



# A Magnification OF LOVE Through Darkness

## Weekly Torah Video Series: Parshas Ki Sisa / Purim

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### Parshas Ki Sisa: Setting the Dynamic for Supremacy and Mercy

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#### Parshas Ki Sisa: The Tension Between Ego & Reality

1. Betzalel was chosen by G-d to oversee the building of the Mishkan.
  2. He was endowed by G-d with knowledge, understanding & Divine inspiration.
  3. He was adept in conjugating the letters of the alphabet that brought about creation.
  4. Mishkan: A microcosm of Creation that needed to be infused with energies that parallel existence.
  5. Betzalel: Miriam's grandson, nephew of Moshe.
  6. When Moshe announced Betzalel would oversee building of the Mishkan there were murmurings- claiming nepotism.
  7. He chose Aaron, his brother as High Priest, his sons, assistants – and now his nephew for the Mishkan.
  8. Midrash: Moshe explains why Betzalel is specially endowed and uniquely qualified.
  9. They understood their own inadequacies & accepted Moshe's word.
  10. After Sinai where G-d had said, "In you they will believe Forever," how could they question the word of Moshe?
  11. Korach & his community were at Sinai & attempted to usurp his leadership.
  12. Although one accepts something as fact, internalizing it is another level.
  13. One's ego whispers, "Why Not Me?"
  14. Only when one understands a task is beyond his ability can one internalize what he believes.
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### Purim: The Grand Maestro Orchestrates His Symphony

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#### Purim: Concealed & Cloaked In Nature

1. The Scroll of Esther is one of the Scriptures.
  2. The only scripture that does not contain the name of G-d.
  3. It is a narrative of Haman the Amalekite rising to power to become the Viceroy Of the Persian Empire.
  4. The Amalek People, from Time immemorial, cannot tolerate the existence of a Jewish People.
  5. Haman, with the consent of Achashveirosh the Persian King who ruled the word supreme, decreed to annihilate the Jewish People.
  6. G-d intervened, behind the scene; the decree was annulled & Haman and his 10 sons were hanged.
  7. On the 13th of the month of Adar, Jews throughout the Empire were given permission to kill their enemies.
  8. They celebrated through feasting on the 14th.
  9. In Shushan, capital city of the Persian Empire, they were given an additional day, the 14th to kill their enemies, & celebrated on the 15th.
  10. All walled cities from the time of Joshua the son of Nun celebrate Purim on the 15th.
  11. G-d said, when the Jews will go into exile, "I will conceal my countenance."
  12. The miracle of Purim was a concealed one, cloaked in nature.
  13. To emphasize this point, Mordechai & Esther, the authors of the Megillah, omitted the name of G-d.
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### Purim: The Confluence of Happenstance Establishes a Pattern

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#### Purim: Stripping the Facade to Reveal the True Essence

## Weekly Torah Commentaries Series: Parshas Ki Sisa / Purim



# A Magnification OF LOVE Through Darkness

### Fractionalization of a Community

Prophet Isaiah: "Do not continue bringing Me your worthless meal offerings and your incense offerings are an abomination...."

Why were the communal meal offerings (*korbanos tzibur*) that were brought on behalf of the Jewish people considered to be "worthless" and the incense offerings an "abomination?"

*Reb Meir Simcha of Dvinsk* explains the difference between a community (*tzibur*) and a partnership. A *tzibur* is a group of individuals who coalesce together for the sake of the common good of all the members of the community. Although the community is comprised of individuals, they are considered to be one entity, because they are dedicated to one another to represent a common interest and value system whereas a partnership is a situation in which two or more individuals have personal interests in the whole.

The law states that a *mincha* (meal) offering cannot be brought as a partnership; it must be owned entirely by one individual and brought on his behalf. However, the Torah tells us, that there is a communal *mincha* offering that was brought in the Temple on behalf of the entire Jewish people.

If so, why is the communal *mincha* offering which is brought on behalf of the entire Jewish people acceptable and valid?

