

"Moshe took half the blood and placed it in basins"

What Prompted Moshe Rabeinu to Employ the Malach Matat for the Purpose of Dividing the Blood into Two Parts?

This week's parsha, parshas Mishpatim, deals almost entirely with the subject of laws concerning matters between man and his fellow man—"bein adam la'chaveiro." Some deal with reimbursement for physical, bodily damage, while others involve reimbursement for property damage. In the last eighteen pesukim of the parsha, however, the holy Torah reveals details about Moshe Rabeinu's and Yisrael's preparations for Matan Torah, which were not mentioned in parshas Yisro.

In this essay, we wish to focus on an incredible act and strategy implemented by Moshe Rabeinu. In preparation for entering into the "bris"—covenant—with HKB"H prior to Matan Torah, blood was set aside. Moshe Rabeinu took the blood from the "olah" and "shelamim" sacrifices and divided them into two equal parts. Half of the blood was sprinkled on the mizbeiach, while the other half was sprinkled on the people. Here are the four pesukim describing this event (Shemos 24, 5):

"וישלח את נערי בני ישראל ויעלו עולות ויזבחו זבחים שלמים לה' פרים. ויקח משה חצי הדם וישם באגנות וחצי הדם זרק על המזבחה, ויקח ספר הברית ויקרא באזני העם ויאמרו כל אשר דיבר ה' נעשה ונשמע. ויקח משה את הדם ויזרוק על העם ויאמר, הגה דם הברית אשר כרת ה' עמכם על כל הדברים האלה."

He sent the youth of Bnei Yisrael and they brought up olah-offerings, and they slaughtered bulls to Hashem as shelamim-offerings to Hashem. Moshe took half the blood and placed it in basins and half the blood he sprinkled upon the altar. He took the Book of the Covenant and read in earshot of the people, and they said, "Everything that Hashem has said, we will do and we will obey!" Moshe took the blood and sprinkled it upon the people, and he said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that Hashem sealed with you concerning all these matters."

Rashi comments: "ויקח משה חצי הדם, מי חלקו, מלאך בא וחלקו"—**who divided the blood in half? A malach came and divided it.** Rashi's source is the Midrash (V.R. 6, 5), which states that a malach descended from above in the likeness of Moshe and divided the blood into equal parts. The Yidei Moshe explains the Midrash's

statement. Seeing as the passuk specifically states that Moshe took the blood, it is implied that Moshe also divided the blood. Hence, the Midrash explains that a malach descended from above in the likeness of Moshe.

The Malach that Descended in the Likeness of Moshe Was Matat

In the commentary of the Yidei Moshe on the Midrash, we find a tremendous chiddush; the malach that descended in Moshe's likeness was none other than Matat. This is alluded to by the words: "ויקח משה חצי הדם"—the name משה is interpreted as an acronym for מ'ט ט ש'ר ה'פנים—**Matat Sar HaPanim**, one of the princes of the malachim. It was in fact Matat who took the blood in the guise of Moshe. In the sefer Cheishev HaEiphod on this week's parsha, we find the very same interpretation; he also writes that the malach involved in this act was Matat.

The Cheishev HaEiphod adds a very nice allusion of his own. It states (Shemos 23, 20): "הנה אנכי שולח מלאך לפניך לשמורך בדרך ולהביאך אל המקום אשר הכינתי, הישמר מפניו ושמע בקולו אל תמר בו, כי לא יראה לך מלאך—Behold! I send an angel before you to protect you on the way, and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Beware of him—hearken to his voice, do not disobey him, for he will not forgive your transgression—for My name is within him. Rashi comments: "ורבותינו אמרו זה מטטרון" "our Rabbis have said that this is Matatron, whose name is like the name of his master; the numerical value of מטטרון equals (314) שדי. His name is also alluded to by the division of the blood; for two times חצי הדם (meaning "half of the blood") equals מטטרון (2x157=314). This concludes the words of the Cheishev HaEiphod.

Let us add a tidbit of our own based on a statement in the Zohar hakadosh in the Raayah Mihemnah (Pinchas 219a): The neshamah of Moshe Rabeinu is told that only he is permitted to employ Matatron Sar HaPanim; for his name is alluded to by your name. The Megaleh Amukos on Vaeschanan (14) explains that they

אז שותים כל אחד כוס יין, וכל אחד נוקף אצבעו, ומורידין טיפה של דם לתוך הכוס, וכל אחד שותה כוס המעורב בטיפת דם של חברו, וזה הדבר מורה שמערבין את דמם הוא החיות שלהם, כי הדם הוא הנפש, להיות להם לב אחד ויהיו בהם אחדות, וכל אחד מחויב ליתן דמו ולמסור נפשו עבור חברו, זהו כריתות הברית.

