

ACCEDING TO ONES DEMISE WITH ELATION

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Maatos-Maasei

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Hourly Video: Maatos-Maasei

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Why the Nullification of Vows and Oaths Now?

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Putting a Cap on Evil by Articulation of its Demise

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Is Their Resistance to Go to War Praiseworthy

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The Ultimate Cell of MultiCultural Organisms

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1. The objective of creation is the study of Torah and the fulfillment of its mitzvos.
2. Zohar: Should there be any moment the Torah is not studied, the world would revert to preexistence.
3. Pirkei Avos: The world stands on 3 principles: Torah, Avodah, and acts of loving-kindness.
4. The Mishnah seems to contradict the Zohar.
5. Chazal: The study of Torah is the equivalent of all 613 mitzvos.
6. Vilnah Gaon: Each word of Torah is the equivalent of all 613 mitzvos.
7. Rambam: Great is the study of Torah that it brings to actualization; the performance of a mitzvah alone does not.
8. Midrash: I would have preferred they abandon me and keep my Torah because the (innate) illumination contained within it would have brought them back to good.
9. All mitzvos are connected to the study of Torah.
10. When one studies Torah, he has touched upon Avodah and acts of loving-kindness.
11. If one does not study Torah regardless of his level of engagement it will not touch upon Torah.

Emphasizing the Innate Value of the Speaking Species

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1. When taking an oath and violating it, one violates the negative commandment "Do not desecrate your word."
2. Gemara: Due to the sin of vows, one loses his wife and (minor) children.
3. The commandment of violating vows connotes there is sanctity to speech.
4. Vernacular: "One's speech is sacred."
5. Job: Man (Adam) was made to toil.
6. Gemara: "Toil" refers to the toil of the mouth, the articulation of Torah.
7. G-d blew a soul of life into his nostrils & he became a living species.
8. Targum: "Living" is interpreted as a speaking species.
9. Speech emanates from the spiritual components of the person, the soul.
10. G-d created the world for Torah & the Jewish People.
11. When one studies Torah it must be articulated.
12. Adam was endowed with the power of speech, which is essential for the study of Torah.
13. Violating one's word, which emanates from a spiritual source, has severe repercussions.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Maatos-Maasei



Establishing the Definitive Word of G-d

Torah: The daughters of *Tzelofchad* approached *Moshe* with a claim to their father's portion in the Land because he had died without sons. They posed the question regarding their inheritance to *Moshe*.

Chazal: Because the answer to their question was concealed to *Moshe*, he presented the question to G-d. G-d told him that the daughters of *Tzelofchad* had a valid claim to their father's portion in the Land and they were the legitimate heirs. Why was this particular area of *Torah* concealed from *Moshe*?

Rashi citing the *Midrash:* *Moshe* had forgotten the law pertaining to inheritance because of something that had occurred soon after the *Torah* was given at Sinai. When *Moshe* had established, through the instruction of G-d, the infrastructure of the judicial system consisting of higher and lower courts, he had said to the Jewish people, "The most difficult issues you will bring to me." Despite the fact that *Moshe*

was the most humble person who ever lived, since he expressed himself in a manner, which could be perceived as he would be the one to elucidate the issues personally, it was considered inappropriate. *Moshe* should have said to them, "Whatever is most difficult I will present to G-d." Although that is what *Moshe* actually meant, nevertheless it was considered to be a failing because of how it could be perceived.

Therefore, measure for measure, G-d concealed the laws pertaining to inheritance from *Moshe* when they were posed by the daughters of *Tzelofchad*. It was important to establish and clarify to the Jewish people the authenticity and origin of every aspect of the *Torah*. It is the Word of G-d and not the word of *Moshe*. *Moshe* was purely the conduit to transmit the Word of G-d and he had no influence regarding its contents.

