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The Gift Of Sinai Incapacitates the Nether Forces

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Bechukosai

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

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A Conduit of Blessing to the World

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1. All the world's blessings are due to the merit of the Jew who observes *Torah* and *Mitzvos*.
2. G-d told *Avraham* that the nations will be blessed through his progeny.
3. The world is denied material when the Jews fail spiritually.
4. *Midrash*: The nation should appoint two sentries for every Jew to assure he is observing *Torah* & *Mitzvos*.
5. They assure and secure the observance of the Jew, and nullify them with their decrees.
6. *Yaakov* and *Esav* battled in the womb of their mother over the physical and spiritual worlds.
7. They agreed the physical would be *Esav's* and the spiritual- *Yaakov's*.
8. *Yaakov*, in the home of *Lavan*, amassed great wealth.
9. Though material, it was only a means to facilitate the spiritual.
10. The world is for the sake of *Torah* and for the Jewish People to observe it.
11. The underpinning of all physical existence and blessings is the spirituality of the *Torah*.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Bechukosai



The Gift Of Sinai Incapacitates the Nether Forces

Torah, the Fortress of Protection

Torah: “If you will follow My Statutes and observe My Commandments and perform them...”

Midrash citing *Eyov* (Job): “It is stated in *Eyov*, ‘If His days are predetermined and the number of his months is with You and You have made his limits, which he cannot surpass.’ What is the meaning of ‘his days are predetermined?’ When G-d created the world, He determined the days of every individual (extent of one’s life)... The meaning of ‘You have made his limits, which he cannot surpass’ is – G-d said to the Jewish people, ‘If you will follow My Statutes (My *Torah*), then *satan* cannot touch you. As it is stated, ‘He cannot cross over.’ However if you do not fulfill My statutes, *satan* will be able to touch you.’

“Verse in *Isaiah*: ‘When he crosses over he will take you.’ G-d said to King Solomon (the wisest man who ever lived), ‘When you asked Me to give you wisdom, I even bestowed upon you things that you did not ask

for. I gave you wealth, glory, and honor. If you fulfill the *Torah* and its statutes, the angel of death cannot touch you.’ As it is stated, ‘If you walk in My way to keep My statutes and My *mitzvos* as your father *David* (King *David*), then I will lengthen your days.’ If *Adam* had followed the *Torah* with its statutes and *mitzvos* that I had given him, he would not have died.” From the moment one is conceived, G-d predetermines the lifespan of the individual. However, in order for one to merit the years that had been allotted to him, one must be fully dedicated to the *Torah*.

Every human being is destined to pass away because *Adam* had eaten of the Tree of Knowledge. Due to this grave sin, G-d decreed death upon him and all existence.

Gemara in Tractate *Shabbos*: “There is no death without sin.” If so what is the meaning of “if you observe My statutes *satan* will not be able to touch you?” No one is immune from death regardless of one’s level of piety and devoutness?

Rosh Hashanah is the “day of judgment” during which one’s spiritual record is scrutinized and audited in order to determine one’s spiritual classification. Every individual has a spiritual record. If so, why does G-d not audit and evaluate this record throughout the year? Why is the evaluation process reserved for *Rosh Hashanah*, the day of judgment?

Ramchal: Throughout the year, G-d does not allow *satan* to prosecute one’s spiritual record, although it may be flawed. It is due to G-d’s Attribute of Mercy that *satan* is not permitted to prosecute. However, if one behaves in certain contexts irresponsibly or inappropriately, he will evoke upon himself the prosecution of *satan* even during the year. This is because the individual’s behavior causes him to be vulnerable to the Attribute of Justice. If *satan* is allowed to prosecute, the Attribute of Mercy is suspended.

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: If one feels that due to his exceptionally focused supplication to G-d he is deserving of G-d’s response, it will cause his record to be audited. This arouses the notice of *satan*. However, if one adheres to the statutes of the *Torah*, G-d will not allow *satan* to prosecute one’s flawed record, regardless of the degree of spiritual failings.

After one lives his life to the fullest, he will transition to the world to come. As the *Mishnah* in *Ethics of Our Fathers* tell us, “This world is only an anteroom to the next world.” This is because when one adheres to the *Torah*, one is in effect utilizing the physicality of the world to its spiritual end. G-d thus protects this individual from *satan*’s prosecution.

