

The Mishkan as Location of ATONEMENT



Original Painting By: Yoram Raanan

Weekly Torah Video Series: Vayikra Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

The Duality & Polarity of the Mirror

1. In the merit of the righteous women, our forefathers were redeemed from Egypt.
2. The Jewish man had no interest in procreating; they despaired they would not leave Egypt and were destined for eternal bondage.
3. The women went into the fields where their husbands were working with food & water, and enticed their men to desire them & procreate.
4. Rabeinu Bachya: Yaakov and his family were worthy to receive the Torah– but a critical mass of 600,000 males aged 20 and above were needed.
5. The women donated their copper mirrors for the Laver in the Mishkan.
6. Moshe initially rejected them because they were the paraphernalia of the evil inclination.
7. G-d said to Moshe: They are more special to me than all else donated. If not for the mirrors, there would not be a Jewish People.
8. Due to the mirrors, there were legions of Jews born into existence.
9. If not for the belief and determination of the women, the Torah would not have been given at Sinai.

A Replication of the All -Time Great Moment

1. G-d called to Moshe from the communion tent.
2. The level of audibility was all-powerful & consuming.
3. Moshe alone, was privy to these communications; why then, such intensity?
4. Ramban: A parallel exists between Sinai and the Mishkan.
5. Mishkan: A replication of Sinai in all its details.
6. As G-d communicated with Moshe at Sinai, so too, in the Mishkan.
7. Gemara: G-d's joy on Day 8, when the Mishkan assumed permanence, was the same as the time of creation.
8. The Mishkan was the equivalent of creation before the sin of Adam.
9. After Adam ate of the fruit, the world became putrified, causing G-d's presence to ascend and leave this existence.
10. The Mishkan was the new location for the Divine Presence – fulfilling the original intent.

Leveraging the Balance to Establish Stability

1. Moshe communicates the laws of the Torah to the Jewish people.
2. Midrash: Both the laws pertaining to the convert & those related to idolatry are mentioned 48 times.
3. Ethics Of Our Fathers: The Torah is acquired through 48 ways.
4. Gemara: I have created the evil inclination, I have created the Torah as its antidote.
5. There is a balance between good and evil; each a counterbalance to the other.
6. 48 prerequisites to acquire the Torah which is the counterforce to idolatry– mentioned 48 times...
7. One deliberately violating the Shabbos is the equivalent of an apostate who rejects the Torah.
8. A Jew engaging in idolatry, though observing mitzvos meticulously, equals the apostate who rejects the entire Torah.
9. One who observes Shabbos meticulously is forgiven for all his sins– even if idolatry should be found among them.
10. Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh: Though observing the Shabbos is to refrain from creative activity, the Torah refers to its observance as doing the Shabbos.
11. Since Shabbos corresponds to the entire Torah, it causes a correction in the areas of spiritual deficiencies.

Weekly Torah Commentaries Series: Vayikra

The Mishkan as Location of ATONEMENT



Original Painting By: Yoram Raanan

The Element that Interferes with G-d's Presence

“He (G-d) called to Moshe...”

Midrash: “Blessed is G-d His angels mighty in strength (*geborei koach*) that do His bidding to obey the voice of His word. (Psalms)

Who are the angels? They are Moshe and Aaron as it states, ‘G-d sent His angel to take them out (of Egypt)...’

Rav Huna says in the name of *Reb Acha*, ‘The angels to which the verse is referring are the Jewish people. They are mighty in strength like angels because they declared at Sinai ‘*Naaseh V’nishma* – we will do and we will listen.’”

Another opinion is that the *geborei koach* are those who observe the mitzvah of *Shmitta* (Sabbatical year).

“Why are they identified as *geborei koach* (people of enormous strength)?”

A *gebor koach* is someone who remains silent as he sees his fields being treated as if they were ownerless, while the fences are breached and the fruits are eaten by anyone who wishes. It requires unusual strength to hold back the inclination to demonstrate one’s ownership rights – and thus prevent others from partaking of his field.

Ethics of our Fathers: “Who is the strong one? The one who suppresses his inclination.”

