

ACTIVATING SPIRITUAL SYSTEMS THROUGH THE ANNOINTING OIL

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YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Ki Sisa

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Korbanei Tibbur: Equal Contributions

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Ritualizing the Hands & Feet of the Kohanim

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The Lineage of Betzalel

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The Tension Between Ego & Reality

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1. Betzalel was chosen by G-d to oversee the building of the Mishkan.
2. He was endowed by G-d with knowledge, understanding, and Divine inspiration.
3. He was adept in conjugating the letters of the alphabet that brought about creation.
4. Mishkan: A microcosm of Creation that needed to be infused with energies that parallel existence.
5. Betzalel: Miriam's grandson, nephew of Moshe.
6. When Moshe announced Betzalel would oversee building of the Mishkan there were murmurings – claiming nepotism.
7. He chose Aaron, his brother as High Priest, his sons, assistants – and now his nephew for the Mishkan.
8. Midrash: Moshe explains why Betzalel is specially endowed and uniquely qualified.
9. They understood their own inadequacies and accepted Moshe's word.
10. After Sinai where G-d had said "In you they will believe forever," how could they question the word of Moshe?
11. Korach and his community were at Sinai and attempted to usurp his leadership.
12. Although one accepts something as fact, internalizing it is another level.
13. One's ego whispers, "Why Not Me?"
14. Only when one understands a task is beyond his ability can one internalize what he believes

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Ki Sisa

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Evaluating One's Accomplishment

Torah: "When you take a census of the Children of Israel..."

Midrash: "Rav Tanchum Bar Aba began lecturing on the verse from *Ecclesiastes*. 'Sweet is the sleep of the one who toils whether he eats less or more...' They said to King Solomon, 'If someone else would have made this statement he would have been mocked; however, you being the wisest person who ever lived, how could you say, 'sweet is the sleep of the one who has less ...' Factually this is not so. When one is hungry and he is only able to eat a small amount, his sleep escapes him because of his hunger. In contrast, if he is able to eat to his fill his sleep is sweet. When is one's sleep sweet? It is when he has more and not less.'

"King Solomon: 'I am not speaking about the toil of one who earns less or more in the physical sense, but rather I am referring to the devoutly righteous who toil in *Torah*. What is an example of this? This is one who

only merits to live thirty years and he toiled in *Torah* and *mitzvos* from the age of ten until the age of thirty when he dies. There is another who lives until the age of eighty and began to toil in *Torah* and *mitzvos* from the age of ten until his passing at the age of eighty.

"Although one toiled for twenty years and the other toiled for seventy years, one may say that the reward of the one who toiled to a lesser degree should be less than the one who toiled to a greater degree. However this is not so. This is because the one who toiled for twenty years can say to G-d, 'Had You given me addition years I would have toiled during those years. It is only because You took me at a young age that I was only able to toil for twenty years.' This is why I say whether one toils less or more, one will receive the same reward. What is an example of this?

"*Rav Chanina:* 'Moshe had served the Jewish people in the desert since they left Egypt for forty years and he lived for 120 years. *Shmuel* the Prophet

lived for fifty-two years and he carried the burden of the Jewish people for his entire life. We see from the verse that *Shmuel* is equated to *Moshe*, ‘*Moshe, Aaron, with his Kohanim and Shmuel will call in His Name...*’ Seemingly, the *Midrash* is speaking about an individual whose life is short-lived because he was only endowed with a shorter lifespan. However, if his life were cut short due to his own spiritual failing, there would be no basis for this individual to make a claim that he passed away before his time.

Mishna in Ethics of our Fathers: “According to the pain is the reward.” Meaning, if one must endure greater difficulty or pain to perform a *mitzvah*, he will receive greater merit. It is because he had demonstrated his degree of dedication to do the Will of G-d despite the difficulty. One who lives a long life and dedicates his years to *Torah* and *mitzvos*, despite the difficulties, the value of his accomplishments are greater based on the principle “according to the pain is the reward.”

This is not a reason to deny the one who lives lesser years because he did not experience the pain and difficulty to the same degree as the one who lived longer years. It is because that same individual could go before G-d and claim that if he been given more years, he would have endured the difficulty and pain of those addition years.

Rabbeinu Bachya: “Since G-d knows the future, he knows that the devoutly righteous will ultimately succeed in His service. If this is so, why does He need to subject them to the trials and tribulations of life to prove their dedication to Him. In fact, the devoutly righteous do not live for themselves, but rather for the sake of others. Regarding the *tzaddik*’s spiritual achievement, G-d would have accredited him even if he did not come into existence. However, the reason he is brought into existence is to live his life as a *tzaddik* in the physical realm to be a representation of the Good for others to emulate. He exists to serve as a role model for others.

