Although this is not the venue for such a study, perhaps some serious consideration should be given regarding the popular charismatic practice of “pleading the Blood” over people, circumstances, finances, and other things. How does this practice ‘fit’ with Torah – or, for that matter, even with the practices set forth in the apostolic Scriptures?

*who kills an ox, or lamb, or goat, in the **macheneh** [camp],
or who kills it outside the camp,
and hasn't brought it to the **petach** [door]
of the **ohel moed** [Tent of Meeting],
to make **korban** [approach] to the Holy One
before the **mish'kan** [tabernacle] of the Holy One:
blood shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood;
and that man shall be **karat** [cut off] from among his people.*

*This is to the end that the children of Yisra'el may bring their korbanot,
which they [the pagan nations] sacrifice in the open field,
that they [the children of Israel] may draw near to The Holy One,
at the door of the Tent of Meeting, to the Kohen,
and through such surrogates
draw near to the Holy One safely and in peace.*

Leviticus 17:3-5 [Rabbi's Son paraphrase]

* * *

This shall be a statute forever to them throughout their generations.'

"You are to say to them,

'Any man there is of the house of Yisra'el,

or of the strangers who live as foreigners among them,

who uses an animal to make a burnt offering or animal sacrifice,

instead of presenting the animal at the door of the Tent of Meeting,

when he draws near to the Holy One; that man shall be cut off from his people.

[Leviticus 17:7-9]

Be Careful Not To Confuse the Concepts:

“Animal Sacrifice” and the Making of Korbanot [Approach] to the Holy One Through Surrogates Are Two Very Different Things

The pagan procedure of *animal sacrifice* – which can be done anywhere, or in any number of “temples” designed for such a purpose -- is not to be confused with the use of animals for surrogates for the making of **korban** [approach] to the Holy One at the *Mish'kan* as part of the Holy One's Divine passion play. As the opening instructions of today's aliyah [cited above] tell us, the Holy One considers *animal sacrifice* the unnecessary shedding of blood, a kind of callous killing which will cause the perpetrator to be **karat** – cut off from the Holy One's People.

Why though, if atonement comes through blood, is spilling animal blood except for food or protection of human life bad even if a person sheds the animal's blood in the Name of the Holy One rather than in the course of making an offering to an idol? Perhaps it has to do with the *nature and essence of blood* as the Holy One created it – be the blood that of *animals* or of *humans*.

The Nature and Spiritual Essence of Blood

How does the sight of spilled blood affect you? A seemingly natural reaction, observable among young children who have not been “sensitized” to bloodshed, is a sense of fear at the sight of blood. As we are baptized into society, our fear of blood eases – although it usually does not altogether disappear. Some grown men and women faint at the sight of blood. Why? We do not instinctively cringe when we see water, or orange juice, or even gasoline – but something inside us says *blood is more than a liquid*. There is something about blood which generates awe.

Let us give some thought to what that might be. Every high school science student knows that blood is a highly sophisticated type of living matter. Because blood contains living cells, blood itself is alive. It performs an amazing variety of functions with unbelievable efficiency. The *river of life*, blood transports oxygen from the lungs to body tissues and carries carbon dioxide from body tissues to the lungs for release.

As the *river of growth*, blood is the medium and means by which nourishment obtained through the digestive process is transported to the tissues that need it; similarly, it transports hormones produced by the various glands the glands of the body to their God-intended destinations. Blood is likewise the *river of health*. It is the medium chosen by the Holy One, in His creative Wisdom, for *transporting disease-fighting substances to the tissues of the body* and for *transporting waste from the body’s tissues and organs to the kidneys* where it can be readied for disposal.⁴

Without blood, the bodies of mammals stop working. The life is in the blood, the Bible says, and science confirms. Blood courses through a mammal in specially designed vessels *delivering essential elements* and *removing harmful wastes*.

