

ACCEDING TO ONES DEMISE WITH ELATION

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Matos-Maasei

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Weekly Video: The Clear Lens of Moshe & The Power of Speech

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Intent to Wrong Carries Liability

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When Hearsay is Not Enough to Exult in G-d's Glory

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The Ultimate Cell of MultiCultural Organisms

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1. The objective of creation is the study of Torah and the fulfillment of its mitzvos.
2. Zohar: Should there be any moment the Torah is not studied, the world would revert to preexistence.
3. Pirkei Avos: The world stands on 3 principles: Torah, Avodah, and acts of loving-kindness.
4. The Mishnah seems to contradict the Zohar.
5. Chazal: The study of Torah is the equivalent of all 613 mitzvos.
6. Vilna Gaon: Each word of Torah is the equivalent of all 613 mitzvos.
7. Rambam: Great is the study of Torah that it brings to actualization; the performance of a mitzvah alone does not.
8. Midrash: I would have preferred they abandon me & keep my Torah because the (innate) illumination contained within it would have brought them back to good.
9. All mitzvos are connected to the study of Torah.
10. When one studies Torah, he has touched upon Avodah and acts of loving-kindness.
11. If one does not study Torah regardless of his level of engagement it will not touch upon Torah.

Emphasizing the Innate Value of the Speaking Species

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1. When taking an oath & violating it, one violates the negative commandment "Do not desecrate your word."
2. Gemara: Due to the sin of vows, one loses his wife and (minor) children.
3. The commandment of violating vows connotes there is sanctity to speech.
4. Vernacular: "One's speech is sacred."
5. Job: Man (Adam) was made to toil.
6. Gemara: "Toil" refers to the toil of the mouth, the articulation of Torah.
7. G-d blew a soul of life into his nostrils & he became a living species.
8. Targum: "Living" is interpreted as a speaking species.
9. Speech emanates from the spiritual components of the person, the soul.
10. G-d created the world for Torah & the Jewish People.
11. When one studies Torah it must be articulated.
12. Adam was endowed with the power of speech, which is essential for the study of Torah.
13. Violating one's word, which emanates from a spiritual source, has severe repercussions.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Matos-Maasei



The Profoundness of a Vow

Torah regarding the taking of a vow: “If a man takes a vow to Hashem or swears an oath to establish a prohibition upon himself, he shall not desecrate his word.”

Gemara in Tractate Shavuos: “For the sin of vows, one’s wife and children die (when the children are minors).” Even if one were to deliberately violate the Shabbos and thus be liable for the death penalty; one’s wife and children will not be affected negatively as a result of his spiritual failing. It is understandable that if one swears falsely in the Name of G-d, it will have the most serious consequence.

Gemara in Tractate Shavuos: At Sinai when G-d communicated the Ten Commandments and said, “Do not pronounce My Name in Vein” the entire world quaked. However, when one makes a vow, where there is no mention of G-d’s Name, why should violating it

have such tragic consequences, such as the death of one’s wife and children?

Midrash of Eichah explaining the words of our Patriarch Yitzchak, “The voice is the voice of Yaakov, and the hands are the hands of Esav...” The Midrash states, “Two of the great wise men of the nations of the world were asked, ‘When do we know that the Jewish people are vulnerable to destruction?’ They answered, ‘You must go to the synagogues to see if you hear the chirpings of children (studying Torah) and the study halls to see if the sound of Torah is heard (from the adults). If they are studying they cannot be destroyed due to the blessing of Yitzchak who had said, ‘When the voice is the voice of Yaakov, the hands cannot be the hands of Esav...’ However, if there are no chirpings (the Jews are not engaged in Torah study and prayer), then (G-d forbid) the hands will be the hands of Esav. Meaning, you can then destroy them.’” Esav assumes a

dominant position and is thus be able to inflict serious harm upon the Jewish people.

G-d endowed the Jewish people with the power of speech to be used for spiritual expression. If it is utilized properly, it will protect and insulate them from the nations of the world.