Rambam in the Laws of Repentance: Every Jew can be as great as *Moshe*, our teacher. *Moshe* was the one who G-d chose to be His spokesman and the

The Prerequisite for the Acquisition of Torah

Torah: “...He gave it *Moshe* when He finished speaking (*v’yitein el Moshe k’chaloso*)...”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: The word “*k’chaloso*” is written with the letter “*vav*” deleted, to allude that the *Torah* was given to *Moshe* as a gift that is given by a bride (*kallah*) to her groom.

Midrash: “*Reb Avohu* says, ‘For the forty days and nights that *Moshe* was in heaven, he was taught the *Torah* and at the end of each day he would forget what he was taught (by G-d). After forty days *Moshe* said to G-d, ‘Master of the Universe, I have studied the entire *Torah* every day for forty days and I do not know any of it.’ When the forty-day period was completed, G-d gave the *Torah* to *Moshe* as a gift (and he thus retained it). This is the meaning of the verse, ‘He gave it to *Moshe*...’”

G-d could have allowed *Moshe* to retain the *Torah* on the first day. Why was it necessary for *Moshe* to go through the process of studying and forgetting the *Torah* over this extended period of time? After forty days of toiling in *Torah*, *Moshe* came to the realization that he was not able to retain the *Torah* that he was taught by G-d. He understood, despite his intellectual capability, that he could not retain the *Torah*. It was only then, that G-d bestowed the *Torah* to him as a gift. Just as *Moshe* needed to initially understand that one’s understanding and retention of *Torah* is not determined by one’s intellectual capacity, but rather, it is a gift of G-d, so too to for every Jew to merit the Divine Assistance to receive the *Torah*, one must have this understanding.

Gemara in Tractate *Megillah*: “One who says ‘I have toiled (in *Torah*) and have come upon it’ – should be believed. One who says, ‘I have not toiled and I have come upon it’ – should not be believed.”

Reb Chaim of Volozhin *z’tl*: The *Gemara* does not say that he toiled in *Torah* and he came to understand it, but rather it states that he had “come upon it.” Being able to understand and retain the *Torah* is the equivalent of coming upon a lost object. One’s degree of initiative will determine whether he will come upon *Torah* or not. It is only when one sufficiently toils in *Torah* and makes an adequate sacrifice, will G-d give him the Divine Assistance to come upon its truth.

King Solomon in *Proverbs*: Regarding fear of heaven (reverence of G-d), “If you desire it as silver and seek it out as a treasure – then you will understand the fear of G-d.” King Solomon is saying that unless one seeks out the fear of G-d with the same initiative that one invests in the seeking out of treasure, then G-d will give him allow him to have a fear of heaven.

Gemara in Tractate *Yomah*: “The storage location for one’s *Torah* is one’s fear of heaven.” As it is stated in the verse, “The fear of G-d is its storage location.” If one does not have sufficient fear of G-d, then he will not merit the Divine Assistance that is necessary to retain it. We see a parallel between the fear of G-d and the acquisition of *Torah*. Just as one needs to toil sufficiently to come upon the *Torah* and only then one is endowed with it as a gift, so too in order for one to come upon the fear of heaven, which is the storage location of the *Torah*, he must take sufficient initiative.

Gemara in Tractate *Shabbos*: Just as one needs to intermingle stones and earth as a preservative when one stores wheat so that it should not rot, so too must one intermingle a sufficient amount of fear of heaven

The Cogency Of Moshe’s Decision

The sin of the Golden Calf was one of the gravest moments in the history of the Jewish people. At Sinai the Jewish people had experienced the most advanced level of prophecy. G-d had communicated with them face to face. Although they had experienced G-d’s Presence in a revealed and obvious manner at the time of the splitting of the Sea, the level of revelation at Sinai surpassed what they had previously experienced. Forty days after experiencing and hearing the word of G-d (Ten Commandments), the Jewish people engaged in idolatry by casting the Golden Calf. What precipitated the sin of the Golden Calf?

The Jewish people understood that after *Moshe* had ascended to heaven to receive the *Torah*, he was to return to them after a specific period of time. However due to a miscalculation, believing that he should have returned and he did not, satan led them to believe that *Moshe* had died. At that time, the rabble, who were a group of Egyptians that Pharaoh had sent out of Egypt to accompany the Jewish people at the time of the exodus, instigated the incident of the Golden Calf. When the Golden Calf was being worshipped, *Moshe* was in heaven receiving the *Torah*. G-d said to *Moshe*, “You must go down because your people who you have taken out from Egypt have become corrupt.”