It is because the Jewish people are a cohesive entity which is classified as a *tzibur* (community). It is not an entity where individuals have personal interest in the whole. It is therefore equivalent of the *mincha* offering that is brought by a single individual.

*Gemara, Yomah*: The Second Temple was destroyed because of baseless hatred (*sinaas chinam*) among Jews. This lack of unity resulted in the tragedy of the destruction of the Second Temple.

*Reb Meir Simcha of Dvinsk*: Because of this baseless hatred, the Jewish people no longer assumed the status of *tzibur*. Since they became fractionalized and no longer reflected the characteristic of being unified as one person, their communal meal offerings became worthless because they did not meet the criteria of a meal offering that can only be brought by one (unified) entity.

Why was the incense offerings considered to be an abomination?

There were eleven ingredients in the incense offering – one of them being *chelbina*, which was a foul smelling ingredient. The *chelbina* represented a segment of the Jewish population that is evil (*reshaim*).

Although the *chelbina* had a very foul smell, when it was properly mixed and coalesced with the other spices that comprise the incense offering, it actually brought out the most beautiful fragrances.

However, if the *chelbina* is not properly coalesced with the other spices then it remains foul smelling.

Reb Meir Simcha of D'vinsk compares the Jewish people at the time of the Second Temple who no longer reflected the characteristic of a unified *tzibur* to the ingredients of the incense offering not being properly integrated and coalesced to make a pleasant fragrance.

As a result of *sinaas chinam*, the incense offering was considered an abomination to G-d.

“This shall they give...a half *shekel* of the sacred *shekel*, the *shekel* is twenty *geras* (in weight), half a *shekel* as a portion to Hashem...The wealthy shall not increase and the destitute shall not decrease from half a *shekel*...to atone for their souls.”

Every Jewish male of the age of twenty and above was required to give a half-silver coin, which was used to purchase the communal offerings, *korbanei tzibur*, which brought about atonement.

Regardless of one's financial status, one needed to give the half-silver coin – not more and not less. By creating this equality amongst Jews, both wealthy and destitute, the profile of participating in the half silver coin reflected the necessary profile of a unified community – as one entity, a *tzibur*. It is only when the Jewish people reflect the characteristic of *tzibur* will they be able to receive proper atonement through the communal offering.

## **Mordechai, Essential to the Survival of the Jewish People**

“Now you (Moshe), take for yourself choice spices: five hundred *shekel*-weights of pure myrrh (*mor dror*), fragrant cinnamon...”

*Rashi*: These special spices were mixed into the olive oil in order to make the anointing oil, the *shemen hamishcha*. Although Aaron and his sons were chosen by G-d to be the Priests (*Kohanim*), they would not be qualified to officiate as *Kohanim* without first being anointed with the anointing oil. The anointing oil was also needed to spiritualize the *Mishkan* and all of its vessels.

Although every aspect of the *Mishkan* met all the specifications that were dictated by G-d and was infused with the proper spiritual intent of the artisans as well as *Betzalel* to bring about the desired function of the *Mishkan*, it was not spiritually functional until it was anointed with the anointing oil. Only then was the *Mishkan* able to function as the medium for G-d to dwell in the midst of the Jewish people.

*Gemara*, Tractate *Megillah*: Where do we find *Mordechai* alluded to in the *Torah*? The first ingredient in the spices that was needed to produce the anointing oil was “*Mor dror* – pure myrrh.”

*Targum*: *Mor dror* - *mori dachya*. *Mordechai* is alluded to through the essential spice that was needed for the anointing oil.

What characteristic does *Mordechai* share with the anointing oil?

The spiritual status of the Jewish people at the time of *Purim* was precarious because they were lacking in the study of *Torah* and in many other areas of observance.

There was a decree issued against the Jewish people that every Jewish man, woman, and child was to be annihilated. The Jewish people

became overwhelmed and incapacitated because they did not know how to respond or react to the decree.

