

The Mishkan as Location of ATONEMENT



Original Painting By: Yoram Raanan

YadAvNow.com Weekly Audio Series: Vayikra

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Absolutely No Nepotism Involved

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Minimizing Oneself and the Innocent Little Child

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This Representation Is His innate Value

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A Replication of the All -Time Great Moment

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1. G-d called to Moshe from the communion tent.
2. The level of audibility was all-powerful & consuming.
3. Moshe alone, was privy to these communications; why then, such intensity?
4. Ramban: A parallel exists between Sinai & the Mishkan.
5. Mishkan: A replication of Sinai in all its details.
6. As G-d communicated with Moshe at Sinai, so too, in the Mishkan.
7. Gemara: G-d's joy on Day 8, when the Mishkan assumed permanence, was the same as the time of creation.
8. The Mishkan was the equivalent of creation before the sin of Adam.
9. After Adam ate of the fruit, the world became putrified, causing G-d's presence to ascend and leave this existence.
10. The Mishkan was the new location for the Divine Presence – fulfilling the original intent.

Leveraging the Balance to Establish Stability

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1. Moshe communicates the laws of the Torah to the Jewish people.
2. Midrash: Both the laws pertaining to the convert and those related to idolatry are mentioned 48 times.
3. Ethics Of Our Fathers: The Torah is acquired through 48 ways.
4. Gemara: I have created the evil inclination, I have created the Torah as its antidote.
5. There is a balance between good and evil; each a counterbalance to the other.
6. 48 prerequisites to acquire the Torah which is the counterforce to idolatry– mentioned 48 times...
7. One deliberately violating the Shabbos is the equivalent of an apostate who rejects the Torah.
8. A Jew engaging in idolatry, though observing mitzvos meticulously, equals the apostate who rejects the entire Torah.
9. One who observes Shabbos meticulously is forgiven for all his sins– even if idolatry should be found among them.
10. Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh: Though observing the Shabbos is to refrain from creative activity, the Torah refers to its observance as doing the Shabbos.
11. Since Shabbos corresponds to the entire Torah, it causes a correction in the areas of spiritual deficiencies.

The Duality & Polarity of the Mirror

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1. In the merit of the righteous women, our forefathers were redeemed from Egypt.
2. The Jewish man had no interest in procreating; they despaired they would not leave Egypt and were destined for eternal bondage.
3. The women went into the fields where their husbands were working with food & water, and enticed their men to desire them & procreate.
4. Rabeinu Bachya: Yaakov and his family were worthy to receive the Torah– but a critical mass of 600,000 males aged 20 and above were needed.
5. The women donated their copper mirrors for the Laver in the Mishkan.
6. Moshe initially rejected them because they were the paraphernalia of the evil inclination.
7. G-d said to Moshe: They are more special to me than all else donated. If not for the mirrors, there would not be a Jewish People.
8. Due to the mirrors, there were legions of Jews born into existence.
9. If not for the belief and determination of the women, the Torah would not have been given at Sinai.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Vayikra

The Mishkan as Location of ATONEMENT



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The Answer for the Ages

Torah: “See, Hashem has proclaimed by name, *Betzalel* son of *Uri* son of *Chur*, of the tribe of *Yehudah*....” *Moshe* told the Jewish people that the only one qualified to oversee the building of the *Mishkan* was *Betzalel*.

Midrash citing Proverbs: ‘He found charm and good understanding in the Eyes of G-d and the eyes of man...’

What was the special charm? G-d had explained in detail to *Moshe* every aspect of the building of the *Mishkan* and the formation of its vessels. As it states, ‘You should see the form as it was shown...’ *Moshe* had believed that since he was being instructed in such detail, that he was to be the one to build the *Mishkan*. As it states, ‘You should make the beams...You should make the altar....You should make the laver.’

