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Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

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Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Bamidbar



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Averting The Return To PRE-EXISTENCE

G-d's Display of Love for the Jewish People

Torah: "Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness of Sinai..."

Midrash: "Before the *Mishkan* was erected, G-d spoke to Moshe at the burning bush...He spoke to him in *Midian* and in *Egypt*...After this G-d spoke to Moshe at Sinai...Once the *Mishkan* was erected G-d said, 'How wonderful is modesty!' (being in a concealed and modest location is more appropriate). When one walks with G-d it should be in an unassuming and modest way. As King *David* writes in *Psalms*, 'The honor of the princess is when she is concealed...'"

Yalkut: G-d gave the *Torah* to the Jewish people in a public setting.

Gemara in Tractate *Zevachim*: When G-d gave the *Torah* at Sinai to the Jewish people, the earth had quaked so violently that the nations of the world believed that the world was coming to an end. They came to *Bilaam*,

their prophet, with their concern. They said to him, "The world is coming to an end." *Bilaam* responded, "Do you not realize that the world cannot be destroyed again by G-d after the Great Flood, because G-d made a covenant with existence that He would not destroy it." They replied, "G-d only promised not to destroy the world with water. Perhaps it is being destroyed by fire." *Bilaam* said to them, "You fools! Do you not realize that G-d is giving His strength/power to the Jewish people (which is the *Torah*). It is because of this monumental moment that the world is quaking." To this the nations of the world responded, "G-d should bless His people with Peace."

Torah: "...Make for Me a Sanctuary – so that I may dwell in your midst." After the *Mishkan* was erected the Divine Presence no longer manifested itself in a public setting but rather only through the *Mishkan*.

Midrash: The change of G-d's level of revelation from a public to a concealed setting with a parable. "It is

analogous to a king who had a young daughter who he loved. When he walked with her even in a public setting (markets, alleyways, etc.) he would continually speak to her and display his affection for her, regardless of the public setting. However, when his daughter matured the king said to her, 'It is no longer appropriate for me to display my feeling for you in public view. I will only show my affections to you when we are alone in a private setting.'

At Sinai, the Jewish people were analogous to the child. After G-d revealed His exceptional love for the Jewish people by bringing heaven to earth at Sinai, it was no longer necessary for Him to demonstrate His love for them in a public setting. He therefore chose to communicate to the Jewish people through the medium of the *Mishkan*, which was concealed and the equivalent of a modest setting.

Since the Jewish people already understood the degree of His love for them, they were not discouraged when the Divine Presence presented itself through the medium of the *Mishkan*. It is clear from this *Midrash* that the building of the *Mishkan* was not a consequence of the sin of the Golden Calf, but rather it was for the sake of the Divine Presence to be in a concealed setting, as it states "the honor of the princess is when she is concealed..."

Midrash: "Who is the princess? It is *Moshe*. As it says: 'He was taken by the daughter of Pharaoh and he became a son to her...' (*Eitz Yosef*: *Moshe* is referred to as the daughter of the king because he was raised by the daughter of Pharaoh.) How do we know that *Moshe* was the king? As it states in *Yeshaya*, 'The fierce king will reign upon them...' Who is the fierce king? It is *Moshe* who was the king of *Torah*, which is referred to as power (fierce). As it states in *Psalms*, 'G-d gave His power to His people...'

Verse: "The king through justice establishes existence..." Since the world only exists for the sake of the Jewish people to fulfill and study the *Torah*, so too *Moshe*, being the equivalent of the Jewish people establishes existence through his directive of *Torah*. He is thus compared to the king.

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: It is a *mitzvah* for the Rabbinic court to seek a compromise between the parties who are in dispute rather than issue a verdict against the defendant. This was demonstrated by *Aaron*, the High Priest who loved peace and pursued peace. He continuously sought compromise in order to

bring about peace between the two parties. However, this was not the case regarding *Moshe*.