Based on one’s perspective of ownership rights, it is nearly impossible for one to remain silent while seeing one’s capital and physical investment that took years to bring about being treated as ownerless. To see others partaking and benefiting of one’s asset that came about through sweat and toil without any degree of compensation or acknowledgement, it is nearly impossible not to react.

Gemara: One's assets are referred to as "y'kum (standing)" because "one's possessions allow one to stand on his feet." One's status and sense of wealth is based on his financial worth. One's status gives one confidence and a sense of value. If one allows others to partake of his assets and produce as if it were their own, their action causes a diminishment to the owner who witnesses this behavior. He is thus classified by Chazal to be the equivalent of an angel, who needs no acknowledgement and only does the Will of G-d.

Chazal: "A poor person is the equivalent of one who is dead." It is because when one is impoverished, no one values or pays attention to him. For one to be able to restrain himself and allow his agricultural assets to be taken, which are the basis for his sense of identity and self-worth, is considered to be one of unusual strength a "*gebor koach*."

There is a positive commandment to "fear G-d." Fear may manifest itself in two levels. The lesser dimension of fear is the fear of punishment if one were to transgress. This level of fear is not considered to be advanced since one only refrains from violating G-d's word out of fear of what will happen to him if he were to violate. A more advanced level of fear of G-d is having reverence and awe for His Majesty and Unlimited Omnipotence. This is the ultimate level of fear for which one should strive.

It is interesting to note that one who reveres G-d also simultaneously fears Him, due to that awe. This fear does not emanate from one's concern that he will be punished if he should transgress, but rather, it is a deeply rooted fear that is based on one's appreciation and internalization of G-d being the Almighty One Who wills every aspect of existence continuously.

For example, if one were an advanced Torah scholar and proficient in all areas of *Torah* and was given the opportunity to meet the *Vilna Gaon*, he would go with great apprehension and he would be afraid. This is because the *Torah* scholar understands with absolute clarity, that his achievement of *Torah* understanding and spiritual achievement are insignificant compared to that of the *Vilna Gaon*. One's sense of value is based on his level of accomplishment.

When one is put into a position that he realizes that his level of accomplishment is insignificant, he will lose his sense of self-worth. When one feels negated and minimized, his sense of accomplishment becomes irrelevant. One who is able to internalize G-d's dimension of Being, would realize that regardless of the scope and dimension of his level of accomplishment, it is the equivalent of nothing. At that moment, overwhelming fear would come upon that individual because he has no senses of worth. Thus, the fear of G-d in this context is due to his level of reverence for Him.

At Sinai the Jewish people were asked by G-d if they would accept His *Torah*. They declared, "We will do and then we will listen."

Because the Jewish people were negated by being exposed to the Divine Presence, there was no basis for them to ask G-d "What is contained in the *Torah*?"

The angels perform the Will of G-d with zeal and without question because they understand Who G-d is and are thus negated to His Will. The angel has no sense of self, but rather exists only to do the Will of G-d.

This is the reason the *Midrash* refers to the Jewish people at Sinai as angels who are "*geborei koach*."

If a Jew were to have the capacity to internalize Who G-d is, he would not hesitate in any way to act with the greatest level of zeal to carry out His Will. *Moshe* was the most humble man to ever walk the face of the earth. He quantified himself as "nothing," as he said, "What are we (*nachnu mah*)?"

Because *Moshe* demonstrated the ultimate level of negation to G-d, although Aaron was not exactly at that level, the *Midrash* refers them as "*geborei koach*."

Moshe, the Beloved of G-d

"He (G-d) called (*vayikra*) to *Moshe*, and *Hashem* spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying..."

G-d initially called out to *Moshe* and then He spoke to him. What is the meaning of this?

Rashi: "In all of the instances in the *Torah* where it states that G-d spoke (*deebur*), said (*amira*), or commanded (*tzivui*), G-d first called (*vayikra*) to *Moshe* before speaking to him.

Vayikra is an expression of love. As we find regarding the angels: "And one (angel) will call (*v'karah*) another and say Holy, holy, holy is *Hashem*..."

Gemara: When G-d was going to give the *Torah* to the Jewish people, the angels in heaven came to Him with a claim, "What is this (unformed) man that is not even worth mentioning? Leave Your splendor in heaven."