Moshe asked G-d, ‘Who shall be the one to build the *Mishkan*?’ G-d replied, ‘I proclaim by name, *Bezalel* son of *Uri* son of *Chur*, of the tribe of *Yehudah* should be

the one to build the *Mishkan*.’ *Moshe* descended from the Mountain and told the Jewish people about all the materials and the process of the building the *Mishkan* as G-d had told him. They asked him, ‘Who will be the one to do all this?’ He said to them, ‘*Betzalel*.’

The Jewish people began to murmur saying, ‘Is it possible that G-d told *Moshe* that *Betzalel* should be the one to build the *Mishkan*? But rather, it must be *Moshe*’s own choice to appoint *Betzalel* to do so. It is because he is *Moshe*’s relative. *Moshe* is the king, *Aaron* his brother is the High Priest, *Aaron*’s sons are the assistant priests, the children of *Kahas* will carry the *Mishkan*. It is all so that *Moshe* and his family should have control over the *Mishkan*. This is the reason, *Betzalel* was chosen by him (it was thought to be nepotism).’ *Moshe* said to them, ‘There is nothing that I do of my own choice. It is only the Will of G-d that I do.’ *Moshe* therefore revealed to them how *Betzalel* was endowed with special and unique wisdom that no one else possessed. It was because of this that *Betzalel* found charm in the eyes of man.”

It is interesting to note that at this point *Moshe* descended from the mountain after supplicating G-d on behalf of the Jewish people so that they should not be destroyed due sin of the Golden Calf. He returned to the Jewish people with the second set of Tablets which indicated that G-d had fully reinstated them to their original status.

Torah: *Moshe* needed to wear a special face covering because he radiated such a level of holiness that no one could gaze upon him. Nevertheless, when *Moshe* explained to them that G-d instructed him that *Betzalel* will be the one to build a *Mishkan* so that the Divine Presence may dwell in their midst, the Jewish people suspected him of nepotism. They thus doubted his authenticity and motive. Their level of lack of faith in *Moshe* is something that is difficult to understand. It was only after they understood clearly the Divine endowment of wisdom that *Betzalel* possessed that they believed *Moshe* that *Betzalel* was in fact G-d's choice to build the *Mishkan* and not *Moshe's*.

The position of the Jewish people before they were convinced of *Betzalel's* qualifications was no different than that of *Korach* who sought to usurp *Moshe's* authority and put into question the *Torah* that he transmitted to them. Had the Jewish people not been satisfied with absolute clarity that *Betzalel* was truly unique and the only one qualified to build the *Mishkan*, they would have remained with the position that *Betzalel's* appointment was due to nepotism.

Korach, understanding and appreciating the mindset of the Jewish people regarding *Moshe's* appointments, chose to usurp his authority as leader. It was only after *Korach* and his community were ultimately swallowed up by the earth did the Jewish people finally accept the word of *Moshe* to be synonymous with the Word of G-d.

Gemara in Tractate *Bava Basra*: A great *rabbi* heard in the desert in a location where voices were heard, the voices of *Korach* and his assembly crying out from the depths of the earth, "*Moshe* is true and his *Torah* is true and we are liars." *Moshe* understood that because of man's limited understanding, the question of the authenticity of *Torah* due to the fact that it was transmitted through a mortal would always be an issue. The eternal answer to all questions about the authenticity of *Torah* is the miracle of *Korach* and his community being swallowed by the earth during which they said, "*Moshe* is true and his *Torah* is true."

The Element that Interferes with G-d's Presence

Torah: "He (G-d) called to *Moshe*..."

Midrash citing a verse in Psalms: "'Blessed is G-d His angels mighty in strength (*geborei koach*) that do His bidding to obey the voice of His word.'

Midrash: "Who are the angels? They are *Moshe* and *Aaron*. As it states, 'G-d sent His angel to take them out (of Egypt)...' Rav *Huna* says in the name of Reb *Acha*, 'The angels to which the verse is referring are the Jewish people. They are mighty in strength like angels because they declared at Sinai '*Naaseh V'nishma* – we will do and we will listen.'"