Reb Shimon Bar Yochai: "It is known, that Esav hates (despises) Yaakov" he will not be able to withstand the spiritual force that is created by "the voice of Yaakov", thus Jewish people will be protected.

A vow must be verbalized in order to be effective. The power of speech is the expression of one's spirituality.

Torah regarding the creation of Adam: "And Hashem G-d formed the man... and He blew into his nostrils the soul of life; and man became a living being (nefesh chaya)."

Targum Unkolus: Interpreting the words "nefesh chaya" as "he (man) became a speaking spirit (species). It is with this unique soul that man will have the ability to comprehend and speak." Thus, the power of speech emanates from the soul. It is a spiritual power and not a physical one. Because a vow emanates from one's spirituality, if one were to violate it, it is considered to be a desecration of something holy. Thus, in this context it is more serious than violating the Shabbos or transgressing dietary laws.

Gemara in Tractate Berachos: There are certain things that touch upon the most exalted aspects of existence and should not be taken lightly. However, they are belittled by mankind. It is referring to prayer, that touches upon the highest levels of existence. Prayer is also an aspect of the "Voice of Yaakov" just as Torah is.

Chavos HaLevavos: If one prays without the proper level of intent, the words are the equivalent of a body without a soul. The verbal expression of the Jew is the source of his power, protecting him from the onslaught of the nations of the world. The Jew must therefore maintain the purity of his speech and not allow it to be desecrated.

Moshe, the Servant of G-d

Torah: "G-d spoke to Moshe saying, 'Take vengeance for the Children of Israel against the Midianites; afterward you will be gathered unto your people.'"

Rashi citing Chazal: Despite the fact that Moshe understood that his demise was contingent on the destruction of the Midianites, he did not hesitate to perform the will of G-d. "He performed the mitzvah with joy and did not delay." If Moshe had chosen not to act immediately upon G-d's command, he would have extended his life.

Midrash regarding Moshe's decision to go to war: "We see the praiseworthiness of Moshe that despite the fact that he understood that he would pass away, his response was without delay." Why did Moshe perform the mitzvah with joy, knowing that upon its completion he was to pass away? According to Jewish law, when a mitzvah presents itself, one is not permitted to delay its performance. Moshe not only did not delay, he did it with joy.

Torah in the Portion of Shelach: "G-d said to Moshe, 'Send for yourself men...'"

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: "Send for yourself men..." means that it was in Moshe's best interest to send the spies to scout-out the Land of Israel. By doing so, the Jewish people would fail and thus be delayed in the desert for an additional thirty-nine years before entering the Land. Since it was decreed before the Jewish people left Egypt that Moshe was not to enter into the Land, if the sin of the spies did not occurred, Moshe would have passed away in the second year in the desert.

However, because of the sin of the spies, Moshe lived an additional thirty-nine years. As it states, "Moshe returned to G-d and said, "My Lord, why have You done evil to this people, why have You sent me...G-d said to Moshe, 'Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh...'"

Rashi citing Chazal: "Now you will see (the redemption/exodus)..." to mean "Because you questioned My ways...you will see the redemption from Egypt, but you will not witness what I will do to the seven nations of Canaan when I will bring the Jewish people into the Land."

When the Jewish people had failed regarding the slander of the Land, it was decreed that the generation between the ages of 20 and 60 should perish in the desert over a forty-year period. After they had failed regarding the spies, in retrospect, Moshe understood the words of G-d "Send for yourself" to mean that it was in his best interest (extending his life).

Regarding the war that needed to be waged against Midian, there was no allusion whatsoever to indicate that Moshe, for the sake of extending his life, should initiate any level of delay. He therefore instructed the Jewish people immediately to go to war and destroy the Midianites. He understood that although gaining the additional thirty-nine years of his life allowed the Jewish people to be influenced by his leadership and teachings for an extended period, it was time for him to pass away in fulfillment of G-d's decree.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: The reason G-d did not annul the decree and allow Moshe to enter into the Land was because it would have been a detriment to the Jewish people. Anything in which Moshe had participated in developing and establishing assumed a permanent and eternal status and thus could not be destroyed. If Moshe would have entered into the Land, he would have built the Temple. In so doing, it could not have been destroyed.

