

THE MISHKAN

A Recreation of Existence



YadAvNow.com Weekly Series: Vayakhel

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Beloved Mirrors

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Living Life in the Context of What Is Permitted

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Moshe Delegates the Building of the Mishkan

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The Mitzvah of Building the Mishkan

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Betzalel Sorted the Donations by Levels of Intent

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Transcending Ego & Recognizing Truth

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1. In Heaven, Moshe was told by G-d, that his people had become corrupt (Idolatry).
2. The Egyptian rabble had instigated the worship of the golden calf.
3. Moshe had allowed them to leave Egypt with the Jewish People.
4. It was within his power to have stopped them from leaving; he did not.
5. There was a claim against Moshe for his endorsement.
6. When Moshe saw the golden calf he smashed the tablets at the foot of the mountain.
7. The breaking of the Tablets was an annulment of the relationship with G-d.
8. It was a retroactive revocation.
9. Moshe chose this location to break the Tablets because that was exactly where they had unequivocally accepted the Torah.
10. Moshe supplicated G-d for forgiveness.
11. G-d offered Moshe the opportunity to become the beginning of a new Jewish People.
12. Moshe: If a nation cannot stand on the merit of the 3 Holy Patriarchs, it cannot stand on the merit of one.
13. Moshe's humility: Knowing G-d wanted His glory to be through the descendants of the Patriarchs.

An Intense Drive Supersedes Barriers

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1. Enormous wealth, given by the Jewish people, was needed to build the Mishkan.
2. Midrash: The least amount of wealth taken out of Egypt was 10 pack animals laden with gold & silver.
3. The spoils of the sea were greater than the spoils of Egypt.
4. Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh: two classifications of people participated in building the Mishkan.
5. Those inspired by their hearts & those of generous spirit.
6. The "inspired by their hearts" are acclaimed as men of stature; not so- "the generous of spirit."
7. The individual who is inspired gives beyond his means - he is taken by the objective.
8. The one motivated by generosity gives to the point where it does not infringe on him personally.
9. Avraham, our Patriarch, rose early to go to the Akeida and hitched his own donkey.
10. Avraham was 137 years old and had servants; why prepare his own donkey for the trek?
11. Bilaam, prophet of the nations - pompous, self-centered, and arrogant, rose early and hitched his donkey to curse the Jewish people.
12. Midrash: Intense love & rabid hate disrupt protocol.
13. When consumed with love or hate, all that exists, despite who you are, is the objective to be addressed.

Definitive Law As Catapult

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1. Moshe assembles the entire Jewish People to teach the laws of Shabbos.
2. Midrash: G-d says, "Gather large assemblies of Jews - so that future generations will learn from you to assemble large assemblies of Jews to teach them what is forbidden and what is permitted - so that I should be extolled among my children."
3. Why? It is possible to say that large numbers of Jews studying Torah is a sanctification of G-d?
4. It appears the Jews are actually praising G-d.
5. There is a positive Commandment to love G-d with all your heart, soul, and assets.
6. How does one achieve this level of love?
7. Gemara: One comes to love G-d through dissemination of Torah to students & engaging in its subject matter.
8. One can only have a true sense of G-d through the study of Torah and its dissemination.
9. When taught the definitive law of the forbidden and permitted, it touches the Jew so causing him to extol G-d.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Vayakhel

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Actualizing G-d

Torah: “Moses assembled the entire assembly of the Children of Israel and said to them,” These are the things that *Hashem* commanded to do.””

Midrash: “G-d said to *Moshe*, ‘Gather large assemblies of Jews and lecture before them in a public setting the laws of *Shabbos* so that future generations may learn from your behavior – to gather large assemblies of Jews each *Shabbos* in the study halls to learn. They will learn the laws of what is “forbidden” and what is “permitted”. You shall do this so that My Great Name shall be praised/extolled among My children.” The purpose of assembling and lecturing to large assemblies of Jews is not for the sake of the study of *Torah*, but rather to ultimately bring glory to G-d’s Name through His children’s praises.

Yeshaya: “I (G-d) created it (this existence) for My glory.” The only objective of creation is to glorify G-d. All that

exists was created for that purpose. In order for one to have the capacity and clarity to internalize the value of G-d, one must study *Torah* through which he will understand what is forbidden and what is permitted to him. By living a life that is in conformance with G-d’s Will, within His parameters, it will give the individual the ability to sense G-d’s Presence and value. This realization will cause one to revere and glorify Him.

Shema: “You shall love *Hashem*, your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your resources... speak of them (words of *Torah*) while you sit in your home, while you walk on the way...” One must love G-d to the degree that he is willing to forgo all of his possessions and even his life.

