

ALWAYS A BENEFACTOR NEVER A DEBTOR

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Vaeschanan

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Rebuke Only After Og Smitten

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There Was an Opening for Rachamim

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Interpretations of Vaeschanan

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On Tisha B'Av

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Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Revealing The WHY Behind the Quintessential Disappointment

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1. The Jews merited three gifts in the desert due to Avraham's hospitality.
2. He hosted the angels and he offered the shade of his tree, water to wash their feet, and bread.
3. Gemara: We merited the wellspring of Miriam that provided water for forty years in the desert.
4. As the water was offered to the angels through an intermediary, it now came through Moshe – unlike the Manna and Clouds of Glory.
5. Had Avraham offered the water himself Moshe wouldn't have had to hit the rock.
6. Why didn't G-d give Moshe clarity not to hit the rock?
7. It was in the Jews' best interest Moshe should not enter into the land.
8. A most serious sin of the desert was the Baal Peor.
9. If not for Pinchas' zealotry the Jewish people would have been destroyed.
10. Moshe's burial location was opposite Baal Peor.
11. Midrash: The deity of Baal Peor emerges yearly to prosecute the Jews for idolatry; when it sees the burial location of Moshe it sinks back into the ground.
12. The prosecution is quelled.
13. Initially Moshe was not aware of the importance of not crossing the Jordan.
14. For the sake of the survival of the Jewish people Moshe could not enter into the land.

Successor As Extender

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1. G-d said to Moshe, "The conquest of the land will only come through Yehoshua.
2. Mishnah: Moshe received the Torah and transmitted it to Yehoshua.
3. Rashi: Yehoshua was most qualified to be the bearer of responsibility for the Torah; he was the youth who never separated from his Rebbe's tent.
4. Gemara: Moshe is the equivalent of the sun, and Yehoshua, the moon.
5. Yehoshua's total being was a reflection of his teacher.
6. Moshe tells the Jews they will worship idols after he dies.
7. Midrash: Although they did not become idolaters until after the death of Yehoshua – as long as Yehoshua was alive Moshe considered it as if he was alive.
8. Moshe was told to pass his spirit on to Yehoshua.
9. Moshe caused the sun to stand still; so did Yehoshua.
10. Midrash: The King, through Justice, establishes the land.
11. The King is Moshe – king of Torah.
12. The power to rule lies in one's dimension of Torah.
13. Yehoshua, a reflection of Moshe, also had this power.
14. The camp of Yehuda – tribes representing Torah – were first in formation.

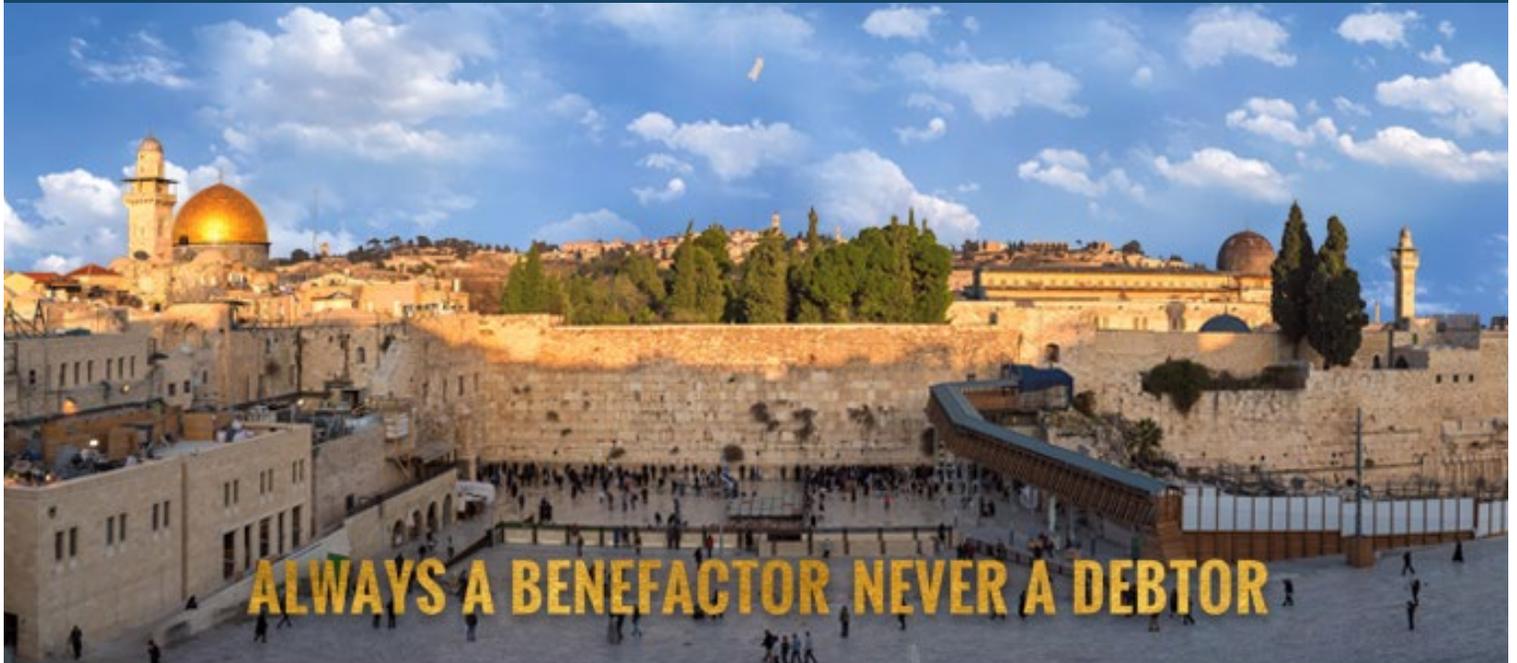
Cognizant Of The Medium Enables The Connection