Verse in Prophets: At the time of the destruction of the First Temple, "The Wrath of G-d had been poured out on the wood and stone."

Chazal: If G-d's Wrath had not been expended on the Temple it would have had to come upon the Jewish people. They would have been destroyed. It is because of this that Tisha B'Av (ninth of Av), although it is a day of mourning the destruction of the Temple is referred to as a "moed (holiday). It is because on that day the Jewish people were spared from destruction. The destruction of the First Temple was an act of Mercy, although it was an expression of the Attribute of Justice. Therefore, Moshe was not permitted to enter into the Land.

Initially when Moshe was informed by G-d that he would pass away after the destruction of the Midianites, Moshe waged war against them without delay and with joy because he understood that for the sake of the eternity of the Jewish people and the Glory of G-d he needed to pass away. However, in the Portion of Va'eschanan Moshe supplicated G-d to evoke His Mercy to protect the Jewish people so that they should not fail, thus he would be permitted to enter into the Land. When G-d said to him to not continue to pray, Moshe understood that his request could not be fulfilled.

G-d's True Blessing

Torah: "The children of Reuvain and the children of Gad had abundant livestock –very great."

Midrash: "G-d created three gifts for the world – wisdom, power, and wealth. If one merits any one of them, it is considered that he has achieved something of the most precious value. If one has wisdom, he has everything. If one has power, he has everything. If one has wealth, he has everything. When is it considered the ultimate good fortune? It is when it is a gift of G-d and it emanates from His Power directly.

Wisdom, power and wealth created by man have no value. As King Solomon writes, 'Those who are swift, will not be able to run. Those who are powerful will not be victorious in war...' If these gifts are taken (grabbed) by the individual and are not granted to him by G-d Himself, they will ultimately come to an end....

We see that the tribe of Reuvain and Gad had abundant livestock. They greatly valued their wealth. It is because of their attachment to their wealth that they were willing to settle outside of the Land of Israel and separate themselves from their Jewish brethren. Because they chose to live outside of the Land and were willing to remove themselves from the Jewish people, they were thus the first of the tribes to be exiled before the destruction of the First Temple. As it states, '..they separated themselves from their brothers for the sake of their livestock...'

Gemara in Tractate Makkos: "In the path that one desires to walk, G-d will lead him along that path..." The tribe of Reuvain and Gad grabbed their wealth. G-d bestowed upon them wealth only because they desired it.

Torah: The tribes of Reuvain and Gad chose to remain on the trans-Jordan side of the river and not enter into the Land because they wanted to dwell near the burial location of Moshe. Seemingly, their preference to the trans-Jordan side was for a spiritual reason to be in the proximity of Moshe.

Torah: After Moshe passed away, "His eyes had not dimmed, and his vigor had not diminished." However, since the tribes of Reuvain and Gad had said to Moshe that they wanted to build corrals for their livestock and homes for their families Moshe reprimanded them. Because they first mentioned that they wanted

to protect their livestock and then their families, they revealed that their primary interest was their wealth and secondarily their families. Similarly, their interest in being in the location of Moshe's burial site was secondary and not primary.

The leper (metzora) who is sent outside of all of the camps of Israel where he must remain secluded until he recovers, is considered to be the equivalent of a dead person because he is detached from the Jewish people. It is similar to one who is liable for spiritual excision. He is in essence, cut off from G-d. Whenever the Torah mentions the liability of spiritual excision (koreis) the Torah 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 leper, being detached from the Jewish people as a result of his contamination is similarly in a state of spiritual excision. He is therefore considered to be dead.

Although one may have great wealth, one must understand that it is only a means to facilitate his spirituality. By choosing to be separated from the Jewish people, the tribes of Reuven and Gad chose to be detached from the source of spirituality which is the Jewish people. Their choice indicated that their primary interest was their wealth. Thus, they were the first to be exiled.

Turning Fact into Reality

The Torah recounts the 42 locations to which the Jewish people traveled in the desert over a forty-year period.