Midrash: Another opinion is that the *geborei koach* are those who observe the *mitzvah* of *Shmitta* (Sabbatical year). Why are they identified as *geborei koach* (people of enormous strength)? The one who remains silent as he sees his fields being treated as if they were ownerless, with their fences being breached and the fruits being eaten by anyone who wishes to do so is a *gebor koach*. The individual who remains silent under these circumstances is identified as one with enormous strength because it requires unusual strength to hold back the inclination to demonstrate one's ownership rights – and thus preventing others from partaking of his field.

Ethics of our Fathers: "Who is the strong one? The one who suppresses his inclination." Based one's perspective of ownership rights, it is nearly impossible for one to remain silent while seeing one's capital and physical investment that took years to bring about, being treated as ownerless. To see others partaking and benefiting of one's asset that came about through sweat and toil without any degree of compensation or acknowledgement, it is nearly impossible not to react.

Gemara in Tractate *Shabbos*: One's assets are referred to as "*y'kum* (standing)" because "one's possessions stand allow one to stand on his feet." One's status and sense of wealth is based on his financial worth. One's status gives one confidence and a sense of value. If one allows others to partake of his assets and produce as if it were their own, their action causes a diminishment to the owner who witnesses this behavior. He is thus classified by *Chazal* to be the equivalent of an angel, who needs no acknowledgement and only does the Will of G-d.

Chazal: "A poor person is the equivalent of one who is dead." Why is this so? It is because one who is impoverished, no one values or pays attention to that individual. For one to be able to restrain himself and allow his agricultural assets, which are the basis for his sense of identity and self-worth, is considered to be one of unusual strength a "*gebor koach*."

Torah: There is a positive commandment to "fear G-d." Fear may manifest itself in two levels. The lesser dimension of fear is the fear of punishment, which comes from one fear of punishment if he were to transgress. This level of fear is not considered to be advanced since one only refrains from violating the G-d's Word out of fear of what will happen to him if he were to violate. A more advanced level of fear of G-d is having reverence and awe for His Majesty and Unlimited Omnipotence. This is the ultimate level of fear for which one should strive.

It is interesting to note that one who reveres G-d also simultaneously fears Him, due to that awe. This fear does not emanate from one's concern that he will be punished if he should transgress, but rather, it is a deeply rooted fear that is based on one's appreciation and internalization of G-d being the Almighty One who Wills every aspect of existence continuously. For example, if one were an advanced *Torah* scholar and proficient in all areas of *Torah* and was given the opportunity to meet the *Vilna Gaon*, he would go with great apprehension and would be afraid. This is because the *Torah* scholar understands with absolute clarity, that his achievement of *Torah* understanding and spiritual achievement are insignificant compared to that of the *Vilna Gaon*. One's sense of value is based on his level of accomplishment.

When one is put into a position that he realizes that his level of accomplishment is insignificant, he will lose his sense of self-worth. When one feels negated and minimized, his sense of accomplishment becomes irrelevant. One who is able to internalize G-d's dimension of Being, would realize that regardless of the scope and dimension of his level of accomplishment it is the equivalent of nothing. At that moment, overwhelming fear would come upon that individual because he has no senses of worth. Thus, the fear of G-d in this context is due to his level of reverence for Him.

At Sinai, were asked by G-d if they would accept His *Torah*. They declared, "We will do and then we will

listen." Because the Jewish people were negated by being exposed to the Divine Presence, there was no basis for them to ask G-d "What is contained in the *Torah*?" The angels perform the Will of G-d with zeal and without question because they understand who G-d is and are thus negated to His Will. The angel has no sense of self, but rather exists only to do the Will of G-d. This is the reason the *Midrash* refers to the Jewish people at Sinai as angels who are "*geborei koach*."

If a Jew were to have the capacity to internalize who G-d is, he would not hesitate in any way to act with the greatest level of zeal to carry out His Will. *Moshe*, who is the most humble man to ever walk the face of the earth, as he quantified himself as "nothing." As he had said, "What are we (*nachnu mah*)?" Thus because *Moshe* demonstrated the ultimate level of negation to G-d, although *Aaron* was not exactly at that level, the *Midrash* refers them as "*geborei koach*."

