

MAN SOARS THROUGH INITIATIVE



Original Painting By:
YORAM RAANAN

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Nasso Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Weekly Video: Tracing The Accomplishment To An Antecedent

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Creating the Partnership That Facilitated The Absolute

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When The Terrestrial Supersedes the Celestial

1. G-d's intent in creation was to dwell on the terrestrial with Man – not only on the celestial.
2. He commanded Man to not eat from the Tree of Knowledge.
3. Adam failed – causing G-d to remove Himself from the terrestrial; He ascended to the 7th Heaven.
4. Avraham's good deeds caused G-d to descend from the 7th to the 6th Heaven.
5. Yitzchok, offering himself as a sacrifice, caused the Divine Presence to descend to the 5th.
6. Why was Moshe able to reinstate G-d's Presence onto the terrestrial?
7. Moshe was the only one qualified to receive the Torah.
8. The objective of creation was that there should be a Jewish people and the Torah.
9. Moshe brought creation to fruition as the location for the Torah to be fulfilled.
10. Moshe was therefore able to bring G-d's Presence to the terrestrial.

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Encrypting the Blessing for All Contingencies

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1. The *Kohen* blesses the congregation with three blessings.
2. First blessing: G-d should bless you and watch over you.
3. *Rashi*: G-d should bless you with material wealth and your possessions should not be plundered.
4. G-d provides divine protection to retain the blessing.
5. *Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh*: G-d should protect you from any negative influence due to the material.
6. *Seforno*: The objective of the material is to provide all that is necessary for the spiritual.
7. "If there is no flour, there is no *Torah*."
8. Second blessing: G-d should bring illumination upon you.
9. After your needs are satisfied, G-d should illuminate your eyes to see G-d's wonders from His *Torah* and actions.
10. You will see His wonders and divine providence.

Ensnaring the Suspected Adulteress

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1. The suspected adulteress claiming innocence is brought to the *Kohen* for the ritual of the *Sotah*.
2. *Sotah* is juxtaposed to the portion of the tithes given to the *Kohen*.
3. If one withholds the tithes from the *Kohen* he will be forced to come with his wife as a suspected adulteress to the *Kohen*.
4. Because Aaron participated in gathering the gold for the golden calf it was decreed his four sons should die.
5. *Moshe's* supplication annulled 50% of the decree.
6. Why were Aaron's adult sons liable for their father's sin?
7. *Midrash*: They died because they officiated after they drank wine, or acted on their own without consulting with *Moshe*.
8. Due to Aaron's piety they should have merited clarity not to err as they had.
9. Because Aaron deserved suffering for his role in the golden calf his two sons were not given clarity.
10. Their failing was their own.
11. Had the husband not withheld the tithes from the *Kohen*, his merit would have protected his wife from not having an interest in another man.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Nasso

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Utilizing Blessing for What it Was Meant

Torah: Regarding the blessing the *Kohanim* (Priests) are commanded to give to the Jewish people, “*Hashem* spoke to *Moshe* saying, ‘Speak to Aaron and his sons saying: So shall you bless the Children of Israel, saying to them: May *Hashem* bless you and safeguard you (*yivorechicha Hashem v’yishmerecha*). May *Hashem* illuminate His countenance for you (*yaeir Hashem Panav eilecha v’yichuneka*). May *Hashem* lift His countenance to you and establish peace for you (*yisah Hashem Panav eilecha v’yaseim lecha shalom*).”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: “May *Hashem* bless you and safeguard you” means that one should be endowed with material wealth and G-d should safeguard the endowment so that it should not be stolen from the recipient.

Midrash: “‘May *Hashem* bless you’ that G-d should bless one with wealth. ‘and Safeguard you’ that G-d should protect the individual to do *mitzvos*.”

Eitz Yosef (a commentator on the *Midrash*): “Safeguard you to do *mitzvos*’ means that G-d should protect and guide the individual to utilize the wealth that he was given for the sake of *mitzvos*. It is to say that if one is given wealth, it could be a determinant to his spirituality. Since wealth causes empowerment and subsequently a level of temptation, the evil inclination may draw the individual to do things with his wealth that will not strengthen the *Torah*, but to the contrary. This is the reason the *Kohen* blesses the individual that G-d should give one the clarity to utilize his wealth for the support of *Torah* and *mitzvos*.”