Chazal: When *Pinchas* had approached *Moshe* to ask him what should be done in response to the public desecration of G-d's Name, the answer was

concealed from *Moshe*. In addition, regarding those who were not able to participate in the sacrifice of the Pascal Lamb because of their state of contamination, approached *Moshe* with a claim. They had said, "Why should we be denied to bring the Pascal Sacrifice?" *Moshe* was not able to respond and thus needed to present their question to G-d.

Although the Law was concealed from *Moshe* in these two instances, *Chazal* do not attribute his lack of understanding to the initial failing that he had made regarding his statement to the Jewish people about the establishing of a judicial system. The measure for measure only manifested itself regarding the laws of inheritance. This had relevance to the daughters of *Tzelofchad* receiving their rightful portion in the Land. Why was this so?

Torah: *Moshe* was denied entry into the Promised Land because he struck the rock in order to extract water from it rather than speaking to it as G-d had commanded him. Because he struck the rock, G-d decreed that he would not enter into the Land together with the Jewish people. Despite all of *Moshe's* supplications to rescind the decree, G-d did not acquiesce to his requests. This was to establish, beyond any doubt, for all to know that *Moshe's* infraction could not be forgiven because it was an instance where he did not follow the Word of G-d as prescribed. He did as he chose to do.

Since the *Torah* is unequivocal the Word of G-d *Moshe* had no degree of influence regarding its contents. Korach and his assembly sought to usurp *Moshe's* authority because they had believed that the *Torah* was the word of *Moshe* and not the Word of G-d. If *Moshe* would not have been punished severely for his action, it could have been perceived that he can choose to do as he sees fit. This perception is unfounded and incorrect. Therefore, *Moshe* was denied entry into the Land.

When *Moshe* had said regarding legal questions that could not be resolved by the courts, "The most difficult issues you will bring to me" it could have been perceived to mean that he would be the one to determine the Law, rather than G-d Himself. The issue that was presented by the daughters of *Tzelofchad* was the opportune moment to establish before the Jewish people that *Moshe* was not the promulgator of the Law, but only G-d Himself. Therefore, G-d

concealed the laws of inheritance pertaining to *Tzelofchad's* daughters in order to highlight the basis for the liability for *Moshe* not entering into the Land. This had originated with the sticking of the rock.

Moshe's Dimension of Clarity

Torah: "G-d spoke to *Moshe* saying, 'Take vengeance for the Children of Israel against the Midianites; afterward you will be gathered unto your people.'"

Rashi citing *Chazal*: Despite the fact that *Moshe* understood that his demise was contingent on the destruction of the Midianites, he did not hesitate to perform the will of G-d. "He performed the *mitzvah* with joy and did not delay." If *Moshe* had chosen not to act immediately upon G-d's command, he would have extended his life.

Midrash regarding *Moshe's* decision to go to war: "We see the praiseworthiness of *Moshe* that despite the fact that he understood that he would pass away, his response was without delay."

Torah regarding *Moshe's* humility: "(He was) the most humble man who ever walked the face of the earth." Because *Moshe* had negated himself to the point that there was no trace of "self," when he was instructed by G-d to destroy *Midian*, which itself was for the sake of G-d's Glory, he did so without hesitation. There was no consideration for *Moshe* to delay the destruction of *Midian* to extend his life, because this would have been contrary to G-d's Glory. The only rationalization for *Moshe* to delay would have been for the benefit of the Jewish people. *Moshe's* level of influence and leadership had surpassed that of *Yehoshua*, his disciple.

Chazal: "The face of *Moshe* was the equivalent of the face of the sun and the face of *Yehoshua* was the equivalent of the face of the moon. (He was only a reflection of *Moshe*)."

Nevertheless, there was not a moment of hesitation. When G-d had commanded *Moshe* to wage war against the Midianites the *Torah* states, "take vengeance for the Children of Israel." However, when *Moshe* communicated the Word of G-d to the Jewish people he transmitted it differently. *Moshe* spoke to the people saying, "Arm men from among yourselves for the legion that may be against *Midian* to inflict *Hashem's* vengeance against *Midian*."