Prophet *Jeremiah*: “If not for My covenant, which is in effect day and night, the statutes of heaven and earth would not be put in place.” The only reason existence is continuously Willed and maintained by G-d, is because the Jewish people are continuously engaged in *Torah* study. G-d wants the world to continue, for man to utilize it as a setting to perfect his spirituality. If the Jew adheres to the *Torah* and engages and toils in its study, he in effect becomes G-d’s partner in creation by maintaining existence.

Despite the fact that *satan* wants to prosecute the individual’s record, G-d does not allow him to do so because of the importance of this individual who is maintaining existence through his *Torah* study. In contrast if one does not toil in *Torah* and is not G-d’s partner in maintaining existence, then his value is no

longer critical to existence, and thus G-d will allow *satan* to “touch” that individual by scrutinizing his flawed record.

Gemara in Tractate *Shabbos*: King *David* was informed by G-d that he would pass away on *Shabbos*. King *David* therefore invested every moment of the day to be fully engaged in *Torah* study. As a result of this, the angel of death was not able to take King *David*. It was only when he was able to distract King *David* from his *Torah* study, that he was able to take him from the world.

Although there may be many claims against the individual due to his failings, if he is engaged in *Torah* he will be spared from the prosecution of *satan*. When one engages in *Torah* study, one becomes enlightened and motivated to be fully committed to adhere to and fulfill G-d’s statutes.

Gemara in Tractate *Kiddushin*, “Great is the study of *Torah* because it brings one to actualization (of the *mitzvos*).”

The Spiritualization of the Jew

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

Midrash: “What is the meaning of ‘If you follow My Statutes’? Is it referring to the fulfillment of *mitzvos*? Rather, it means, ‘if you toil in My *Torah*.’ To what is ‘observe My commandments and perform them’ referring? When you toil in *Torah* it should not only be to retain it, but to toil in it for the purpose of actualize the *Torah* through the performance of *mitzvos*.” If the Jewish people toil in *Torah* for the sake of the fulfillment the *mitzvos*, they will merit unlimited material bounty.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: A “Statute” is a law that cannot be understood within the context of the human intellect. The statute to merit unlimited material bounty is that one must toil in *Torah* because it is the Will of G-d. However, one can understand the reason toiling in *Torah* is a precondition to meriting material bounty differently.

Ki Savo, in the curses (*tochacha*): “All these curses will come upon you and overtake you... Because you did not serve *Hashem*, your G-d with joy and wholeheartedness... with an abundance of

everything.” Although one may have observed all of the *mitzvos* meticulously, one is nevertheless deserving of the curses and tragedies that are delineated by the *Torah*, because he did not serve G-d with “joy and wholeheartedness.” If one would be able to internalize the fact that serving G-d through the performance of His commandments is the ultimate privilege and opportunity, one would naturally perform them with joy and wholeheartedness.

If one does not sense this joy, it is a confirmation that he does not see his obligation as a Jew as a privilege, but rather as a burden and an infringement on his being. Thus, performing the *mitzvos* within this begrudging context will bring about the curses mentioned in the *Torah*. However, if one were to toil in *Torah* as the *Midrash* explains the verse, “If you follow in My Statutes...” then the Jew will become spiritualized to the degree that he will be able to sense the value and opportunity of fulfilling G-d’s *mitzvos*. In this context and state, the Jew will feel privileged and thus perform them with joy and wholeheartedness.

Maharal of Prague in *Nesivos Olam* in the segment *Path of Torah*: There are 248 positive commandments and the human being has 248 parts of the body (*RAMACH*). There is a correspondence between every positive commandment and a particular part of the body. When a Jew performs a *mitzvah*, he spiritualizes that aspect of his physicality. Man is naturally an intellectual animal who is driven and influenced by his physical needs and desires. However, when one spiritualizes his being through the performance of *mitzvos*, the animalistic aspect of his being ceases to function within that context and he will become inclined and receptive to spirituality.