Chazal: The only way one can come to this level of selfless love is to engage in and articulate the words of the *Torah* in all settings and predicaments. The ongoing articulation of the words of the *Torah* will

touch the spirituality of the Jew in a way that will give him a sense of G-d's omnipotence. Thus, it will evoke an overwhelming level of love that will allow him to act selflessly on His behalf.

Midrash: "The face and the structure of the head were created by G-d in a specific manner. There are many streams of fluids that flow through the head of a human being. The fluid of the eye contains salt.... The fluid that is located in the ear is fatty.... The fluid of the nose is putrid... The fluid that is in the mouth is sweet. Why is the fluid in the mouth sweet? There are times when one may eat something that does not agree with him and cause him to regurgitate. The sweetness of the mouth is to minimize its negative effect. In addition, one uses his mouth to study and read the *Torah*. As it states in *Psalms*, 'The *Torah* is sweeter than honey...' Since the *Torah* is sweet it must be associated with something that will not detract from its sweetness. Thus the saliva in the mouth is sweet."

Chazal: The fluid in the mouth is sweet because the mouth's primary function is to engage in the articulation of the words of the *Torah* that are sweet. Although the taste buds in the mouth were created to experience physical sensation, the sense of taste in the mouth also has relevance to spirituality. This is indicated through the saliva that is found in the mouth, which is different from all the other fluids in the body.

Gemara in Tractate *Eruvin* citing a verse: "It brings life to those who come upon it..." It should not be understood as "those who come upon it" rather it should be understood as "those who enunciate its word." The greatest impact and effect of *Torah* upon one's spirituality is when it is articulated through the mouth. The sweetness of the fluid found in the mouth is a confirmation of this verse.

Gemara in Tractate *Eruvin*: *Bruria*, the wife of *Rebbe Meir*, was passing a student who was studying silently without verbalizing what he was learning. She rebuked him and said that his manner of study was incorrect because the verse states, "Life comes to the one who comes upon them" which is meant to be understood as, "life comes to the one who articulates its words with one's mouth." Why is meditating in *Torah* not sufficient, since in fact one is reflecting upon G-d's Word? It is only through the enunciation of the words of the *Torah* and engaging in dialogue that one can truly experience its true spiritual value and not merely as abstract intellectualism.

Gemara in Tractate *Kiddushin* citing *Psalms*: "King *David* writes '...When they (the students of *Torah*) speak with enemies at the gate' What is implied by the words 'enemies at the gate'?"

"*Reb Chiya bar Abba*: It refers even to a father and his son, or a teacher and his student who are studying *Torah* together. At first they become enemies of one another (through the process of debate, neither scholar is willing to accept the position of the other and vehemently tries to disprove it.) However, ultimately they become intimate friends through coming upon the truth of *Torah*."

When one engages in the process of elucidating *Torah* concepts, he is engaged in the quest for truth. Thus, when one enters into *Torah* dialogue with his fellow, each one believing that his position is more cogent than the other, it will cause a strain between the two of them. This is the equivalent of being enemies. However, after debating the issues and coming upon a common understanding, this creates a good feeling and love between them because through their intellectual participation they came upon Divine truth, which is the *Torah*. G-d commanded *Moshe* to gather large assemblies and teach them the laws of *Shabbos*. Through the process of engagement in *Torah*, the masses would gain an appreciation for G-d and thus evoke an intense level of reverence and love.

The Spiritual Potential Of the Jew

Midrash: "G-d said to the Jewish people, 'Keep My *Mitzvos* and My Statutes. Because the reward for performing a *mitzvah* is a *mitzvah* and the consequence of a sin is a sin...."

Mishna in *Pirkei Avos* (*Ethics of our Fathers*): "Reward for a *mitzvah* in this world does not exist." This is because the consequence of a *mitzvah* is infinite/eternal. Something of unlimited value cannot be given within a limited context. If one were to be rewarded for a *mitzvah* in the physical realm, it would be miniscule compared to what he truly deserves. Therefore, G-d rewards the individual who had performed a *mitzvah* by presenting him with an opportunity to perform another *mitzvah*, which in its innateness has relevance to the infinite. Conversely, when one transgresses he is presented with another spiritual pitfall that will lead him to transgress further. This is because when one

sins, he creates a spiritual deficiency that causes him to be vulnerable to transgression.

Midrash: “Ben Azai explains that this is the concept of *mitzvah goreres mitzvah* and *aveira goreres aveira* (a *mitzvah* encourages another *mitzvah* and a transgression encourages another transgression).”