The angels did not want G-d to give the *Torah* to the Jewish people because man is fickle and has a propensity to sin. They wanted the *Torah* to remain in heaven.

G-d said to *Moshe*, "Answer them (the angels)." *Moshe* said to them, "It states in the Ten Commandments that it is forbidden to covet another's property, etc. Angels have no evil inclination and thus cannot covet or have relevance to envy."

Since each class is able to perceive the other class without envy, when they call to one another, it is with love. There is no evil inclination that interferes to obscure each angel from appreciating his fellow.

When G-d called to *Moshe*, it was an indication that He valued and loved him for who he was.

If every time G-d spoke or commanded *Moshe* throughout the *Torah* it was predicated on Him first "calling - *vayikra*" *Moshe*, why does the *Torah* first reveal this in the Portion of *Vayikra*? Why did the *Torah* choose the portion of the sacrifices to reveal this expression of love?

The *Torah* tells us that although G-d had promised *Avraham* that he and his offspring would inherit the Land and be as numerous as the stars in heaven, he was concerned that if his offspring were to sin, they would be destroyed as the generation of the Great Flood and the generation of the Dispersion. G-d told *Avraham* to take various species of animals in the Covenant between the Parts, which allude to the sacrifices that the Jewish people would be given to atone for their sins. *Avraham* did not need to be

concerned about the future of the Jewish people because if they should sin they would be atoned through the sacrifices.

Gemara: If one brings a sacrifice and it is not predicated on repentance, it is considered to be the sacrifice of the wicked, and it is thus an abomination to G-d. Sacrifices only have the ability to bring about atonement because of the Attribute of Mercy.

The *Torah* using the expression "*Vayikra*," which is an expression of love, particularly in the portion of the sacrifices because it indicates G-d's love for the Jewish people since He gave them sacrifices.

Although the non-Jew can bring a burnt offering, he has no relevance to atonement and reinstatement. It is only the Jew who can bring a sacrifice for atonement. Thus, we are able to appreciate the meaning of the expression "*Vayikra*" in this particular context because it is an expression of love for the Jewish people.

Rambam: Before one repents, one is considered despised, disgusting, and abominable before G-d. However, after he repents, he is considered to be beloved, cherished and precious. It is because sacrifice only has value if it is valued on repentance, which causes the Jew to be seen in G-d's eyes as special; therefore, the *Torah* chose to use the expression of "*Vayikra*" in this particular context.

The Patriarchs Before G-d

Rambam: Because man has an innate overwhelming need to be subservient to a greater power, it was necessary for G-d to establish a means for man to express that subservience through worship in a permitted context. This is the concept of sacrifices. When one brings a sacrifice, he is expressing that subservience to G-d.

Ramban rejects the position of *Rambam* and states that the object of sacrifices is to activate and coalesce spiritual forces that are necessary for existence and the Jewish people. Sacrifices are unrelated to the need to be subservient to a greater power.

Reb Meir Simcha of Dvinsk: *Rambam* is not referring to the sacrifices that were brought in the *Mishkan*

or the Temple, but rather, he is referring to the sacrifices that one is permitted to bring on one's personal altar (*bamah*), which was only permitted during certain times in Jewish history.

This was a time when the *Mishkan* was not classified as "*Mishkan*" but rather "*Bamah gedola* (great altar)." It was a time when the Holy Ark was not located in the *Mishkan*.

When one was not able to bring a sacrifice in the *Mishkan*, G-d permitted him to bring his own personal altar to express his subservience to Him. However, when the *Mishkan* was in place and when the Temple was built, the personal altar was no longer permitted. The sacrifice that was brought in the *Mishkan* or Temple, was as *Ramban* explains to activate and coalesce spiritual forces that were needed for the Jewish people. *Ramban* fully concurs with *Ramban*. The *Mishkan* and Temple were the location of the Divine Presence. Thus, the sacrifices that were brought in the *Mishkan* or Temple were brought before G-d. This was not the case when it was brought on a personal altar.

