

Yad Avraham Institute
WEEKLY TORAH COMMENTARIES SERIES
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Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita

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About the Yad Avraham Institute

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Pekudei

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

Dean

1. Betzalel the Vessel for Wisdom

The Torah states, “See, Hashem has proclaimed by name, Betzalel son of Uri son of Chur, of the tribe of Yehudah. He filled him with G’dly spirit with wisdom, insight, and knowledge and with every craft...” The Torah tells us that Betzalel was chosen to oversee the building of the Mishkan. The Gemara at the end of Tractate Berachos tells us that Betzalel was endowed with the understanding of how to conjugate letters of the Hebrew alphabet to bring about Creation. Because he possessed this knowledge, he understood the inner workings of Creation. The Mishkan, being a microcosm of existence needed to be infused with the similar intent as Creation so that it could activate the necessary spiritual forces and influences. The Midrash tells us that at this time, Betzalel was thirteen years old. Why did Betzalel merit such a special endowment?

Whenever the Torah mentions one’s pedigree it usually only traces it back to one’s parent. However, regarding Betzalel, the Torah traces his pedigree back to his grandfather, Chur. As it states in the verse, “**Betzalel son of Uri son of Chur.**” The Midrash tells us that Betzalel’s qualification for this special endowment can be understood with an allegory. There was a general who fought many battles for his king and was victorious. He brought great honor and glory to his king. Because the general had brought him much honor, the king decided that after the next battle he would reward him for his selfless sacrifice. However, before the king was able to actualize his intent, the general was killed in battle. The king wanting to show his appreciation to his dedicated general, decided to seek out the general’s closest relative, his grandson. He bestowed upon him the wealth and recognition that was due to his grandfather. Chur the grandfather of Betzalel, attempted to stop the Jewish people from the sin of the Golden Calf. When he intervened for the sake of G’d, he was killed by the rabble. Betzalel was the beneficiary of the sacrifice of his grandfather and was thus endowed with the wisdom to

oversee the building of Mishkan. This was due to the merit of his grandfather.

The Torah tells us that Pharaoh told the Hebrew midwives, Yocheved and Miriam, to kill the Jewish male children as they were being born. The Torah tells us that they defied his order because “**They feared G’d.**” The Midrash states that as a reward for their fear of G’d Yocheved and Miriam merited that “Hashem made for them houses (*baatim*).” Yocheved was given the houses of Priesthood (Kehuna) and Kingship (Malchus). This reward was realized through Moshe (as King of the Jewish people) and Aaron (who was the High Priest). Miriam’s reward was wisdom (*chochmah*). Where do we see Miriam’s reward manifested? The verse states in Eyov, “Fear of G’d is wisdom.” Betzalel, a descendent of Miriam, merited wisdom because of Miriam’s demonstration of her fear of G’d. Thus, Betzalel was endowed with the most advanced level of wisdom, which gave him the ability to understand the inner workings of Creation.

Rashi in the Portion of Mishpatim cites Chazal who ask, “Why is the Portion of the Jewish Court juxtaposed to the Portion of the Altar (which precedes it in the previous Portion)?” The Midrash explains it is to teach us that the location of the Sanhedrin Gedolah, (The High Court of Israel) must be adjacent to the Altar (the Sanctuary of the Temple). This location was known as the Chamber of Cut Stone (*Lishkas HaGazis*). What is the significance of the Sanhedrin’s location being adjacent to the Holy Sanctuary?

One is able to say that reason that the location of the Sanhedrin must be adjacent to the Sanctuary is based upon the verse, “*Ki me Tzion teitzei Torah* - Torah goes forth from Zion.” Since the Sanhedrin represents a body of Torah Sages who have the greatest understanding of Torah and are responsible to resolve all halachic issues, they must be closely associated with the Divine Presence to merit a special level of clarity. The verse states, “G’d stands within the congregation of G’d.” Meaning, that when every rabbinic court convenes to issue a verdict, G’d

is present and the judges merit to see truth through the Eyes of G'd, rather than through their human intellect, which is subject to error.

The Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin states that the Judges who were qualified to be part of the Sanhedrin were required to understand seventy languages because they needed to hear direct testimony of witnesses without any intermediary such as an interpreter. The Sanhedrin was composed of Judges that were not only proficient in the entire Torah but also proficient in seventy languages and many branches of knowledge that were directly or indirectly related to the evaluation of evidence. The Gemara states that although one is not permitted to study the laws of witchcraft, the judges of the Sanhedrin were permitted to be fully versed in these areas in order to adjudicate these cases properly. The judges who qualified for the Sanhedrin possessed a level of genius and understanding that is beyond our comprehension.

One would think that such an unequalled level of genius would cause the judges to become haughty and arrogant, which would impair their judgment due to their various conflicts. However, because they convene in the proximity of the Divine Presence, it causes them to be humbled and negated, thus allowing them to fully employ their genius properly. The Gemara in Tractate Rosh Hashanah states "there are no rabbinic fences in the Temple." Why is this so? Rashi explains that the reason the Rabbis enact fences was because one does not have continuous cognizance and focus of one's spiritual responsibilities. This lack of cognizance leads to inadvertent transgression. However in the Temple, because one is able to sense G'd's Presence, there is no lapse of cognizance. Thus, there was no need for Rabbinic fences. The Sanhedrin, being in the proximity of the location of the Divine Presence would cause them to have a sufficient fear and reverence of G'd. It will thus allow them to maximize on their exceptional knowledge and ability. This is the meaning of wisdom is synonymous with the fear of G'd.

2. Earth, the Equivalent of Heaven

The Midrash cites a verse from Psalms, "Hashem, I love the shelter of Your House and the place of the residence (Mishkan) of Your Glory..." Reb Shimon Bar Yochai explains, 'From this we see that the lower Sanctuary corresponds to the heavenly Sanctuary....' Reb Yaakov B'Reb Yossi said, 'Why does King David say 'I love the shelter of Your House...?' It is to indicate that the

Mishkan itself is the equivalent of Creation.' Where do we find that it is equivalent? The Torah states regarding Creation, '...G'd spread the heavens like a tapestry...' Regarding the Mishkan it is written, 'You should make tapestries made of goat hides...' Regarding Creation the Torah states, 'And G'd separated between the waters...' Where do find the concept of separation in the Mishkan? It states, 'The curtain shall separate (between the holy and Holy of Holies).' Regarding Creation, the Torah states, 'The waters shall gather...' Regarding the Mishkan, it states, 'The water will gather in the copper laver...' It states regarding the creation of man, 'So G'd created Man in His image...' Where do we find the corresponding element for 'Man' in the Mishkan? It is the High Priest. (Just as Adam was created to serve G'd on earth, so too was Aaron chosen to be the Officiant of G'd in the Mishkan)..." The Midrash continues to offer many other correlations between the Mishkan and the creation of the world. Why did the Mishkan need to be the equivalent of Creation?

The objective of Creation was for G'd's Presence to dwell in the physical realm with Man to be His Officiant. However, because Adam had failed by eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, physical existence was no longer fit for the Divine Presence. By sinning, Adam putrefied the world that was created to be a pristine setting for G'd. At Sinai, the Jewish people once again ascended to the level of Adam before the sin. At that time, the angels pleaded with G'd to keep His Splendor in heaven. However, G'd told Moshe to explain to the angels that His location is on earth on not in heaven.

The Gemara tells us that a tzaddik is greater than the most lofty angel. Reb Chaim of Volozhin z'tl explains that although the greatest human being cannot comprehend what the angel understands, the devoutly righteous is still greater because the angel only understands because G'd endowed it with this understanding; however, the tzaddik reaches horizons of understanding and clarity through his own initiative. Whatever the tzaddik is, is due to his own choices and initiatives. Therefore, his level of achievement is attributed to himself. Since the greatness and dimension of the angel is not attributed to its own initiative, the tzaddik is greater than the most lofty angel. G'd gave the Torah to the Jewish people to allow them to develop and refine themselves spiritually. Since man is a product of his own choices, the Torah is meant to be the mechanism through which he can make the proper choices and thus be spiritualized.

