

TO RECONSTRUCT FOR ETERNITY
THE FOUNDATION
MUST BE RESET

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Devarim

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

The 48 Covenants As Counterforce To All Levels Of Idolatry

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Not A Threat But Reality

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To Merit The Land Unconventionally

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Appreciating The Accountability Of Human Behavior

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Conscience as Barometer to the Acuity of Debt

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1. Moshe at the end of his life rebukes the Jewish People for their failings over 40 years.
2. He refers to Yisro who suggested establishing a judicial system.
3. The Judges who were qualified to adjudicate were "Chachamim" (knowledgeable, wise).
4. Rashi: They must have shame, conscience.
5. Jews, descendants of Avraham, possess three characteristics: Compassion, Shame (conscience) and Acts of Loving Kindness.
6. Though brilliant, if one does not have conscience the intellectual is misappropriated.
7. This individual cannot be classified as wise.
8. Fear of G-d is referred to as fear of heaven.
9. Nefesh Hachaim: If one is aware of accountability to G-d, one behaves appropriately.
10. Psalms: The prerequisite to wisdom is fear of G-d.
11. Avraham, our Patriarch, came upon G-d due to his sense of conscience.
12. He needed to identify his benefactor to pay his debt of gratitude.
13. The weight of one's debt is determined by conscience.

How To Increment the Unquantifiable

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1. Moshe blesses the Jewish People to increase a thousand fold.
2. Sifri: The Jewish People responded: "Your blessing is finite; the blessing G-d gave to Avraham is unlimited."
3. G-d said to Avraham, "Your progeny will be like the sand on the seashore that can not be counted."
4. Moshe responds "My blessing is in addition to the blessing given to Avraham."
5. Gemara: "Blessing" does not come upon something counted, measured or weighed.
6. Blessing only comes upon that which is concealed from the eye.
7. Maharal of Prague: Blessing is something that is spiritual in nature which is unlimited.
8. The physical realm is finite, limited.
9. Once quantified by number or weight it no longer has relevance to Blessing which is unlimited.
10. The Jewish people said to Moshe: Your quantification denies us unlimited blessing because we assume a physical persona.
11. Moshe responds: "My blessing is in addition to G-d's not compromising the spiritual."

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Devarim



Torah, the Blueprint of Existence

Torah: “These are the words that Moshe spoke....”

Midrash: “The Jewish people said, ‘It was only recently that you had said that you were not a man of words (Moshe had a speech impediment), and now you are speaking to a great degree.’

“Reb Yitzchak: ‘If one studies *Torah* it will bring about healing. Moshe had already studied the entire *Torah* (thus he was healed from his speech impediment).’ When G-d sent Moshe to Pharaoh, Moshe said, ‘How can You ask me to do such a thing? I am not able to express myself properly. They speak seventy languages in the palace of Pharaoh. If one were to come from another location, they will speak to him in his language. If I am going as Your agent, they will check to see who I am and they will say, ‘He is the agent of G-d?’ It will become known to them that I cannot communicate with them. They will make a mockery of me saying, ‘Is this the agent of the One who created the world and the languages?’

“Moshe said, ‘I will not be able to understand or to respond. It will be something outrageous. I am not a man of words because I have a speech impediment.’ G-d said to Moshe, ‘Adam did not have anyone to teach him. If this is so, how did he know seventy languages? And you say you are not a man of words?’ At the end of forty years after the Jewish people left Egypt, Moshe began to elucidate the *Torah* in seventy languages. This is the meaning of the verse, ‘These are the words that Moshe spoke....’”

Torah: “Moshe began explaining the *Torah* saying...” G-d said to Moshe ‘Explain this *Torah*...”

Rashi: G-d said to Moshe to explain the *Torah* to the Jewish people in seventy languages. One would think that it is so that the *Torah* should be transmitted to the seventy nations of the world in their own languages. However, from the *Midrash* cited above, it is clear that it is not the reason.

Chazal: "G-d looked into the *Torah* and Created the world." Meaning, every aspect of existence is contained within the *Torah*. If seventy languages exist in the world, it is only because it is contained in the *Torah*, which is the blueprint of existence. In addition, it is not that the *Torah* should be taught to the seventy nations of the world.

Gemara in Tractate *Chagigah*: It is forbidden for a Jew to teach a non-Jew *Torah* and the non-Jew is not permitted to study *Torah*. If a non-Jew were to study the *Torah* he would be liable for the death penalty. This is because the *Torah* itself is considered to be the "betrothed" of the Jewish people.

Adam, because he was the handiwork of G-d, was nearly in a perfect state. He was therefore able to fathom all aspects of existence. He knew all the seventy languages of the world because it was part of existence and thus part of his completeness. Similarly, *Moshe*, the most perfect person who ever lived and who was the transmission for the *Torah*, was conversant in all seventy languages. This is a confirmation that the *Torah* itself is all-encompassing in its essence.