The *Torah* tells us that *Bilaam* was commissioned by *Balak* to curse the Jewish people. In order to endear himself to G-d, *Bilaam* built seven altars and had *Balak* bring upon them sacrifices to G-d. *Rashi* cites *Chazal* who explain that the seven altars that *Bilaam* built were to counter the seven altars that were built by the three Patriarchs.

Midrash: "*Bilaam* said, "The seven altars that I built are the equivalent of all the altars built by their forefathers. *Avraham* built four....*Yitzchak* built one and *Yaakov* built two..."

Bilaam believed that his altars upon which sacrifices were brought before G-d were the equivalent of the altars of the Patriarchs. However, this was not so.

Gemara: A non-Jew is permitted to bring a sacrifice wherever and whenever he chooses to do so. However, he is not permitted to serve idolatry. What is the difference between a sacrifice brought in the Temple and outside of the Temple?

The Temple was the location of G-d's Presence and is thus considered to be brought "before G-d." However, if one brings a sacrifice outside of the

Temple on a personal altar, it is only an expression of subservience to G-d but it has no relevance to G-d's Presence being associated with it.

Although *Bilaam* established seven altars and brought sacrifices upon them, because they were not in the location of the Divine Presence, their value was limited. It is not comparable to any degree to the sacrifice that is brought before G-d in the location of the Divine Presence.

Chazal: Before the *Mishkan* was built, the holy Patriarchs were the location of the Divine Presence. "*Hein hein hamerkava* (they are G-d's chariot).

When the Patriarchs brought their sacrifices on the altars they built, they were brought before G-d because they were the location of the Divine Presence. It was the equivalent of their sacrifices being brought in the Temple and not on a personal altar.

In contrast, *Bilaam's* sacrifices were on personal altars which had no relevance to the Divine Presence. This was something that *Bilaam* did not understand or appreciate.

Shedding Light in an Existence of Darkness

"He (G-d) called (*vayikra*) to *Moshe*..."

Midrash: "The *Torah* uses the term "*vayikra* (called)" to indicate the greatness of *Moshe*.

We find at the beginning of Creation when G-d created day, the *Torah* states "...and G-d called (*vayikra*) the light day." Just as G-d called (*vayikra*) the light day, so too He called (*vayikra*) to *Moshe*.

Who is greater? Is it the captor or the captured? The captor is greater. The light was called day. There is no true light other than the *Torah*.

"*Neir mitzvah v'Torah ohr* (the mitzvah is the fuel and the *Torah* is the light/illumination)." (Proverbs)

Moshe captured the *Torah* in its entirety as it states, "You ascended above and you captured the captured."

Gemara: Moshe ascended to heaven and took the *Torah* despite the angels who were opposed to man possessing G-d's splendor. Moshe was the captor who captured the *Torah* (the light).

G-d said to Moshe, "In this existence you are the leader of the Jewish people. At the end of time when the righteous come to claim their reward, you shall be ahead of them all." Thus, Moshe being the captor is even greater than the *Torah* itself.

"If not for My covenant, which is in effect day and night, the statutes of heaven and earth would not be put in place." (Jeremiah)

Gemara: "The covenant" is referring to the study of *Torah*, which must be in effect continuously in order to maintain existence.

Ramchal: When G-d Willed existence, He linked every aspect of existence to the *Torah*. When one engages in *Torah* study, it activates various spiritual influences and forces that allow the world to manifest and generate great blessing. However, if *Torah* study would cease, so too would existence cease.

Gemara: Physical existence is comparable to the nighttime period (darkness), and the world to come (at the end of time) is comparable to the daytime period (light). Just as in the nighttime period one perceives his surroundings in a distorted manner, so too is one's perception of truth in the physical world distorted and obscured.

"G-d called the light day." The only way one is able to see existence in its true light is through the study of *Torah*, which is the source of illumination. The study of *Torah* allows one to have a sense of his own spirituality, thus removing the conflicts of interest that distort truth.

The world to come will be completely illuminated and free of distortion because evil will be vanquished. However, G-d gave the Jewish people a mechanism, which is the *Torah*, to illuminate the physicality of the world to have a semblance of the world to come as the *Gemara* states, "I (G-d) created the evil inclination and the *Torah* as its antidote."

