

Yad Avraham Institute
Weekly Torah Commentaries Series
Portion of Pekudei

March 10, 2016

Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita

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About the Yad Avraham Institute

The Yad Avraham is a Torah learning institute located in midtown Manhattan. Classes are offered every day during the week starting at 5:50am and throughout the day. Classes in Chumash, Halacha, Hashkofa, Gemara, and general topics are well attended by businessmen, professionals, and students. The Yad Avraham invites you to participate in our extensive offerings of classes and events.

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Pekudei

New York
March 10, 2016

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Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

Dean

1. The Mishkan, An Expression of G'd's Unlimited Power

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...”** By giving such an accounting Moshe demonstrated to the Jewish people that his conduct was beyond reproach and there would be no basis for suspicion regarding how the materials that were contributed for the Mishkan were used.

The Torah states in the Portion of Vayakhel regarding the materials of the Mishkan, **“There was enough (*dai*) and there was excess...”** The verse seems to be contradictory. If there were sufficient (enough) materials, it would mean that there was no excess. If there were excess materials then it would not be considered more than enough. How do we reconcile this? Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that all the Jewish people wanted to participate in the building of the Mishkan and feel that their contribution was needed. They wanted to feel that they were part of creating the Mishkan in which the Divine Presence dwelt. G'd brought about a miracle that regardless of how much materials were brought they were used in building the Mishkan. Even the excess was sufficient and needed. Thus, in actuality there was no excess.

This is similar to the Mishna in Rosh Hashanah which tells us that when witnesses came to testify for the new moon, although there were multiple witnesses who came to testify regarding its sanctification, only the testimony of two witnesses was needed. After it was determined through the testimony of two witnesses when the moon appeared, the other witnesses who were not yet interrogated were no longer needed. However, the Sanhedrin would interrogate the remaining witnesses and ask them a number of question regarding what they had seen. After traveling long distances and being inconvenienced, the Sanhedrin did want the witnesses to be discouraged from coming in the future to give testimony.

It is interesting to note that the thirty-nine creative activities that are forbidden on Shabbos are derived from the creative activities that were needed for the building of the Mishkan. What is the relationship between the

building of the Mishkan and Shabbos? The Midrash tell us that the Mishkan itself was a microcosm of Creation. The Midrash draws a parallel between every aspect of creation and the Mishkan. Thus, the creative activities that were needed to bring about the building of the Mishkan, correspond to the creative energies that were necessary in the spiritual realms to bring about existence. Just as G'd performed creative activities for the six days of creation and refrained from them on the seventh day, Shabbos, so too the Jewish people who were involved with the building of the Mishkan, which is a microcosm of creation, must refrain from the creative activities of the Mishkan on the Shabbos.

Chazal explain that the appellation of *“Shakai”* is conjunction of the words, *“Sheh Kocho Dai (Whose Power is Enough).”* The commentaries explain this to mean that G'd's abilities and powers are infinite and are without limitation. When the Torah states regarding all aspects of Creation such as, **“And G'd said, ‘Let there be light...’** The energy that was released at that moment would have been ongoing and unending without limitation, because it emanated from G'd Who is unlimited and Infinite. However, because there is the appellation *“Shakai”* G'd restrains and limits His power so that the result should be exactly as He wishes it to be. If G'd would not have restrained His Power, Creation would have continued and evolved without end and the world would not have been able to come about to accommodate man as was desired. Similarly, regarding the Mishkan, although the contribution of the Jewish people was unlimited and more than enough, G'd performed a miracle and it was sufficient and not excessive. The processes was a replication of Creation Thus, **“There was enough (*dai*) and there was excess...”**

2. The Mishkan, a Replication of Existence

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 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 its 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 who was anointed to serve G’d. (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 Torah tells us that Moshe officiated in the Mishkan for seven days before Aaron and his sons were installed to be the Priests. The Mishkan assumed a permanent status on the eighth day when Aaron officiated as High Priest. The Gemara in Tractate Avodah Zorah states, “Rebbe Akiva was asked, ‘What vestments did Moshe wear when he officiated?’ Rebbe Akiva answered ‘He wore a white tunic.’” Moshe did not wear the priestly vestments that were worn by Aaron or his sons; nevertheless, his service was valid. If the service of the Kohen is only valid when he wears the Priestly vestments that are prescribed by the Torah, why was Moshe’s service considered to be valid if he only wore a white tunic?