Depending one’s intent and quality of dedication when one performs a *mitzvah*, it will determine to what degree it will impact upon his physicality. If one for example were to fulfill a *mitzvah* for its own sake (*I’shmah*) then it will affect and impact upon his being to a greater degree, because he did not fulfill it out of self-interest which relates to one’s physicality. When one is spiritualized to a degree and toils in *Torah*, which is the equivalent of fulfilling all of the *mitzvos* combined (*talmid Torah keneged kulom*), then his entire being will transcend to another level of spiritualization to have the fullest capacity to appreciate the value of serving G-d. Thus, when this individual will perform the Will of G-d, he will do so with joy and wholeheartedness. In contrast, one

who did not toil when he engaged in *Torah* study and consequently did not spiritualize himself, he will regard the *mitzvos* as a burden and an infringement on his life.

Torah: In the fourth year of the Sabbatical Cycle, before the Passover Festival, one must make the confession of the Tithes. The *Torah* states, “You shall say before *Hashem*, your G-d, ‘I have removed the holy things from the house, and I have also given to the Levite, to the proselyte, to the orphan, and to the widow, according to whatever commandment You commanded me... Gaze down from your holy abode, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel, and the ground that You gave us, as You swore to our forefathers, a Land flowing with milk and honey.”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: “We have done all that You have decreed upon us. Now, You do what is incumbent upon You to do for us. You had said ‘If you will follow My Statutes and observe My Commandments and perform them; then I will provide for your rains in their time...’” Meaning, since the Jewish people have given all of the tithes that were incumbent upon them to give (including the new grains and fruits), G-d will provide them with unlimited material bounty as He promised in the verse, “If you will follow My Statutes...”

However, this seems contradictory to the *Midrash* at the beginning of *Bechukosai* cited by *Rashi* that explains that “If you will follow My Statutes and observe My Commandments and perform them; then I will provide for your rains in their time...” One will merit material bounty only when he toils in *Torah*. When one engages in *Torah* at a level that is considered to be “toiling,” the rains will come in their time and one will merit unlimited bounty. How do we reconcile the two interpretations of *Chazal* that are given to this verse? They seem to be unrelated.

The individual who supplicates G-d to gaze upon the Jewish people and provide them blessing predicates his request by saying, “I have done all that you have commanded me....” This is referring to the bringing of the new fruits and grains and the distribution of tithes that need to be given to various segments of the Jewish people.

Rashi: *Chazal* explain this to mean, “I have rejoiced and have caused others to rejoice.” Meaning the individual who distributed the tithes and brought he *bikurim* rejoiced when he distributed the tithes and caused

the recipients to rejoice. It is understood that the one who receives the tithes would rejoice, because he had received something of value which he did not have. However, how could the one who distributes a significant portion of his harvest experience joy when he has parted with a significant portion of his profits? It is only the individual who is sufficiently spiritualized who can appreciate the value of the distribution of tithes. It is because he had internalized the value of the *mitzvah*, which surpasses the material cost.

One who has a sense of purpose as a Jew, which is to address his spiritual potential and destiny, understands that only through the performance of *mitzvos* can one achieve his spiritual objective and address his purpose in existence. One who senses this innate value will surely rejoice. He understands that the only value of the material is to facilitate the spiritual. This sense of purpose can only come about through toiling in *Torah* because the individual becomes spiritualized through this process and thus has the capacity to appreciate the value of a *mitzvah*.

The individual who distributes his tithes and declares, "I have rejoiced and caused others to rejoice" is the one who is imbued with spirituality due to his toiling in *Torah*. Thus, the *Chazal* that is cited by *Rashi* is only a result and consequence of the interpretation of the *Midrash* cited by *Rashi* in *Bechukosai*: Therefore, the individual supplicates G-d by saying, "Gaze down from your holy abode and bless us because we have done all You have decreed upon us. Now, do what is incumbent upon You because we have followed Your statutes."

The Single and Only Purpose of Creation

Midrash: "If you follow in My Statutes I will provide you rains in their time; however if you do not follow My Statutes, the heavens shall be iron.' It is because of you that the heavens withheld their dew and the earth withheld its yield. Even the nations of the world shall be smitten because of the sins of the Jewish people.

