

MAN SOARS THROUGH INITIATIVE



Original Painting By:
YORAM RAANAN

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Nasso

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

The Monumental Strength Of The First Words of This Blessing

Part 1

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Part 2

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An Extract That Brought Greater Ruination

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The Mishkan As Identified With Moshe

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Betraying Both Through Impure Forces

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When The Terrestrial Supersedes the Celestial

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1. G-d's intent in creation was to dwell on the terrestrial with Man – not only on the celestial.
2. He commanded Man to not eat from the Tree of Knowledge.
3. Adam failed – causing G-d to remove Himself from the terrestrial; He ascended to the 7th Heaven.
4. Avraham's good deeds caused G-d to descend from the 7th to the 6th Heaven.
5. Yitzchok, offering himself as a sacrifice, caused the Divine Presence to descend to the 5th.
6. Why was Moshe able to reinstate G-d's Presence onto the terrestrial?
7. Moshe was the only one qualified to receive the Torah.
8. The objective of creation was that there should be a Jewish people and the Torah.
9. Moshe brought creation to fruition as the location for the Torah to be fulfilled.
10. Moshe was therefore able to bring G-d's Presence to the terrestrial.

Encrypting the Blessing for All Contingencies

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1. The Kohen blesses the congregation with 3 blessings.
2. First blessing: G-d should bless you and watch over you.
3. Rashi: G-d should bless you with material wealth and your possessions should not be plundered.
4. G-d provides divine protection to retain the blessing.
5. Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh: G-d should protect you from any negative influence due to the material.
6. Seforno: The objective of the material is to provide all that is necessary for the spiritual.
7. "If there is no flour, there is no Torah."
8. Second blessing: G-d should bring illumination upon you.
9. After your needs are satisfied, G-d should illuminate your eyes to see G-d's wonders from His Torah and actions.
10. You will see His wonders and divine providence.

Ensnaring the Suspected Adulteress

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1. The suspected adulteress claiming innocence is brought to the Kohen for the ritual of the Sotah.
2. Sotah is juxtaposed to the portion of the tithes given to the Kohen.
3. If one withholds the tithes from the Kohen he will be forced to come with his wife as a suspected adulteress to the Kohen.
4. Because Aaron participated in gathering the gold for the golden calf it was decreed his 4 sons should die.
5. Moshe's supplication annulled 50% of the decree.
6. Why were Aaron's adult sons liable for their father's sin?
7. Midrash: They died because they officiated after they drank wine, or acted on their own without consulting with Moshe.
8. Due to Aaron's piety they should have merited clarity not to err as they had.
9. Because Aaron deserved suffering for his role in the golden calf his two sons were not given clarity.
10. Their failing was their own.
11. Had the husband not withheld the tithes from the Kohen, his merit would have protected his wife from not having an interest in another man.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Nasso

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Spiritual Ascent, A Road with No Return

Torah: “A man or woman who shall dissociate himself by taking a Nazerite vow of abstinence for the sake of Hashem; from new or aged wine shall he abstain, and he shall not drink...anything which grapes have been steeped...a razor shall not pass over his head...the growth of hair on his head shall grow...he shall not come near a dead person....he shall not contaminate himself upon their death...for the crown of G-d is upon his head. All the days of his abstinence he is holy to *Hashem*.”

One may choose to take upon himself the vow of the Nazerite in order to become closer to G-d. When one assumes the status of a Nazerite, he is considered “holy to *Hashem*.” He is thus not permitted to partake of grape products, cut his hair, or contaminate himself to the dead.

Torah: Upon the completion of the period of one’s Nazeritehood, which is thirty days, one must bring three offerings, one of which is a sin offering.

Ramban: If the Nazerite is a person of an exalted holy status, “Why must the Nazerite, upon concluding his counting, bring a sin offering? What is his spiritual failing?”

Ramban: “According to the simple understanding, this individual is considered a sinner when he completes his Nazeritehood because now he has removed himself from the sanctity and service of G-d. It would have been appropriate for him to remain a Nazerite his entire life and be sanctified to G-d. As we find the verse in Amos, the Nazerite is equated to the prophet, although he does not have prophetic vision. He must be atoned because he has allowed himself to become contaminated and be associated with the lusts of existence. Therefore, he must bring a sin offering.”