Ramchal writes in his work *Daas Tvunos* that the receptacle for the soul is the human body. Thus, the body is the domicile for the soul. Shalah HaKadosh explains that when Adam was created by G’d, his physicality was spiritualized to the degree that he radiated holiness that had a semblance of the radiance of G’d. The angels thus confused his radiance with the radiance of G’d and began singing his praises. After Adam sinned, by eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, which contained within it good and evil, he introduced evil into himself, thus putrefying himself and the world. As a result of his sin, Adam’s radiance was extinguished and his spirituality was no longer integrated into his physicality. Adam no longer had any relevance to his original dimension of person. The soul of man could no longer be contained within the body, because of its impurity, rather it hovers above the head.

Shalah HaKadosh explains that initially the vestments of the human being to serve G’d was his body. However, because Adam had spiritually putrefied his body by eating of the Tree of Knowledge, it no longer qualified to be a vestment. As the Gemara in Tractate Zevachim explains that if the vestments of the Priest are soiled, he

cannot officiate in those vestments. Thus, when Aaron was chosen to officiate as the High Priest, he needed priestly vestments to qualify him as the Priest of G’d. This is what is meant, when G’d said regarding the vestments that were made for Aaron, that they were for “**honor and glory.**” These vestments were to compensate for the spiritual diminishment that came upon the human body as a result of the sin of Adam. Moshe, on the other hand, because of his dimension of spirituality was qualified to officiate in while only wearing a white tunic. He was the only person after Adam whose soul dwelt within his body.

The function of the Mishkan was to be a location in which to bring offerings to G’d. As we see throughout the Torah when an offering is mentioned the Torah uses the expression, “an offering for Hashem (YKVK) – *Korban l’Shem.*” The appellation YKVK (Hashem) connotes His Attribute of Mercy. Without the Attribute of Mercy, there is no basis for offerings. The Torah tells us that when G’d created existence, He did so through the Attribute of Justice. As it states, “**Bereishis bara Elokim- In the beginning G’d created ...**” “Elokim” is the appellation for G’d that connotes the Attribute of Justice. However, since G’d understood that the world could not survive within the context of Justice, due to the fact that man was prone to fail, He coalesced His Attribute of Mercy with the Attribute of Justice. Thus, the Mishkan being a reflection of Creation was the location to bring offerings to G’d, which evoke the Attribute of Mercy. Without the Attribute of Mercy, the world could not continue to exist. Therefore, the Mishkan, being a microcosm of creation had relevance to G’d’s Mercy.

The Torah states in the beginning of Book of Bereishis, “**In the beginning G’d created heaven and the earth – when the earth was empty, with darkness upon the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of G’d hovered over the face of the waters. (Bereishis bara Elokeem es ha’shamayim v’es ha’aretz: v’ha’aretz hoysa tohu v’vohu v’choshech al panei tahom v’ruach Elokeem merachefes al panei ha’mayim).**” The Midrash explains that each of the words in these verses that depict creation alludes to the exiles that will come upon the Jewish people in the future.

The Midrash explains that the words “**v’ha’aretz hoysa tohu** – the earth was **unformed,**” refer to the Babylonian exile. “**v’vohu- desolate**” refers to the Persian/Medes exile. “**Choshech - darkness,**” refers to the Greek exile; as the Chazal tell us, “they blackened the eyes of the Jewish people with their decrees.” “**Al panei sahom-surface of the deep**” alludes to the Edomite (Roman)

exile, which is seemingly unlimited/ endless as the depth of the waters that covered the earth. (We are still experiencing the Edomite exile after more than 2,000 years.) **“V’ruach Elokeem merachefes al panei ha’mayim - the Spirit of G’d hovered over the face of the waters”** is ascribed to the spirit of Moshiach.