Moshe, G-d's Beloved

Torah: "He (G-d) called to *Moshe*..."

Midrash: "From where did G-d call to *Moshe*? He called to *Moshe* from the communion tent (*Ohel Moed*). The Name of G-d should be blessed forever. He chose to leave the upper spiritual levels of existence to dwell in the lower physical realm. He chose to dwell in the *Mishkan* because of His love for the Jewish people. King Solomon writes, 'Is it to be understood how G-d should dwell on the terrestrial level? All the heavens cannot contain His Glory, yet He chose to dwell on earth.' Does a potter desire pottery (his creation)? Similarly, G-d is the Creator of everything. Why should He desire to be with His Creation? It is only because of His great and special love for the Jewish people that He yearns for them and is consumed to be in the courtyards (of the Jewish people- *Mishkan*/Temple)."

Midrash: "The *Torah* uses the term '*vayikra* (called)' to indicate the greatness of *Moshe*. We find at the beginning of Creation when G-d created day the *Torah* states '...and G-d called (*vayikra*) the light 'day'...' Just as G-d called (*vayikra*) the light 'day' so too He called (*vayikra*) to *Moshe*. Who is greater? Is it the captor or the captured? The captor is greater. The light was called 'day.' There is no true light other than the *Torah*."

"As King Solomon writes in Proverbs, 'Neir mitzvah v'Torah ohr (the mitzvah is the fuel and the Torah is the light/illumination).' Moshe captured the Torah in its entirety. As it states, 'You ascended above and you captured the captured.'

"Gemara in Tractate Shabbos: Moshe ascended to heaven and took the Torah, despite the angels who were opposed to man possessing G-d's Splendor. Thus, Moshe was the captor who captured the Torah (the light)... Thus, Moshe being the captor is even greater than the Torah itself." Because Moshe captured the Torah and brought it to the Jewish people, G-d has a special love for him. Just as G-d loves the Torah, He loves Moshe.

Chazal: Yaakov was the most special of the Patriarchs. However, regarding the text of the Amidah (silent Prayer) we conclude the first blessing by mentioning only Avraham our Patriarch ("the shield of Avraham"). If Yaakov was the most special of the Patriarchs, why do we conclude the Amidah with Avraham? It is because without Avraham being the founding Patriarch, there would not have been Yitzchak or Yaakov. Although Yaakov surpassed Avraham in his spiritual dimension and contribution as a Patriarch, had there not been an Avraham who was the foundation, he would not have come to be. Similarly, had Moshe not captured the Torah on behalf of the Jewish people, the angels would have claimed it for themselves and it would not have had relevance to the terrestrial level.

Gemara in Tractate Shabbos: The angels had said to G-d, "What is the value of this undeveloped being that he is even worthy of being mentioned? Place Your glory to heaven." G-d spoke to Moshe saying, "Answer them." Moshe then responded saying, "The Torah states, 'I am the Lord your G-d who has taken you out of Egypt' – were you ever in Egypt? The Torah says, 'You shall honor your father and mother' – do you have a father and mother?"

Moshe provided the angels with many examples, which confirmed that the Torah was intended for man and has no relevance to the angels (regardless of their spirituality). Thus, Moshe acquired the Torah for the Jewish people. Why did G-d not respond to the angels Himself? It is because it was important for Moshe to be the conquer. Without the Torah, the Jew has no value or purpose. As the Torah states in the Portion of Bereishis, "Bereishis bara Elokeem es ha'shamaiyim v'es ha'aretz (In the Beginning, G-d Created the heaven and the earth)..."

Midrash: The word "Bereishis " can be interpreted to mean that the world was created for the sake of Torah which is referred to as "reishis (choicest)" and the Jewish people who are also referred to as "reishis." Because the Jewish people have the special capacity to be able to fulfill and internalize the Torah, G-d has special love for them. Through the Torah, the Jewish people are able to actualize their spiritual dimension.