Stop the flow of blood and you will always *stop life*. Likewise, however, blood by itself, outside the body, does nothing. It is only when it is circulating through the body that blood sustains life. Spilling it means *bringing death*.

Blood is, therefore, precious to the Holy One. Indeed, it is holy. It is not to be considered – or treated as - common. It is not to be considered – or treated as - *chol*. Not a single drop of blood - be it from a human or an animal - is ever to be spilled cavalierly, selfishly, unnecessarily, or meaninglessly how we are to keep and honor the holiness of the life-force we know as ‘blood’. Today’s aliyah of Torah tells us:

³ Among the many resources which discuss blood in light of the functions it performs is an online article entitled simply “Blood”, available at <http://www.ultranet.com/~jkimball/BiologyPages/B/Blood.html>

V'zarak ha-kohen et-ha-dam al-mizbach Adonai
The Kohen shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of the Holy One

petach Ohel Mo'ed
at the door of the Tent of Meeting . . .
[Leviticus 17:6]

* * *

Ki-nefesh ha-basar b'dam
For the life of the flesh is in the blood;

hi v'ani netativ lachem al-ha-mizbe'ach
and I have given it to you on the altar

l'chaper al-nafshoteichem
*to make **kafar** [atonement⁵] for your souls:*

ki-ha-dam hu b'nefesh yechaper
*for it is the blood that makes **kafar** [atonement] by reason of the life.*
[Leviticus 17:11]

The Hebrew word our English bibles translate as “blood” is **dam**⁶. This is a masculine noun meaning *blood*, or *bloodguiltiness*. The first Biblical usage of **dam** is in Genesis 4:10 as follows:

*“And he [the Holy One] said, ‘What have you done?
The voice of your brother's blood [i.e. ‘dam] cries to me from the ground!’”*

Blood, it seems, is unique among liquids, in that *it has a voice*. I know that sounds strange. I am not offering a scientific fact, but a Biblical truth. Blood, in its way, transmits sound waves, on frequencies the Holy One can hear. And, since man is created in the image of the Holy One, somewhere within us, the sound waves transmitted by blood affect us as well. We cannot in our fallen state interpret the message of the blood as can the Holy One. But I believe we are nevertheless programmed to respond to its frequencies. And that, I personally believe, explains why we instinctively fear blood.

In Genesis 1, when **Elohim** was discussing creating a creature in the image of the Holy One, the creature that resulted was called **Adam**. Our English Bibles translate this word as “man”. The Hebrew word however, literally interpreted as a hieroglyphic word picture, would mean *blood [dam] emanating from God* [represented by the *alef* with which the name Adam begins]. Keeping this in mind one can see the beauty of the name Y’shua chose for himself. “Son of man”, in Hebrew, is *ben adam*, the son of *blood emanating from God*. Considering Y’shua’s mission,

⁵ For a discussion of the concept of “atonement” from a Hebraic perspective see the first two Rabbi’s son studies from parsha **Acharei Mot**.

⁶ Dam is *dalet, mem sofit*. Strong’s Hebrew word #1818, it is pronounced *dawm*.

upon His first advent, to shed blood His upon the earth – to literally be the blood emanating from God for us – we see the perfect accuracy of that name.

The Hebrew word ‘**dam**’ is made up of a *dalet* and a *mem sofit*. *Dalet* (which provides the “d” sound) constitutes a picture/hieroglyph of a *doorway, or passageway*. The Hebrew letter *mem* (which provides the “m” sound) and constitutes a picture/hieroglyph of *flowing water*. When a *mem* is found at the end of a word, its form changes, and it becomes a *mem sofit* - i.e. a *mem* in *final form*. This requires a little analysis. Do you recall being told in Genesis 1:2 that originally, “*darkness was upon the face of the waters*”? The original *mem* was then described – it was *darkness* and emptiness, and *chaos*. Contrast however the water after the Holy One spoke His “**Yehi ohr!** [*Light, BE!*].” Then the water assumed form and shape and meaning and order. And that was just the beginning. The final form *mem (mem sofit)* is the perfect picture of water (*mem*) in its final (*sofit*) form is found in Revelation 22:

*... a river of water of life, clear as crystal,
proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb,
in the middle of its street.*

On this side of the river and on that was the tree of life ...

