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**RABBI WEIN'S
WEEKLY
BLOG**

The book of Vayikra, which contains so many detailed commandments and minute details of ritual within it, concludes with a broad view and general description of Jewish faith. It restates the original premise of B'reishit, that the Earth and its inhabitants belong to God and are free agents as to the limits that God has imposed upon them.

The basic premise is that "the Earth belongs to Me." All of the various laws of agriculture that apply in the Land of Israel are based on this simple declaration of the sovereignty of God over the domain where humans temporarily reside.

We storm about asserting our ownership and build for ourselves palaces as though we will be their eternal tenants. It is this false assessment of the true nature of life that leads to painful disagreements and dysfunction in families, communities and even in the relationship between countries and national entities.

The power of self-grandeur unfortunately knows no bounds in the human psyche. The prophet mocks the Pharaoh of Egypt who evidently thought that he created and controlled the Nile River. Our world is witness to tyrants who made and make themselves gods and ascribe to themselves the power to dominate the lives of

millions, and to threaten the destruction of millions of others, who do not bow to their inflated will. The truth is that the closer one is able to come to godliness, so to speak, that person will become more humble and recognize his or her true place and space in this world. And that is the secret of attaining humility and which is ascribed to our great teacher Moshe.

The Torah also limits the control we have over the lives of others. The Lord informed the Jewish people that they are His servants. People have somehow convinced themselves that they truly are entitled to control the lives of others. Perhaps this arises from the necessity of parents to raise their children to adulthood. Yet the economic system that currently governs our lives allows little room for consideration of the needs of others.

Human lives are unfortunately secondary to the almighty bottom line and this affects the entire balance of society generally. If we realize that we are all only God's servants, that humbling effect should make life easier to deal with. The realization of the limits of human power is one of the basic lessons of Judaism. Of course human beings are able to accomplish great things and this is the story of the advancement of human civilization throughout the millennia of history. It is the balance of this aspiration and the human drive for greatness coupled with the humble realization of our limitations, which the Torah wishes us to achieve.

Care and concern for others, an

appreciation of God's ownership of the earth and a belief in the guardianship of God over the land and its people are the key ingredients, in the Torah's view, of the Jewish future. And that is a basic understanding of the lesson that the Torah and this week's pasha teaches us.