If one never chose to enter into the state of Nazeritehood there is no claim against him. However, if one did choose to ascend to the exalted holy state of Nazeritehood, one is considered to be a sinner for not remaining there at that level. What is the difference between the two? If

one has the ability to ascend to that special level and does not, why is he not considered to be a sinner?

There is a *Torah* obligation, which is incumbent upon every Jew to be involved in continuous *Torah* study. Only through engaging in it can one actualize his spiritual potential. If one does not acquire the portion of *Torah* that was meant to be his during his lifetime, it is considered to be a spiritual failing. However, if one does not become a Nazerite during his lifetime, it is not considered to be a claim, although he did not ascend to that special level.

Every Jew has a unique and specific portion in *Torah* that was designated for him at Sinai, as we recite many times in our prayers, “give us our portion in Your *Torah*.” When one is born one is ordained with a spiritual potential. In order for one to achieve spiritual growth in one’s lifetime, one must engage in *Torah* study for the sake of the performance of *mitzvos*.

Gemara in Tractate *Kiddushin*: “Great is the study (of *Torah*) because it is through it that one comes to action.” One is only able to reach his spiritual potential when he has acquired his full portion of *Torah*. If one chooses not to do so, it is considered to be his failing. Nazeritehood, on the other hand, is a nonobligatory state into which one chooses to enter. One is able to fully actualize his spirituality without becoming a Nazerite. However, if one does choose to enter and to ascend to such an exalted state that is the equivalent of being a prophet, then it is considered to be an affront to G-d if he should leave this state in order to return to the mundane. If one does so he must bring a sin offering in order to atone.

Mishna in *Pirkei Avos*: If one interrupts his *Torah* study to take notice of a tree by saying, “how beautiful is this tree”, although he is admiring G-d’s creation, his life should be taken. This is because if one has engaged in *Torah* study, which is the ultimate level of spirituality, how could he interrupt it for something of lesser value, although he is admiring G-d’s creation! Just as the Nazerite who descends from his lofty level of holiness for something of lesser value is considered a sinner, so too is the one who disengages from his *Torah* study for something of lesser value.

The Patriarchs, an Essential Component for Spiritual Ascent

There is a Positive Commandment for the Priests (*Kohanim*) to bless the Jewish people. The priestly blessings are comprised of three separate blessings.

Torah: “May Hashem bless you and safeguard you. May Hashem lift His countenance to you and establish peace for you..”

Rashi: “May Hashem bless you” means that one’s possessions should be blessed and that “(G-d) should watch over you” so that thieves should not steal that which was given. When a master gives a gift to his servant, he cannot guarantee that it will not be stolen. However, G-d endows the Jewish people (His servants) with blessing and assures them that it will remain with them.

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: There are two opinions as to why there are three prayer services every day—*Shachris* (morning service), *Mincha* (afternoon service), and *Arvis* (evening service). One opinion states that the three prayer services were enacted to correspond to the daily communal offerings that were brought in the Temple. *Shachris* corresponds to the “*Tamid shel Shachar* – morning communal offering,” *Mincha* corresponds to the “*Tamid shel bein ha’arbaayim* – closing afternoon communal offering,” and *Arvis* corresponds to the, “*Eivarim* and *pedarim* - the burning of the limbs and the fats during the nighttime period (that were left over from the daytime sacrifices).”

Another opinion states that the basis for the three services is linked to the holy Patriarchs. They established the three services, as the *Gemara* states, “*Avraham* established *Shachris*, *Yitzchak* established *Mincha*, and *Yaakov* established *Arvis*.” Thus, the three services correspond to the Patriarchs who had established them. The holy Patriarchs opened the pathways through which the Jewish people are able to pray to G-d. Because the Patriarchs had a special relationship with G-d, when one prays during the times that they had, G-d is attentive to the prayer because it reminds Him of the Patriarchs, upon whose merit we draw upon. The *Gemara* concludes that both opinions regarding the enactment of three prayer services are true.