Moshe, because of his unique dimension of spirituality was the one who brought this special light

into existence through his acquisition of the *Torah*. He will thus be the first to receive reward because it is only because of his accomplishment that anyone can see truth and thus advance spiritually.

Just as G-d called the light "day," He called to Moshe who was the one who brought light into the world despite the darkness of physical existence. He was the one who allowed the Jew to have "day" during the nighttime period, the physical world.

Rambam: Although there is a *mitzvah* to study *Torah* during the day and nighttime period, the majority of one's study should be done in the nighttime period as the Prophet Jeremiah states (*Eicha*), "Rise and sing out in the night." The song of the Jew is the *Torah*, which is most effective when studied during the nighttime period.

The Prophet wrote these words in *Eicha*, which was expressed after the destruction of the Temple. He had witnessed the Jewish people going into exile and further into darkness. The only way one could have some semblance of understanding of one's predicament is through the light of *Torah*, which is the song of the Jew.

One sings when one is joyous. Similarly, when one is able to achieve clarity through the study of *Torah*, despite the darkness of the world, it will give him joy.

Choice, the Basis for Trust and Faith

"He (G-d) called to Moshe..."

Midrash: cites a verse from Psalms, "Blessed is G-d His angels mighty in strength (*geborei koach*) that do His bidding to obey the voice of His word."

Who are the angels? They are Moshe and Aaron as it states, "G-d sent His angel to take them out (of Egypt)..."

Rav Huna says in the name of *Reb Acha*, The angels to which the verse is referring are the Jewish people. They are mighty in strength like angels because they declared at Sinai "*Naaseh V'nishma* – we will do and we will listen."

It seems from the *Midrash* that it took enormous strength for the Jewish people to accept the *Torah* at Sinai. What is the basis of this strength?

Gemara: Rav was so immersed in his *Torah* study that he did not realize that his finger was under his heel, and it was bleeding. A heretic came to him and said, "I see that you people have not changed. You are still impulsive. Just as long ago, because of your impulsiveness, you declared that you would do before you heard the extent of your obligation, so too you remain impulsive as is clear from your injury." Rav explained to the heretic that there is a verse that states, "The one who has faith, it will lead him; however, the one who does not have faith will be cast aside. We have faith and thus we will be led to salvation whereas your kind will be cast aside."

It seems from the *Gemara* that the acceptance of *Torah* at Sinai was based on the Jew's trust and faith in G-d to accept His Word without exception. However, based on the *Midrash* it seems that one needs enormous strength to accept the Word of G-d.

Another opinion cited by the *Midrash* is that the *geborei koach* are those who observe the *mitzvah* of *Shmitta* (Sabbatical year). The *Midrash* asks, "Why are they identified as *geborei koach* (people of enormous strength)?" The one who remains silent as he sees his fields being treated as if they were ownerless, with their fences being breached and the fruits being eaten by anyone who wishes to do so is a *gebor koach*.

The individual who remains silent under these circumstances is identified as one with enormous strength because it requires unusual strength to hold back the inclination to demonstrate one's ownership rights and thus prevent others from partaking of his field.

Ethics of our Fathers: "Who is the strong one? The one who subdues his inclination." One is able to have enormous strength not because he was endowed with physical strength but rather because he chose to subdue his inclination. It is by choosing to follow the path of G-d despite one's inclination that establishes him as the strong one.

This is the difference between the Jew and the nations of the world. Because the Jewish people made many choices to establish their spirituality, they were able to have enormous faith in G-d to reach unparalleled heights of spiritual advancement. This is unlike the heretic who succumbs to his inclination and rejected the path of good. Due to the Jew's spiritualization of self, he is able to have greater strength to observe the Sabbatical year because he appreciates and internalizes the value of heeding G-d's Word.

The Jewish people chose to be straight, while the nations of the world chose not to be so. As King Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes, "G-d had made man straight, but he sought out many intrigues." The Jewish people remain straight because they made and continuously make the right choices, which is to subordinate the evil inclination. However, the nations of the world choose to follow their own inclinations and will ultimately be cast aside.