Just as the Torah in the narrative of Creation alludes to the various exiles the Jewish people would face, identically the Mishkan, being a microcosm of creation, had a representation of all of these exiles and the ultimate redemption within it. The Torah at the beginning of the Portion of Terumah enumerates the various materials that were needed for the building of the Mishkan, **“Gold, silver, copper...and ram skins that are dyed red...and oil for illumination”**. The Midrash states, “Gold signifies the Babylonian exile...Silver represents and signifies to the exile of the Medes... Copper represents the Greek exile, which was the least of all the exiles (Copper in Hebrew is *‘nechoshis’* which alludes to the word *‘nechustah’* (the least)). The ram skins that were dyed red represent the fourth exile, which is the Roman exile (Edom) (the nation who destroyed the Second Temple). G’d said, ‘Although you (the Jewish people) will experience four exiles and you see these four kingdoms behaving with insolence and coming upon you, I promise that ultimately I will bring you salvation from the bondage.’ As it states regarding the oil that was used to kindle the Menorah, **‘oil for illumination...’** It represents the light of Moshiach.” Just as the four exiles are represented in Creation identically they are alluded to through the materials that were used to build the Mishkan, since it was a microcosm of Creation.

3. The Role of the Jew Vs Humanity

The Torah refers to the Mishkan as “the **Sanctuary of Testimony** (*Mishkan ha eidus*).” Why does it refer to it in this manner? The Midrash states, “It is a testament to all the nations of the world that G’d was willing to forgive the Jewish people for the sin of the golden calf. After they had sinned, Moshe supplicated G’d and advocated on their behalf. G’d accepted Moshe’s supplications and forgave the Jewish people. Moshe said to G’d, ‘Master of the Universe, who will inform the nations of the world that You have forgiven the Jewish people?’ G’d replied, ‘Tell them to make a sanctuary so that I may dwell in their midst.’ Thus, the Sanctuary of Testimony is a testament that the Divine Presence dwells in the midst of the Jewish people. This can only be, because G’d forgave His people.”

Maharal of Prague cites in his work on Chanukah the Chazal that states that one of the decrees that the Greeks had issued against the Jewish people, was that every Jewish home should display the horn of an ox (keren) and write upon it, “We do not have a share in the G’d of Israel.” Maharal explains that the basis for this decree was, that the Greeks wanted to communicate with the Jewish people after they had worshipped the golden calf at Sinai, when they were taken as G’d’s people, that they never had a relationship with G’d. Chazal tell us that the Sinai event is the equivalent of the wedding canopy (chupah) under which G’d had taken the Jewish people to be His bride. However, because the Jewish people engaged in idolatry immediately after receiving the Torah, Chazal tell us that it is the equivalent of the bride committing adultery while still under the chupah. If a marriage deteriorates after many years, one could say that the basis for the infidelity was because of the issues that existed between the couple. However, if the bride commits adultery immediately under the chupah it is an indication that there was never a relationship between the two individuals. The Greeks therefore wanted the Jewish people to realize and acknowledge that they never had a relationship with G’d, because they worshipped idolatry immediately after being taken as G’d’s people.

The Greeks were not correct in their understanding of events. The fact that G’d commanded the Jewish people to build the Mishkan, so that He would dwell in their midst is a testament that regardless of how serious their sin was with the golden calf, the relationship was viable and genuine. Chazal explain that the Jewish people did not initiate the idolatry of the golden calf, but rather it was precipitated by the rabble who had come out with them from Egypt. As the verse states regarding what was said regarding the golden calf, **“This is your G’d, Israel.”** If the Jewish people had initiated the sin of the golden calf it would have stated, “This is our G’d...” The essence of the Jew is committed to G’d, but because of the circumstance that existed at that time, they were vulnerable. Why is it important for the nations of the world to understand that G’d forgave the Jewish people and dwells in their midst?

The Jewish people are G’d’s representation in the world and are a testament to the fact that He is the Omnipotent One Who solely Wills all existence forever. The Torah tells us that after the splitting of the Sea, the Jewish people were attacked by the Amalekites. A battle ensued and the Amalekites were defeated. G’d declared, “My Throne is not complete until the Amalekites are obliterated from under the heavens...” Why was he attack of the Amalekites considered to be an extreme affront to

G'd's Presence in existence (and therefore they must be obliterated)?