Reb Chaim of Volozhin: Based on the *Zohar*, when one performs a *mitzvah* a pure spiritual energy is created that engulfs the individual. The majority of this energy detaches itself and ascends to the spiritual realm. One’s share in the world to come is comprised of all of the positive energies that were created over the course of one’s lifetime through *mitzvah* performance and *Torah* study. A trace of the positive energy remains with the individual to motivate him to perform another *mitzvah*.

When one transgresses, a contaminated force/influence is created that engulfs the individual. The majority of this impure force ascends to the spiritual realm. This force is the *geheimom* that one is subjected to after he passes away. All the impurity that was created by transgressing during one’s lifetime accumulates to create one’s *geheimom*. A remnant of that contaminated force remains with the individual to act as an addictive influence that seduces the individual to transgress. However, if one should repent, the negative force is dispelled and the individual is free of this influence.

Midrash: “*Reb Meir* says, ‘For every *mitzvah* that one performs, G-d sends an angel to protect him. If one performs one *mitzvah*, he receives one angel. If he performs many *Mitzvos*, he receives many angels to protect him. As it states in *Psalms*, ‘The angels were commanded to protect you...’” In order for one to be protected from prosecution, one needs to have G-d’s Mercy. The Attribute of Mercy is implemented through angels who protect the individual. Therefore if one had performed multiple *Mitzvos*, his level of protection would be great. The Mercy of G-d manifests itself in two guises; firstly, the individual should not be prosecuted for his failings. Secondly, the individual is protected from sin/temptation.

Midrash: “In addition to meriting angels for protection, if one is engaged in many *Mitzvos* he creates for himself a ‘good name.’ We find that an individual is identified by three names – the name that his parents gave him, one that he is called by others, and one that he acquires for himself. The greatest of the three is the one that he creates for himself... As it states in *Ecclesiastes*, ‘Better

is a good name from the most fragrant oil and better is the day of one’s death than the day of one’s birth.’... King Solomon explains that when one is born one does not know how the child will develop. (Will he be good or will he be evil) However, when one passes away with a good name... people will come to give their proper last respects to him...”

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: The name that is given to one at the time of one’s birth determines his destiny.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: The naming of a child by its parents is semi-prophetic. G-d reveals the intended name of the child to the parents. Although the name that the child is given determines the potential of that child, it is uncertain whether he will meet his potential. One will only know if he had actualized his potential on the day of his death. The actualization of one’s potential manifests itself through multiple proper choices throughout one’s lifetime. Thus, the good name that one creates for himself is based on his personal positive initiative. The process that G-d had created for one to achieve this goal, is based on the principle that each *mitzvah* generates a circumstance that allows one to perform another. This mechanism is crucial and necessary for the Jew to actualize his potential.

The Essence of the Torah

Torah: “It was given to *Moshe* when it was completed...”

Midrash: “*Reb Avohu* says, ‘For the forty days and nights that *Moshe* was in heaven, he was taught the entire *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 remember any of it.’ When the forty days were completed, G-d gave the *Torah* to *Moshe* as a gift. This is the reason the verse states, ‘It was given to *Moshe*...’” *Moshe*’s retention of the *Torah* was not based upon his own intellectual capacity, but rather endowed to him by G-d as a gift.

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

Reb Chaim of Brisk: The *Gemara* does not say that if says he toils in *Torah* that he came to understand it,

but rather it states that he had “come upon it/found it.” It is the equivalent of coming upon a lost item. One’s initiative has no relevance to what is found. It is only when one sufficiently toils in *Torah* will G-d give him the Divine Assistance to come upon its truth, unrelated to one’s intellectual capacity. At the time of the receiving of the *Torah* at Sinai, the *Torah* states, “*Moshe* spoke and *Hashem* responded with a voice.”

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: Based on this verse, the audibility of G-d’s voice was no louder than *Moshe*’s communication to the Jewish people. Meaning, when G-d had spoken to *Moshe*, at Sinai, the Jewish people were able to hear what was being communicated. Subsequently, *Moshe* had transmitted to the Jewish people what he had heard from G-d.

Rambam in *Laws of the Study of Torah*: The methodology for teaching *Torah* is through an intermediary, a *meturgamon* (spokesman). The *rebbe* (teacher) speaks at a level of audibility that can be heard by the students and the *meturgamon* repeats the words of the *rebbe* to the students verbatim, without any embellishment. Furthermore, the intermediary must speak at the same level of audibility as the teacher.

When the students pose a question regarding the material that they had heard, they must present it to the *meturgamon* who subsequently poses it to the *rebbe*. Although the *rebbe* hears the question as it is being asked by the students, the *rebbe* does not respond directly to the student but rather, the answer is communicated through the *meturgamon*. This methodology of teaching seems to be superfluous and unnecessary. The ability to understand and process *Torah* knowledge, to come upon its truth, is not based on one’s intellect or the teacher’s skill as a communicator.