"*Reb Yehoshua Ben Levy*: 'If the nations of the world would understand that they are being smitten as a result of the sins of the Jewish people, they would appoint two sentries to guard every Jew so that he should observe the *Torah* and not sin. However, not only do they not do this, the nations of the world actually deny the Jew the ability to perform the *mitzvos*. Because of this the world is smitten.' When the Jewish people sin, the entire world

is punished...However, if the Jewish people do not sin, the entire world will be blessed with bounty. As it states, 'G-d said to *Yaakov*, 'through your progeny the nations shall be blessed...'"

King *David* in *Psalms*: "The nations of the world will praise G-d because the Kindness of G-d has overwhelmed us."

Gemara: "If the Kindness of G-d would overwhelm the nations of the world it is understandable that they would praise G-d; however, why would they do so if His Kindness overwhelms the Jewish people?"

Rabbeinu Bachya on *Lech Lecha*: All blessing that comes upon existence is channeled through the Jewish people. When the Jewish people are worthy, because they adhere to the *Torah*, they will be the beneficiaries of abundant blessing, that will overflow into existence and provide for the nations of the world. However, if the Jewish people are not worthy because of their transgressions, then they will only be able to capture a minimal amount of blessing and a diminished amount will be provided to the nations of the world through them.

Thus, when the Jewish people are overwhelmed with blessing, the nations of the world are greater beneficiaries of G-d's kindness. Therefore, in this context, the nations of the world will sing G-d's Praises, when the Jewish people are overwhelmed with blessing. As the *Midrash* cites the verse, "Through your progeny the nations shall be blessed..." Why should the nations of the world be smitten and denied blessing because of the sins of the Jewish people?

Torah: "*Bereishis bara Elokim*- In the beginning G-d created ..." *Chazal* explain that the opening words of the *Torah* mean, that for the sake of *Torah*, which is referred to as "*reishis* (first/choicest)" G-d created heaven and earth. In addition, the Jewish people are referred to as "*reishis* (choicest)." Meaning, all existence was only created with the objective of the fulfillment of the *Torah* by the Jewish people. They are the only nation who is qualified to do so. If the Jewish people should transgress the dictates of the *Torah*, they are utilizing existence in a manner that is contrary to its purpose.

Consequently, G-d withholds His blessing and the world will suffer and will be smitten. Existence was created and its bounty is provided to facilitate and assist the Jewish people regarding their spiritual objective, which is the fulfillment of the *Torah*. Thus, the value of the nations of

the world in Creation is that they should assist the Jewish people to succeed in their objective. The focus of the Jew must be on the spiritual, while the responsibility of the nations of the world is to tend to the physicality that is needed to facilitate the spiritual. Just as G-d created a helpmate for *Adam* to attend to all of his physical needs so that he should be able to actualize his spiritual potential, so too the nations of the world are meant to be the attendants of the Jewish people to address their material needs to facilitate their fulfillment of the *Torah*.

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: An argument between *Reb Yishmael* and *Reb Shimon Bar Yochai* regarding the understanding of the verse “that you may gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil...” *Reb Shimon Bar Yochai*’s position is that if the Jew adheres to the Will of G-d as he should, he will not need to engage in the material whatsoever to provide for himself. His material needs will be attended to and provided to him through others, the nations of the world. However, if the Jew does not adhere sufficiently to the *Torah*, then not only will others not provide him with his physical needs, he will need to tend to the needs of the nations of the world.

The only reason bounty comes into existence is to facilitate the fulfillment of the *Torah*, which is the only objective of Creation. It is because of this that *Torah* states, “If you will follow My Statutes... I will provide for your rains in their time...” If the nations of the world would understand this fact, they would assist the Jewish people in their objective.

Gemara in Tractate *Avodah Zorah*: At the end of time G-d will sit with a *Torah* Scroll in His lap and He will announce to the world, “Whoever has a share in this *Torah*, let him come and take his portion (reward)!” The first nation that will come to claim their reward will be the Romans (who destroyed the Second Temple). They will claim, “Whatever we accomplished in this world such as building market places, boulevards, bathhouses, and going to war to amass large amounts of wealth was all so that the Jewish people should be able to engage in *Torah* study. Therefore we deserve reward.”