Midrash: "G-d said to *Moshe* 'If I told you to take the vengeance of the Children of Israel against the Midianites, why did you communicate it to the Jewish people that they were to take the vengeance of *Hashem* against *Midian*?' *Moshe* responded, 'If the Jewish people had been uncircumcised, idol worshipers, or heretics the Midianites would not hate us and pursue us. It is only because of the *Torah* that you gave us.

Therefore, it is not the vengeance of the Children of Israel that must be taken but rather the vengeance of *Hashem*." Because of *Moshe*'s level of humility, he had processed G-d's dictate as he had communicated it to the Jewish people. Although G-d had told him to take the vengeance of the Jewish people, he understood it to be the vengeance of G-d. This is because the only value and purpose of the Jewish people, when they received the *Torah* at Sinai, is to perpetuate G-d's Glory.

King David writes in Psalms: "I hate those who hate You...I will rise against those who rise against You." King David's response to those who hate G-d was unrelated to something of a personal matter. Rather, since he is counted as one of the three most humble people who ever lived (in addition to *Moshe* and *Avraham* our Patriarch) every aspect of his being was for the sake of G-d's Glory.

Anyone who hates G-d or rises up against Him will cause the most intense negative response from King David. It is something that he could not tolerate. His hatred and intolerance for G-d's enemies was founded in his selfless love for G-d, which was rooted in his own negation. King David's expression of humility was, "I am a worm and not a man." In addition, there is another way to understand why there was not even a consideration for *Moshe* to delay the war against *Midian* to extend his life.

Torah in *Shelach*: "G-d said to *Moshe*, 'Send for yourself men...'"

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: The verse, "Send for yourself men..." can mean that it was in *Moshe*'s best interest to send the spies to scout-out the Land of Israel. By doing so, the Jewish people would be delayed in the desert for an additional thirty-nine years before entering the Land. Since it was decreed at the time that the Jewish people had left Egypt that *Moshe* was not to enter into the Land, if the sin of the spies had not occurred, *Moshe* would have passed away in the second year that they were in the desert.

Because the Jewish people had failed regarding the slander of the Land, it was decreed that the generation between the ages of 20 and 60 should perish in the desert over a forty-year period. After they had failed regarding the spies, in retrospect, *Moshe* understood the words of G-d "Send for yourself" to mean that it was in his best interest (extending his life). Regarding the war that needed to be waged against *Midian*, there was no allusion whatsoever to indicate that *Moshe*, for the sake of extending his life, should initiate any level of delay. He therefore instructed the Jewish people immediately to go to war and destroy the Midianites.

The Power of Speech vs. The Power of the Sword

Torah: Regarding the war against the Midianites and the demise of *Bilaam*, "They killed the kings of *Midian*... and *Bilaam* son of Beor they slew with the sword."

Rashi citing *Chazal*: "Why does the *Torah* chose to elucidate the point that *Bilaam* was killed with the sword? When *Bilaam* came against the Jewish people, he exchanged his craft with their craft. The Jew only advances through the articulation of his mouth through prayer and supplication. *Bilaam* came upon the Jewish people to curse them with his mouth. Therefore, when it was time to kill *Bilaam*, the sword was chosen to bring about his death to indicate that the Jewish people had exchanged their craft with the craft of the nations of the world, which is the sword.

Where do we see that the craft of the nations of the world is the sword? As it states regarding the blessing that *Yitzchak* had given to his son *Esav*, 'By your sword you shall live.'" The verse that is cited by the *Midrash* to establish that the sword is the craft of the nations of the world is drawn from the blessing that *Yitzchak* had given his son *Esav*. Seemingly, this blessing is particular to *Esav* and the Edomites, his descendants, and not the nations of the world at large.