Rashi citing the *Midrash*: “*Moshe* said to G-d, ‘Why do refer to them as my people are they not Your people?’ G-d used the expression ‘your people’ because He was referring to the rabble who *Moshe* had permitted to accompany the Jewish people out of Egypt. G-d said

to *Moshe*, ‘You did not consult with Me regarding if they should accompany you or not.’” Any decision that *Moshe* had made was always in accordance with G-d’s Will because he had consulted with Him. G-d was always available to *Moshe* whenever he wanted to resolve an issue. If his is so, why did *Moshe* not consult with G-d regarding the rabble? *Moshe*’s decision to take the rabble out of Egypt led to the gravest sin ever committed by the Jewish people. The Sin of the Golden Calf affected the Jewish people and altered their destiny until the end of time.

Gemara in Tractate *Avodah Zorah*: At Sinai, the Jewish people reverted to the spiritual level of *Adam* before the sin. Death no longer had relevance to them and they became immortal beings. However, after the Sin of the Golden Calf, they reverted once again to the deficient spiritual status of *Adam* after the sin. They were once again moral beings who were subject to death. Something of such serious consequence would not have come about unless G-d had allowed it to be so. Why did *Moshe* not consult with G-d regarding this issue?

Torah: When *Moshe* returned to Egypt after G-d commanded him to do so, he had not yet circumcised his youngest son. “It was on the way, in the lodging, that Hashem encountered him (*Moshe*) and sought to kill him.”

Midrash: At the lodging, *Moshe* was swallowed by a serpent from his feet to his waist and from his head to his waist. When *Tzipporah* his wife saw what was happening, she realized that the reason *Moshe* was vulnerable to this attack was because he did not yet circumcise his son. She immediately took a rock and circumcised him. She then threw the foreskin before the snake and it retreated. Why had *Moshe* not circumcised his son?

Midrash: “We had learned that *Reb Yosi* had said, It is not G-d forbid that *Moshe* had not taken the *mitzvah* of circumcision seriously, but rather it was because of the danger of traveling, that he did not circumcise his son. If *Moshe* had circumcised his son, before he had left Midian, he would have had to delay his journey for three days, which he could not because G-d had commanded him to go to Egypt immediately. If this is so then why did *Moshe* deserve to be killed when he came to his lodging on the way to Egypt? It was

because *Moshe* had delayed the circumcision for a moment, by giving priority to his lodging needs (before the circumcision), he thus deserved to die. It was only because his wife *Tzipporah's* intervention that he was spared."

Chazal: *Moshe* was the only one qualified to be the redeemer of the Jewish people. Had *Moshe* been killed for hesitating to circumcise his son, the Jewish people would not have come to Sinai and the objective of existence would not have been fulfilled. If this is so, why did *Moshe* deserve such severe punishment?

Chazal: The bondage was instituted in Egypt only after the Jewish people decided to no longer circumcise themselves. When they decided to emulate the Egyptian people, the Jewish people went from being the beloved of G-d to being despised by Him. He thus caused the Egyptian people to despise the Jewish people. Therefore, the suspension of the *mitzvah* of circumcision precipitated the bondage and suffering of the Jewish people.

Since *Moshe* was the redeemer, by being lax regarding the *mitzvah* of circumcision, he had failed in the area that had brought about the bondage upon the Jewish people. This was sufficient reason to disqualify *Moshe* from being the redeemer and thus causing him to be vulnerable to be killed. After *Moshe's* encounter with the serpent, he understood that if the correction of the initial problem is not perfect, then the correction will not be effective.

Gemara in Tractate *Nidarim*: One of the reasons the Jewish people were destined to be enslaved in Egypt was because *Avraham*, our Patriarch, had failed. He had an opportunity to convert a group of pagans to monotheism and he did not. After *Avraham's* victory over the four mightiest kings who had taken the *Sodomites* captive, the King of *Sodom* approached *Avraham* and said, "Give me the people and the possessions shall be yours."

Avraham's response to the King of *Sodom* was, "I will not take from you as much as a thread or a bootstrap." At this moment, *Avraham*, as the victor, had the opportunity and right to take the people of *Sodom* and convert them from paganism to monotheism, but he did not. G-d said to *Avraham*, "Because you allowed these people to remain pagans, and not bring them under the wings of the Divine Presence your children shall be exiled to a land that is not their own..."