Moshe proved to the angels that the Torah has more relevance to the Jew because G-d gave an evil inclination to mankind that must be subdued and suppressed. In contrast, the angel does the Will of G-d because he was created to do so with his dimension of spirituality and clarity. This is the reason the Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin writes, "Greater is the tzaddik from the ministering angels." This is because the tzaddik only evolved into a tzaddik because he continuously subdued his evil inclination through the tests of life, whereas the angel's spiritual greatness is due to G-d creating him as such.

Moshe's Contribution to the Mishkan

Midrash citing a verse in Proverbs: "'There is much gold and there is an abundance of diamonds, but the most precious vessel is the lips that speak wisdom.' If one possesses much gold, silver, and precious gems, although he may possess all the wealth in the world, if he has no common sense and wisdom, then what is it worth? There is an idiom, 'If one has wisdom, what are you lacking? But if one does not have wisdom, what do you truly have?' To whom is the verse 'There is much gold ...' referring? It is referring to the fact that the Jewish people donated much gold to the building of the Mishkan. To whom is '...an abundance of diamonds...' referring? It is referring to the gifts of the Princes who had donated the shoham stones. To whom is 'the most precious vessel is the lips that speak wisdom' referring? It is Moshe.

Midrash: "G-d came to Moshe and saw that he was melancholy because the entire Jewish people had participated in the building of the Mishkan, but he did not contribute. G-d responded, "I swear on your life! Your words to Me are more precious than what they have contributed.' As we see despite the fact that Moshe did not participate in the building of the Mishkan, the verse states, 'He (G-d) called to Moshe.'

"In the portion of Pekudei the Torah continuously states, 'G-d commanded Moshe...' regarding every aspect of

the *Mishkan*. This is analogous to a king who asked his subject to build for him a palace. The subject selflessly built the palace and inscribed the name of the king on every part of it...When the king entered into the palace that his subject had built for him, he saw that every aspect of the palace had his name inscribed on it. The king said to the servant, 'All of this honor that has been bestowed upon me is due to my subject. Should I be on the inside and he remain on the outside?' The king immediately summoned his subject to enter because he understood the special love and dedication that he had for the king. Identically, G-d had commanded *Moshe* to build the *Mishkan* for Him." Everything that *Moshe* had done was solely for the glory of G-d.

Torah: *Moshe* was personally involved in locating and removing the remains of *Yosef* from Egypt at the time of the exodus.

King Solomon: "A wise heart takes *mitzvos*."

Gemara in Tractate *Sotah*: This verse is referring to *Moshe* because he chose to locate the remains of *Yosef* while the Jewish people were preoccupied with borrowing the silver and gold vessels from the Egyptians. Although it was also a *mitzvah* for them to borrow the personal effects of the Egyptians, as G-d had commanded them, *Moshe* chose to seek out *Yosef's* remains because he understood that without them there would be no exodus. He chose this task to bring G-d's Word to fruition. It was his wise heart that gave him clarity to do so.

Everything that *Moshe* did was only for the sake of G-d. He wanted to allow every Jew to have the opportunity to participate in the *mitzvah* of the building of the *Mishkan*. Factually, the Jewish people had completed it on their own without his participation. Nevertheless, he felt denied because he did not contribute to the location of G-d's Presence. He did not participate in something that contributed to G-d's glory. Therefore, G-d explained to *Moshe* that He was not excluded. *Moshe's* imprint was on every aspect of the *Mishkan*. Everything that he had done was for the sake of G-d. It therefore states, "He (G-d) called to *Moshe*..."

Although one may perform *mitzvos* and study *Torah*, one needs to understand the true motivation for doing so. If one engages in *Torah* study for its intellectual value, despite the fact that he is fulfilling the *mitzvah* of studying *Torah*, his participation is considered deficient. The more selflessly one performs a *mitzvah*

the greater is its spiritual worth. This will in turn bring about greater glory to G-d.