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1. Moshe says to the Jews "You who cleave to G-d are all alive today."
2. Maharal of Prague: G-d who is the source of all that exists, if one attaches himself to that source, is fully alive and functional.
3. Rambam: All blessings are Rabbinical except for grace after the meal.
4. Gemara: One has an obligation to recite 100 blessings daily.
5. A blessing that does not contain the name of G-d and that He is King of the universe is not a blessing.
6. Baal Haturim: The word in Hebrew to cleave is "deveikim."
7. The numerical value of the letter Kuf is 100.
8. Many letters in the Torah have a small crown-they are called Tagim.
9. The Crown on the letter Kuf: One who wants to cleave to G-d must say 100 blessings a day.
10. The recitation of the blessings creates a cognizance of G-d's presence in one's life.
11. Perceiving G-d as Master, Almighty, and King creates the setting to be worthy to cleave.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Vaeschanan



The Limitation of Man's Understanding

Torah: Moshe pleaded with Hashem to allow him to cross the Jordan and enter into the Land of Israel; however, Hashem rejected Moshe's request. Moshe spoke to the Jewish people saying, "But Hashem became angry with me because of you, and He did not listen to me; Hashem said to me, 'It is too much for you! (*rav lach*) Do not continue to speak to Me further about this matter."

Rashi: The words "*rav lach*" (It is too much for you) to mean that Hashem wanted Moshe to cease beseeching Him to enter into the Land because it would reflect negatively on Hashem. Hashem did not want the people to say that the Master is inflexible and without compassion for His student (*Moshe*).

Devarim: Moshe recounts the incident of the *meraglim* (the spies). He says that when Hashem told the generation of the spies that they would not enter into

the Land of Israel, "They retreated and wept before Hashem, but Hashem did not listen to your voice and He did not hearken to you."

Rashi citing the *Midrash (Tanchuma):* Hashem did not listen to the cries of the Jewish people because "they transformed the Attribute of Mercy and caused Him to be perceived as cruel." Hashem is not cruel. One would think that the *Midrash* should have said that since the Jews were unworthy of entering the Land, their prayers were rejected based on the Attribute of Justice which dictates that only the deserving are rewarded. If so, why does the *Midrash* say that Hashem's treatment of them appears cruel when in fact it was really proper Justice?

Gemara in Tractate *Succah:* *Vayetar* is an expression of *tefilla* (prayer) that is so overpowering that it overturns the attribute of cruelty and establishes the Attribute

of Mercy. The difficulty with the terminology used by the *Gemara* is that there is no such attribute as the “cruelty” of *Hashem*. The *Gemara* should have said that it overturns the Attribute of Justice and establishes the Attribute of Mercy. The answer is that when the *Midrash* and the *Gemara* refer to the attribute of “cruelty” it is in fact referring to the Attribute of Justice. However because of the limited human perception of one’s lack of worthiness the Attribute of Justice is viewed as “cruelty”. It is only because of a person’s lack of understanding spiritual failing that he sees G-d’s reaction as cruel.