Gemara: Regarding *Moshe's* approach to justice, if there was a mountain in the way of adjudicating a judgment, then the mountain must be pierced to allow justice to be implemented. If there is a *mitzvah* to mediate and compromise, why did *Moshe* not encourage this and only demand absolute justice? It is because, "The king through justice establishes the land..." Since *Moshe's* dimension of being was the king, he had no relevance to compromise, but rather his decisions needed to be absolute justice.

Chazal: The *Torah* Sages are the equivalent of the kings because they personify the *Torah*, which is the basis for the existence of the world.

G-d's Plan for Creation

Torah: The Jewish people traveled in the desert in a formation of four camps, each camp was comprised of three tribes. The camps were positioned in a specific formation and situated in the east, west, north and south. They would travel and camp in this formation. The camp of *Yehudah* was comprised of the tribes of *Yissachar* and *Zevulun*. They were the first to travel when the Jews were given the order. When the *Torah* mentions the various camps comprised of Tribes, it always states: "this tribe and that tribe"; however when the *Torah* mentions the Tribes of *Yissachar* and *Zevulun* it omits the "and" (in Hebrew it is the letter "vav") and it states "Tribe *Yissachar* tribe *Zevulun*."

Baal HaTurim: "The reason the *Torah* omits the letter vav (and), although it is stated regarding all of the other tribes, is because the tribe of *Zevulun* was responsible for the full material support of the tribe of *Yissachar*, who were fully dedicated to the study of *Torah*."

"*Midrash Tanchuma*: 'The tribe of *Zevulun* would place the food in the mouth of *Yissachar*.' Meaning, *Zevulun's* esteem of *Yissachar's* *Torah* study was so great that they would not allow them to be distracted to any degree from their study. *Zevulun* was involved in commerce and the material while *Yissachar* was engaged in the spiritual, the *Torah* did not want to indicate that *Zevulun* was secondary to *Yissachar* by inserting a 'vav.'

“Zevulon’s involvement in the material was to fully support Yissachar’s Torah study without distraction. The Torah wants to indicate that Zevulon, because of his financial support, was the equivalent of Yissachar. The reward for Zevulon is no less than Yissachar.

“Proverbs: ‘It is the tree of life for the one who supports it.’

“Ecclesiastes: ‘In the shade of wisdom is the shade of silver...’ If one provides financial support for the one who is engaged in Torah study, he is the equivalent of the one who studies Torah. Thus, the Torah expresses itself as if Yissachar and Zevulon are the same tribe.”

Yitzchak, our Patriarch initially intended to give the material blessing to Esav, his firstborn rather than to Yaakov. Although Yitzchak understood that Yaakov was the more spiritual son, because he was fully dedicated to Torah, he nevertheless believed that Esav should receive the material blessing.

Sforno: Yitzchak wanted to create a partnership between Esav and Yaakov that was similar to the partnership that Yaakov would establish between Yissachar and Zevulon. Esav, being adept at the ways of the world as a hunter and a man of the field, would be able to provide for all the material needs of Yaakov, who was fully engaged in the study of Torah.

However, Rivka, our Matriarch understood the true nature of Esav, as being evil. If he were to receive the material blessing, Yaakov would not be able to survive. She understood with absolute clarity that Esav would not be the provider for Yaakov. She thus instructed Yaakov to take the material blessing from his father Yitzchak. The partnership between the material and the spiritual was successfully implemented by Yaakov, our Patriarch by establishing a partnership between Zevulon and Yissachar.

Torah: G-d created Chava to be the helpmate for Adam.

Midrash: The purpose of the helpmate was so that Adam should not be distracted from advancing his spirituality. If Adam would have been alone, he would have needed to provide for himself by producing the cloth for his own clothing and processing his own food. He thus would have no time to advance his spirituality. Chava was created to provide for all of Adam’s material needs so that he could pursue his spiritual objective in existence without distraction. We see from the onset of existence that G-d set in place the concept of a partnership between the material and the spiritual,

similar to Yissachar and Zevulon so that mankind would be able to pursue his spiritual objectives without the distraction of the material and mundane.