The conflict between *Yaakov* and *Esav*, regarding the birthright, was rooted in the issue of who would be the spiritual heir of their father *Yitzchak*. *Esav*, being evil, had no relevance to spirituality. However, being the firstborn of his father he initially had the right to be the future patriarch. He had chosen to forfeit his birthright by selling it to his brother *Yaakov*. In order for *Yaakov* to receive what was rightfully his, he needed to

deceive his father by coming to him in the guise of his brother *Esav*. When *Yitzchak* had given his blessing to *Esav*, "By your sword you shall live" he was quantifying him as a physical being, who was no different than the nations of the world.

He had no relevance or qualification to be the spiritual heir of his father. *Yitzchak's* words were only a revelation of *Esav's* essence, thus confirming that he was no different from every gentile. It is only because of the *Midrash* that is cited by *Rashi* that we are able to conclude that the words of *Yitzchak* "By the sword you shall live" is not particular to *Esav*, but rather a common characteristic that he shared with the nations of the world, who are devoid of spirituality.

Torah: Regarding the creation of man, "And G-d formed the man, dust from the ground, and He blew into his nostrils the soul of life; and man became a living being (*nefesh chaya*)."

Targum Unkolus: The words "*nefesh chaya*" can mean "he (man) became a speaking species." It is because of his unique soul, that man has the ability to comprehend and have verbal expression. Although other creatures, such as a parrot, may be able to mimic speech, it is only man who has the Divine Soul which gives him the "power of speech".

Maharal: that the word "*Adam* (man)" is derived from the word "*adamah* (earth)." Just as the earth has unlimited potential to yield its bounty if it is properly cultivated, so too does man have the innate ability to develop and advance his spirituality to an unlimited degree. However, because *Adam* had failed by eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, he forfeited his classification as "*Adam*." He putrefied himself and all of existence when he introduced evil into himself by eating of the Tree. Thus, he was no longer qualified to actualize the potential of the "speaking species."

It was not until *Avraham*, our Patriarch reintroduced G-d into existence that he assumed the posture of "*Adam*." As a result of his own spiritual metamorphosis, which was due to his own choices, *Avraham* and his descendants, the Jewish people, were endowed with the unlimited potential that was initially given to *Adam* the first human being. In contrast, the nations of the world do not have that potential because they do not descend from the holy Patriarchs. Therefore, their ability to speak is not an expression of that unique

spirituality, which has the spiritual ramifications of the power of speech of the Jew.

G-d's Glory, the Aspiration of the Jew

Torah: "G-d spoke to *Moshe* saying, 'Take vengeance for the Children of Israel against the Midianites; afterward you will be gathered unto your people (*Moshe* will pass away).'"

Reb Meir Simcha of Dvinsk: "Why could *Moshe* not have passed away before the destruction of the Midianites? If the war against *Midian* would have taken place after *Moshe* had passed away, people would have said that the reason *Moshe* did not destroy them in his lifetime was because he was flattering them. It was because he was the son-in-law of *Yisro* who was a *Midianite* and had spent many years in *Midian*."

Therefore, the war against *Midian* needed to take place in *Moshe's* lifetime." If the world had believed that *Moshe* did not go to war against *Midian*, despite their wickedness, because he was flattering them it would have been a desecration of G-d's Name. It would have been perceived that *Moshe* was compromising his characteristic of truth for the sake of flattery. Thus, G-d commanded *Moshe* to take vengeance against them before he passed away.

Midrash: "Why did G-d want *Moshe* to destroy the Midianites? It is because of what is stated in the verse, 'G-d does not want to deny the *tzaddik*, what he desires to see with his own eyes.' From here we learn that *Moshe* desired to see the destruction of *Midian* before he passed away. He thus requested from G-d that He should allow him to see their destruction. As it states in the verse in Psalms, 'The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance (of G-d), he will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.' 'The righteous will rejoice...' is referring to *Moshe*. He rejoiced in the destruction of the Midianites. '... wash his feet in the blood of the wicked' is referring to *Bilaam*, the evil one." Why did *Moshe* desire to see the destruction of the Midianites with his own eyes?