The Desert, A Period of Clarity

Torah: "Moshe spoke to all Israel...eleven days from Chorev, by Mount Seir to Kadesh-barnea..." *Moshe* was telling the Jewish people that it was an eleven-day trek from Mt. Sinai to Kadeshbarnea.

Rashi citing *Chazal*: Although the distance from Chorev to Kadesh-barnea is an eleven-day journey, G-d allowed the Jewish people to traverse the distance in three days so that they should enter the Land of Israel as soon as possible. Unfortunately, the Jewish people failed due to the sin of the spies and it was thus decreed that they should wander the desert for forty years.

Sforno: "The shortest route from Mt. Sinai to Kadesh-barnea is through Mt. Seir. G-d allowed them to make the journey in three days. However, because of their sin they needed to wander the desert for forty years. What was the purpose of the wandering? It was so that they should remember and return to G-d (repent)."

The prerequisite to repentance is to remember the wrong that one had done. The more profoundly one remembers the transgression and appreciates the degree of the wrong, the more complete will be his repentance. Thus, the value of the Jewish people

wandering the desert for forty years was so that they should focus and reflect upon their sin to appreciate the wrong that they had done against G-d, thus allowing them to achieve full repentance.

Chazal: "The *Torah* was only given to those who ate of the manna." Because the Jewish people were sustained by the manna, which was food that was spiritual in its essence, they qualified to receive the *Torah* at Sinai. In addition to being provided the manna in the desert for forty years, they also received the gift of the wellspring and the clouds of glory which G-d had given them in the merit of "the three good providers" *Moshe*, *Aaron*, and *Miriam*.

In order for one to repent properly one must sense the deficiency within himself. For one to be able to achieve this level of introspection, he must do so without distraction. Although one may understand that he had sinned, if he is distracted he will not be able to focus sufficiently to introspect. Consequently, he will thus not be able to appreciate the depth of his failing in order to repent fully.

In the desert, the Jewish people did not have any distractions because every need and amenity was provided by G-d. The setting that G-d provided for them in the desert was similar to that of *Adam* in the Garden of *Eden* before his sin. After *Adam* had sinned by eating from the Tree of Knowledge, he was cursed to provide for himself through his own toil. As the verse states, "By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread..." The Jewish people in the desert were not subject to this curse because G-d provided them everything they needed not to be distracted. They were able to perceive and internalize their failing to introspect properly and thus to do a quality repentance.

After experiencing the spiritual environment of the desert for forty years without distraction, the Jewish people were sensitized and spiritualized to the degree that they would be able to appreciate and value the sanctity of the Land of Israel.

Gemara in Tractate *Kesubos*: "One who lives outside of the Land (of Israel) it is as though he has no G-d." The Land of Israel is known as the "holy land" only because it is the location of the Divine Presence. All blessing that comes upon existence emanates from the Land of Israel. In order for the Jewish people to be able to sense and appreciate this, they needed to be in the desert for forty years to introspect and make the necessary corrections.

The sin of the spies was an indication and confirmation that the Jewish people were not ready to enter into the Holy Land. The request of the Jewish people to send scouts to investigate the Land before they would enter was a confirmation that they had a lack of trust and faith in G-d. G-d already had told them that the Land itself was "a Land that flows with milk and honey..." G-d allowed them to send spies only to prove to them that they were not worthy to enter into the Land because of their open mistrust of G-d. After all the Jewish people had experienced in Egypt and the exodus, they should have had sufficient trust in G-d. Thus, the wandering in the desert for forty years was a necessary prerequisite to enter into the Land so that they could gain the clarity that was needed to appreciate the Land Israel.

Moshe's Blessing to the Jewish People

Torah: Moshe blessed the Jewish people by saying, "May Hashem, the G-d of your forefathers, add to you a thousand times yourselves, and bless you as He has spoken to you."

Rashi citing *Chazal*: "After receiving this blessing, the Jewish people said to Moshe, 'G-d had blessed our forefather Avraham that we should be as unquantifiable as the dust of the earth, yet the blessing that you are giving us is that we should only increase a thousand fold. Your blessing putting a limitation on our number.' Moshe responded, 'My blessing is an addition to the one you have already received from G-d. He had blessed you to be unquantifiable as the dust of the earth and my blessing is that the unlimited number should be a thousand fold.'"

At the time that Moshe had blessed the Jewish people the number of the men above the age of twenty was more than 600,000, in addition to their families. If that number was multiplied a thousand fold it would seemingly be a staggering number, bordering on something unlimited. This was not acceptable to the Jewish people. Moshe responded that whatever the unlimited number that G-d had blessed them with, it should be a thousand fold.