*Mordechai*, who was the leading Torah sage of his generation, galvanized the Jewish people and inspired them to repent. He guided the Jewish people in all aspects of their spirituality, and he instructed *Esther*, who was the queen, how to deal with her husband King *Achashverosh* and *Haman* the archenemy of the Jewish people. Had *Mordechai* not directed and inspired *Esther* and the entire Jewish people to act according to his instruction, the Jewish people would have been annihilated.

Just as the anointing oil was necessary to give the *Mishkan* and *Kohanim* their spiritual dimension and effective value, so too did *Mordechai* through his leadership and guidance allow the Jewish people to actualize their spirituality, which caused the decree of annihilation to be annulled and their enemies the Amalekites to be destroyed.

*Gemara*, Tractate *Megillah*: The students of *Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai* asked him, “Why at the time of *Purim* did the Jewish people deserve to be annihilated?”

He explained that it was because they had bowed to the image of *Nebuchadnezzar* (Babylonian Emperor, who had destroyed the First Temple). *Nebuchadnezzar* had ordered all of his subjects to bow to his image or be put to death. The only Jews who did not obey his command and bow were *Chananyia*, *Meshael*, and *Azarya*.

Because they refused to bow, they were cast into a fiery kiln (they emerged miraculously unharmed). Since the Jewish people bowed to the image, they deserved to be annihilated.

*Gemara*: If this was so, why were they not annihilated? Because their bowing was only an external act without intent. They did not believe that *Nebuchadnezzar* was a deity. Their bowing was only a façade.

So too, the decree against the Jewish people manifested itself in a similar vein. It presented itself as if it were going to take place, although G-d never intended it to come to fruition.

Although their bowing was merely a façade, the Jewish people needed to repent, and the one who was able to guide them in this process was *Mordechai*. He was the one who unified and motivated the Jewish people.

Although the *Mishkan* was built with the most advanced level of intent by artisans who were endowed with special wisdom by G-d and by *Betzalel* who was endowed with the ability to infuse it with the same intent as the act of Creation itself, it would not have been able to function without the anointing oil. It was the anointing oil that actualized the *Mishkan* and the most important ingredient in the anointing oil was *Mori dachya*.

We see here the commonality between the anointing oil and *Mordechai*. Without *Mordechai*, the Jewish people would not have been able to unify and actualize their spiritual potential.

## **What Does G-d Expect of every Jew**

“When you take a census of the Children of Israel...”

*Midrash*: *Rav Tanchum Bar Aba* began lecturing on the verse from *Ecclesiastes*. ‘Sweet is the sleep of the one who toils whether he eats less or more...’ They said to King Solomon, ‘If someone else would have



made this statement, he would have been mocked; however, you being the wisest person who ever lived, how could you say, 'sweet is the sleep of the one who has less ....'?

When one is hungry and he has only a small amount to eat, sleep escapes him because of his hunger. In contrast, if he is able to eat to his fill, his sleep is sweet.

When is one's sleep sweet? It is when he has more and not less.

King Solomon responds, 'I am not speaking about the toil of one who earns less or more in the physical sense, but rather I am referring to the devoutly righteous who toil in *Torah*.

What is an example of this?

This is one whose years are only destined to be thirty years and he toiled in *Torah* and *mitzvos* from the age of ten until he dies at the age of thirty. There is another who lives until the age of eighty and began to toil in *Torah* and *mitzvos* from the age of ten until his passing at the age of eighty. Although one toiled for twenty years and the other toiled for seventy years, one may say that the reward of the one who toiled to a lesser degree should be less than the one who toiled to a greater degree.

However, this is not so. This is because the one who toiled for twenty years can say to G-d, 'Had You not taken me from the world in midlife, I would have toiled during those additional years in *Torah* and *mitzvos*. I was only able to toil for twenty years.'

This is why I say whether one toils less or more, one will receive the same reward.

What is an example of this?

*Rav Chanina* says, 'Moshe had served the Jewish people in Egypt and in the desert for forty years and he lived 120 years. *Shmuel* the Prophet lived for fifty-two years and he carried the burden of the Jewish people.