When one witnesses a sanctification of G-d's Name one should be elated with joy. If one is not, it is an indication that bringing glory to G-d is not a focal point in his life. *Moshe* lived every moment of his life for the sake of G-d's Glory. He was the ultimate faithful servant

of G-d. Thus, when he witnessed the destruction of evil, whose mere existence is a desecration of G-d's Name and the antithesis of His Will, *Moshe* rejoiced. He desired to see the destruction of the Midianites because they were truly evil. Under *Bilaam's* direction, the *Midianite* women sexually engaged with the Jewish men and caused them to worship Baal Paor. As a result of this ploy, 24,000 Jewish men died in a plague. The continuation of the *Midianite* nation, who perpetrated such evil was a desecration of G-d's Name. Therefore, *Moshe* desired to witness their destruction, which is a sanctification of His Name.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: If there would be ten Jewish men in a synagogue in any community in the world who truly desired the coming of *Moshiach*, G-d would bring him instantly. Although there are many Jews who desire the coming of *Moshiach* and yearn for the ultimate glorification of G-d, the fact that he has not yet come, is an indication that their quality of intent is not sufficient. Why does the Jew want the coming of *Moshiach*? Is it to put an end to the persecution of the Jewish people? Is it so that the world should recognize the special value and significance of the Jewish people? As long as *Moshiach* is not here, evil and falsehood continue to exist and thrive, which is a ongoing desecration of G-d's Name. The coming of *Moshiach* will be the ultimate glorification of G-d because it will be a time when evil will be vanquished from existence. One should desire the coming of *Moshiach* for the sake of His Glory, when truth will become evident and obvious.

Amidah (silent prayer) of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*: We ask G-d to instill fear and awe in all mankind. Additionally, we ask Him to give honor and glory to the Jewish people and reveal Himself and bring *Moshiach*. As a result, the devoutly righteous (*tzaddikim*), the straight (*yesharim*), and the scrupulously pious (*chasidim*), will rejoice. It would seem that if all mankind is brought to the realization of G-d and is in awe by His Presence, one would think that all mankind would become ecstatic as a result of this realization and revelation.

Why do we single-out only these three levels of spiritually advanced individuals who will rejoice? It is because these exceptionally spiritual people have dedicated their lives to the sanctification of G-d and await His revelation and glory. However, the ordinary person who has devoted his life to the pursuit of his own success

and interest does not have the capacity to internalize the value of that event, despite its awesomeness.

In *Avinu Malkeinu*: "Our Father, our King, avenge before our eyes the spilled blood of Your servants." Is this because the Jewish people are vengeful? Since the Jewish people have been victimized and downtrodden throughout the ages, it is a desecration of G-d's Name because they are His chosen people. The Jewish people should rejoice with the destruction of those who spilled the blood of G-d's servants because their annihilation is a sanctification of G-d. Therefore, the Jewish people need to ask their Father and King to allow them to witness His vengeance upon their enemies. This is the reason *Moshe* desired to see with his own eyes the destruction of the Midianites.

Debt of Gratitude, To What Degree?

Torah: "G-d spoke to *Moshe* saying, 'Take vengeance for the Children of Israel against the Midianites...'"

Midrash: "*Moshe* had sent a thousand men from each tribe (totaling 12,000) to go to war against the Midianites. G-d had commanded *Moshe* to take vengeance against the Midianites, himself, on behalf of the Jewish people; however, we find that he had sent others to wage war against them. As it states, 'Arm men from among yourselves...' *Moshe* sent others to engage in war against *Midian* because he was raised and established himself in *Midian*. He thus said, "It is inappropriate to do them harm because they had done good to me. I was a beneficiary of their hospitality."

