

THE MISHKAN

A Recreation of Existence



Weekly Torah Video Series: Vayakhel / Pekudei

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Featured Video: Wisdom Endowed to the Already Wise

Transcending Ego & Recognizing Truth

1. In Heaven, Moshe was told by G-d, that his people had become corrupt (Idolatry).
2. The Egyptian rabble instigated the worship of the golden calf.
3. Moshe had allowed them to leave Egypt with the Jewish People.
4. It was within his power to have stopped them from leaving; he did not.
5. There was a slight claim against Moshe for his endorsement.
6. When Moshe saw the golden calf he smashed the tablets at the foot of the mountain.
7. The breaking of the Tablets was an annulment of the relationship with G-d.
8. It was a retroactive revocation.
9. Moshe chose this location to break the Tablets because that was exactly where they had unequivocally accepted the Torah.
10. Moshe supplicated G-D for forgiveness.
11. G-d offered Moshe the opportunity to become the beginning of a new Jewish People.
12. Moshe responded: If a nation cannot stand on the merit of the 3 Holy Patriarchs, it could not stand on the merit of one.
13. Moshe's humility: Knowing G-d wanted His glory to be through the descendants of the Patriarchs.

An Intense Drive Supersedes Barriers

1. Enormous wealth, given by the Jewish people, was needed to build the Mishkan.
2. Midrash: The least amount of wealth taken out of Egypt was 10 pack animals laden with gold & silver.
3. The spoils of the sea were greater than the spoils of Egypt.
4. Ohr Ha Chaim Hakadosh: 2 classifications of people participated in building the Mishkan.
5. Those inspired by their hearts & those of generous spirit.
6. The "inspired by their hearts" are acclaimed as men of stature; not so- "the generous of spirit."
7. The individual who is inspired gives beyond his means – he is taken by the objective.
8. The one motivated by generosity gives to the point where it does not infringe on him personally.
9. Avraham, our Patriarch, rose early to go to the Akeida and hitched his own donkey.
10. He was 137 years old and had servants; why prepare his own donkey for the trek?
11. Bilaam, prophet of the nations – pompous, self-centered, & arrogant, rose early and hitched his donkey to curse the Jewish people.
12. Midrash: Intense love and rabid hate disrupt protocol.
13. When consumed with love or hate, all that exists, despite who you are, is the objective to be addressed.

Definitive Law As Catapult

1. Moshe assembles the entire Jewish People to teach the laws of Shabbos.
2. Midrash: G-d says, "Gather large assemblies of Jews – so that future generations will learn from you to assemble large assemblies of Jews to teach them what is forbidden and what is permitted – so that I should be extolled among my children."
3. Why? It is possible to say that large numbers of Jews studying Torah is a sanctification of G-d?
4. It appears the Jews are actually praising G-d.
5. There is a positive Commandment to love G-d with all your heart, soul, and assets.
6. How does one achieve this level of love?
7. Gemarah: One comes to love G-d through the dissemination of Torah to students and engaging in its subject matter.
8. One can only have a true sense of G-d through the study of Torah and its dissemination.
9. When taught the definitive law of the forbidden and permitted, it touches the Jew so causing him to extol G-d.

Weekly Torah Commentaries Series: Vayakhel / Pekudei

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The Objective of One's Existence

"Moshe assembled the entire assembly of the Children of Israel and said to them, 'These are the things that Hashem commanded to do.'"

Midrash: Our Rabbis who are experts in homilies (*aggadita*) say, 'There is no portion in the entire Torah that begins with the word "Vayakhel" other than this portion.'

G-d said to Moshe, "Gather large assemblies of Jews and lecture before them in a public setting the laws of *Shabbos* so that future generations may learn from you to gather large assemblies of Jews each *Shabbos* in the study halls to learn and to rule on the laws that pertain to what is 'forbidden' and what is 'permitted'. You shall do this, so that My Great Name shall be extolled among My children."