Mabit, *Rav Moshe Ben Yosef di Trani*, in his work, “*Bais Elokeem*” (a sixteenth century rabbi who authored a work that explains prayer): When one stands before G-d in the *Amidah* (silent prayer), one only has the right to make a request for what is pertinent to one’s existence. One should not supplicate G-d to receive something superfluous that would be considered unacceptable, even to a mortal king.

Rambam in the Laws of Prayer: “During the entire *Amidah*, one must visualize himself as standing before G-d Himself.” There is a principle, “G-d brings merit to the one who is meritorious.” In order for one to make proper decisions for himself and on behalf of others, especially for the Jewish people, one needs to be endowed with special merit.

Mishna in Ethics of Our Fathers: “The one who brings merit to the community, sin will not come to his hand.” If one brings merit to others, he will merit Divine Protection not to sin. Thus this individual will utilize the gift of G-d to do His Will.

One may ask, “If the *Kohanim* are blessing the Jewish people continuously to have material wealth, why do we not see the fruits of those blessings?” The blessing of the *Kohanim* to be endowed with wealth, is specifically for the individual who lives with a spiritual perspective. If one receives wealth and it is to his detriment, it is not a blessing. The blessing of the *Kohanim* is that one should not be diminished as a result of G-d’s endowment.

Midrash: “The blessing ‘May Hashem illuminate His countenance for you’ means that one should merit to have children that are *Torah* scholars. As King Solomon states in Proverbs, ‘*Neir mitzvah v’Torah ohr* – the *mitzvah* is fuel and the *Torah* is the illuminator.’” The *Gemara* in Tractate *Bava Basra* tells us that the light of the *Menorah* symbolizes the Oral Law, which is the elucidation of the Written Law.

Gemara in Tractate *Shabbos*: If one kindles many candles to honor the *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* he will merit to have children who are *Torah* scholars. The *Gemara* tells a story about a man who lit many candles on behalf of *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* and he merited to have two sons who were great Sages of the *Talmud*. We see that one needs to have a special blessing for one to merit children who are *Torah* scholars. It is not something that comes about solely through one’s initiative. It must be supplemented with blessing and supplication.

Midrash: “Another explanation of the blessing ‘May Hashem illuminate His countenance for you’ is that G-d should establish from you *Kohanim* who will illuminate the Altar. As it states, ‘the Altar should not be illuminated for naught.’... (Since the blessing is being given to those who are not *Kohanim*, how could one establish *Kohanim*?)... One should merit to have sons-in-law who are *Kohanim* and bring forth grandchildren who are *Kohanim*.”

This blessing is still in effect today although we do not have an Altar. As it states, ‘The one who engages in the study of *Torah* that pertains to a particular offering, G-d values it as if he brought that offering.’ (It may be that *Torah* sages also have the status of *Kohanim* since they are engaged in *Torah* study).” We say in the *Amidah*, “Behold our affliction, take up our grievance and redeem us speedily for Your Name’s sake...” We pray that G-d redeem us not because we have been victimized by the nations of the world but rather because we long for spiritual redemption. We pray that G-d send the Redeemer so that we can serve Him in the most optimal setting and not in exile, where G-d’s Name is in a state of Desecration.

Touching Upon what is Beyond

Torah: “It was on the day that *Moshe* finished erecting the Tabernacle...” *Midrash*: “King Solomon writes, ‘The one who cares for the fig tree is the one who will eat its fruit. And the one who watches over his master shall be honored.’ G-d does not withhold the just reward from any creature. For whatever one toils and sacrifices, G-d does not withhold reward from him. This is the meaning of the words of King Solomon. Where do we find this?”

King Solomon built and completed the First Temple. However because King David had sacrificed selflessly for its building (by purchasing its location) and longing to be able to build it, he should be remembered. As it states, ‘G-d had promised: You should remember David and how he was afflicted to bring about the Temple. He yearned to be able to enter into My House.’ Thus, G-d did not withhold his reward. The Temple is identified with his name. As it states, ‘This is a song for the inauguration of the House of David.’ Was it King David who inaugurated the Temple? It was King Solomon, his son who had done so. However because King David sacrificed for it, the Temple is identified with his name. As it states in Proverbs, ‘The one who cares for the fig tree is the one who will eat its fruit.’