והנה מלכותא דרקייע כעין מלכותא דארעא, ולרמז זה לקח משה רבינו ע"ה רבן של כל הנביאים חצי הדם, וישם באגנות לרמז על אגן הסהר שהם בחינת פלג גופא, וחצי הדם זרק על המזבח כביכול לרמז על פלג הדכר, ומן הדם שבאגנות זרק על העם, לרמז על המבואר שכביכול הדמים שהם הכוחות מעורבים זה בזה, ושיהיה הכח ביד ישראל למסירות נפש על קדושת שמו יתברך ויתברך, והוא הוא כריתות הברית, ויאמר הנה דם הברית אשר כרת ה' עמכם, להיות עמכם ביחוד גמור וברזא דאחד".

It is the nature of people who enter into a covenant together to become of one body and one mind. They are willing to sacrifice their lives for one another. In a sense, their blood becomes intermingled. For, the blood is the main source of life.

Then, they each drink a cup of wine and each nicks his finger—dripping a drop of blood into the cup. Each one then drinks from the cup containing the other's blood. This demonstrates that they are mixing their blood together—their life-force and existence. This signifies their union; each one is now committed to give his life and sacrifice on behalf of the other. This is the meaning of a covenant—a "bris."

Now, the heavenly sovereignty resembles the earthly sovereignty. To represent this fact, Moshe Rabeinu, chief of all the prophets, took half of the blood and placed each half into a basin—alluding to the full moon and the two halves of the body. Half of the blood he sprinkled on the mizbeiach, representing the male half, as it were. The remaining blood, he sprinkled on the people—indicating that their blood, representing their forces and beings, were now intertwined. This indicated that Yisrael now had the power to sacrifice their lives for the sanctity of G-d. This is the significance of the covenant they entered. The blood signified the complete unity of Hashem and Yisrael.

This coincides beautifully with the following passage in the Midrash (V.R. 6, 5). After Moshe divided the blood into two equal portions in the basins, he asked HKB"H what to do with each of the two halves. HKB"H told him to sprinkle HKB"H's half on Yisrael and Yisrael's half on the mizbeiach:

"אמר משה לפני הקב"ה, מה נעשה בחלקך, אמר לו זרוק על העם. ומה נעשה בחלקם, אמר לו זרוק על גבי המזבח, וחצי הדם זרק על המזבח. רבי ברכיה ורבי חייא בשם רבי יוסי בר חנינא, הוא נשבע להן והן נשבעו לו, הוא נשבע להן (יחזקאל טז-ח) ואשבע לך ואבוא בברית אתך נאם ה' אלקים, והן נשבעין לו להקב"ה שנאמר (דברים כט-יא) לעברך בברית ה' אלהיך ובאלתו".

In this manner, they became committed to one another.

Thus, we have seen that the division and sprinkling of the blood in this manner constituted the establishment of a covenant between two lovers. Each committed to sacrifice on behalf of the other. Yisrael obligated themselves to sacrifice their lives for the sanctity of Hashem and His Torah. HKB"H, so to speak, committed Himself never to abandon His people, to always stand by them and protect them from all forms of trouble and danger.

The Bottom Half Is Human and the Top Half Is Godly

Continuing onward and upward along this exalted path, let us now explain why Moshe saw fit to employ the malach Matat specifically for the task of dividing the blood into two equal parts. Additionally, let us address the significance of the Midrash's statement: "מלאך ירד בדמות משה וחלקו"—**a malach descended in the likeness of Moshe and divided the blood.** Other than the allusion contained in Moshe's name--"משה" being an acronym for מ'טט ש"ר ה'פנים—what semblance is there between the malach Matat and Moshe Rabeinu?

First, let us introduce the elucidation in the Midrash (D.R. 11, 4) regarding the passuk (Devarim 33, 1): "וזאת הברכה אשר ברך משה: איש האלקים. מהו איש האלקים, אמר רבי אבין, מחציו ולמטה איש, מחציו ולמעלה האלקים. The passuk depicts Moshe as "ish haElokim"—**the man of G-d.** The Midrash questions the meaning of this description. Rabbi Avin explains that his bottom half was man-like, while his upper half was G-d-like. We learn the interpretation of the Midrash from the Maharal of Prague in Tiferet Yisrael (Chapter 21). Moshe was not merely the intermediary between HKB"H and Yisrael, having a connection with each side, but he occupied an intermediate status between the two—as the passuk states (Devarim 5, 5): "אנכי עומד בין ה' וביניכם"—**I stand between Hashem and you.** He belonged to both the earthly realm and the heavenly realm as reflected by the description "ish haElokim." Therefore, he was able to ascend and descend between earth and the heavens, in order to receive the Torah from HKB"H and deliver it to Yisrael. Here are the Maharal's exact words:

"ומפני כי משה היה מן התחתונים ומן העליונים, כמו שאמרו שנקרא משה איש האלקים, מחציו ולמטה היה איש ומחציו ולמעלה היה אלקים, ולכך אי אפשר לומר רק שיהיה כמו אמצעי בין העליונים ובין התחתונים, והאמצעי מצורף לשניהם, ולפיכך עלה שמים וירד, והיה למשה משפט האמצעי, שנאמר אנכי עומד בין ה' וביניכם להגיד לכם דבר ה' וגו'".