The purpose of assembling and lecturing to large assemblies of Jews is not merely for the sake of the study of *Torah*, to become proficient in its laws, but

rather to ultimately bring glory to G-d's Name so that He should be extolled by His children.

What is the relevance between the study of laws that pertain to what is forbidden and permitted to extolling G-d?

Midrash: "From here it is learned, Moshe established for the Jewish people that they should study the laws of *Pesach* on *Pesach*, the laws of *Atzeres* on *Atzeres*, the laws of *Sukkos* on *Sukkos*."

Moshe said to the Jewish people, 'If you will follow this prescription, then G-d will consider it as if you coronate Him in this world and that you attest to His existence.'"

Gemara: "I (G-d) have created the evil inclination and the *Torah* as its antidote." The only antidote for the evil inclination is the *Torah* itself. One cannot succeed in diminishing, dispelling, and incapacitating his inclination without the Divine Assistance that he is given through the study of *Torah*.

This is because man is a physical being who processes and understands everything through his physical senses and environment. Since he is bound in every respect to the physical, one does not have the ability to independently supersede and rise above the confines of his material framework in order to be able to understand and internalize spiritual matters.

The evil inclination is something that is part of the physical context in which man is bound. It obscures truth and prevents man from being able to sense spirituality. This is what is meant by the verse in the *Torah*, "Man is evil from the moment he is cast from his mother's womb."

How can one undermine and evade this inclination which is a part of man's natural essence?

Gemara: Only through the study of *Torah* can one have relevance to the spiritual and be able to override the physical system in which he was born. When one studies *Torah*, it brings about a spiritualization so that he can have a sense for truth.

King Solomon in Proverbs: '*Neir mitzvah v'Torah ohr* (the *mitzvah* is the fuel and the *Torah* is the light/illumination)."

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: It is only when the *Torah* is studied for its own sake (*l'shmah*), that it has the capacity to act as an antidote against the evil inclination and protects the individual from its influence.

However, the *Torah* that is studied not for its own sake (*shelo l'shmah*) will not bring about this effect. Why is this so?

Proverbs: "It brings length of days to the right, and to the left it brings wealth and honor..."

Gemara: When one who engages in *Torah* study and *mitzvah* performance for the sake of G-d (*l'shmah*), which is the equivalent of the "right," he will merit length of days, which is eternity of the World to Come.

On the other hand, the one who studies *Torah* with an ulterior motive is the equivalent of the "left" because it is not being studied with the proper intent. This will bring wealth and honor.

One who engages in *Torah* and *mitzvos* for the sake of G-d does not take into consideration his own interests and desires, but rather, he focuses on doing the Will of G-d. This is the reason that studying *Torah* for its own sake causes a length of days and the spiritualization of the individual.

Whereas if one has an ulterior motive, which is rooted in his own self interest, he is physicalizing the *Torah* as a means to achieve his own interests. Thus, this study of *Torah* is limited to the physical, which is wealth and honor. Therefore, this form of *Torah* study only reinforces the evil inclination rather than undermine it.

Thus *Moshe* was commanded by G-d to gather the *Jewish* people in large assemblies so that they could be able to be spiritualized through the study of *Torah* so that they could recognize His Name and extol Him.

One's Need for Ongoing Advocacy

Midrash: G-d said to the *Jewish* people, 'Observe My *Mitzvos* and My Statutes.' Why? Because the reward for performing a *mitzvah* is a *mitzvah* and the consequence of a sin is another sin.

Ben Azai: This is the concept of "*mitzvah goreres mitzvah*" and "*aveira goreres aveira*" (a *mitzvah* encourages another *mitzvah* and a transgression encourages another transgression.)

Reb Meir: 'For every *mitzvah* that one performs, G-d sends an angel to protect him.'

Mishna in Ethics of our Fathers: When one performs a *mitzvah*, he creates an angel that will be his advocate at the time of judgment.