The ability of comprehending *Torah* is based upon Divine Assistance. Because the innate subject matter of *Torah* is spiritual and Divine (G-d’s Wisdom), it cannot be fathomed without His Assistance. Thus, unless one transmits and receives *Torah* as it was transmitted at Sinai, through an intermediary (*meturgamon*), one would not merit the necessary Divine Assistance to be able to comprehend it. This methodology of transmission was chosen by G-d.

Torah: After *Moshe* had returned from being taught the *Torah* by G-d he had said to the Jewish people, “For forty days and forty nights bread I did not eat and water I did not drink.”

Midrash: “Why was it necessary for *Moshe* to share this fact with the Jewish people?” Seemingly, it is irrelevant whether he ate or drank when he was in heaven receiving the *Torah*.

Chazal: *Moshe* was saying to the Jewish people, “Just as I sacrificed my blood and fat for the sake of the acquisition of *Torah*, so too must you be willing to compromise on your physicality and material comforts in order to acquire *Torah*.” *Moshe* was teaching the Jewish people that the formula to be implement to be worthy of acquiring *Torah* must be similar to his own. Only then will one merit G-d’s Assistance to be able to comprehend It’s truth.

The Jews’ Perception of Moshe

Midrash citing *Proverbs*: “You will find favor and good understanding in the eyes of G-d and man.” To what is this referring? When G-d communicated the building of the *Mishkan* to *Moshe* he showed him how every vessel was to be developed...*Moshe* believed that since he was being instructed that he would be the one to oversee its building. As it states, ‘You (*Moshe*) shall make the curtains...’ ‘You shall make the altar...’

After everything was set in place in a specific order *Moshe* asked G-d, ‘Who will oversee all of this?’ G-d responded, ‘See, I have proclaimed by name, *Bezalel*...’ *Moshe* then communicated all that was told to him to the Jewish people...They asked, ‘Who will oversee all of this?’ *Moshe* responded, ‘*Bezalel* will be the one.’ The Jewish people began murmuring saying, ‘G-d did not instruct *Moshe* to appoint *Bezalel* to oversee the building of the *Mishkan*, rather it was *Moshe* himself who decided to appoint him because he is a relative.

Moshe is the king, his brother *Aaron* is the High Priest... etc. *Moshe* will dominate all of the building of the *Mishkan*. He is seeking for himself all of the glory by appointing only members of his family.’ *Moshe* responded to them, ‘There is nothing that I do that is my own initiative/decision, rather G-d Himself instructed me...’ *Moshe* showed them clearly who *Bezalel* is. The Jewish people accepted *Bezalel* as the one to oversee the *Mishkan*. This is the meaning of ‘You will find favor and good understanding in the eyes of G-d and man.’...” The Jewish people saw clearly that *Bezalel* was truly chosen by G-d because he was infused with His spirit. They understood he possessed a Divine endowment that qualified him for this task.

Chazal: At the age of thirteen, *Bezalel* (whose name means “in the shadow of G-d” (*B’tzeil Kail*) understood the inner workings of existence. He understood how to conjugate the letter of the Hebrew alphabet to create energies that were similar to those that brought about creation. After the Jewish people engaged in the sin of the Golden Calf, G-d wanted to destroy them. It was only because of the intense supplications of *Moshe* that they were spared.

Moshe had said to G-d, “If You destroy the Jewish people (as a result of their sin), You should erase me from Your Book.” *Moshe* was given a second set of Tablets on behalf of the Jewish people confirming that they were forgiven. G-d said to the Jewish people, “Build for Me a Sanctuary so that I shall dwell in your midst.” Because of *Moshe*’s efforts on their behalf, the Jewish people they were spared from destruction and were reinstated to have a relationship with G-d. Thus, they were instructed to build a *Mishkan* to be the medium for G-d to dwell in their midst.

Despite *Moshe*’s selfless dedication on behalf of the Jewish people (taking them out of Egypt, splitting the Sea, and receiving the *Torah*...), nevertheless, they suspected him of nepotism. His interest was only to glorify his own family. How could they have perceived *Moshe* in this critical light? Although the mutiny of *Korach* had not yet taken place, the seeds of suspicion against *Moshe* were prevalent among all Jews. They had believed that within his leadership, *Moshe* had a degree of self-interest. *Moshe* was able to confirm that *Bezalel* was truly the qualified person who was chosen by G-d.