Since the beginning of Creation, the Sinai event was the first time that the world was able to once again be the dwelling location for the Divine Presence. As Chazal tell us, the world quaked because G'd brought heaven to earth. Ramban explains that the Mishkan was a replication of Sinai. The intensity of G'd's Presence in the Holy of Holies in the Mishkan was the equivalent to that of Sinai. Just as G'd communicated to Moshe and the Jewish people at Sinai, He spoke to Moshe from between the Cherubs on the Holy Ark that was located in the Holy of Holies. Ramban presents many correlations, based on verses of how the Divine Presence in the Mishkan was the equivalent of Sinai. Thus, the Mishkan is the location through which the initial intent of Creation can be fulfilled.

The Midrash continues, "Why is the Mishkan the equivalent of heaven and earth? The verse states, 'I call heaven and earth today to bear witness...' Just as heaven and earth will bear witness for the Jewish people if they are adhering to principles of the Torah, so too will the Mishkan bear witness on their behalf. As the Torah refers to the Mishkan as 'Sanctuary of Testimony (Mishkan ha eidus).' The verse states, 'These are the reckonings of the Sanctuary, the Sanctuary of Testimony...' Why does the Torah repeat the word 'Sanctuary (Mishkan)' twice? Reb Shmuel explains, 'It is alluding to the destruction of the First and Second Temple.'" If the Jewish people have the Mishkan or the Temple in their midst it is an indication that they are conforming to the principles of the Torah. However if the Temple is destroyed, then it is a confirmation that the Jewish people have transgressed. The Mishkan only has value if there is a Jewish people. If there is no Jewish people, then the Mishkan has no value.

Chazal tell us that although the ninth of Av is the most tragic day of the year, because it is the day that the First and Second Temples were destroyed, it is referred to as a "moed (holiday)." Why is this so? It is because the verse in Prophets tells us that 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 tell us that if G'd's Wrath had not been expended on the Temple it would have had to come upon the Jewish people. This would have destroyed them. The destruction of the First Temple was an act of Mercy, although it was an expression of the Attribute of Justice. Therefore, the day of the destruction of the Temple is considered to be a holiday, because it was the day the Jewish people were spared. By being spared, they have the opportunity to repent and atone for their sins, and thus are able to bring about the rebuilding of the Third Temple with the coming of Moshiach.

The Mishkan needed to be the equivalent of Creation because the objective of existence is to be the dwelling location of G'd. If the world itself was not qualified to host His Divine Presence, then the Mishkan was to be that location.

3. The Power of Agency

The Midrash states, "When they had finished all that was needed for the Mishkan, the people said, 'When will the Divine Presence dwell in our midst?' The Jewish people were anguished that the Divine Presence did not enter into the Mishkan. What did they do? They went to all of the wise of heart and said, 'What are you doing sitting idly while the Divine Presence is not entering into the Mishkan! After all that we have given to its building, go now and erect the Mishkan so that the Divine Presence should dwell in our midst. However, they did not know how to erect the Mishkan. They believed that if they were to erect it, the Mishkan would collapse. They went to consult with Betzalel and Ahaliav, because they were the ones who understood the inner workings of the Mishkan. They asked them, 'How will you erect the Mishkan?' They attempted but they did not succeed. The people began to murmur and complain amongst themselves saying, 'What did the son of Amram do to us? He caused us to expend our wealth on the building of this Mishkan and we toiled with great effort, because he promised us that G'd would ascend into the Mishkan and dwell within the tapestries of goat hides. As it states, 'Make for Me a dwelling location in your midst....' But He did not!' Why could they not erect the Mishkan?"

The Midrash continues, "It is because Moshe was pained and anguished that he did not participate in the building of the Mishkan. G'd thus did not allow the Mishkan to be erected without Moshe's involvement. "

One would think that the Jewish people would have wanted Moshe to be involved in every aspect of the building of the Mishkan because he was chosen by G'd to be the conduit for Torah. He was the most special Jew to ever live and radiated with holiness. However, the Jewish people did not seek out his assistance until they realized that they were not able to erect it themselves. Why did they not initially come to him to participate? How could they have even considered that the Divine Presence would enter into the Mishkan without Moshe's participation? In addition, it seems that had Moshe not been pained and anguished he would not have participated in the building

of the Mishkan. G'd would have allowed the Jewish people to erect it without Moshe's participation. How is it possible that neither the Jewish people nor G'd would want Moshe to be involved in the building of the Mishkan to some degree?