We see from the words of the *Midrash* that in addition to being an advocate, the angel that one creates through the performance of a *mitzvah* performance also protects him.

Midrash: "If one performs one *mitzvah*, he receives one angel. If he performs many *mitzvos*, he receives many angels to protect him.

Psalms: "The angels were commanded to protect you..."

This is referring to the angels that one creates for himself through the performance of *mitzvos* that serve not only as advocates but also as protectors.

In what context do these angels “protect” the individual who created them?

Gemara: When one walks into a courtyard that will lead to a public domain, it is the equivalent of walking into a courtroom. When one walks into the market, it is the equivalent of going before a judge who will pronounce a judgment of execution.

Since man is not perfect, he is continuously subject to prosecution due to the Attribute of Justice. The Attribute of Justice dictates that if one sins, he must be punished. In order for one to be protected from this prosecution, one needs to have G-d’s Mercy, which one merits due to his own spiritual endeavors.

When one is engaged in *mitzvos*, he creates angels who will be his advocates against the continuous prosecution due to his spiritual failings. In essence, the angels that one creates through *mitzvah* performance will not only be advocates on the ultimate Day of Judgment when one passes away, but they also protect the individual all the days of his life against prosecution.

Not only does the performance of a *mitzvah* bring about another *mitzvah* (*mitzvah goreret mitzvah*), it also brings about an angel that protects the individual.

Midrash: “In addition to meriting angels for protection, if one is engaged in many *mitzvos*, he creates for himself a ‘good name.’

We find that an individual is identified by three names – the name that his parents gave him, one that he is called by others, and one that he acquires for himself.

The greatest of the three is the one that he creates for himself as it states in Ecclesiastes, ‘Better is a good name from the most fragrant oil and better is the day of one’s death than the day of one’s birth.’

King Solomon explains that when one is born, one does not know how the child will develop. (Will he be good or will he be evil?) However, when one

passes away with a good name, people will come to give their proper last respects to him.”

The essence of a Jew is his spirituality. If his spirituality is dormant, his physicality will become more prominent and dominate the individual. However, if one performs *mitzvos*, he will strengthen and empower his spirituality to allow it to develop and dominate his physicality.

The “good name” that one creates for himself is based on the advancement of his spirituality, which he brings about through his *mitzvah* performance. The advancement of one’s spirituality is the objective of one coming into the world. In fact, this is the objective that the angel addresses with the unborn fetus in utero, when he is taught the entire Torah.

The Devoutly Live with Unswerving Faith

“See, Hashem has proclaimed by name, *Betzalel* son of *Uri* son of *Chur*, of the tribe of *Yehudah*...”

Moshe told the Jewish people that the only one qualified to oversee the building of the *Mishkan* was *Betzalel*.

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

What was the special charm?

Midrash: G-d explained in detail to *Moshe* every aspect of the building of the *Mishkan* and the formation of its vessels. ‘You should see the form as it was shown...’

Moshe initially believed that since he was being instructed in such detail that he was to be the one to build the *Mishkan* as the pasuk states, ‘**You** should make the beams...**You** should make the altar....**You** should make the laver.’

Moshe asked G-d, ‘Who shall be the one to build the *Mishkan*?’

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

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

The Jewish people began to murmur saying, 'Is it possible that G-d told *Moshe* that *Betzalel* should be the one to build the *Mishkan*? Rather, it must be *Moshe's* own choice to appoint *Betzalel* to do so. It is because he is *Moshe's* relative. *Moshe* is the king, *Aaron* his brother is the High Priest, *Aaron's* sons are the assistant priests, and the children of *Kehas* will carry the *Mishkan*. It is all so that *Moshe* and his family should have control over the *Mishkan*. This is the reason *Betzalel* was chosen by him.' (It was thought to be nepotism.)

Moshe said to them, 'There is nothing that I do of my own choice. It is only the Will of G-d that I do.'