G-d will respond to them saying, “You fools! Everything that you did was for your own self-interest.” G-d will then dismiss them from His Presence and they will leave in a distraught state. All the nations of the world will come before G-d with a similar claim that all that they had accomplished was only to accommodate the Jewish people to study the *Torah*. All of them will be

rejected on the same grounds as the Romans. Whatever they had accomplished was for their own sake and not for the sake of the Jewish people to study *Torah*.

Brisker Rav z”l: “How is it possible that at the end of time, which is a time of Truth, that the nations of the world can come before G-d and blatantly lie that all of their initiatives and successes were only to facilitate the study of *Torah* for the Jewish people?” He explains that at the end of time, truth will become known to all mankind and the nations of the world will realize that creation has only one purpose, which is to facilitate the *Torah* and the Jewish people who study it. They will realize in retrospect that all their successes and accomplishments were only to accommodate the Jewish people regarding their study of *Torah*.

The Less is the Equivalent of the More

Torah: On the seventh year of the Sabbatical Cycle (*Shmita*), all agricultural activities must cease. Since one is not permitted to plant his field in the seventh year, he will thus not have a crop to be harvested in the eighth year. The sowing of the eighth year, which is after the Sabbatical year, will only produce its bounty in the ninth year. Despite this fact the *Torah* tells us that one should not be concerned. As it states, “You shall perform My Decrees, and observe My Ordinances and perform...The land will give its fruit and you will eat to be sated...”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: “There will be blessing in one’s innards.” Meaning, although one will only eat a miniscule amount of produce, he will be nourished and fully sated.

Torah: “If you will say: What will we eat in the seventh year? -Behold! We will not sow and not gather in our crops! I will ordain My blessing for you in the sixth year and I will yield a crop sufficient for the three-year period.”

Sforno explains, “If the Jewish people will not have faith in G-d and will question the fact that they will be sated with a lesser amount of food, then G-d will command His blessing to come upon the physical to provide a yield that will be the equivalent of three years.”

If the Jewish people will be lacking in their faith in G-d, not being certain that eating less will be the equivalent of having more, then G-d will provide a quantity that they will see that they will have enough food for the three-year period. If they have faith in G-d then the less will be the equivalent of more; however, if they do not have

sufficient faith, then G-d will give them quantitatively a three-year crop in the sixth year of the Sabbatical Cycle.

Midrash: The verse, “You shall perform My Decrees...” to mean if one toils in *Torah* he will merit unlimited bounty. It is through the study of *Torah* that one becomes spiritualized and is thus able to have sufficient faith in G-d that a miniscule amount of food will be sufficient to sustain him. If on the other hand, one is not immersed in *Torah* and spiritual advancement, then the blessing will manifest itself in a quantitative context and not qualitative.

Initially when G-d created the world, everything was provided to *Adam* without any need for him to take a initiative. However after *Adam* had sinned by eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, G-d cursed man by saying, “By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread...” From this moment onward, man needed to take initiative to provide for himself.

Ramchal in *Mesilas Yesharim (Path of the Just)*: If the *Gemara* tells us that one’s yearly allocation for livelihood is determined from *Rosh Hashanah* to *Rosh Hashanah*, why does one need to take an initiative in order receive his allocation? In order for one to receive his allocation, one must fulfill the prerequisite of the decree, which is “By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread...” Thus, one must take a physical initiative to be the equivalent of “By the sweat of your brow...” to release the allocation that was made for him on *Rosh Hashanah*.

If one lives his life with a material perspective and is motivated by the acquisition of glory and honor, then engaging in material pursuits for a minimal amount of time will not be sufficient to achieve and attain one’s allocation because it would not be considered “By the sweat of his brow...” This individual must therefore invest many hours of work in a day to receive his allocation.

In contrast, if one is spiritually attuned whose perspective and ideal is to dedicate every moment of his life to G-d’s Will, then it would only be necessary for him to invest a minimal amount of effort in order to meet the prerequisite of “By the sweat of your brow...” It is because the spiritual person will be pained when he must interrupt his *Torah* study for the sake of the material. G-d will therefore provide him with everything that was intended for him with a minimal degree of effort. One’s mindset will determine to what extent he must invest in order to be worthy of the material allocation intended for him.