Chofetz Chaim: Although the Gemara in Tractate Kesubos states that one should not give more than twenty percent of his assets to charity, this does not apply to supporting the study of Torah. If one gives the needy more than twenty percent of his income, there is a possibility that he will jeopardize his financial standing and become impoverished. In contrast, when one supports Torah study, because he is considered to be an equal partner with the one who is studying, he is not expending his assets but rather investing them. Since it is not possible to study the Torah in its entirety, the one who studies Torah if he is financially capable of supporting another, it is advisable that he supports his fellow who is engaged in another aspect of Torah because it will accrue to him as if he had studied it.

The Significance of the Formation of the Travels of the Desert

Torah: The Jewish people traveled in the desert in a specific formation. Their formation was comprised of four camps with the camp of the Divine Presence in the center which contained the Mishkan. The families of the Levites encircled the center camp. Each of the outer camps, which were each comprised of three tribes are referred to as “banners (*degolim*)” as it : “Each with his banner according to the sign...”

Midrash: “Before Yaakov, our Patriarch passed away he said to his children ‘I will soon lie with my forefathers...’ He blessed each one of them and instructed them saying, ‘When you will carry my remains, you should do so with honor and reverence. No one other than you is permitted to touch my coffin...’ His children did as they were instructed. What were they instructed to do? Yehudah, Yissachar, and Zevulon shall be on the east of my coffin...”

“Levy will not carry my remains because the one who carries the ark of the source of life for all existence shall not carry the coffin of the dead. If you follow my instructions regarding my remains, G-d will dwell in your midst in the context of banners. Thus, when they went out of Egypt, G-d said to them, ‘It is time to establish your formation with the banners as you were instructed by your father...’”

Only if the tribes, who were *Yaakov's* sons carried his remains as they were instructed with honor and reverence, would G-d dwell in their midst. What relevance does carrying their father's remains have to the carrying the Holy Ark which was the location of the Divine Presence? In addition, why was it important for *Yaakov* to instruct his sons to carry his remains with honor and reverence, if it is understood that they would do so on their own because it was their father?

Rashi citing *Chazal*: At Sinai the Jewish people saw the myriads of angels that accompanied G-d. They presented themselves in a formation of groupings (camps) that encircled His Presence. The Jewish people yearned to be privileged to also encircle the Divine Presence in a similar context. G-d said, "Since at Sinai you saw the formation of the angels and you yearned to do the same, you shall travel in the desert encircling My Presence in a similar manner."

Chazal: *Yaakov* was the most special of the holy Patriarchs. He was the Patriarch who fathered the twelve tribes of Israel, who established the spiritual infrastructure of the Jewish people. They are referred to by King *David* in *Psalms* as "the Tribes of G-d (*Shivtei Ka*).

Rabbeinu Bachya in his commentary on *Vayigash*: *Yaakov* on the terrestrial level is a reflection of G-d's Profile in heaven. His dimension of holiness is a representation of G-d's holiness in heaven. He explains that the heavenly throne has four groups of angels that encircle it and in total are comprised of seventy angels. *Yaakov*, our Patriarch, had four wives (two Matriarchs and two maidservants) that ultimately gave forth the seventy souls that accompanied him to Egypt. Just as the seventy angels in heaven that encircle His throne emanate from G-d, so too the seventy souls that when down to Egypt emanated from *Yaakov*. Thus, *Yaakov* was the most beloved of the Patriarchs, because he was G-d's representation on earth.

Therefore, when *Yaakov* instructed his children to carry his remains with honor and reverence in a specific formation, it was with the intent to reflect the formation of the four groupings of angels in heaven that encircle the heavenly throne. The honor and reverence that he instructed his children to have was greater than what a child would naturally have for a parent, but rather it was to reflect his special spiritual value. Thus, if *Yaakov's* children would carry out his

instructions regarding his remains, they would merit that the Divine Presence would dwell in their midst.