Sacrifices Before G-d

Rambam in the *Guide for the Perplexed*: The Jewish people were slaves in Egypt for hundreds of years and were exposed to various forms of idol worship, which involved the goat, sheep, and ox. Since man has an innate overwhelming need to be subservient to a greater power, it was necessary for G-d to establish a means for man to express that subservience through worship in a permitted context. Thus, the *Torah* specifically chooses the species of the goat, sheep, and ox to be sacrifices to G-d. It is a lesson to the pagan world that one must bring sacrifices to the Omnipotent G-d and not to deities. This is the concept of sacrifices. When one brings a sacrifice, he is expressing that subservience to G-d.

Ramban rejects the position of *Rambam*: The object of sacrifices is to activate and coalesce spiritual forces that are necessary for existence and the Jewish people. Sacrifices are unrelated to the need to be subservient to a greater power.

Reb Meir Simcha of *Dvinsk* explains the position of *Ramban*: *Ramban* is not referring to the sacrifices that were brought in the *Mishkan* or the Temple. The *Torah* refers to the bringing of these sacrifices in the *Mishkan* and Temple as being "before G-d (*lifnei Hashem*)..." But rather, *Ramban* is referring to the sacrifices that one is permitted to bring on one's personal altar (*bamah*), which was only permitted during certain times in Jewish history. This was a time when the *Mishkan* was not classified as "*Mishkan*" but rather "*Bamah gedola* (great altar)." It was a time when the Holy Ark was not located in the *Mishkan*. When one was not able to bring a sacrifice in the *Mishkan*, G-d permitted to bring his own personal altar to express his subservience to Him.

However, when the *Mishkan* was in place and the Temple was built, the personal altar was no longer permitted. The sacrifice that was brought in the *Mishkan* or Temple, was as *Ramban* explains to activate and coalesce spiritual forces that were needed for the Jewish people. *Rambam* fully concurs with *Ramban*. The *Mishkan* and Temple were the location of the Divine Presence. Thus, the sacrifices that were brought in the *Mishkan* or Temple were brought before G-d, This was not the case when it was brought on a personal altar.

Torah: Bilaam, the evil one, was commissioned by Balak to curse the Jewish people. In order to endear himself to G-d, Bilaam built seven altars and had Balak bring upon them sacrifices to G-d. Although Balak brought the sacrifices for the sake of cursing the Jewish people, he brought them to G-d and not a deity.

Chazal: Because of this, Balak merited that Ruth (grandmother of King David) should be his granddaughter.

Gemara: "From here we learn that something that is not performed with the proper intent leads to performance with the proper intent."

Rashi citing *Chazal:* The seven altars that Bilaam built were to counter the seven altars that were built by the three Patriarchs.

Midrash: "Bilaam said, 'The seven altars that I built are the equivalent of all the altars built by their forefathers. Avraham built four....Yitzchak built one and Yaakov built two...'" Bilaam believed that his altars upon which sacrifices were brought before G-d were the equivalent of the altars of the Patriarchs. This however was not so.

Gemara: A non-Jew is permitted to bring a sacrifice wherever and whenever he chooses to do so. He is not permitted to serve idolatry however. What is the

difference between a sacrifice brought in the Temple and outside of the Temple when it is permitted? The Temple was the location of G-d's Presence and is thus considered to be brought "before G-d."

However, if one brings a sacrifice outside of the Temple on a personal altar, it is only an expression of subservience to G-d but it has no relevance to G-d's Presence being associated with it. Although Bilaam established seven altars and brought sacrifices upon them, because they were not in the location of the Divine Presence their value was limited. It is not comparable to any degree to the sacrifice that is brought before G-d in the location of the Divine Presence.

Chazal: Before the *Mishkan* was built, the holy Patriarchs were the location of the Divine Presence. As they state, "hein hein ha merkava (they are G-d's chariot). Thus, when the Patriarchs brought their sacrifices on the altars they had built, they were brought before G-d because they were the location of the Divine Presence. It was the equivalent of their sacrifices being brought in the Temple and not on a personal altar. In contrast, Bilaam's sacrifices were on personal altars which had no relevance to the Divine Presence. This was something that Bilaam did not understand or appreciate.



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