After the splitting of the Sea and all of its miracles and the destruction of the Egyptian armies, the world stood in awe and trembled from the Jewish people. They had seen G'd's unlimited power unleashed on behalf of the Jewish people. Chazal equate the attack of the Amalekites against the Jewish people to a fool jumping into a scolding bath that others are frightened to go near for fear of being burned. However the fool, who jumps into the bath, although he is scolded, he nevertheless cools down the bath for others to enter. It was because of the attack of the Amalekites that the aura of the Jewish people was removed. Thus, the Jewish people were no longer an impressive representation of G'd's Presence in the world. If the Jewish people would have been perceived in a special light, they would have been the role models for all existence to emulate them by accepting G'd as the King of all existence. However, this did not happen due to the attack of the Amalekites. Thus, G'd's Throne is not complete until they are obliterated from under the heavens. Similarly, after G'd had forgiven the Jewish people, it was important for the world to know that they were reinstated to their original relationship with G'd. They would thus continue to be His representation in the world. G'd said to Moshe that the nations of the world will know this through the Mishkan where He will dwell in their midst.

4. Moshe's Non-Participation in the Building of the Mishkan

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..."** Rashi cites Chazal, "Why did the Jewish people bring the Tabernacle to Moshe to erect? Although they had completed all that was needed in the building of the Mishkan, they were not able to erect it because of the weight of the beams. G'd, reserved the erecting of the Mishkan for Moshe he could participate in its building. It was humanly impossible to erect the Mishkan because of the weight of the beams." Moshe was perceived and revered to be the most spiritual and holy person, who had taken them out of Egypt and was the conduit for the Torah to be given to the Jewish people, how is it possible that they would not want Moshe to be included in the building of the Mishkan? Moshe's participation, because of his special dimension, would have given the Mishkan an advanced capacity for holiness. It is clear from the words of Chazal, that if they could have erected the Mishkan, they would have done so and

completed the Mishkan without Moshe's participation. We find that there is no claim against the Jewish people for not including Moshe in the building of the Mishkan, despite the fact that they appreciated and understood his dimension of value and holiness.

The Torah states regarding the bringing of the materials that were needed for the building of the Mishkan, **"Every man whose heart inspired him (*nisoah leibo*) came; and everyone whose spirit motivated him (*nadvah rucho*) brought the portion of Hashem for the work of the Tent of the Meeting..."** Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that the one of the categories of people who gave to the Mishkan was one who was "inspired" by his heart (*nisoah leibo*). This category of individual, because he was consumed by the cause of the Mishkan gave beyond his means. Although they may have been compromised regarding their own needs, they continued to give regardless of this. When one is consumed by an objective, all that exists is that objective. They therefore had no sense of diminishment or loss. As a result of the sin of the golden calf, G'd's Presence no longer dwelt in their midst. The Mishkan was to be the medium so that G'd should return to their midst. Understanding and appreciating the value of the Mishkan, every Jew was subsumed with this objective to be fully reinstated with G'd. Therefore, at the time of their involvement to complete the Mishkan, all that existed was the objective, unrelated to themselves being the participants. Their degree of focus was to the point that they thought of nothing else but meeting the objective of G'd, regardless of who participated. Moshe, was thus not included in its building. The fact that Moshe was not included was actually something praiseworthy, because it was an indication that the Jewish people were fully negated to completing the Will of G'd.

The Torah states regarding the Akeidah, **"Avraham arose in the morning and saddled his donkey..."** Despite the fact that Avraham was one hundred and thirty seven years old at the time of the Akeidah, and a person of renown and great wealth, who had an abundance of servants and slaves, and was proclaimed as the "prince of G'd", he nevertheless arose in the morning to saddle his own donkey to carry out the Will of G'd. This behavior was a demonstration of Avraham's all-consuming love for G'd. His only focus at that moment was to perform the Akeidah (binding of Yitzchak). Until the objective was fulfilled, all else was negated for Avraham. Chazal tells us regarding Avraham hitching his own donkey to do the Will of G'd, "From here we learn the principle that love disrupts all protocol." At that moment, Avraham was negated and therefore did not think

to delegate the saddling of his donkey. It was the equivalent of not existing. The only thing that did exist, due to Avraham's focus, was the Word of G'd that needed to be fulfilled. Thus, Avraham is an example of one with an "inspired heart" (*nisaoh libo*).