Maharal of Prague: The concept of blessing is something of a spiritual nature, which is unlimited. The spiritual realm is not something that is finite but rather it is unlimited and has relevance to the infinite.

Gemara in Tractate *Bava Metzia*: Blessing does not come upon something that is measured, weighed, or counted.

Since blessing is a spiritual concept, which by nature is not finite, it cannot come upon something that has assumed a physical profile of limitation. This was the basis for the response of the Jewish people to Moshe's blessing. Their claim to Moshe was that by quantifying them by a number, regardless of the dimension of that number and its multiples, it is nevertheless a quantification - thus, denying them G-d's unlimited Blessing.

It is interesting to note that the reality of "unlimited/infinite" only has relevance to G-d Himself, Who is Unlimited. The basis for the Jew to have relevance to G-d and have a compatibility with Him is to establish a commonality with Him. If the Jew is quantified in any context, it interferes and lessens his commonality with the Omnipotent One. Thus, when the Jewish people received the blessing of Moshe that they should increase a thousand fold, they saw this as a detriment because it was an obstacle to their relationship with G-d. Despite the enormity of their number, it was not considered to be a blessing, compared to what they had received from G-d. To this, Moshe responded and clarified the meaning of his blessing by explaining that it was not a quantification of them, but rather the blessing was a thousand fold of the unlimited - thus, not interfering with their profile as G-d's people.

Mishna in Ethics of our Fathers: One should be as careful in the performance of a seemingly less severe *mitzvah* as with a more severe *mitzvah* because one does not know the extent of reward for a *mitzvah*. Although the *mitzvah* in its essence is G-d's commandment, the nature of its profile must also conform with spirituality, which is something that cannot be quantified.

Torah: The *Mishkan* and its contents were built with precise specifications that were dictated by G-d. Every aspect of the *Mishkan* was measured and formed to an exact design. Although the *Mishkan* was something that was measured and physically quantified, it was the source of all blessing for existence. How is it possible that blessing, which is something that is unlimited, could emanate from something that is finite and measured? The *Mishkan* was also the dwelling location for the Divine Presence, which is Infinite in the absolute sense. How could we reconcile this specificity of the *Mishkan* with the concept of spirituality, which is unlimited?

The *Mishkan* and its components were actually physical symbols/representations that correspond to spiritual entities. For example, the *Menorah* was exact

and measured and made of pure gold, however *Chazal* tell us that *Moshe* could not fathom how to make it. It is not because of its complexity of its physical formation, but rather *Moshe* did not understand the necessary intent that was required to infuse into the physicality of the *Menorah*.

The intent of the *Menorah* was something that touched upon the infinite because it was a representation of the Oral Law (which has no limit). Thus, G-d Himself told *Moshe* to put the gold into the fire and the *Menorah* was formed. Although the *Mishkan* was exact in its physicality and the number of *mitzvos* is limited to 613, this does identify them as quantified or limited, due to the fact that their true essence is spiritual and thus unlimited.

Moshe, the Ultimate Disseminator of Torah

Torah: Before *Moshe* passed away he rebuked the Jewish people for many of their failings that had taken place over the past forty years. The *Torah* states, “I (*Moshe*) said to you at that time, saying, ‘O cannot carry you alone...How can I alone carry your contentiousness, your burdens, and your quarrels? Provide for yourselves distinguished men, who are wise, understanding, and well known to your tribes, and I shall appoint them as your heads. You answered me, “The thing that you propose to do is good.”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: “The response of the Jewish people to *Moshe* was for their own self-interest. They should have responded by saying, ‘Our teacher *Moshe*, from whom is it better to learn, from the teacher or from the student? Is it not better to learn from you, who suffered and sacrificed for the sake of acquiring the *Torah*?’ Since you did not respond in this manner, I understand that you were acting out of self-interest. You believed that if you have multiple judges who do not recognize you, you would be able to give them gifts in order for them to favor you. You understood that such a thing would not possible with me...”

Since *Moshe* was taught the *Torah* by G-d Himself, Who is the source and basis for all spirituality, one would think that the reason it would be better to study from *Moshe*, rather than anyone else, was because he studied from the source. However, *Chazal* tell us that the reason it was better to learn the *Torah* from *Moshe* was because he had suffered and was pained for its acquisition. Where do we see that *Moshe* had suffered for the sake of acquiring the *Torah*?

Torah: *Moshe* had said to the Jewish people, “For forty days and forty nights bread I did not eat and water I did not drink.” Why was it necessary for *Moshe* to tell the Jewish people that he was denied food and drink? What is its relevance to them?

Midrash: “*Moshe* was teaching the Jewish people that the manner which one must acquire *Torah* must be similar to his own. He had said to them, ‘Just as I sacrificed my blood and fat for the sake of the acquisition of *Torah* (because I did not eat or drink...), so too must you be willing to sacrifice your physicality and material comforts in order to acquire *Torah*.’ Only then will you merit to come upon its truths.”