Gemara in Tractate *Bava Metzia*: "The radiance of *Yaakov* was a semblance of the radiance of *Adam*." Initially when *Adam* was created, being the handiwork of G-d, he radiated to such a degree that the angels in heaven confused it with the radiance of G-d. They began to sing G-d's praises to him, mistaking his radiance for G-d's. Because *Yaakov* was qualified to be a representation of G-d's Presence in this world he radiated a semblance of *Adam's* radiance, who was the handiwork of G-d.

The Significance of a Name

Torah: "G-d said, 'Take a census of the entire assembly of the Children of Israel according to their families, according to their fathers' household, by number of the names...'"

Sforno: "By the number of the names" can mean, "by identifying each individual by name it is an indication that each one is an entity that has value unto himself." By identifying them by name, the *Torah* reveals the dimension of person and his innate exaltedness.

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos* citing a verse: "Come see works of G-d, He put desolation (*shamus*) in the land."

Gemara: "Do not read the word as 'shamus (desolation)' but as 'sheimos (names).'" Meaning, one's destiny is contained within the name that one is given to him by his parents.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: When parents name their child, they merit something that has a semblance of prophecy to choose an appropriate name that determines the spiritual destiny of the child.

Gemara in Tractate *Yomah*: One should not name his child after an evil person because, as it states *Proverbs*, "the name of the wicked shall rot." The child's destiny will be negatively affected if he is named after an evil person.

Sforno: "As the verse: 'I (G-d) will know you through your name...' However, this was not so with the new generation that entered into the Land after the forty years of wandering in the desert. The *Torah* does not instruct that they should be counted by name, but

rather only by number. Initially the generation that was taken out of Egypt was intended to enter into the Land; however, because of the sin of the spies they did not.”

When the *Torah* enumerates the ten generations from *Adam* to *Noach*, it delineates how many years each one lived. After each individual is mentioned and the number of years is stated, the *Torah* concludes, “and he died.” Regarding the ten generations that are enumerated by the *Torah* from *Noach* to *Avraham*, when it mentions the number of years of their lives, it does not state, “and he died.” It is obvious that after one lives the number of years of one’s life, that one dies. Why does the *Torah* need to state, after mentioning the years of the individual’s life “and he died” after the names of the generations from *Adam* to *Noach*?

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: The dimension of individuals that lived during the first ten generations of existence had such a unique advanced dimension of being to the point that each one represented an era unto himself. Thus, when the individual died, it was the end of an era in existence. Despite the fact that these generations chose to do evil, their dimension of being was exceptional. In contrast, the generations from *Noach* to *Avraham* did not possess this unique dimension of being. Therefore, after mentioning the years of the individual’s life, it does not state, “and he died.”

Regarding the generation of the Jewish people that were taken out of Egypt, the *Torah* wants that they should be counted by name to indicate each one’s unique value and dimension of being. Although there were more than six hundred thousand males above the age of twenty millions of people, the *Torah* did not want them to be mentioned as a number but rather identifies each by name when they were counted to indicate each individual’s unique potential. Regardless of their advanced spiritual dimension, they failed because of the sin of the spies.

Torah, the Only Effective Antidote for the Evil Inclination

Torah: “If you follow in My Statutes and observe My commandments and perform them; then I will provide you rains in their time...”

Rashi citing *Toras Kohanim*: “If you follow My Statutes” can mean “If you toil in My *Torah*.”

Mishna in *Ethics of Our Fathers*: When one studies the *Torah* it should be for the sake of actualizing it through the performance of *mitzvos*. The *Torah* is not abstract intellectualism, but rather it is something that needs to be actualized and internalized into one’s being.