There is a positive commandment to love G'd, as it states in the Shema, "**You shall love Hashem, your G'd with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your assets....**" Chazal explain that to love G'd with all of one's soul means that one is willing to give his life for Him. If one were to love G'd with all of his heart but not be willing to give his life for Him, then his love for G'd would be considered deficient. If one would be willing to give his life for G'd but not willing to give all of his assets for G'd, then his love is also considered deficient. It is only if one is willing to sacrifice in all aspects of his life is he considered one who truly loves G'd and is consumed by it.

5. The Far Reaching Effect of Miriam's Fear of G'd (from *Vayakhel*)

The Torah states, "**Moshe said to the Children of Israel, 'See Hashem has proclaimed by name, Bezalel 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...'**" Why did Bezalel merit such a profound level of wisdom? The Midrash explains, "The Torah states regarding the Jewish midwives in Egypt, '**But the midwives feared G'd and they did not do as the king of Egypt spoke to them...**' Pharaoh had commanded the Jewish midwives, Yocheved and Miriam, to kill the newborn Jewish male children during the birthing process. They defied his order because '**They feared G'd.**' As a reward, Yocheved and Miriam merited that '**Hashem made for them houses.**' What were these houses? Yocheved received the houses of Priesthood and Kingship. This reward was realized through Aaron, who was the High Priest and Moshe, who was the king of the Jewish people. And what did Miriam receive? Miriam's reward was wisdom. As it states in Eyov, 'The fear of heaven is wisdom.' Thus, Bezalel, a descendent of Miriam, was endowed with the most advanced level of wisdom because, Miriam feared G'd. as it states, "...**He filled him with G'dly spirit, with wisdom...**"

It is interesting to note that Korach attempted to usurp the authority of Moshe because he believed that the appointment of Aaron to be the High Priest was Moshe's own decision and not the Will of G'd. To this claim, Moshe responded, "Just as one cannot change the day to be night, so too it is not possible for Aaron to not be the

High Priest." Why is Aaron's appointment to be the High Priest so strongly established that it cannot be questioned? It is because Yocheved did not heed the decree of Pharaoh in Egypt due to her fear of G'd. It is because of Yocheved's demonstration of fear of G'd that it was decreed that Aaron will be the High Priest. Similarly, the designation of Bezalel as the one who would oversee the building of the Mishkan was precipitated and established by Miriam's demonstration of her fear of G'd in Egypt.

King Solomon was the one who built the First Temple. We see that the king is the one who is responsible for the building of the location of the Divine Presence. Although the Gemara tells us that Moshe, who was the son of Yocheved was considered to be the king at the time of the building of the Mishkan, he was not the one to oversee its building, but rather it was Bezalel who descended from Miriam. Chur, who was the grandfather of Bezalel was from the tribe of Yehudah, which is the tribe of Kingship. Thus, Bezalel possessed the pedigree that had relevance to kingship.

If the midwives did not have sufficient fear of G'd they would have carried out the dictate of Pharaoh, and there would not have been a Jewish people. Without the Jewish people, G'd would have no value for existence. The Gemara in Tractate Yomah states, "The storage location for Torah is one's fear of G'd." As it is stated in the verse, "**The fear of G'd is its (the Torah) storage location.**" It is only the one who fears G'd who will have the capacity to esteem and revere the Torah sufficiently. The Jewish people, being the only one's qualified to receive the Torah are thus the model in existence of having sufficient fear of G'd. The basis for the relationship between G'd and the Jewish people is the Torah itself, and the basis for the Jewish people being worthy of Torah is their fear of G'd.

The Mishkan is the location of the Divine Presence, thus it is the location through which the Jewish people had the most intimate relationship with G'd. Bezalel, the overseer if the Mishkan, was a manifestation of the fear of G'd that was demonstrated by his grandmother, Miriam.