[Revelation 22:1-2]

* * *

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"

He who hears, let him say, "Come!"

He who is thirsty, let him come.

He who desires, let him take the water of life freely.

[Revelation 22:17]

The *mem sofit* thus means living water – the pathway leading to the Tree of Life. Putting that together with the letter *dalet*, we find that the hieroglyph/mural formed by the Hebrew word ‘**dam**’ is that of a doorway of living water, leading to the Tree of Life.

It Has Everything to Do With the Blood!

Today’s aliyah is *all about blood*. We are told to slaughter our animals in such a way as to allow the blood to be completely drained from their bodies. We are not to either *eat* or *drink* blood, or eat or drink *anything that contains blood* - even in small amounts. If we kill an animal, we are to *drain* the blood, and cover it with earth. Spilled blood must be *covered*. We are to respond with reverence to this gift of life from the Holy One. We are to regard it as *precious*. We are not to shed it except in accordance with the Holy One’s explicit instructions – ***for His instructions make blood a doorway of living water, leading us to the Tree of Life.***

Blood spilled contrary to the Holy One’s instructions, on the other hand, is *dangerous*. It is a *doorway [dalet]* leading away from the Tree of Life, back to

primeval darkness. Its voice cries out “darkness, darkness” rather than **yehi ohr** [*Light, Be!*]. Uncovered blood [blood without a **kafar**] cries to the Holy One. It creates *bloodguilt*. And bloodguilt cries out for *judgment*. That is why we must have a **kafar** (cover/atonement).

Spilling Blood Any Other Way . . .

Blood spilled contrary to the Holy One’s instructions, on the other hand, is *dangerous*. It is a *doorway* [**dalet**] *leading away from the Tree of Life, back to primeval darkness*. Its voice cries out “darkness, darkness” rather than **yehi ohr** [*Light, Be!*]. Uncovered blood [blood without a **kafar**] cries to the Holy One. It creates *bloodguilt*. And bloodguilt cries out for *judgment*. That is why we must have a **kafar** (cover/atonement).

Do Not Confuse the Concepts: Making Korbanot and Worship are Two Different Things

The concept of making **korbanot** [drawing near to the Holy One at the *Mish’kan* through a surrogate’s blood] should not be confused with the Hebrew concept of “worship” [Hebrew **shachah**, *shin, chet, hey*, Strong’s Hebrew word # 7812, pronounced *shaw-khaw*]. Worship of the Holy One by every redeemed individual, of course, was, and always is, to occur everywhere and at all times and in all contexts. Contrary to popular opinion and teaching worship of the Holy One is not an incident of religious service – it is the *continuous* and yet *spontaneous* response of each of His people to His marvelous deeds and His glorious person.

There is no such thing Hebraically as a “worship service”. There is only *worship* - a heart attitude of awe, love, and thanksgiving which should be inseparable from and insuppressible in anyone who is in relationship with the Holy One. Worship of the Holy One was (and is) to be the breath His People breathe - as the Psalmist said “***I will bless the Holy One at all times.***”

The Holy One’s plan is for each man, woman, and child to become a walking “worship center”. He calls each head of household to inscribe His instructions for living on the household’s doors and gates. He envisions each family in His Redeemed Community actively engaged in teaching the Torah to its children, in speaking of the Holy One and His Torah when they lay down, when they rise up and as they walk along the way. What the Holy One has made clear is not a good idea, and what He has warned would be destructive of the people’s relationship with Him and with each other, was to have **community altars** and a **community priesthood** in each local area. The Holy One knew such a system would drain the spiritual energy for true worship

from His people, making them dependent upon a paid clergy for religious instruction, and would take the focus of spiritual energy away from the heart, the home, and the Torah, and place it on the religious organization, the maintenance of its tenets, and the financial support of its clergy.