We see from the verse that *Shmuel* is equated to *Moshe*, 'Moshe, Ahron, with his *Kohanim* and *Shmuel* will call in His Name...'

*Rambam*: Every Jew can be as great as *Moshe*, our teacher. *Moshe* was the one who G-d chose to be the one to receive the *Torah* on behalf of the Jewish people and transmit it to them.

"G-d said, 'In all of My house he is faithful..."

He is the only prophet with whom G-d communicated in a wake state "face to face." As it states, "Face to face I (G-d) will speak to him..."

How is it possible that every Jew can bring about this level of accomplishment?

*Rambam* is referring to one addressing his own personal potential. Each individual is endowed with a potential which he is responsible to fully address and actualize.

Just as *Moshe* actualized his spiritual potential and was the greatest Jew who ever lived, if every Jew would do the same and fully actualize his potential, his level of accomplishment would be no less than that of *Moshe*.

It is similar to what King Solomon states in Ecclesiastes, "Sweet is the sleep of the one who eats less or more..." Although one may be endowed with lesser years, if he were to actualize them fully through toiling in *Torah*, it would be no less than the one who lived eighty years and actualized seventy of those years through *Torah* and *mitzvos*.

Seemingly, the *Midrash* is speaking about an individual whose life is short-lived because he was only endowed with a shorter lifespan. However, if one were to love lesser years because his life were cut short due to his own spiritual failing, there would be no basis for this individual to make a claim that had he lived longer years, he would have accomplished more.

"Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years these were the years of Sarah's life." Why does the verse conclude with the words "these were the years of Sarah's life"? It is obvious.

*Rashi*: "All of the years of Sarah were equally good."

*Ohr Hachaim HaKadosh*: "Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years..." indicates that Sarah passed away before her time, due to satan informing her that *Avraham* was about to slaughter her only beloved son *Yitzchak* at the *Akeidah*.

One may think that since she did not live the years that she was meant to live, her level of spiritual accomplishment would be less.

However, the verse concludes, "(these were) the years of Sarah's life," which indicates that although she passed away prematurely, G-d accredited her for all the years that she would have lived as a devout woman.

We see once again the application of the words of King Solomon, "Sweet is the sleep of the one who eats less or more..."

As long as one has fully applied himself to the best of his ability, regardless of how much he is actually able to accomplish, his reward is no less than the one who surpasses his accomplishment.

The *Torah* tells us that an animal is brought as a sacrifice by the wealthy man, and a bird is brought as a sacrifice by the needy person. When the animal is burnt on the altar, the fragrance of the meat is pleasant, whereas when the bird is burnt with its feathers it gives off a foul stench. Nevertheless, we find regarding each of these that the *Torah* concludes, "It is a pleasant fragrance to G-d."

*Gemara*: When one does more or does less, it is equally valued by G-d as long as the intent is for the sake of G-d. Again we see the application of the words of King Solomon.

## **The Unlimited Ramifications of "We will do and We will listen."**

"G-d spoke to *Moshe* saying, When you take a census - *ki sisa*, of the Children of Israel ...this shall they give...a half *shekel* of the sacred *shekel*..."

The term "*ki sisa* (census)" literally means, "to elevate." The counting of the Jewish people in this manner was an indication of their special value to G-d.

*Midrash*: "This is similar to a king who had many regal garments. The king commanded one of his subjects saying, 'Please take extra care of this particular silk garment because it is the most dear to me. It is the garment that I wore on the day of my coronation. It is attached to my loins and I pride myself with it.'

Identically G-d spoke to *Moshe* regarding the preciousness of the Jewish people. 'Take special care of the Jewish people because they are attached to My loins. Just as one's belt is attached to one's loins, identically I have attached the House of Israel to Me.'

Why are the Jewish people compared to the king's special regal garment?