Torah in *Emor*: “When an ox or sheep or a goat is born...” These are the only three species that qualify to be brought as an offering.

Midrash: “The species that qualify to be brought as offerings were chosen in the merit of the Patriarchs. The ox was chosen in the merit of *Avraham*. As it states regarding *Avraham*’s hosting of the angels, “*Avraham* ran to the cattle...” The sheep was chosen to qualify as an offering in the merit of *Yitzchak*. As the verse states

regarding the *Akeidah* (binding of *Yitzchak*), 'And *Avraham* looked up and saw- behold a ram – after it had been caught in the thicket...' The goat was chosen to qualify to be an offering in the merit of *Yaakov*. As the *Torah* states (when *Rivka*, our Matriarch, told her son *Yaakov* to go and receive the blessing from his father *Yitzchak*), 'So now, my son, heed my voice to that which I command you. Go now to the flock and fetch from there two good goats...'"

The concept of sacrifices exists only within the context of the Attribute of Mercy. By bringing the sacrifices that correspond to each of the Patriarchs, the Jewish people remind G-d of the holy Patriarchs and are thus able to evoke the Attribute of Mercy in their merit.

Baal HaTurim: Each of the three blessings which comprise the Priestly blessings corresponds to the Patriarchs. The first blessing, "May *Hashem* bless you..." corresponds to *Avraham*, our Patriarchs because the verse states, "He blessed *Avraham* with everything (*ba kol*)." The second blessing, "*Hashem* lift His countenance..." corresponds to *Yitzchak* our Patriarch. This is because when he was at the *Akeidah* the intensity of the Divine Presence was so great that he actually expired.

Chazal: G-d illuminated *Yitzchak's* eyes and brought him back to life. The third blessing, "...establish peace for you." corresponds to *Yaakov*, our Patriarch because the verse states regarding his supplication to G-d for safety, "I should be brought back in Peace." We see continuously that the merits of the holy Patriarchs are intertwined in every aspect of our service of G-d, even beyond our prayers and sacrifices. We say in the first blessing of the *Amidah* (Silent Prayer), "Who recalls the kindness of the Patriarchs..." Meaning, because of the unique level of spiritual accomplishment and their dimension of being, the Jewish people will draw upon the merit of the Patriarchs until the end of time.

However, we also see that each of the individual prayer services have relevance to the Patriarchs, individually. When one performs a *mitzvah*, or any act of service to G-d, one generates merit for himself; however, simultaneously the *mitzvah* also identifies with the Patriarchs thus giving it special value. Because the *mitzvah* accomplishments of the Jewish people have continuously reflect the Patriarchs, their merit seemingly will never be depleted. Every time one engages in prayer, brings offerings, or blesses the Jewish people with the Priestly blessings, the merit of the Patriarchs is not only drawn upon it is also replenished.

How Can One Be Safeguarded from His Natural Inclination

Torah: "It was the day that *Moshe* completed the building of the *Mishkan*..." The word that the *Torah* uses is "*Vayehee* (It was the day.) The first syllable of this word is "*vay*", which means "woe."

Midrash: On the day that *Moshe* had completed the building of the *Mishkan* G-d had said, '*veiy* (woe) to Me.' Why did G-d say, 'Woe to Me?' It is analogous to king who had a contentious wife. She would continuously quarrel with her husband the king and cause him to become angry. He subsequently instructed her to make for him an elaborate regal garment, which needed an extended period of time to complete. As long as she was engaged in this project, there was no quarreling between the king and his wife because she was fully occupied with her chore.

When she had completed the garment, she brought it to the king. He saw the garment and was satisfied; however, he said, 'Woe to me. Woe to me.' Hearing his expression of woe, the queen said to him, 'After all I have toiled in making you this garment you say 'Woe to me.' Is this the way one should demonstrate one's appreciation?' The king responded, 'Your accomplishment is pleasing to me; however, as long as you were occupied with this project we did quarrel. We had peace between us. I am concerned that now that you are no longer engaged you will once again quarrel with me and cause me to become angry.'