Wherever We Live, We Are to Have Only One Altar

In chapter 17 the Holy One instructs Moshe to tell Aharon to tell all the people that the Holy One redeemed from Egypt a very important truth – that no matter where, or in what era, they/we live, they/we are only to have ONE ALTAR. For the Holy One Himself expressly says:

Ish ish mibeit Yisra'el asher yishchat shor o-chesev o-ez
If any member of the family of Israel sacrifices an ox, sheep or goat,

b'machaneh o asher yishchat michutz l'machaneh
whether in the camp or outside the camp,

V'el-petach Ohel Mo'ed
and does not bring it to the Communion Tent

lo hevi'o l'ha-k'riv korban l'Adonai l'fnei Mish'kan Adonai
to be presented as an approach to the Holy One before His sanctuary,

dam y'chashev l'ish
that person is considered a murderer.

hahu dam shafach
That person has committed an act of murder,

v'nichrat ha-ish hahu mikerev amo
and he shall be cut off from among his people.

[Leviticus 17:1-4]

There is not, contrary to the way of the pagans, to be an altar for each individual or for each family. While each father and mother are to build a home based upon the foundation of Torah, center the activities and interests of the family around the Torah, and diligently teach the words of Torah and what they mean in practical terms to their children, the family is not 'all there is'. Men are not to ritually slaughter animals – or offer any other 'sacrifices' in their front yards. There is also not, contrary to the way of the pagans, to be an altar for each *community*. We are not to build little sanctuaries or shrines, and establish little priesthoods and ecclesiastical authorities, in the local communities or neighborhoods where we live. Other religions do that. We are not to imitate them. Men are not to ritually slaughter animals – or offer any other sacrifices – in the public places or gathering halls of their communities. There is not to be an

altar for each little group of like-minded worshippers. That would cause us to break up into little splinter groups, and compete with each other rather than cooperate with each other. There is not to be an altar built on every high hill or under every spreading tree. There is not to be an altar for each clan or tribe. We are called to function as *a nation*. We are inextricably bound together – wherever we live, however far apart we are. We are all to share one – and only one – shrine. And we are all to share one – and only one – altar.

A Quick Look Around Through Torah-Lens Glasses

Could it be that the very thing the Holy One instructed us not to do is exactly what we as His people have done? Have we possibly disobeyed the Holy One by making the programs of religious organizations built by man, patterned after the tower of Babel, the primary focus of our spiritual energies and center of gravity of our spiritual lives?

In doing so have we, individually and as a people, lost touch with the reality of worship as a lifestyle, as our ancestor Avraham, our Messiah, Y'shua, and His early followers, all knew and practiced? Have we in so doing done exactly what the Holy One lovingly instructed us not to do in Leviticus 17 - and again in Deuteronomy 12, which we have yet to study? Are we perchance *grazing where there is no grass – and no Shepherd guiding us?*

Perhaps the Holy One would have us turn our hearts and the focus of our families back to Him, to His Torah, and to the *sh'ma* lifestyle of which Moshe prophesied, and which Messiah demonstrated. Perhaps it is not youth groups He desires to train our children in His ways, but loving parents who study – and practice – His Torah in their homes, when they wake up, and when they lie down, and when they walk by the way. Perhaps it is not ‘worship services’ He desires of us, but ‘worship lifestyles’.

Questions For Today's Study

1. What does today's Torah aliyah say makes a man guilty of “bloodshed” or “bloodguilt”, and what do those concepts mean?
2. The opening verses of today's aliyah discuss the *place* where *korbanot* [deliberate approaches to the Holy One by the Holy One's redeemed through surrogates such as sacrificial animals and agricultural produce] are to be brought to the Holy One. *Korbanot* are only to be presented at one location in the entire world. Altars to the Holy One, tended by paid priests/ministers, are *not* to be built on every street corner or freeway exit – that is the way of the pagans. The only *korbanot* the Holy One's people are to bring are to be presented at the *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle]. There is one altar. There is one place, and one alone. And it is not in your city or mine, Beloved. The rest is bloodshed, and brings bloodguilt which pollutes our land.