We also find regarding the building of the *Mishkan*, that although every Jew had participated in the building of the *Mishkan*... However, it was because *Moshe* had given of himself selflessly and sacrificed to a greater degree, that the *Mishkan* is identified with his name... It states, ‘It was on the day that *Moshe* finished erecting the Tabernacle...’ If all of the Jewish people assisted in building the *Mishkan*, why does the *Torah* attribute its completion to *Moshe*? It was because of his sacrifice for it...”

Torah: When an animal is rendered as a “*treifa*” it cannot be eaten by a Jew, but rather it should be given to the dog. From this, we learn “G-d does not withhold the just reward from any creature.” At the time of the tenth plague in Egypt, the killing of the firstborn, G-d had said that the dogs should not bark. Because the dogs remained silent and did not bark, G-d rewarded them with the remains of an animal that is found to be “*treifa*”. We learn from this passage that G-d does not withhold reward even from a lowly creature. If the principle that G-d does not withhold reward from any creature is derived from a verse in the *Torah*, why does the *Midrash* need to cite a verse from Proverbs in order to establish the same principle?

We can draw from the example of the dog that G-d does not withhold reward from any creature. That reward is commensurate with doing the Will of G-d. However, regarding the *Mishkan*, Moshe did not participate in the actual building of the *Mishkan*. He only performed the final act of its erection. Thus, we see regarding the *Mishkan* that G-d rewards even the one who did not actually participate in the performance of the *mitzvah*. Although Moshe did not participate in the building of the *Mishkan*, he oversaw it and prayed that every aspect of the *Mishkan* should have the greatest capacity to be the receptacle for G-d’s Presence. The reward that is derived from the verse in Proverbs teaches us that although an individual only sets a dynamic in motion to bring about a result, he is fully credited for the end result.

King David wanted to build the Temple; however, G-d did not allow him to do so. King Solomon was the one destined to build the Temple; however, had it not been for King David’s personal sacrifice on its behalf, his son King Solomon would not have been able to create the setting for G-d’s Presence. Thus, the inauguration of the Temple identifies as the “House of David.”

Chofetz Chaim: If one provides for what is needed to give a child a proper Jewish education and that child is set forth on a path to become a true *Torah* observant Jew who eventually establishes a family, the one who initially provided for that education will receive merit from all the generations who will descend from the beneficiary until the end of time. It is through that one act of providing for the child’s *Torah* education that gives the benefactor unlimited merit. Had it not been for his interest and initiative in the *Torah* education of the child, all the generations that evolved from that one person would not have been *Torah* observant Jews.

If one in some way affects the life of another Jew even by offering him a kind word, that single act, although it seems to be inconsequential may have infinite value. It is because an endless chain of events could evolve from that one kind word. Although we may believe that what we do may seem inconsequential, only G-d knows to what degree it will be effective.

Seeing Beyond the Veneer

Torah: “It was on the day that Moshe finished erecting the Tabernacle...” *Midrash* citing a verse from Proverbs: “...Sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it...’ To whom is this referring? It is referring to *Bezalel* who toiled in the building of the *Mishkan*. As it states, ‘See, Hashem has proclaimed by name, *Betzalel*... He filled him with G-dly spirit with wisdom, insight, and knowledge...’ Despite the fact that *Bezalel* toiled for the building of the *Mishkan* the *Torah* tells us that someone else claimed his portion. Moshe did not toil in the building in the *Mishkan*, yet his name is associated with its completion. As it states, ‘... Moshe finished erecting the Tabernacle...’ It does not state that *Bezalel* completed the *Mishkan*. Thus, the one who did not toil received the portion of the one who did toil.” From the words of King Solomon, life seems to be sometimes inequitable. One may toil, yet another will reap the benefits. How do we understand this?

We say every day in our prayers, “We should not toil for naught and give birth to confusion.” Meaning, our initiative should have value and bring about purpose. In some instances one may toil and yield nothing of value. This is why we pray to G-d that we should be the beneficiaries of our efforts. Why was *Bezalel* not acknowledged for his building and overseeing the *Mishkan* despite his exceptional level of wisdom, insight, and knowledge? Why was Moshe the one to merit having the *Mishkan* identify with him?