Deciphering the Mystery Concerning Moshe's Burial Place

Based on what we have just learned, the Maharal explains magnificently the mysterious statement in the Gemara (Sotah 13b) concerning Moshe's burial place:

"וכבר שלחה מלכות הרשעה גסטרא של בית פעור, הראנו היכן משה קבור, עמדו למעלה נדמה להם למטה, למטה נדמה להם למעלה. נחלקו לשתי כיתות, אותן שעומדים למעלה נדמה להן למטה, למטה נדמה להן למעלה, לקיים מה שנאמר (דברים לד-1) ולא ידע איש את קבורתו. רבי חמא ברבי חנינא אמר, אף משה רבינו אינו יודע היכן קבור".

The Gemara describes the phenomenon that occurred when the evil Romans sought the site of Moshe's grave. Those standing on high saw it below; those standing below saw it above. This is the significance of the passuk (Devarim 34, 6): **"And no man knows his burial place."** Rabbi Chama the son of Rabbi Chanina said: "Even Moshe Rabeinu does not know where he himself is buried."

The commentaries struggle to decipher this enigmatic passage. What is the significance of the fact that it appeared to those above as if it was below and it appeared to those below as if it was above? Furthermore, what is the significance of the baffling statement that Moshe Rabeinu himself was unfamiliar with his own burial site? The Maharal provides us with an explanation. The concept of "קבר" or burial teaches us very clearly that the deceased person is concealed and set apart from the living.

This was the goal of the evil Romans' inquiry. They dispatched the profane authorities of Beis Peor to clarify the matter and reveal: **"where Moshe is buried."** In other words, they wanted to discern how he differed from other human beings. At first: "עמדו למעלה"--they thought that because he ascended to the heavens this separated him from earthly beings; however, they then realized that he was intimately connected with Yisrael down below--"נדמה להם למטה". Due to his relationship with Yisrael down below, they thought that he must be separate from the heavenly realm; nevertheless, they saw that this also was not the case. Due to his intermediate status between Hashem and Yisrael, he merited even in death to be separate from both realms.

Hence, Rabbi Chama the son of Rabbi Chanina adds: **"Even Moshe Rabeinu does not know where he is buried."** Sometimes he serves in the heavens, defending Yisrael and proclaiming their merit before HKB"H. At other times, he is present in the guise of Torah scholars, providing them with insights and understanding of the Torah. The Tikunei Zohar (Tikun 69, 112a) expresses this idea concerning the neshamah of Moshe as follows: **"אתפשטותא הוא"**

—בכל דרא ודרא, בכל צדיק וצדיק וחכם דמתעסק באורייתא עד שתין רבוא—an extension of Moshe Rabeinu exists in every generation and in every tzaddik and scholar who engages in Torah study.

We can now rejoice at having shed some light on the matter of why Moshe Rabeinu specifically performed the division of the blood from the sacrifices into two equal parts. Seeing as he was an **"ish Elokim"**—**part human and part divine**—constituting an intermediate status between HKB"H and Yisrael, connecting the two sides irrevocably, it was only fitting that he should unite them by means of the "blood of the covenant." He accomplished this feat by dividing the blood into two equal parts; then he sprinkled HKB"H's half on Yisrael and Yisrael's half on the mizbeiach, to Hashem the G-d of Yisrael.

The Malach Matat Appeared in the Likeness of Moshe

Let us continue along the high road and endeavor to explain the connection between the malach Matat and Moshe Rabeinu. Our blessed sages revealed to us in the Midrash that a malach descended from above in the likeness of Moshe and divided the blood. We also learned that the name **מש"ה** is an acronym for **מ"ט ש"ר ה'פנים**—alluding to the fact that the malach who descended and divided the blood was Matat. Also, what is the connection between Matat and the sacred act of dividing the blood into two parts?

I was struck by a wonderful idea concerning this enigmatic personality. Who was the malach Matat? What was his background? Let us begin to unravel this puzzle by examining the passuk (Bereishit 5, 24): **"ויתהלך חנוך את האלקים ואיננו כי לקח--"** **—and Chanoch walked with Elokim; then he was no more, for Elokim had taken him.** The Targum Yonatan explains that Chanoch merited going up to heaven while still alive; there he became the malach Matatron, the great scribe: **"ובלח חנוך בקושטא קדם ה', והא ליתוהי עם דירי ארעא, ארום אתנגיד וסליק לרקיעא במימור קדם ה', וקרא שמיא מטטרו"ן ספרא רבא."**

Notwithstanding, in Tosafos (Yevamos 16b), Rabeinu Tam questions this fact based on a statement in the piyut (Shacharis Simchas Torah) that the malach Matat is the Prince of the Universe. According to the Gemara (Chullin 60a), the existence of the Prince of the Universe dates back to the six days of creation. This being the case, how is it possible to suggest that Chanoch, who was born 622 years after the creation of the universe became the malach Matat?

An answer is provided by the Arizal in Shaar HaGilgulim (end of Introduction 31). We learn in the Zohar hakadosh (Noach 59b) that every tzaddik has two spirits—one down below in this