Therefore, when a Jew prays to *Hashem* to alleviate his plight and *Hashem* does not respond, the individual views this as cruelty rather than understanding that he is unworthy of *Hashem*’s Mercy. Therefore *Hashem* told *Moshe* to cease his pleading (“*rav lach* - It is too much for you”) because if *Moshe* continued to beseech *Hashem* and He would not respond, it would appear that He was being “cruel” rather than a lack of understanding who is deserving and who is not.

To perceive *Hashem* as being “cruel” is a *Chilul Hashem* (a desecration of *Hashem*’s Name). Therefore, *Moshe* needed to be silenced. When the Jews pleaded with *Hashem* to let them into the Land of Israel after the incident of the spies, the Attribute of Justice dictated that they did not have the merit to enter into the Land because of their failings. *Hashem*’s lack of response to the beseeching of that generation caused Gd to appear as “cruel” from a limited human perspective.

With this understanding we can explain the *Gemara* in Tractate *Bava Basra* which says that at the end of time, *Hashem* will tell the angels to expand the boundaries of every city except that of the Holy city of Jerusalem. The *Gemara* continues to say that the angels will come to *Hashem* and ask Him, “How could You expand the boundaries of all the cities and not the Holy city of Jerusalem?” *Hashem* will answer, “If that is the case, then expand the boundaries of Jerusalem also.”

We see from the dialogue between *Hashem* and the angels that initially *Hashem* did not intend to expand the boundaries of Jerusalem; however, only after the angels questioned *Hashem* did he agree to have the boundaries of Jerusalem broadened. How do we understand this?

Mishna in *Pirkei Avos* (*Ethics of our Fathers*): One of the miracles which took place on the Temple Mount was that when the Jews worshiped in the *Bais HaMikdash* (the Temple) they were crowded in to the point that they were pressed against one another.

However, when they heard the pronouncement of the Name of *Hashem* they prostrated themselves on the ground and miraculously there was sufficient room for them to do so. How was this possible? Although the *Bais HaMikdash* was a physical structure with specific dimension, the essence of the location was spiritual. The spiritual dimension has no limitation – it has an unlimited capacity. Therefore when the Jews would prostrate themselves on the ground there was sufficient room for them to do so.

Jerusalem is the Holy City and its dimension is spiritual, which has an unlimited capacity. Therefore, Jerusalem (unlike all other cities of the world) will not need its boundaries to be expanded. Despite its physical limitation it has an unlimited capacity. However the angels will say to *Hashem* that although it may be true there is no need to physically expand the boundaries of Jerusalem, nevertheless, since the world has no understanding of the reality of Jerusalem, their perception will be that all cities of the world would be expanded except for Jerusalem.

The angels will be saying to *Hashem* that this misconception will be a *Chilul Hashem*. *Hashem*’s response will be, “If this is the case, in order to avert the *Chilul Hashem* – expand the borders of Jerusalem as you have done with all other cities.” Often we find that *Hashem* overturns the Attribute of Justice to establish the Attribute of Mercy in order to avoid a *Chilul Hashem*. He does this not for our sake but rather for the sake of His Holy Name. Thus when we pray to *Hashem*, even though we may not be deserving, we should pray for His Mercy so that there should not be a *Chilul Hashem*.

Who is Truly Deserving?

Moshe prayed to *Hashem* saying, “*Va’eschanan el Hashem* – I implored *Hashem* ...”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: The word “*Va’eschanan*” refers to graciousness of *Hashem*. *Moshe* beseeched *Hashem*

as one who is undeserving and it is only through *Hashem's* graciousness will *Hashem* respond.