Similarly G-d said, 'As long as my children were occupied in the building of the *Mishkan* they did not complain and anger Me; however, now that it is completed I am concerned that they will begin complaining.' This is the reason G-d said, 'Woe to me.' On the day the *Mishkan* was completed." Was the reason the Jewish people did not complain based on the fact that they were too occupied? Or is it based upon a more profound principle?

Torah: After G-d had destroyed the world with the Great Flood, He had said, "I will no longer bring a Great Flood upon the world to destroy it, because the inclination of man is evil from the moment he is cast from the womb of his mother."

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: The evil inclination only comes upon man after he is born into existence.

Maharal of Prague: "Why does the evil inclination not come upon the child in-utero, before he is born?"

He explains that G-d had created the evil inclination in a manner that it cannot affect something that is completed. As long as the individual is in the process of developing and growing, the evil inclination does not have permission to affect him. The evil inclination can only come upon something that is considered to be developed. Thus, it cannot affect the fetus in-utero.

Maharal: As long as one is in the process of advancing and developing in his spirituality, the evil inclination cannot affect him because the individual does not see himself in a “completed state.” However, if one acts and behaves as if he is in a completed state regarding his spiritual development, he will be subject to the influences of the evil inclination. Thus, as long as the Jewish people were preoccupied with the *mitzvah* of building the *Mishkan*, it was not that they did not have time to complain, but rather they were not susceptible to the evil inclination.

Because they were invested in their spiritual development through the building of the *Mishkan*, they perceived their situation in a positive manner. However, upon its completion, G-d said “Woe to Me” because they were no longer engaged in *mitzvah* activity and may feel spiritually accomplished, they would no longer be safeguarded from the evil inclination. We see something similar regarding the attack of the Amalekites upon the Jewish people when they had left Egypt.

Torah: “Amalek came and battled Israel in *Rephidim*.”

Midrash: The reason the *Torah* identifies the location as *Rephidim* is because the Jewish people were not fully invested in *Torah* study and *mitzvah* observance. Not being fully engaged in *Torah* study is an indication that they were satisfied with their spiritual accomplishment. Subsequently they had questioned, “Is G-d in our midst?” despite the fact that they had witnessed the ten plagues of Egypt and the splitting of the Sea. This was an outgrowth of the evil inclination.

There is a custom that when one completes the study of a tractate one immediately begins another tractate. In addition, when one finishes a chapter of a tractate before beginning the next, “Many returns ‘hadran’ from us to you and from you to us, Tractate...” Meaning, he will review what he has learned. There is never a moment when the Jew is truly completed in his acquisition of *Torah*. One must be continuously involved in its pursuit.

The life of a Jew must be a “work in progress” regarding his spirituality so that he cannot be influenced by the

evil inclination. However, if one does feel a sense of pride and completion in his spiritual growth and thus disengages from his level of involvement, he becomes subject to the influence of the evil inclination. With this we can understand the meaning of the *Gemara* in Tractate *Kiddushin* which states, “I (G-d) have created the evil inclination and I have created the *Torah* as its antidote.” As long as one is engaged in *Torah* study and *mitzvah* performance, he will be safeguarded from the influence of the evil inclination because he is continuously evolving into a more advanced level of spiritual development.

Seeing Beyond the Obvious

Torah: “It was on the day that *Moshe* finished erecting the Tabernacle...”

Midrash: “King Solomon writes, ‘The one who cares for the fig tree is the one who will eat its fruit. And the one who watches over his master shall be honored.’ G-d does not withhold the just reward from any creature. For whatever one toils and sacrifices, G-d does not withhold reward from him. This is the meaning of the words of King Solomon.”

Torah: If one comes upon the remains of an animal that was mauled in the field (not ritually slaughtered), one is not permitted to partake of it. One should give it to the dog.

Gemara in Tractate *Chulin*: The reason for this is, “G-d does not withhold the just reward from any creature.” At the time of the tenth plague in Egypt, the killing of the first-born, G-d had said that the dogs should not bark. Because the dogs had restrained themselves and did not bark, G-d rewarded them. The remains of the animal found mauled in the field should be thrown to the dog. We learn from this passage that G-d does not withhold reward even from a lowly creature. If the principle that G-d does not withhold reward from any creature is established from G-d rewarding the dog for not barking in Egypt, why does the *Midrash* need to cite a verse from Proverbs in order to establish the same principle?