Mishna in Ethics of our Fathers: There is a principle, “Based on the pain, it will determine the reward.” The simple understanding of this principle is, that if one were to perform a *mitzvah* within a context of inconvenience or suffering, one will receive a greater degree of reward because despite his suffering he performed the *mitzvah*, which is an indication of his dedication to G-d.

Maharal of Prague: If one is willing to perform a *mitzvah* despite the pain and suffering that he will incur, the *mitzvah* itself will be elevated to another dimension of value. Reward is not something in addition to performing the *mitzvah*. Because *Moshe* suffered for the sake of the acquisition of *Torah*, it assumed a more profound dimension. If another were to acquire the *Torah* without suffering, although he may communicate the same words as *Moshe*, they would not have the same effect.

In order for the Jewish people to be the greatest beneficiaries of the *Torah*, *Moshe* was the most appropriate teacher to communicate the *Torah* to them. Thus, if one has the opportunity to study *Torah* from someone who may not be proficient in every aspect of *Torah* but had suffered for its acquisition it would be better to study from him rather than one who is proficient in every aspect of *Torah* and did not suffer for its sake.

Transforming Intelligence into Wisdom

Torah: Before *Moshe* passed away he recounted to the Jewish people of all the events that had transpired over the past forty years when they were in the desert. In so doing, he reprimanded them for their various failings. *Moshe* had recounted to them the time when he had appointed judges and established a judicial system.

He had said, “How can I carry your contentiousness, your burdens, and your quarrels? Provide for yourselves distinguished men, who are wise (*chachamim*), understanding, and well known to your tribes, and I shall appoint them as your heads.”

Rashi: The word “*chachamim* (wise)” is referring to people who are “*kesufim*”, which means people with conscience and shame.

Sifsei Chachamim: “The word ‘*chachamim* (wise) is referring to people with shame. They are ashamed for their inappropriate behavior. Therefore, before they chose to do anything, they evaluate initially evaluate their actions so that shame should not come upon them.”

Mishna in Ethics of Our Fathers: “Who is the wise person? It is the one who sees the consequences of his actions.” It is interesting to note that the *Mishna* does not say that the wise person is the one who “understands” the outcome of his actions, but rather it is the one who “sees” the outcome. The wise person “sees” the result of his action as if it were a reality in the present.

One who is wise is not necessarily one who has superior intelligence, but rather it is one who understands how to employ his intelligence properly, within the context of the *Torah*, so that the outcome will be correct and appropriate. In order for one to be wise, one must possess the characteristic of shame/conscience. If one has the capacity to feel shame, then he will be able to gird and direct his intelligence wisely.

Gemara in Tractate *Yevamos*: There are three characteristics that are innate in every Jew. They have compassion (*rachmanim*), possess conscience/shame (*bishanim*), and have a propensity to do acts of kindness (*gomlei chassadim*). Since the Jewish people descend from the holy Patriarchs, who established and inculcated these characteristics into their own being, their progeny inherited them, as their spiritual heirs.

Avraham, our Patriarch, was the first human being to recognize G-d as “The Master.” How was he able to come

upon this truth when all of humanity was not able to? Was he the most intelligent person among humanity? It was because *Avraham* developed within himself the special quality of having conscience/shame. *Avraham* understood that he was the beneficiary of the unlimited kindness of a power. Because of his conscience he strove to seek out his benefactor. He could not live his life with good conscience not acknowledging and revealing the one who endowed him with everything. He thus searched relentlessly until he came upon G-d. Had *Avraham* not been motivated by his conscience to identify his benefactor, he would not have come upon G-d.

The Jewish people are the spiritual heirs of this characteristic of conscience and shame. Although the Jew innately possesses shame it must be coupled with *Torah* because without it, there is no way to understand what is truly shameful. If on the other hand the Jew engages in *Torah* study, then he will be able to understand the standard that G-d has set for him. Thus, acting differently will be considered shameful. Studying *Torah* also allows the person to maximize on the characteristic of conscience because it covers not only what is considered shameful to his fellow man, but also in the Eyes of G-d.

In the text of the “*Vidui* (Confession)” we say before G-d “we are ashamed.” It is not enough for one to apologize for one’s transgression, one must feel a sense of shame. Because the Jew has an innate conscience he is able to repent properly. This is not so with the nations of the world. *Chazal* tell us that there is no nation that G-d had begun punishing that He did not ultimately destroy.

This is because the nations of the world do not possess the characteristic of conscience and thus do not appreciate their failing. Rather, they react and defy G-d to a greater degree when tragedy comes upon them. In contrast, when difficulties come upon the Jewish people, it causes them to introspect and repent because of their innate characteristic of shame/conscience.



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