The basis for the Jewish people being satisfied with *Bezalel* was not based upon their unwavering belief and faith in *Moshe*, as G-d’s prophet. But rather, it was something that they had understood. *Moshe*’s credibility had been breached by the people. This failing had far-reaching ramifications which resulted in the attempt of *Korach* to usurp the authority of *Moshe*—questioning the authenticity and validity of G-d’s Word, the *Torah*. If one questions the position of *Torah* sages and is only satisfied with their perspective after comprehending their view, it is considered a serious failing. It is a confirmation that the individual does not esteem the *Torah* sage as the ultimate authority, within the context of leadership.

However, if one only questions for the sake of understanding the position of the *Torah* sage, not as a

basis for rejecting it, it is not seen as a failing. At Sinai, the Jewish people embraced G-d’s Word unequivocally with the declaration “*Naaseh v’nishma* – we will do and we will listen.” In contrast, the nations of the world had asked G-d “What is written in it?” The question of “what is written in it?” clearly identifies their position—that even if the nations of the world were to accept the *Torah* it would be on their terms and not G-d’s. What had taken place at Sinai is an indication that every Jew has the ability to esteem G-d at a level that is unique to the Jewish people.

Torah, the Purifying Factor for the Jew

Torah: “*Bezalel* made the Ark of acacia wood (*atzei sheetim*)...”

Midrash: “The reason the wood used for the Ark was ‘*atzei sheetim* (acacia wood) is because it was revealed before G-d that the Jewish people would sin in the location of *Sheetim*...” In *Sheetim*, the Jewish males sinned with the *Baal Peor* and had forbidden sexual relations with the Midianite women.

Midrash: “Therefore G-d gave the commandment that the Ark should be made of *sheetim* wood so that they could be atoned for that sin that will occur in *Sheetim*.

“Verse: ‘He cast it (the Ark) with pure gold...’ This is symbolic of students of *Torah* who are pure. Just as the casting of gold onto wood enhances the wood, so too the more the students study the *Torah* they become enhanced and glorified. If they engage sufficiently in *Torah* study, it will enter into their hearts causing purity of the heart and kidneys. They will be referred to as ‘pure gold.’”

The Ark was the repository for the Tablets and the *Torah*. The *Torah* by specifying that the Ark must be made of “*sheetim* wood” is alluding to the fact that through the Ark, one can be atoned from the most severe level of sin (idolatry and promiscuity - as mentioned regarding the incident of *Baal Peor*). Secondly, the reason the wood of the Ark was cast in pure gold, is to teach us that the study of *Torah* purifies the hearts (and kidneys which symbolize wisdom) of those who study it. Just as the gold enhanced the wood, so too does the study of *Torah* enhance and purify the person who studies it.

One can only appreciate and value something that he possesses if he truly understands its intrinsic value.

The more a *Torah* scholar engages in *Torah* study he gains a greater capacity to appreciate its value. The purification process of *Torah* study causes one to gain a keener grasp and appreciation for the *Torah* itself.

Before World War II, an assembly of great rabbis and *Torah* sages convened in Warsaw. At this assembly, *Reb Shimon Shkop z'tl*, the *Rosh HaYeshivah* of Grodna Lithuania, had made a suggestion regarding certain issue which was summarily dismissed by many of the rabbis. *Reb Baruch Ber Leibowitz z'tl*, the *Kaminetzer Rosh HaYeshivah* (main disciple of *Reb Chaim Brisker z'tl*): "*Reb Shimon Shkop* values *Torah* to such a degree that if he encounters a difficulty in one of the commentaries he becomes physically ill until he is able to understand it. How could a person of this level of dedication to *Torah* be dismissed so quickly?" Meaning, because *Reb Shimon Shkop's* dedication and immersion was at such a level, he merited a unique clarity that should be considered.

Chazal: Those who dedicate themselves to *Torah* study are purified and enhanced through it, because it offers them clarity and wisdom. As they advance in *Torah* knowledge, they gain a new understanding of how precious it is – consequently it motivates them to dedicate themselves, even to a greater degree, to *Torah* study. This is why King *David* writes in *Psalms* based on his own perspective of *Torah*, "The words of *Torah* have greater value than thousands of pieces of gold and silver."

On *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* we pray to G-d in the *Amidah* (silent prayer) that He should purify our hearts to serve Him with Truth. The only path to truth is through the purity of heart. Purity of heart can only be achieved through intensive *Torah* study because its essence is Truth.

King Solomon in *Proverbs*: "Acquire Truth, do not sell it." We pray that the *Torah* we study should purify our hearts and minds to be able to appreciate the truthfulness of G-d.



Yad Avraham Institute