Maharal of Prague *z’tl*: “If the *Torah* is the Wisdom of G-d, then why does the *Torah* chose the appellation of ‘*Torah*’ and not ‘the Wisdom of G-d’?” The *Torah* is “a way of life” for the Jew. The word *Torah* is derived from the word “to guide,” to indicate that it is intended to guide the Jew in his life in order to actualize his spiritual potential.

Gemara: “I (G-d) created the *yetzer hara* (the evil inclination) and the *Torah* as its antidote.” We understand this to mean, that regardless of one’s intellectual capacity and ability, one cannot subdue or incapacitate the evil inclination without the study of *Torah*.

Ramchal in *Path of the Just*: One may delude himself into believing that if he engages in other spiritual activities other than the study of *Torah* that he would be able to subdue his evil inclination. This is similar to a patient who does not heed the prescription that is given to him by his doctor in order to overcome a life-threatening illness. Since G-d created the evil inclination and He is the one who prescribes the antidote, which is only the study of *Torah*, then regardless of one’s understanding and opinion he will fail.

If G-d says that the *Torah* is the only antidote for the evil inclination, to what degree must one study it in order for it to be an effective antidote? Is the effectiveness of this antidote dependent on the amount of the *Torah* that is studied? Or is it based on the quality of study? We see that nearly all those who are engaged in *Torah* study for many hours, are still subject to the influences of the evil inclination. What is the determining factor for it to be an antidote?

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: In order for the study of *Torah* to be an effective antidote against the evil inclination, it must be studied for its own sake (*I’shma*). Although *Doeg Haadomi*, the antagonist of King *David*, was the leading *Torah* sage of his generation, he was still subject to his evil inclination, which brought about his ultimate destruction, because he did not study *Torah* for its own sake. The evil inclination continuously attempts to interfere with the Jew from performing a *mitzvah*, and if he does perform it, the evil inclination

attempts to undermine its quality. The evil inclination seeks to taint one's *Torah* study by causing one to pride himself or become haughty due to the *Torah* knowledge that he has accumulated; thus, diminishing the effective of the *Torah* as an antidote and its *mitzvah* value.

Mishna in Ethics of Our Fathers: "If you studied an enormous amount of *Torah* do not pride yourself because for that you were created."

Reb Chaim of Volozhin in Nefesh HaChaim: Arrogance and haughtiness is detested by G-d. Therefore, if one performs a *mitzvah* and is tainted by this characteristic, the *mitzvah* is greatly diminished. Even if initially the individual did not perform the *mitzvah* for the sake of pride, it can become immediately diminished if he later prides himself about the performance of the *mitzvah*.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: *Torah* acts as an antidote only when it is studied for its own sake (with pure intent). The evil inclination will thus encourage the individual to study *Torah* with an ulterior motive in order to render it ineffective as an antidote to subdue and incapacitate him.

It is written about the *Chofetz Chaim* that during his lengthy lifetime he lived in a number of communities.

He lived in the cities of Brisk and Vilna. When the poor in Europe would seek alms from the community it would be on one particular day of the week. When the poor would come to his doorstep in Vilna, he would engage them in conversation he would realize that they came from Brisk.

When the *Chofetz Chaim* lived in Brisk and engaged the poor who came to his doorstep for assistance, he learned that they came from Vilna. He asked himself a question, "If in fact the poor of Vilna are needy and the poor of Brisk are needy, why do they not each remain in their communities and be supported by their own community?"

Chofetz Chaim: The highest form of charity is for one to support his own needy (members of one's own community). Since doing acts of charity is something innate in every Jew, the evil inclination cannot prevent the Jew from giving charity; however, he attempts to diminish its value by sending the poor of Vilna to Brisk and the poor of Brisk to Vilna. Thus, the area in which the evil inclination is most active is in the quality of the study of the *Torah*, so that it should not be for its own sake. He attempts to minimize it so that it should not be an antidote.



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