The Midrash tell us that the Mishkan was beloved to G'd like gold, because it was the "Mishkan of Moshe." The Torah tells us that Moshe was instructed by G'd to build every aspect of the Mishkan. However, he was not actually involved in the physical building of the Mishkan. Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that the mitzvah of the building of the Mishkan was given to Moshe and because he could not do everything regarding its building, it was understood that G'd wanted him to delegate the responsibility to the Jewish people. Subsequently, G'd endowed all those who had a wise heart with special wisdom that was needed to build the Mishkan in order to actualize their agency to Moshe. Why did G'd command Moshe to delegate the building of the Mishkan to the Jewish people? The obligation should have been directly incumbent upon them. Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that through the principle of agency, G'd wanted Moshe to be the beneficiary of the building of the Mishkan. He wanted every aspect of the mitzvah to accrue to him. This is based on the principle of agency which states, "the agent is considered to be the equivalent to the one who appointed him." Based on this understanding of agency, the entire Mishkan identifies with Moshe (Mishkan of Moshe_ because every aspect of the Mishkan was done through the agency of Moshe. The Gemara in Tractate Kiddushin, tells us that it is greater for one to perform a mitzvah himself then to delegate it through an agent. If this is so, why did G'd want the Mishkan to come about through the law of agency? It was because it was not possible for Moshe to be engaged in every aspect of the Mishkan.

When the Jewish people were not able erect the Mishkan they came to Moshe to erect it. Although they had been acting as Moshe's agents regarding the entire building of the Mishkan; nevertheless, since Moshe was pained and anguished because he understood that value of being personally involved in the execution of a mitzvah, G'd did not allow them to complete its building. Thus, it was necessary for them to come to Moshe to erect it. We are now able to understand that regardless of Moshe's level of spirituality why the Jewish people did not ask him to participate. They were acting as his agents in every aspect of the building of the Mishkan. Thus it was not necessary to ask him.

4. Moshe's Dimension of Being

The Torah states, "**All of the work of the Tabernacle (Mishkan), the Tent of the Meeting, was completed...They brought the Tabernacle to Moshe, the Tent and all its utensils...**" The Midrash tells us that Moshe was pained and anguished that he did not participate in the building of the Mishkan. G'd therefore did not allow the Jewish people to erect the Mishkan without Moshe's involvement. Rashi cites Chazal, "Why did the Jewish people bring the Tabernacle to Moshe to erect? It was because of the weight of the beams that they were not able to erect it. Moshe had not participated in the building of the Mishkan. G'd, therefore, reserved the erecting of the Mishkan for him so that he should complete its building. It was humanly impossible to erect the Mishkan because of the weight of the beams (*krashim*)." Why did Moshe not initially participate in the building of the Mishkan?

Maharal of Prague z'tl explains that whenever there is something that involves the evolution and development of existence and the fulfillment of the objective of Creation, it is not by chance or coincidence but rather it is destiny. The events relating to the building of the Mishkan unfolded exactly as G'd had intended. Moshe chose initially not to participate in the building of the Mishkan because he did not want to deny any Jew the opportunity to participate in its building. The reason Moshe understood the situation in this manner was due to G'd. He did not want Moshe to actually participate in the building of the Mishkan until its completion with the erection of the beams. Why did G'd not want Moshe to participate in its development but only in the completion of the Mishkan?

Maharal of Prague z'tl in his work *Gevuras Hashem* explains that each Jew within the 600,000 men above the age of twenty who left Egypt were considered to be a component (*prat*) within the totality of the Jewish people. Moshe was not a component within the Jewish people, but rather he is considered to be the equivalent of the totality of the Jewish people. As Chazal tell us, "Moshe is the equivalent of the entire Jewish people."

The Midrash tells us that the Mishkan was the equivalent of Creation. Every aspect of Creation is alluded and reflected in the Mishkan. The reason Moshe did not participate in the development and details of the building of the Mishkan was because Moshe, as a person, only had relevance to the totality of the Mishkan, which is the

totality of existence. Because of his dimension of being, his role was to bring together all the components of Creation to establish what is the equivalent of all existence.