Moshe therefore revealed to them how *Betzalel* was endowed with special and unique wisdom that no one else possessed. It was because of this that *Betzalel* found charm in the eyes of G-d and in the eyes of man. The Jewish people were thus satisfied with *Moshe's* response.

After all the Jewish people had witnessed that *Moshe* had done on their behalf, how is it possible that there would be murmurings amongst them regarding the building of the *Mishkan*? How could they believe that *Moshe's* decisions regarding the *Mishkan* were his own and not the directive of G-d?

The *Torah* tells us that *Moshe* had ascended to heaven for forty days and forty nights to receive the *Torah* on behalf of the Jewish people. After the Jewish people sinned with the golden calf, *Moshe* again ascended to heaven to supplicate G-d on their behalf so that they should not be destroyed.

He returned to the Jewish people with the second set of Tablets which indicated that the Jewish people were fully reinstated by G-d due to *Moshe's* supplications. The *Torah* tells us that *Moshe* needed to wear a special face covering because he radiated such a level of holiness that no one could gaze upon him.

Despite all this, when *Moshe* explained to them that G-d instructed him that *Betzalel* will be the one to build the *Mishkan* so that the Divine Presence may dwell in their midst, the Jewish people suspected him of nepotism. Their level of distrust of *Moshe* is something that is difficult to understand.

It was only after they appreciated *Betzalel's* dimension of being and capacity, that he was endowed with special Divine wisdom, that they believed *Moshe*. In fact, the basis to believe *Moshe* was based on their own level of satisfaction in understanding the truth.

Although *Moshe* demonstrated to the Jewish people that *Betzalel* was the most qualified to oversee the building of the *Mishkan*, the suspicion of nepotism was not completely removed from the minds of the Jewish people.

The suspicion of the Jewish people that existed before they were convinced of *Betzalel's* qualifications was no different than that of *Korach*. *Korach* sought to usurp *Moshe's* authority with the same claim that *Moshe's* choice of *Aaron* as the High Priest was nepotism.

Regarding *Korach's* claim, the Jewish people had no answer or response. They thus were open to embrace *Korach's* perception of *Moshe*.

Had the Jewish people not been satisfied with absolute clarity that *Betzalel* was truly unique and the only one qualified to build the *Mishkan*, they would have remained with the claim of nepotism.

Korach, understanding and appreciating that the seeds of the suspicion of nepotism were already planted in the minds of the Jewish people, took advantage of this weakness and attempted to usurp *Moshe's* authority. It was only after *Korach* and his community were ultimately swallowed up by the earth did the Jewish people finally accept the word of *Moshe* to be synonymous with the Word of G-d.

Although the Jewish people had witnessed G-d saying to *Moshe*, "Tell them such and such..." they did not have sufficient faith.

When witnessing events that cannot be understood, how does one process them?

The Gemara cites the verse of the Prophet, "The devoutly righteous with his faith, lives..." The devoutly righteous, because of their dimension of faith, never question.

Unlike the Jewish people who needed *Moshe* to demonstrate *Betzalel's* qualifications, the *tzaddik* does not need to receive answers because he has total faith in G-d.

One's Expression, an Indication of One's Intent

The Princes of Israel donated the precious stones (*avnei shoham and avnei miluim*) that were used on the *Ephod* and in the breastplate that were worn by the High Priest.

When the *Torah* writes the word "Princes (*Niseeim*)", regarding the building of the *Mishkan*, it is written in a deleted form. The letter "yud", which reflects the plural in the word "*Niseeim*", is omitted.

Midrash: "Rav Nason says, 'When it came to inaugurating the *Mishkan*, the Princes were the first to participate with their offerings and gifts. However, regarding the construction of the *Mishkan*, the Princes were the last to participate. They said, 'Let the Jewish people participate in the building of the *Mishkan* to the extent that they can, and whatever remains unfinished we will complete.'