Moshe, as the redeemer of the Jewish people, understood that in order to correct the failing of *Avraham*, he could not repeat the same mistake as *Avraham* had made regarding forgoing the opportunity to convert pagans to monotheism. *Moshe* was in a position to either reject the rabble of Egypt and allow them to remain pagans or allow them to become part of a monotheistic people. The obvious choice was to allow them to join. This was the reason felt it was unnecessary to consult with G-d regarding this decision. Seemingly, *Moshe's* decision was cogent and compelling. If so, why did *Moshe* deserve rebuke?

Moshe and *Avraham's* situations were comparable. *Avraham* had missed the opportunity to save the *Sodomite* community from going into oblivion by not converting them to monotheism. He was held culpable because the context of converting them to monotheism was not to affect anyone but themselves. He was not introducing a foreign element into a setting that there could be any negative ramifications. There was no Jewish people at that time. However, regarding the rabble of Egypt, allowing them to accompany the Jewish people to Sinai would introduce and expose them to a foreign element that could negatively affect G-d's Chosen people. Therefore, *Moshe's* decision was wrong. He should have consulted with G-d to prevent this serious failing.

Seeing the Picture as a Whole

In the *Haftarah* that is read on a communal fast day *Yeshiah* the prophet says: "In the place of a thorn bush, a cypress will rise; and in place of the nettle, a myrtle will rise."

Gemara in Tractate *Megillah*: The verse, "In the place of a thorn bush, a cypress will rise" can mean, "In the place of the one who deified himself as a deity, *Mordechai* will rise to replace him." *Haman*, the evil one, deified himself and it was decreed by the king that all should bow before him. If a Jew were to bow before *Haman*, it would be considered an act of idolatry. *Mordechai*, the Jew, would not bow. Ultimately, *Haman* and his sons were hanged and *Mordechai* assumed his position as Viceroy of the Persian Empire.

Gemara: The verse "In place of the nettle, a myrtle (hadas) will rise" can mean, "In the place of *Vashti*, the evil one, *Esther* will rise to replace her (as the Queen)."

Vashti was the Queen of *Achashverosh* and despised the Jewish people. She forced her Jewish maidservants to display themselves in the most degrading manner. She ultimately was put to death by her husband the king, when she defied his order. After *Vashti's* death, *Esther*, who is referred to as "*Hadassah*" was taken as the Queen of Persia. Why is it important for *Yeshiah* the prophet to tell us this, if it is obvious from the narrative of the *Megillah*?

The only scripture that does not mention the Name of G-d is the *Megillah* of *Esther*. It is because the miracle of *Purim* was concealed. The redemption of the Jewish people and destruction of evil evolved in a series of events that were cloaked in nature. In order to convey the nature of the concealed miracle that was orchestrated by G-d, *Mordechai* and *Esther* chose not to mention the Name of G-d in the *Megillah*. This was to indicate that just as G-d's Name is concealed in the scripture so too was the miracle of *Purim*. If the miracle of *Purim* was concealed in nature, how can it be concluded that there was a miracle at all? Perhaps *Purim* was only a series of events that ended favorably for the Jewish people.

Maharal of Prague *z'tl*: If one were to understand how the events unfolded on *Purim*, one could easily conclude that it is not probable that all of the elements could come together at exactly the moment that they had without G-d being the one to orchestrate them. For example, *Vashti* the queen defied the king's wish and was put to death. *Esther*, who was a Jewess was chosen to replace the Queen of the Persian Empire. What is the likelihood that out of the thousands of woman who were evaluated to become the queen, that *Esther* would be the one to be chosen?

Megillas Esther: There were two gatekeepers who were plotting to assassinate the king. As they were plotting, *Mordechai* the Jew, who was fluent in seventy languages overheard the plot and was able to reveal it to his niece *Esther*, who was the queen. She immediately shared it with her husband the king. How could this be attributed to coincidence? Although each event in the *Megillah* could individually be dismissed as happenstance, when all of the events are seen together, it becomes clear that the Hand of G-d was directing every aspect of the events that led up to *Purim*.

Gemara in Tractate *Megillah*: Although *Hallel* is recited on every holiday, one does not recite the *Hallel* on

Purim. Why is this so? The reading of the *Megillah* itself is an expression of thanks and praise to G-d. When one reads the narrative, one will be moved and overwhelmed by joy and gratefulness that G-d, through His infinite Love and Mercy for the Jewish people saved them from certain destruction. After the miracle of *Purim*, the Jewish people reaffirmed their commitment to G-d by accepting the *Torah* out of love.