G-d said, 'The Jewish people had accepted My Kingship upon themselves after the splitting of the Sea. They said, 'G-d shall reign for all eternity.' Therefore, they are the equivalent of the special garment worn by Me on the day of My coronation. Because of the abundance of their love, I descended from above to the terrestrial level with My Divine Presence to dwell amongst them. Even to dwell within tapestries made of goat's hair... "

*Gemara, Berachos*: If one recites a blessing and does not mention "the Name of G-d and His Kingship" it is not considered a valid blessing. One must say the Name of G-d "*Hashem* (YKVK)" and acknowledge that He is King by saying, "King of the Universe (*Melech HaOlam*)."

*Gemara*: If this is so, how could the first blessing of the *Amidah* be considered a valid blessing since it does not mention the word "King (*Melech*)"? It only mentions, 'the G-d of *Avraham*, the G-d of *Yitzchak*, and the G-d of *Yaakov* -*Elokei Avraham, Elokei Yitzchak, Elokei Yaakov*.

Acknowledging G-d as "the G-d of *Avraham*, the G-d of *Yitzchak*, and the G-d of *Yaakov*" is the equivalent of acknowledging Him as the King. Therefore, the first blessing of the *Amidah* meets the criteria of a valid blessing.

The first person to acknowledge G-d as "Master - *Adon*" was *Avraham* our Patriarch.

Is there a difference between the acknowledging G-d as "Master" or acknowledging Him as "King?"

Acknowledging G-d as "King" implies that the individual is a subject who is dedicated to the service of the king, whereas, the appellation of "Master" implies that the individual is a mere chattel of the master. The appellation of "King" is thus greater, since it reflects the submission, subservience, and dedication of the subject to the king and not that he is the chattel that is owned by the master.

When the Jewish people acknowledged G-d at the splitting of the Sea by declaring, "G-d shall reign for all eternity," it was a demonstration of their acceptance of G-d as their King and they as His loyal subjects forever – dedicated to His Honor and Glory.

Although there is this differentiation between "Master" and "King" we see in the *Gemara* that when *Avraham* acknowledged G-d as "Master" it was not to be only a mere chattel, but rather he accepted upon himself to be His subject and dedicate every aspect of his being to do His Will. This is reflected in the first blessing of the *Amidah* with the words "*Elokei Avraham* (G-d of *Avraham*)" which is the equivalent of King.

*Gemara, Shabbos*: When the Jewish people unequivocally accepted the *Torah* at Sinai by declaring, "*Naaseh V'nishma* – we will do and we will listen," G-d said, "Who revealed this secret to My children?"

The Jewish people expressed themselves with the same words as the angels. Their level of dedication was to the same degree and their commitment was no less than the angels who were created to do His Will.

*Gemara*: When *Moshe* ascended to heaven (to receive the *Torah*) the angels said to G-d, "Master of the Universe, why is there a mere mortal among us? Give Your glory to heaven."

We see that the Divine Presence did not remain with the angels and did not descend to be among the nations of the world, but rather, G-d descended from His Heavenly Throne to dwell among the Jewish people and not remain with the angels in heaven. It is because the Jewish people, through their declaration of acceptance, ascended to the level of angels.

*Gemara, Sanhedrin*: A *tzaddik* is greater than the ministering angels (most advanced level of angel).

*Reb Chaim of Volozhin zt"l*: It is because he ascended to the dimension of *tzaddik* through his own choices and initiatives, whereas the angel was created to be righteous and did not need to take any initiative or exercise his choice.

Because of the abundant love that the Jewish people demonstrated to G-d, He descended from above to dwell with them on the terrestrial level even among the tapestries made of goat's hair. This is because the level of spiritual accomplishment of the Jewish people, assuming the profile of angels, was greater than the angels themselves.

## Un-inhibiting One's Spirituality

At Sinai, the Jewish people had unequivocally accepted the *Torah* with the declaration of, "*Naaseh V'nishma* – we will do and we will listen." They were willing to accept the dictate of G-d without understanding its extent and its applications.

However we find, despite their declaration, G-d held the mountain over their heads and said to them, "If you accept the *Torah* it will be good. If not, you will be buried under the mountain."

If the Jewish people had already accepted the *Torah* with '*Naaseh V'Nishma*' why did G-d need to hold the mountain over their heads and give them this ultimatum?