Torah regarding the recording of these locations: "Moshe wrote their goings forth according to their journeys at the bidding of Hashem, and these were their journeys..."

Midrash: "G-d said to the Jewish people, 'My children, be careful regarding the observance of My mitzvos and keeping of My Torah. Understand how many miracles and wonders I have performed for you from the time that I had taken you out from Egypt. I have toppled your enemies. I took you across the Sea and brought fear and dread upon your enemies... I have destroyed the Amorites and the giants. During the 40-year period

that you were in the desert, I did not for a moment leave you unattended. Many enemies came upon you and you did not need to flee from them. How many snakes and scorpions did I kill in your presence in the desert? I did not allow them to harm you. It is because of all these miracles that I want you (Moshe) to record all of the travels of the Jewish people in the desert so that they should know the many miracles that I performed for them within every travel."

Why does G-d initially tell the Jewish people to be careful regarding the observance of His mitzvos and then explains the importance of recounting all of the miracles that He performed on their behalf? Evidently there is a linkage between the performance of mitzvos and having the capacity to appreciate and internalize the value of the miracles that G-d performed on behalf of the Jewish people. One must first be spiritualized to a degree through the performance of mitzvos and the study of Torah in order to have the capacity to appreciate the miracles that G-d performs on his behalf.

Torah: Three days after the splitting of the Sea, and the Jewish people had sung the song, which articulated every aspect of the miracle, they began to complain that they did not have water to drink. What they had witnessed at the splitting of the sea was greater than what the Prophet Yechezkel had ever come upon in his prophecy. After the Jewish people received the Torah at Sinai, during which they all experienced prophecy at the most advanced level, G-d had spoken to them face to face, when Moshe was slightly delayed (because he did not return as they had expected), they sinned with the golden calf. After being exposed to the ultimate level of revelation and achieving such a level of clarity, how is it possible that the Jewish people could have regressed to such a degree?

A human being is completely consumed with his own interests and needs. This is rooted in one's physical make up which is entirely material. The only way one can address the handicap of physicality is through the spiritualization process, which can only come about through the performance of mitzvos and study of Torah. Although the Jewish people experienced a unique level of revelation of G-d at the time of the splitting of the Sea and at Sinai, they were hardly engaged in the performance of mitzvos and the study of Torah because it was pre-Sinai. They were not sufficiently spiritualized to be able to internalize

the G-dly events that they had witnessed. They were considered the equivalent of bystanders of spirituality rather than participants.

If one is not spiritualized through Torah and mitzvahs, and reads about the miracles that G-d had performed on behalf of the Jewish people it would be no different than a history lesson. This is the reason G-d said, "My children, be careful regarding the observance of My mitzvot and keeping of My Torah. Understand how many miracles and wonders I have performed for you..." A Jew who engages in Torah and mitzvot as prescribed by the Torah, and is able to sense his spirituality, he continuously sees and processes daily events differently than the ordinary person. Because of his degree of spiritualization, he is able to internalize G-d's Hand in creation. Thus, every day is an opportunity for further spiritual growth.

Dasan and Aviram's Contribution to the Jewish people (From Pinchas)

After the plague that killed 24,000 men due to the sin of Baal Peor, the Torah commands Moshe to take a census of the tribes.

Torah: "Reuvain the firstborn of Israel- the sons of Reuvain...And the sons of Eliab: Nemuel and Dasan and Aviram, the same Dasan and Aviram who were summoned by the assembly, who contended against Moshe and Aaron among the assembly of Korach, when they contended against Hashem..."

Torah: Dasan and Aviram of the tribe of Reuvain, together with Korach, attempted to usurp the authority of Moshe. They chose to incite the people to reject Moshe as their leader.

Midrash: "Our Rabbis of blessed memory said, 'Woe to the evil one (rasha) and woe to his neighbor. It is good for the devoutly righteous and it is good for his neighbor.' Where do we see this? Dasan and Aviram were destroyed because of the dissention of Korach. They were his neighbors and were thus influenced by him. His location was in the south... The location of the camp of Reuvain was adjacent to Korach and his family... It was because of their close proximity to him that they joined with him in the mutiny against Moshe..."