Midrash: “King Solomon built and completed the First Temple. However because King David had sacrificed selflessly for its building by purchasing its location and longing to be able to build it, he should be remembered. As it states, ‘G-d had promised: You should remember David and how he was afflicted to bring about the Temple. He yearned to be able to enter into My House.’

Thus, G-d did not withhold his reward. The Temple was identified with his name. As it states, 'This is a song for the inauguration of the House of David.'

Was it King David who inaugurated the Temple? It was King Solomon, his son who had done so. However because King David sacrificed for it, the Temple is identified with his name. As it states in Proverbs, 'The one who cares for the fig tree is the one who will eat its fruit.' We also find regarding the building of the *Mishkan*, that although every Jew had sacrificed for the building of the *Mishkan*... However, it was because *Moshe* had given of himself selflessly and sacrificed to a greater degree, that the *Mishkan* is identified with his name...It states, 'It was on the day that *Moshe* finished erecting the Tabernacle...' If all of the Jewish people assisted in erecting the *Mishkan*, why does the *Torah* attribute its completion to *Moshe*? It was because of his sacrifice for it..."

There are times that one is able to succeed in an endeavor not only because he merits to actualize it, but rather, it is because someone who had preceded him set a certain dynamic in motion that allowed him to succeed. Although it was King Solomon who had built and completed the Temple, it was because of the sacrifice and supplications of his father King David, that he was able to do so. King David's level of sacrifice and devout righteousness was the reason that King Solomon was able to build the Temple.

Similarly, it was only because of the sacrifice, righteousness, and supplications of *Moshe*, that the *Mishkan* was able to be completed. The Jewish people were only spared after the sin of the Golden Calf because of *Moshe's* beseeching G-d on their behalf. It was only because *Moshe* had given his blessing that G-d's Presence should dwell in their handiwork that the *Mishkan* was able to be functional. Had it not been for his blessing, the *Mishkan* would have only been an ornate edifice without G-d's Presence.

Moshe lived only for the glory of G-d and that the Jewish people should be the beneficiaries of G-d's blessings. G-d did not withhold reward from the dog because it did not bark. Similarly, any creature or human being would receive its just reward based on the principle that "G-d does not withhold the just reward from any creature."

Midrash citing the words of King Solomon in Proverbs: This principle can also be applied in instances even when an individual is not directly involved in the outcome. Although King David was not involved in

the building of the Temple; however, because of his selfless sacrifice for its existence that created a momentum that allowed it to come about, it identifies with his name. Because King David was pained that the Divine Presence was not in a permanent location, his son King Solomon was able to build the Temple.

If one lives a life that is dedicated to G-d through *Torah* study and *mitzvah* observance and yearns for His Glory; although he may not merit to see his aspirations and prayers answered in his day, he will be the beneficiary of the ultimate outcome. Because he was a contributing factor to set the dynamic in motion, the end result identifies with him.

Internalizing the Privileged Status of Being G-d's Chosen People

Torah: "They stood *b'tachtis ha har*." The simple understanding of the verse is "They stood at the foot of the mountain."

Gemara in Tractate *Shabbos*: The word "*tachtis*" literally means "under" the mountain, rather than "at the foot of" the mountain. Meaning, G-d held the mountain over their heads "like a barrel and said to them: If you accept the *Torah* it will be good for you; however, if you do not, there you will be buried." The Jewish people accepted the *Torah* with their declaration of, "*Naaseh V'nishma*- We will do and we will listen."

Gemara: "Regarding the manner in which the *Torah* was presented to the Jewish people, there is a basis for a disclaimer. It was given under duress and coercion. They were compelled to accept it. Because of this disclaimer the level of liability is to a lesser degree than one who had accepted the *Torah* wholeheartedly and willingly.

Raba: 'Nevertheless at the time of *Achashveirosh* (*Purim*) the Jewish people reaffirmed their initial acceptance of the *Torah* with love. As it is stated in the *Megillah* of *Esther*, 'They fulfilled it and accepted it upon themselves.'" Therefore, after *Purim* it was no longer considered that its acceptance was under coercion but rather it was of their own volition and wholeheartedness.