If one lives according to the prescription of the *Torah*, “You shall perform My Decrees...” and is thus immersed in *Torah* study, he will understand that the material is only to facilitate his spiritual objective. He will internalize the fact that spiritual pursuit is the ultimate and the material does not have any innate value. Therefore, G-d will cause the less to be the equivalent of the more. However, the one who does not regard the material as a means to a spiritual end, will be driven to engage in the physical to a great extent. He will need to labor for endless hours in order to receive the material success that was allotted for him.

Converting the Finite into the Infinite

Torah: Regarding the four species one is obliged to take on the Festival of *Succos*, “You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of the citron tree (*esrog*), the branches of date palms (*lulav*), twigs of myrtle (*hadas*), and brook willows (*aravos*)...”

Midrash: “G-d said, ‘And now I have commanded you to take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of the citron, the branches of date palms, twigs of a plaited tree and brook willows. For what do I need this? It is only to bring merit upon you. Why did G-d specifically choose these four species? Some of the species produce fruit while the others do not produce fruit. Two of the species produce fruit, the citron (*esrog*) and the palm, which represents the *tzaddikim* who produce good deeds.

The other two species represent the ordinary class. G-d said, ‘You shall make yourselves into one bond so that there should not be any impurity (*psoles*) among My children. If you do as I instruct you, I will elevate you...” If the Jewish people are united together as one entity, then even the evil ones (*rashaaim*) will be purified from their sin. How is it possible that the evil ones will achieve atonement if they do not repent?

Gemara in Tractate *Zevachim*: The meaning of the word “*Kippur*” is derived from one of the vessels that was used in the service in the Temple. When the *Kohen* would finish sprinkling the blood of the offering, which had a consecrated status, he would cleanse his finger by running it along the edge of the gold vessel. Thus, the vessel that cleansed his finger was called “*Kipurei* (cleanse) *Zahav* (gold).” Just as the blood is cleansed from the finger of the *Kohen*, so too does *Yom Kippur* cleans and purify the Jewish people from sin.

The liability of spiritual excision (*koreis*) is the cutting off of the soul of the individual from its connection to G-d. The *Torah* tells gives us many examples of transgressions that carry the liability of *koreis*. For example, if one violates *Yom Kippur*, eats *chametz* (leaven) on *Pesach*, or violates *Shabbos* and is not forewarned, one is liable for spiritual excision (*koreis*).

Whenever the *Torah* mentions the liability of spiritual excision, it does not state, “this soul will be cut off from G-d,” but rather, it expresses itself by saying “this soul will be cut off from Israel” or “this soul will be cut off from its people”. It is clear that when one is cut off from the Jewish people he no longer has relevance to G-d, because one only can have a relationship with Him within the context of being part of the Jewish people. The Jewish people are the only people with whom G-d has a relationship.

Ramchal (Reb Moshe Chaim Luzzatto) in The Way of G-d: Regardless of how perfect an individual may be, he will still be finite. If so, how could one have relevance to the infinite?

Torah: “But you who cling to *Hashem*, your G-d, you are all alive today (*Vatem HaDevakim Ba'Shem Elokeichem Chayim Kulchem HaYom*).” If the Jew cleaves to G-d he will live eternally because he becomes attached to the eternal and infinite Being. This is similar to one grafting a branch to a tree. If the graft is done properly, the branch becomes part of the ecosystem of the tree. So too the Jewish people become connected to the Infinite Being if they cleave to G-d.

When the Jewish people are unified together as one group, they reflect the Unity of G-d and thus establish a commonality with Him. By assuming the characteristic of G-d’s Oneness, by uniting the devoutly righteous Jew and the ordinary Jew together, there will be no blemish among the Jewish people because when they assume the profile of unity, they become attached to G-d and will be thus purged of impurity. Through the unity of the various classifications of Jew, all impurity will be cleansed from the Jewish people because they become part of G-d’s pure and holy system.

Torah: Before the giving of the *Torah* at Sinai, “Israel camped (*vayichan*) there..” The word “*vayichan*” (camped) is written in the singular to indicate that the Jewish people were unified as one individual with “one heart.” In order to be qualified to receive the *Torah* and become G-d’s people, the Jewish people needed to reflect G-d’s Unity as His Holy nation.



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