Seemingly the Midrash is saying that it was only because the camp of the tribe of Reuvain was in

the proximity of Korach, that they were negatively influenced. Consequently, Dasan and Aviram joined Korach in his mutiny against Moshe.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: The evolvement of the mutiny of Dasan and Aviram differently. He states, "We need to understand what is the Torah teaching us by reiterating that Dasan and Aviram were the ones who contended against Moshe and G-d. If it is coming to teach us that they were part of the assembly of Korach, it is something that was stated explicitly earlier in the Torah.

Rather, the Torah is coming to teach us that it was Dasan and Aviram who influenced Korach to mutiny against Moshe. G-d wants to reveal the actions of the evil, that they were the cause of the evil that came about through Korach. They were the ones who incited the entire community against Moshe and G-d. They were the ones who initially planted the seeds of dissent in the mind of Korach. Although the verse states, 'And Korach took...' which seems to indicate that Korach gathered his assembly against Moshe as a result of his own initiative, he only had done so due to the influence of Dasan and Aviram. Therefore the Torah states, '...And the sons of Eliab: Nemuel and Dasan and Aviram, the same Dasan and Aviram who were summoned by the assembly, who contended against Moshe and Aaron..."

Dasan and Aviram had put Moshe and the Jewish people into jeopardy many times before the incident of Korach. The Torah tells us that initially Moshe needed to flee from Egypt because Dasan and Aviram had informed Pharaoh that Moshe had killed an Egyptian. When the Jewish people were at the Sea, Dasan and Aviram began to incite them against Moshe.

When the Jewish people were in the desert, G-d provided the manna to sustain them. Before Shabbos, they received a double portion because the manna did not fall on Shabbos. In order to undermine Moshe as G-d's spokesman, Dasan and Aviram planted manna in the field to prove that what Moshe had said regarding the manna was not true. Their action enraged G-d against the Jewish people. Dasan and Aviram took every opportunity to undermine Moshe's leadership and authority. It ultimately came to an end when they were swallowed up by the earth together with Korach and his community. Why did Moshe tolerate Dasan and Aviram's unconscionable behavior when they continued to undermine him?

Midrash: The reason Moshe was the most favored by G-d is based on the principle cited by King Solomon in Ecclesiastes, "G-d favors the pursued." Moshe was favored by G-d and chosen to be His spokesman only because he was pursued by Pharaoh. This was due to Dasan and Aviram informing on Moshe. After the sin of the golden calf, G-d wanted to destroy the Jewish people.

However, because Moshe supplicated G-d on their behalf, He did not do so. G-d heeded Moshe's plea because he was favored by G-d, due to being "pursued." Although Dasan and Aviram's intent was sinister; nevertheless, Moshe was the direct beneficiary of their actions. It was due to them that he was favored by G-d. Thus, Moshe's gratitude towards them had no bounds.

G-d could have commanded Moshe to exile Dasan and Aviram from amongst the Jewish people since they continuously sought to undermine Moshe's leadership. G-d did not destroy them until they put the authenticity of Torah into question.

Torah: "Do not oppress the Egyptian because you must appreciate what they had done for you..." Although they had enslaved the Jewish people for 210 years and

persecuted and tortured them, they nevertheless were the host country that provided them with a domicile for that period of time.

Thus, the Jewish people owe the Egyptians a debt of gratitude for hosting them, despite the evil that they perpetrated. Similarly, Dasan and Aviram's intent was not relevant, due to the fact that Moshe was the beneficiary of their evil. He thus tolerated them and took no initiative to curtail their actions.

We find something similar regarding Og, the king of Bashan, who had lived from the time of Avraham until he was killed by Moshe. Chazal tell us that he merited lengthy years due to the service that he had provided to Avraham, our Patriarch, when he had informed him that his nephew Lot was taken captive by the four mighty kings. Although the intent of Og was that Avraham should be killed in battle and he would take Sarah as his wife; nevertheless, since his act had facilitated a favor to Avraham, that he was able to save his nephew, he merited to live hundreds of years.



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