Gemara in Tractate *Shabbos*: At Sinai, they accepted the *Torah* under duress: "He held the mountain over them like a barrel..." In contrast, the Jewish people accepted the *Torah* out of love because they understood the love that G-d had for them. When the Prophet *Yeshiah* says, "In the place of a thorn bush, a cypress will rise; and in place of the nettle, a myrtle will rise" it is to inform us that the events of *Purim* were orchestrated by G-d Himself and should not be attributed to happenstance.

Shushan Purim: Having Relevance to All Jews

Gemara in Tractate *Megillah*: *Purim* is celebrated on the 14th day of month of *Adar*, which is the day that followed the destruction of *Amalek*. However, in cities that were protected by a surrounding wall from the time of *Yehoshua Bin Nun*, *Purim* is celebrated on the 15th of the month of *Adar*. It is because *Shushan*, the capital of the Persian Empire was given an additional day to destroy the *Amalekites* and were thus only able to celebrate their victory on the on the 15th of *Adar*.

The 15th of the month of *Adar* is known as *Shushan Purim*. Although, most cities are not walled and celebrate *Purim* on the 14th of the month, nevertheless the 15th of the month retains a festival status to all Jews although they may not live in a walled city. What relevance does the celebration of *Shushan* have to those who celebrated the festivities on the 14th of the month?

Gemara in Tractate *Pesachim*: When the Jewish people entered into the Land of Israel, three *mitzvos* were immediately incumbent upon them. They needed to appoint a king. They needed to obliterate *Amalek* and they needed to build the Temple. Why did *Amalek* need to be obliterated before the building of the Temple? G-d says, "My throne is not complete until the memory of *Amalek* is obliterated from under the heavens." The effect and value of the Temple, which is G-d's location

of dwelling on the terrestrial level, is not considered complete unless *Amalek* is removed from existence. Thus, the Jewish people needed to first destroy *Amalek* before the building of the Temple.

King *Shaul* was given the responsibility of destroying *Amalek*; however, he failed. He did not kill *Agag*, the king of the *Amalekites*. Before *Agag* was killed by *Shmuel* the prophet he had impregnated a woman. Thus, the *Amalekite* line was perpetuated. *Haman*, the evil one was a descendant of King *Agag* and is thus known as *Haman*, the *Agagie*.

Gemara in Tractate *Megillah*: "If one celebrated *Purim* on the appropriate day of *Adar* and the High Court of Israel (*Sanhedrin*) later ruled that the year should be extended by adding another month of *Adar* to be a leap year, should one celebrate *Purim* again with all of its *mitzvos*?" One must celebrate *Purim* again during the second month of *Adar*. However if one knows in advance that it will be a leap year, then *Purim* will be celebrated in the second *Adar* and not the first. Why is this so?

It is to juxtapose one redemption to the next. The month of *Adar* is followed by the month of *Nissan*. In a leap year, *Adar II* is followed by *Nissan*. *Nissan* is the month during which the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt and it is thus known as the month of redemption. *Adar* also being a month of redemption, is thus juxtaposed to *Nissan*. The Jewish people were redeemed by G-d in the month of *Adar* from the decree of annihilation.

Gemara in Tractate *Rosh Hashanah*: Just as the Jewish people were redeemed (from Egypt) in the month of *Nissan*, the ultimate redemption (the coming of *Moshiach*) will be in *Nissan*. As that time, *Amalek* will be removed from

existence to allow G-d's Throne to be secure and permanent. Thus, *Purim* is celebrated during the month of *Adar* that precedes *Nissan* to indicate that before the ultimate redemption *Amalek* will be destroyed as they were during the *Purim* event. Therefore, *Amalek* needed to be destroyed before the building of the Temple, which is the location of G-d's Presence. The celebration of *Shushan Purim* has relevance to all Jews, regardless if the city in which they live has a wall or not. It is because it is a day during which G-d allowed *Amalek* to be destroyed, which allowed the heavenly throne to come to a greater degree completion.

Gemara in Tractate *Shabbos*: After the *Purim* event, the Jewish people reaffirmed their acceptance of *Torah* out of love.

Maharal of Prague *z'tl*: Because the Jewish people witnessed G-d's love for them, they understood that the *Torah* was only given to them as an expression of His love. The additional day that the Jewish people were able to continue to obliterate the *Amalekites* in *Shushan* was another opportunity to witness G-d's love for His people. Therefore, although those living outside of walled cities do not perform the *mitzvos* of the *Purim* on the 15th of *Adar*, they nevertheless celebrate it as a holiday because it was essential to the reaffirmation to the Jewish people's commitment to *Torah*.



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