Midrash in *Bereishis*: "He Gazed into the *Torah* and Created the world." The *Torah* itself was the blueprint for all existence.

Torah: "*Bereishis bara Elokim* – In the beginning G-d created..."

Chazal: The word “*Bereishis*” in its grammatical form is to be understood that, “*B’shvil Reishis bara Elokeem...– for the sake of ‘the choicest’ (which is the Torah) G-d created Heaven and Earth...*” The term “*Bereishis*” also alludes to the Jewish people who are the chosen who will accept the *Torah* at Sinai. Thus, every aspect of creation came about only to be the setting for the fulfillment of the *Torah* by the Jewish people. Every aspect of existence is a necessity for the fulfillment of the *Torah*.

If the Jewish people would have rejected the *Torah*, the world would have reverted back to a pre-existent state, because the objective of creation would not have been met. If this is so, why was G-d’s ultimatum to the Jewish people to accept the *Torah* considered to be a setting of coercion and duress?

If one wishes to be hired for a position that requires an unusual level of commitment, it is understood that the prospective employee must agree to meet the responsibilities of that position. Being agreeable to accept employment under the terms of the employer is not considered to be under duress. The individual is not being forced to accept the employment of the employer. G-d’s only objective of creation was that it should be the setting for the Jewish people to fulfill the *Torah*. If they had chosen to reject the *Torah*, then the sole objective and purpose of creation would never have been met. What is then the basis for the disclaimer that is mentioned in the *Gemara*?

G-d gave the Jewish people the most precious and valuable gift in all of existence, the *Torah* itself. King Solomon writes in Proverbs, “(G-d said to the Jewish people) I have given you a good commodity (*lekach tov*) do not abandon it.” Since G-d Himself, the Infinite Being identifies the *Torah* as “a good commodity” it is an indication that the *Torah* is truly precious in the absolute sense.

Chofetz Chaim in his writings explains this with an allegory. Although an ordinary person may consider a possession of his to be special, the minister of the king, who has at his disposal greater levels of wealth, does not consider that object to be special. Whatever the minister may consider to be special and unique, the king himself, who possesses treasures beyond that

of most peoples’ purview, considers the possessions of the minister as inconsequential. Whatever the mere mortal, including the king, considers as out of the ordinary and precious, the spiritual angel considers it to be meaningless and without special value. Whatever is within the scope of the angel, to be considered special and of enormous value, G-d the Omnipotent and Infinite Being considers it to be meaningless. Thus, if G-d the Creator of Existence, Who is the Master of All, tells the Jewish people that He is giving them something that He values as a “special commodity” then it is truly the most precious gift in the most absolute context.

Understanding this, when the Jewish people were presented with the opportunity and privilege to accept the ultimate from G-d, His *Torah*, they should have been overwhelmed with joy that He had chosen them to be worthy of His gift. If at Sinai the Jewish people had unequivocally accepted the *Torah* with their declaration of, “*Naaseh V’nishma – we will do and we will listen*” because of their faith in G-d, why then did He need to put the Mountain over their heads and give them an ultimatum?

Tosfos: G-d had revealed to the Jewish people the fires of *gehenom* which indicated their level of liability if they should deviate from the Word of G-d. Upon seeing the gravity of their responsibility, they wanted to retract their initial acceptance. Therefore, G-d needed to give them an ultimatum so that they should adhere to their initial commitment and not back out.

Even after realizing the ramifications of their failings and liabilities of their actions, the Jewish people should have nevertheless accepted the *Torah* not within the context of coercion, because the world must continue; but rather as the ultimate privilege and opportunity. It is thus considered as if they had accepted the *Torah* under duress because they did not truly appreciate its value. It was not until many generations into the future that the Jewish people fully appreciated the extent of G-d’s love for them and the value of His *Torah* when He saved them from physical destruction at the time of *Purim*. Understanding their special value in G-d’s Eyes caused them to reaffirm their acceptance of *Torah* with love and reverence.



Yad Avraham Institute