After *Moshe* had fled Egypt, he sought refuge in *Midian* where he had married the daughter of *Yisro*, the *Midianite*. He had spent many years there before returning to Egypt. As the proverb states, 'The well from which you had drunk water, do not throw into it a stone.' Therefore *Moshe* delegated the responsibility to destroy *Midian* to others." Although *Moshe* was commanded to destroy the Midianites, he understood, based on the principle of not being an ingrate, that G-d had intended that he should delegate it through others.

Torah: After Pharaoh decreed that all Jewish male newborns should be killed, *Yocheved*, the mother of *Moshe*, placed him in a box and set it upon the Nile. "It happened in those days that *Moshe* grew up and

went out to his brethren and observed their burdens; and he saw an Egyptian man striking a Hebrew man, of his brethren... So he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand."

As a result of *Moshe* benefiting from the Nile (he miraculously did not drown despite being placed in a box) and the sand, in which he had hidden the remains of the Egyptian so that his actions should be concealed, we find regarding the plagues of blood, frogs, and lice, that G-d commanded *Moshe* to tell his brother *Aaron* to bring about those plagues. This was so that *Moshe* should not be an ingrate because he had benefited from them. As it states regarding the plague of blood, "*Hashem* said to *Moshe*, 'Say to *Aaron*, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt...'"

Torah: Regarding the plague of frogs, "*Hashem* said to *Moshe*, 'Say to *Aaron*, 'Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers...'" Regarding the plague of lice, the *Torah* states, "*Hashem* said to *Moshe*, 'Say to *Aaron*, 'Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the land...'" Since *Moshe* benefited from the Nile and the earth, it would have been inappropriate for him to strike them and disrupt their function.

When G-d told *Moshe* to take vengeance against the Midianites on behalf of the Jewish people, despite the fact that they were deserving of punishment for what they had perpetrated, *Moshe* understood from his experience regarding the plagues, that he had an obligation to demonstrate his gratitude, even to the inanimate. If it was required of him to demonstrate his gratitude to the inanimate, although his benefit was unrelated to its choice, how much more so should he refrain from destroying the Midianites himself, from whom he had so greatly benefited, from their land and community.

One of the tests that G-d had presented to *Avraham*, our Patriarch was to leave his land, his birthplace, and his father's household. As it states in the Portion of

Lech Lecha, "*Hashem* said to *Avraham*, 'Go for yourself from you land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house...'"

Midrash: Because *Avraham* espoused monotheism he became a fugitive and needed to go into hiding for many years. He had become a pariah in his community and was despised by all. *Avraham's* father, *Terach*, had taken him to *Nimrod* the king, in order to put him to death for destroying his idols. He was given an ultimatum by the king to either bow to the idol or be thrown into the fiery kiln. *Avraham* chose to give his life for G-d. If *Avraham* had become an individual who was despised and hated by his countrymen and family, how is G-d's directive to leave them considered to be a test?

Avraham believed that he owed a great debt of gratitude to his father, *Terach* because he was the one who brought him into existence. Without *Terach*, there would not have been an *Avraham* to bring G-d to all mankind. Although *Avraham's* community were pagans who despised him, he believed that he owed them a debt of gratitude because his entire development was shaped by his interaction with them. One must be thankful for all of the experiences that G-d brings upon one, because even if the experience is negative, if one learns from his mistake (especially one never to be repeated) it is considered something of great value.

Chavos HaLevavos: If one were to understand and appreciate the extent of G-d's Kindness in every aspect of one's life, one would have no difficulty in addressing his obligation to serve Him. One would always be beholden to his Benefactor. Although we recite the morning prayer, "*modeh ani*" upon rising, "I gratefully thank You, O living and eternal King..." and recite blessings throughout the day demonstrating our acknowledgement of G-d's providing for our needs, in order for one to be truly impacted by this reality, one must reflect upon and internalize these fact to sense a debt of gratitude to G-d.



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