

An ox, lamb or goat, when it is born shall be with its mother for seven days... (22:27) But an ox or a sheep... you may not slaughter and its offspring on the same day... (22:28) When you slaughter a feast thanksgiving offering to Hashem, you shall slaughter it to gain favor for yourselves. (22:29) You shall not desecrate My Holy Name, rather I shall be sanctified among Bnei Yisrael. (22:32)

Four *pesukim* in sequence: the first three address *korbanos*, offerings; the fourth *pasuk* addresses *chillul* and *kiddush Hashem*, profaning and sanctifying Hashem's Name. Clearly, the Torah's arrangement of *pesukim* is not haphazard. Every *pasuk*, every letter, every crown, is in its specific place by Heavenly design. What is the rationale behind the positioning of these four *pesukim*? *Horav Shimon Schwab, zl (Rav Schwab on Chumash)*, examines the common denominator in these *pesukim*. It is about life and living. First, the Torah teaches us that not just any animal, regardless of age, may be sacrificed. It must be, at minimum, eight days old. Second, it is prohibited to sacrifice a cow and its offspring on the same day. Third, the Torah discusses the *Korban Todah*, thanksgiving offering, and the importance of gratitude. The Torah leaves the sacrifices of animals and directs us toward the ultimate sacrifice: giving up one's life for Hashem. We are admonished never to profane His Holy Name, but rather, sanctify it – in any manner possible. [One need not give up his life to sanctify His Name. Living a moral/spiritually correct life is *kiddush ha'chaim*, sanctifying life, which is also a *Kiddush Hashem*.]

Horav Schwab explains that the goal of Jewish life is to create a *kiddush Hashem*. The question which we must first answer is: What does life mean to us? How much do we really value life? The Torah gives us three examples which emphasize the value of life itself. First is the law that prohibits slaughtering an animal until it is at least eight days old. This demonstrates the reverence the Torah has for life. The popular notion is that a short life is an incomplete life. Every minute of life has the greatest infinite value. We have no idea of the value of a short life lived well, in contrast to a longer life which had many "gaps" of time not used to its fullest potential. General Douglas McArthur was wont to say, "Some people die at the age of thirty, but are not buried until they are seventy."

Second, the prohibition against slaughtering an animal and its offspring on the same day underscores the revulsion associated with genocide and emphasizes the supremacy of life. Last, the *mitzvah* to bring a thanksgiving offering after one has survived a harrowing life-threatening experience demonstrates the importance of recognizing and appreciating our greatest Heavenly gift: life.

Making the ultimate sacrifice has greatest significance when one's life has meaning and value. Someone, who due to circumstances beyond his control, is relegated to living a wretched life of

poverty, serious illness and other *tzaros*, troubles, is unable to truly value life. One who nonetheless does, is a G-dly person who sees beyond the ephemeral and recognizes that living to serve Hashem, regardless of the circumstances, is in and of itself a privilege. A person who lives in misery and feels miserable does not sacrifice as much with his life as one whose life is filled with positive joy and success. Thus, the Torah is teaching us the precious nature of life and how important it is to cherish every moment. The Torah teaches us this so that, if by some Heavenly decree, he is called upon to pay the ultimate sacrifice, he will do just that, give up something that is of ultimate value to him.

A principle in *halachah*, *pikuach nefesh* (literally watching over one's soul), enjoins us to do everything possible to preserve Jewish life. This *halachah* overrides every other rule in Judaism. When a person's life is in critical danger, most laws are not applicable. Human life is sacrosanct and takes precedence over other *mitzvos*. Thus, if someone endangers himself to save a Jewish life, or, even if it is not dangerous, but he gives of himself to save a fellow Jew, he is performing a special service to Hashem. With the aforementioned in mind, the barometer for determining the level of reward for such an act of self-sacrifice is the individual's personal outlook on life and his appreciation of its value.