Moshe was the vital link between G-d and the Jewish people. After the sin of the Golden Calf, G-d wanted to destroy the Jewish people. However, only because of Moshe’s supplications did He annul the decree and spare them. In order to demonstrate the fact that G-d had forgiven them, He commanded the Jewish people to build a *Mishkan* to act as a medium for His Divine Presence to dwell in their midst. Had it not been for Moshe, there would have not been a Jewish people.

The value of the *Mishkan* only stemmed from the fact that *Moshe* had supplicated G-d to forgive the Jewish people. Regardless of how unique *Bezalel's* level of wisdom and knowledge had been, his building of the *Mishkan* was only relevant because of *Moshe's* spiritual initiative. Thus, although *Moshe* did not actually toil for the *Mishkan* its value is only because of *Moshe*. Thus, the *Mishkan* is accredited to *Moshe* who did not toil for it.

G-d metes out reward in the most perfect and just manner. Although one may perceive that *Bezalel* was denied what was rightfully his because the *Mishkan* does not identify with his accomplishment; nevertheless, understanding the background of the *Mishkan* we clearly see that the one who was truly deserving was *Moshe*.

To Perceive G-d in All Aspects of Our Existence

Torah: Regarding the Priestly blessing, “May Hashem bless you and safeguard you. May Hashem illuminate His countenance for you and be gracious to you. May Hashem lift His countenance to you and establish peace for you.”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: “‘May Hashem bless you’ means that one’s material possessions should be blessed and succeed. ‘(G-d should) safeguard you’ means that G-d should protect one’s assets so that plunderers should not come and steal what was given. ‘May Hashem illuminate His countenance for you...’ means G-d should suppress His anger and thus allow His Countenance to shine upon you and give you special charm.”

Sforno: “‘May Hashem illuminate His countenance for you...’ means that G-d should illuminate your eyes so that you should be able to gaze upon the wonders from His *Torah* and His actions.”

King David in Psalms: “How great (*rabu*) are Your works Hashem...” The word “*rabu*” can be interpreted as “numerous or immense.” However, *Ramak* (*Reb Moshe Cordavero*) writes in his work *Tomer Devorah* that “*rabu*” means “how prestigious and exalted are Your works” because they all came about through G-d’s wisdom. He explains that the imprint of the Craftsman who brought about existence is obvious in all that He created; therefore, they are exalted and special.

King David in Psalms: “The heavens speak G-d’s Glory.” He was able to appreciate and see and G-d’s Glory when he gazed upon the heavens. How is one able to appreciate and see G-d’s imprint on every aspect of creation? One

needs Divine Assistance so that his eyes should be illuminated to have this level of appreciation. Even for one to fathom G-d, one needs for Him to illuminate one’s eyes to have the ability to see G-d’s wonders.

We say at the end of the *Uva l’Tzion* prayer, “May He open our heart through His *Torah* and imbue our heart with love and awe of Him and that we may do His will and serve Him wholeheartedly...” One would think that if one was imbued with love and awe for G-d that doing His Will would be a natural consequence. Why is it necessary to supplicate G-d the ability to do His Will despite the fact that one’s heart is filled with intense love and reverence for Him?

We see from this supplication that even when one possess love and awe for G-d, one needs Divine Assistance to be able to actualize His Will. If one merited the Divine Assistance to be able to actualize the *mitzvos* one would think that he would do so wholeheartedly? We see that one needs to also supplicate G-d to do His Will wholeheartedly despite that fact that one has love and awe. Every level of advancement requires a separate degree of Divine Assistance in order to succeed in his spiritual ascent. One may have love and reverence for G-d and yet falter in doing His Will.

Within the spiritual realm there is no end to levels of growth and achievement. For example, *Rebbe Akiva*, one of the greatest rabbis of the Tanaic period gave his life as one of the ten martyrs in order to sanctify G-d as an expression of his love. Despite this unique level of love, it was not the equivalent of *Moshe's* level of love for G-d. It is not to say that *Rebbe Akiva* was not unique in this regard, but rather *Moshe* reached the ultimate level that no human being had ever achieved.