[A] Where does Torah say is the only place *korbanot* (which would include first fruits offerings and tithes) are to be made?

[B] What reason(s) does *the Holy One* give for this in the Book of Leviticus?

[C] In what context, and how frequently, were the people of the Holy One to bring their *korbanot*, first fruits, and tithes to the place the Holy One prescribed?

[D] Can a local church or synagogue be compared to the *Mish'kan* (or the Temple)? Why or why not?

3. Today's Torah aliyah contains a direct word from God regarding eating blood or eating meat from which the blood has not been drained (such as very "rare" meat, with blood running out of it).

[A] What reason does the Holy One give for not eating these things?

[B] What special instructions does the Holy One give regarding animals killed during a hunt?

[C] What is to happen to someone who disregards these instructions?

[D] Why is the blood of animals not something a human should treat lightly or drink or consume?

[E] Read Acts 15:19-21. What influence do you think Leviticus 17 had on the Jerusalem Council's instructions for brand new gentile believers in Y'shua.

4. Turning to the haftarah reading for today from Ezekiel 22 we read the Holy One's indictment of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, in the days before He raised up the Babylonians to destroy the city and take its people into exile. The Holy One describes a society that has strayed a long, long way from His Torah – which was (and is) to be the constitution of life in His holy Community. Weep as you read this indictment – for it looks like the evening news in America, Beloved:

*Behold, the princes of Yisra'el,
everyone according to his power,
have been in you [Jerusalem] to shed blood.
In you have they set light by father and mother;
in the midst of you have they dealt by oppression with the foreigner;
in you have they wronged the fatherless and the widow.*

*In you they have despised my holy things,
and have profaned my Shabbats.
Slandering men have been in you to shed blood;
and in you they have eaten on the mountains:
in the midst of you they have committed lewdness.*

*In you have they uncovered their fathers' nakedness;
in you have they humbled her who was tamei in her menstruation.
One has committed abomination with his neighbor's wife;
and another has lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law;*

and another in you has humbled his sister, his father's daughter.

*In you have they taken bribes to shed blood;
you have taken interest and increase,
and you have greedily gained of your neighbors by oppression,
and have forgotten Me",
says the Holy One God.*

[A] List the sins/transgressions/iniquities with which the Holy One [through His prophet, Ezekiel] charges the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

[B] In the last verse of today's Haftarah Ezekiel explains the underlying "disease" which has caused all the symptoms you just listed. What is that underlying "disease"?

[C] In Strong's and Gesenius look up the word translated "*forgotten*" in verse 12. Write the Hebrew word and its definition.

[D] What do you think causes a person to "forget" the Holy One?

[E] What signs are there in a person's life that he has "forgotten" the Holy One?

5. In the B'rit Chadasha reading selected for today, Shaul of Tarsus first quotes some of the people's arguments about why they are above (or "beyond") the Torah. They say "*Everything is permissible for me*" and "*Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food*". Thus, they argue that they can eat, and they can do, anything they want, even if it is against Torah, because it does not affect their souls or spirits, only their bodies.

[A] What are Shaul of Tarsus' two responses to the argument of some of the Corinthians that "*Everything is permissible for me?*"

[B] What is his response to the argument of those in Corinth who say "*Food is for the stomach. . .*"?

*May we the Holy One as He deserves to be worshipped,
and may all His people honor all the Holy and Wonderful words of His Mouth.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 9:10-12

***Those who know your Name will put their trust in you,
For you, O Holy One, have not forsaken those who seek you.***

Sing praises to the Holy One, who dwells in Tziyon,

And declare among the people what he has done.

*For he who avenges blood remembers them.
He doesn't forget the cry of the afflicted.*