The Jewish people, as a nation, have a special relationship with G'd because as an entity, they represent totality, which is G'd Who is all-encompassing. In this context there is a commonality between G'd and the Jewish people. No single Jew can have a relationship with G'd in his own right, but rather it is because he is part of the entire Jewish people that he has a relationship with Him. Moshe, on the other hand, was the only one who was able to have a direct relationship with G'd because he reflected the totality of the Jewish people. His dimension of prophecy and relationship with G'd was "face to face."

The Torah tells us that because Miriam did not fully understand and appreciate Moshe's special dimension of person, she was critical of his behavior. She not understand that Moshe's behavior needed to be different than any prophet. In response to her inappropriate criticism, G'd told her that she had spoken improperly about "Moshe My servant." This is because only he was the equivalent of the entire Jewish people, thus meriting a relationship of "face to face."

5. The Characteristic that Engenders Blessing

The Torah tells us that Moshe gave an accounting of all the gold, silver, and copper that had gone into the building of the Mishkan. Torah states, "**These are the reckonings of the Tabernacle...**" The Midrash states, "This is the understanding of the verse in Proverbs, 'A man who is faithful has great blessings (*ish emunos rav Berachos*). Whoever is trustworthy (*ne'eman*), G'd will bestow upon him many blessings. The verse continues, 'The one who is aggressively pursuing wealth, will not be vindicated.' Who is the man who is trustworthy (*ne'eman*)? It is Moshe. In whatever pursuit he was involved, his handiwork was blessed. Why was it blessed? Because he was *ne'eman*. Who is the one who was consumed with the pursuit of wealth? It was Korach. Although he was a Levy, he wanted to possess more than he was given, which was the High Priesthood." King Solomon tells us that if one possesses the characteristic of faithfulness, he is the conduit for blessing. Why does the characteristic of "*ne'eman*" (faithful/trustworthy) bring about great blessing?

The Torah states, "**But you who cling to Hashem, your G'd, you are all alive today (*Vatem HaDevakim Ba'Shem Elokeichem Chayim Kulchem HaYom*).**" Maharal of Prague z'tl explains that when one cleaves to G'd, Who is the source of all, will have life and unlimited blessing. It is because he is connected to the One Who encompasses all, he will have relevance to blessing. In contrast, one who does not cleave to G'd will not have blessing or life in the spiritual or material sense. The concept of "blessing" is of a spiritual nature. Just as the spiritual realm is unlimited and unquantifiable, so too is blessing unlimited and unquantifiable. On the other hand, the material realm is defined by limitation and quantification. The one who has relevance to blessing must be one who cleaves to G'd, meaning that he lives his life in full conformance with the Torah, which is G'd's Will. In addition, the individual who wants to cleave to G'd properly must reflect His characteristics so that there should be a commonality for the sake of compatibility, thus allowing him to cleave. The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos tells us that the "signet of G'd is Truth." Therefore, the one who cleaves to G'd must reflect His characteristic of Truth.

Moshe is quantified as "*ne'eman*" because he was faithful and trustworthy in every aspect of his life. He embodied uncompromising truth. When he gave an accounting of all the materials that were used in the Mishkan, he indicated that he was fully responsible for all to understand that he was truly faithful. It is because Moshe was the ultimate faithful and trustworthy person, that he was the conduit for blessing. The Torah tells us that the Divine Presence did not enter into the Mishkan until Moshe gave his blessing. This is because, as King Solomon tells us, "A man who is faithful has great blessings...."

One who lives his life as a Jew in a manner that is fully consistent with the Torah, he is considered to be faithful. If he is genuine in every aspect of his life as one who adheres to the dictates of the Torah, he is one who has relevance to the spiritual realm and thus has relevance to blessing. The Gemara in Tractate Yomah tells us that one who studies Torah and behaves and speaks properly will evoke praise from all those around him for his level of sanctification of G'd. They will say, "Fortunate is the one who gave birth to him...." "Fortunate is the one who taught him Torah..." Since this individual truly represents G'd in the most positive context, he will thus be a conduit for blessing.