As great as *Yehoshua Bin Nun*, the successor of *Moshe*, was regarding his responsibility to bring the Jewish people into the Land of Israel and to guarantee the transmission of *Torah* from generation to generation, he was only reflection of his master.

Gemara: “The face of *Moshe* was the equivalent of the sun and the face of *Yehoshua* was the equivalent of the moon.” Meaning, *Moshe's* face had an intense radiance as the sun, but *Yehoshua* only reflected the radiance of his master as the moon reflects the sun.

One’s achievement in the spiritual realm is not dependent only on one’s intellectual capacity, but rather will be determined by the degree of Divine Assistance

that the individual merits. We thus supplicate G-d to assist us on multiple levels to perform as G-d dictates.

Spiritual Ascent, A Road with No Return

Torah: “A man or woman who shall dissociate himself by taking a Nazerite vow of abstinence for the sake of *Hashem*; from new or aged wine shall he abstain, and he shall not drink...anything which grapes have been steeped...a razor shall not pass over his head...the growth of hair on his head shall grow...he shall not come near a dead person....he shall not contaminate himself upon their death...for the crown of G-d is upon his head. All the days of his abstinence he is holy to *Hashem*.”

One may choose to take upon himself the vow of the Nazerite in order to become closer to G-d. When one assumes the status of a Nazerite, he is considered “holy to *Hashem*.” He is thus not permitted to partake of grape products, cut his hair, or contaminate himself to the dead. The *Torah* tells us that upon the completion of the period of one’s Nazeritehood, which is thirty days, one must bring three offerings, one of which is a sin offering.

If the Nazerite is a person of an exalted holy status, *Ramban* asks, “Why must the Nazerite, upon concluding his counting, bring a sin offering? What is his spiritual failing?” He answers, “According to the simple understanding, this individual is considered a sinner when he completes his Nazeritehood because now he has removed himself from the sanctity and service of G-d. It would have been appropriate for him to remain a Nazerite his entire life and be sanctified to G-d.

As we find the verse in *Amos*, the Nazerite is equated to the prophet, although he does not have prophetic vision. He must be atoned because he has allowed himself to become contaminated and be associated with the lusts of existence. Therefore, he must bring a sin offering.” If one never chose to enter into the state of Nazeritehood there is no claim against him. However, if one did choose to ascend to the exalted holy state of Nazeritehood, one is considered to be a sinner for not remaining there at that level. What is the difference between the two? If one

has the ability to ascend to that special level and does not, why is he not considered to be a sinner?

There is a *Torah* obligation, which is incumbent upon every Jew to be involved in continuous *Torah* study. Only through engaging in it can one actualize his spiritual potential. If one does not acquire the portion of *Torah* that was meant to be his during his lifetime, it is considered to be a spiritual failing. However, if one does not become a Nazerite during his lifetime, it is not considered to be a claim, although he did not ascend to that special level.

Every Jew has a unique and specific portion in *Torah* that was designated for him at Sinai, as we recite many times in our prayers, “give us our portion in Your *Torah*.” When one is born one is ordained with a spiritual potential. In order for one to achieve spiritual growth in one’s lifetime, one must engage in *Torah* study for the sake of the performance of mitzvos. As the *Gemara* in Tractate *Kiddushin* states, “Great is the study (of *Torah*) because it is through it that one comes to action.” One is only able to reach his spiritual potential when he has acquired his full portion of *Torah*. If one chooses not to do so, it is considered to be his failing.

Nazeritehood, on the other hand, is a nonobligatory state into which one chooses to enter. One is able to fully actualize his spirituality without becoming a Nazerite. However, if one does choose to enter and to ascend to such an exalted state that is the equivalent of being a prophet, then it is considered to be an affront to G-d if he should leave this state in order to return to the mundane. If one does so he must bring a sin offering in order to atone.

The *Mishna* in Ethics of our Fathers tells us that if one interrupts his *Torah* study to take notice of a tree by saying, “how beautiful is this tree”, although he is admiring G-d’s creation, his life should be taken. This is because if one has engaged in *Torah* study, which is the ultimate level of spirituality, how could he interrupt it for something of lesser value, although he is admiring G-d’s creation! Just as the Nazerite who descends from his lofty level of holiness for something of lesser value is considered a sinner, so too is the one who disengages from his *Torah* study for something of lesser value.



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