Chazal: Although *Moshe* was an *tzaddik* (righteous person) who had sufficient merit to be deserving, nevertheless when *taddikim* pray to *Hashem* they ask for “*Maatnus Cheenam* – free gifts”. That *Hashem's* graciousness should favor them. The question is – if in fact *Moshe* was the most deserving, then why would he pray to *Hashem* as if he were not? It would be disgraceful for a person has the means to purchase a certain item to ask the seller to release it to him without any cost. For example, in the Portion of *Devarim* when the Jewish people came near *Edom*, *Hashem* told *Moshe* to tell the *Klal Yisroel* that they should “purchase food and drink from the *Edomites*.”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: *Hashem* wanted the Jews to pay for their food and drink (their needs), in order to not appear as if they were, “paupers”. If they would then they would be “ingrates.” Simply, one could understand the words of *Chazal* to mean that if one could afford what one desires he should pay for it. However, this is not what the *Midrash* is saying.

Midrash: If a Jew understands that the resources which he was endowed with by *Hashem* was only given to him to accommodate his function as a Jew, then he would not want to not utilize the blessing for that purpose. If he does not utilize his blessings as they were meant to be expended then he is considered “ingrate”. If *Hashem* gave wealth to the Jewish people it was only for them to be able to utilize it and not appear as paupers, which would be considered a *Chilul Hashem* (Desecration of G-d's name) – that G-d's people have to beg for their existence.

Therefore by not using the wealth that was given to them they would be considered “ingrates”. If one does not utilize the resources that have been given to him by *Hashem* appropriately, then it is a statement that he himself is the source of his own blessing. Every *tzaddik* throughout his life accumulates an unlimited amount of *mitzvos*.

Mishna: The “true reward for a *mitzvah* is not possible in this existence.” If a *tzaddik* has such a wealth of merit then why did *Moshe Rabbeinu* plead with *Hashem* to respond to him based on His Graciousness? The question is why? The answer is, a true *tzaddik* understands that although his own spiritual accomplishments are numerous and

maybe even unlimited, nevertheless it all emanates from *Hashem*.

Dovid HaMelech in *Tehillim (Psalms)*: “I am fortunate that You (*Hashem*) have given me the clarity of mind.” Meaning, the *tzaddik* is endowed by *Hashem* with a clarity that allows him to do the right thing. Even the ability to execute the *mitzvah* is only possible because *Hashem* Wills the function of our existence. If this is the case a person is truly undeserving because whatever we have or accomplished is in fact a gift of *Hashem*.

Gemara: “All is predestined by Heaven (G-d) except the fear of Heaven.” The basis for deservedness is only if we make the right choice. It is difficult for the *tzaddik* to understand his deservedness when *Hashem* provides him with every conceivable need to be able to fulfill his mission in existence. This is why *Moshe* beseeched *Hashem* as if he was undeserving. The question to ask ourselves is – what is the basis for disappointment in life?

The answer is – the greater the expectation the greater is the disappointment. When things do not turn out the way we thought they would, we are disappointed. The basis of the expectation is our sense of self worth, thus we feel we are deserving. *Hashem* does not owe anyone anything. It is similar to a child becoming enraged with the parent if he does not give him what he wants. A *tzaddik* always praises *Hashem* regardless of his personal situation because he understands that whatever he receives is only through the Grace of *Hashem*. If we recognize that we are the beneficiaries of *Hashem's* endless Kindness, then we will remove disappointment from our lives, thus being happy.

The Intrinsic Value of Mitzvah (from Devarim)

Torah: When *Moshe Rabbeinu* approached *Og*, he was fearful that he would not be able to defeat him. *Hashem* reassured *Moshe* by saying, “Do not fear him.”

Rashi citing *Midrash*: *Moshe* was concerned because *Og* had special merit from doing a kindness for *Avraham Avinu* hundreds of years earlier. As we said last week, *Og* had intended that *Avraham* be killed battling against the Four mightiest Kings so he could

take Sarah (Avraham's wife) for himself. Nevertheless he received great reward for informing Avraham about the capture of his nephew. He lived an additional 500 years and because of this merit Moshe was concerned.

We learn from this that despite the degree of deficiency in the performance of a *mitzvah* it nevertheless has spiritual value. If someone benefits from another's actions, there is merit in that action regardless of the ulterior motive behind it.