*Midrash*: At Sinai G-d held the mountain over them and said, 'If you accept the *Torah* it will be good; if not you will be buried under the mountain.

Maybe one will say that He held the mountain over them to compel them to accept the Written Law. This cannot be so because initially when G-d offered the *Torah* to the Jewish people they exclaimed, '*Naaseh V'Nishmah*.'

Why did they accept the Written Law so readily? It is because, one does not need to toil and sacrifice for the sake of the Written Law. However, regarding the Oral Law, which contains the details of all of the *mitzvos*, the less severe and the more severe; it is something difficult and

demanding. The level of dedication and commitment that one needs to apply oneself for the sake of the Oral Law is fierce, painful, and difficult as the grave. The only one who engages in the study of the Oral Law as it is meant to be studied, is the one who truly loves G-d.

It is the one who loves G-d with all of his heart, all of his soul, and all of his assets. In *Shema* we say, 'You shall love *Hashem* your G-d with all of your heart, and all of your soul, and all of your assets....'

How do we know that this level of love relates to the study of *Torah*? The verse continues, 'It is these words that you shall place on your heart....'

The second paragraph of the *Shema* states, '...if you hearken to My commandments...to serve Him with all your heart and with all our soul...'

This is to teach us that the first paragraph does not mention any reward in this world. As we see delineated in the second paragraph, if one adheres to the commandments, 'then I will provide rain for your land in its proper time...'

In the second paragraph (which relates to the fulfillment of *mitzvos*), it is not mentioned one's 'assets.' This is to teach us that the one who has an interest in wealth and material pleasure has no relevance to the study of the Oral Law as it is meant to be studied. It is the one who willing to remove himself from material amenities, remove his eyes from sleep, and compromise on his physicality for it. Therefore, the only appropriate reward for its study (the Oral Law) is in the world to come.

The *Torah* tells us that forty days after the Jewish people had heard the first two commandments directly from G-d, "I am the Lord your G-d..." and "You shall not make for yourself graven images..." they were involved with the sin of the golden calf.

*Chazal* tell us that it was not the Jewish people themselves who initiated the golden calf, but rather it was initiated by the rabble - *eirev rav*, who came out of Egypt along with them.

Although the Jewish people did not initiate the sin of the golden calf, they did participate in it. Why were they not repulsed by this idolatry after hearing directly G-d's dictate regarding idolatry?

*Midrash*: At Sinai G-d opened the heavens and the depths of the earth for the Jewish people so that they could see that there is no other power in existence other than Him.

If so, how could they have been seduced by the golden calf?

In order for one to delve in and come upon the truth of the Oral Law and internalize all of its precepts, one must remove himself from the drives, interests, and influences of the physical world. It is a process of weaning oneself from the material and physical to become spiritualized.

The only way one is able to bring about this metamorphosis is to toil and make sacrifices in the material realm for the sake of the study of *Torah*. King Solomon states in Proverbs, "Acquire Truth (*Torah*) and do not sell it." With extreme conditioning, one ultimately will have a sense of its spiritual profoundness and unlimited *value*.

The *Torah* states regarding the bondage in Egypt, "They were subject to back-breaking labor..."

*Maharal of Prague zt"l*: Initially Pharaoh wanted to prove that the Jewish people were merely physical beings, as all other nations of the world. He therefore believed that if they were subject to hard labor, it would weaken their physicality and break them to become less prolific regarding procreation.

However, G-d demonstrated to Pharaoh that his evaluation was incorrect. When the physicality of the Jew is weakened, and his spirituality is uninhibited, he advances at an unlimited level. This is the reason that with the hard labor the Jewish people procreated at an unlimited level.

The same is true regarding the study of *Torah*. If the Jew is willing to sacrifice and compromise on his physicality, his spirituality will become less confined and will thus have greater relevance to truth, which is the *Torah* itself. As King Solomon states in Proverbs, "Acquire Truth (*Torah*) and do not sell it."