Gemara in Tractate *Avodah Zorah*: At the end of time Hashem will sit with a *Sefer Torah* in His lap and He will announce to the world, "Whoever has a share in this *Torah*, let him come and take his portion (reward)!" The first nation that will come to claim their reward will be the Romans (who destroyed the Second Temple). They will claim, "Whatever we did in this world such as going to battle, amassing large amounts of money, building boulevards and bathhouses was all so that the Jewish people would be able to learn *Torah*. Therefore we do deserve reward."

Hashem will respond, "You fools! Everything that you did was for your own self-interest." Hashem will then dismiss them from His Presence. Just like the Romans, one nation after the next will approach Hashem believing that they have a claim to a share in *Torah*. They will all be dismissed on the same grounds –whatever they did was for themselves and not so the Jews should be able to study the *Torah*.

Brisker Rav z'tl: "How is it possible that at the end of time, which is a time of Truth, the nations of the world come before Hashem and blatantly lie that all of their endeavors were only so the Jews should be able to study the *Torah*?" He explains that at the end of time Truth will become known to all mankind and the nations of the world will realize that nothing in this existence could happen unless it directly or indirectly relates to accommodating the *Torah*. This is based on the principle that all of creation was made and exists for the sake of the *Torah* and the Jewish people.

So, although at the time of their endeavors the nations of the world did not have in mind that their initiatives were for the sake of *Torah*, (rather for their own glory and greed), they nevertheless believed that they had a claim to reward because the Jewish people were in fact the beneficiaries of their accomplishments. Hashem will dismiss them by claiming that since their intent was lacking, they are undeserving of any reward.

Seemingly the *Gemara* in *Avodah Zarah* is in direct contradiction with the *Midrash* regarding Moshe *Rabbeinu's* concern with Og. Although Og had the most sinister intent, Hashem rewarded him with longevity. Even Moshe was afraid of Og's merit. On the other hand the nations of the world will be dismissed by Hashem when they will come to claim a share in *Torah* because they did not have the proper intent. How do we understand this?

The answer is the *Gemara* in *Avodah Zarah* is addressing what will happen at the end of time when the physical world will come to an end and the context of reward will be within the spiritual realm. In the physical world, even the most deficient level of accomplishment is deserving of reward because the blessing itself is manifested in the physical. The fact that Og merited longevity because of the Kindness that he had done for Avraham was a reward in the physical world. However, if the initiative is lacking in purity then it has no relevance to the spiritual world.

The nations who will approach Hashem at the end of time are claiming that they deserve a share in a spiritual context. Therefore since the intent of their actions was devoid of any relevance to *Torah* they do not deserve reward in the spiritual realm, despite the innate value of their actions (which was to accommodate the *Torah*).

Gemara in Tractate *Taanis*: "The *Torah* can be either a life potion or a death potion." The *Gemara* derives this understanding from a verse in the Portion of *Haazinu*, "My *Torah* will decapitate as hard rain and My Word will flow like the dew." The *Torah* is saying that the study of *Torah* itself can either destroy a person like a destructive rain or enliven and invigorate like the gentle flowing dew. If one studies the *Torah* for its own sake with a pure intent (*L'shma*) then the *Torah* becomes a "life potion". However if one studies *Torah* for other reasons other than *Torah* itself (*Shelo L'shma*), then the *Torah* becomes a death potion.

Tosafos: "The *Talmud* teaches us that although a *Mitzvah* is not executed with a pure intent it nevertheless has spiritual value because of the principle that an impure intent will ultimately bring a person to a pure level of performance. If so how could the *Gemara* say that the *Torah* itself is a "death potion" if one studies it without the purest intent?"

The impurity of the *mitzvah* that is discussed in the *Gemara* is not referring to a person who studies for the sake of financial gain or glory, but rather with sinister intent to destroy or undermine another person (*L'kanteir*). If so this presents a difficulty in our understanding *Og's* merit. He had only informed *Avraham* that his nephew *Lot* was taken captive with the sinister intent that he should be killed in battle. Why was he deserving of reward?

The *Gemara* in Tractate *Taanis* is addressing the study of *Torah* specifically and not other mitzvos. Regarding the study of *Torah*, which is the spiritual Tree of Life (which is G-d's Wisdom), if it is tainted with sinister intent, not only is it not rewarded but it becomes destructive (a death potion). However regarding other mitzvos such as *Chesed* which was performed by *Og*, it has a degree of value vis-à-vis the physical world even though *Og's* intent was to destroy *Avraham*.



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