The Jewish people actually provided all of the materials that were needed for the building of the *Mishkan*. The Princes asked, 'If all the materials were already provided, what is there left for us to do?' They therefore provided the precious stones.

However, when it was time to inaugurate the *Mishkan*, the Princes did not repeat their mistake, which was rooted in their laziness, by waiting to see what was left for them to do. They were thus the first to provide their offerings and gifts."

When the *Torah* enumerates the materials that were needed for the building of the *Mishkan*, it lists them in descending order of preciousness and value, beginning with "gold, silver, and copper..."

However, the list concludes with, "the *shoham* stones and the stones for the setting for the *Ephod* and the Breastplate." These were precious colored gems that had even greater in value than gold and silver.

Why are the *avnei shoham* and *avnei miluim* mentioned last if they are the most valuable?

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: Although the intrinsic material value of the *avnei shoham* and *avnei miluim* was greater than gold and silver, they are mentioned last because the intent behind the giving of the Princes was deficient. Thus, the innate spiritual value was the least of all that was donated to the *Mishkan*.

The order in which the *Torah* enumerates the materials needed for the *Mishkan* not only reflects the intrinsic material value but also how G-d values the materials, which is based on the intent of the individuals.

The *Torah* tells us that when *Avraham* sent *Eliezer* to seek out the appropriate wife for *Yitzchak* to be the future Matriarch of the Jewish people, "The servant said to him (*Avraham*), 'Perhaps (*ulie*) the woman shall not wish to follow me to this land...'"

Chazal explain that the *Torah* writes the word "perhaps (*ulie*)" in its deficient form, with the letter "vav" deleted, to indicate *Eliezer's* question was based on his personal conflict of interest. *Eliezer* had a daughter who was devoutly righteous, and he believed that perhaps she would be suitable to be *Yitzchak's* wife, the future Matriarch.

Avraham understood the basis for *Eliezer's* question (*ulie*), was his own personal conflict of interest. He had only asked the question because he believed that his own daughter was qualified to be the wife of *Yitzchak*.

Avraham said to *Eliezer*, "It is not possible for your daughter to marry my son because you come from a cursed stock and I come from a blessed stock. Something that is cursed cannot cleave to something that is blessed."

We see that *Eliezer's* conflict of interest manifested itself in his question. Similarly, the Princes because of their laziness had devised a calculation that they

would only contribute what the Jewish people were not able to contribute.

Understanding that the building of the *Mishkan* was the ultimate spiritual opportunity, to provide a location for the Divine Presence, the Princes should have been motivated to be the first to participate. However, because of their laziness, they deluded themselves by saying that they would complete what the Jewish people would not complete.

The *Torah* tells us that *Moshe* did not participate in the building of the *Mishkan*; rather he allowed the Jewish people to have the merit to build it.

Midrash: "G-d saw that *Moshe* was in a melancholy state. He asked, 'Why are you melancholy?' *Moshe* replied, 'I did not participate in the building of the *Mishkan*.'

G-d asked, 'Why did you not participate in the building of the *Mishkan*?' *Moshe* answered, 'I wanted to give the opportunity to the Jewish people to build it and whatever they could not complete, I would.'

G-d said, 'I swear on your life that your contribution shall be greater than theirs. You shall be the one to erect the *Mishkan*.'"

Based on the words of the *Midrash*, *Moshe* like the Princes, chose to wait until the end to participate in the building of the *Mishkan*. However, G-d only reprimanded the Princes and extolled *Moshe* for his non-participation. Why is this so?

Moshe was the most humble person who ever lived. He was completely negated to G-d as the *Torah* states, "What are we (*Nachnu Mah*)..."

If this is so, when *Moshe* assumed his position of not participating in the *Mishkan*, there was no self-interest whatsoever regarding his waiting to see what was needed to complete the *Mishkan*.

In contrast, when the Princes delayed, it was due to their own self-interest, which caused them to not have sufficient appreciation for the building of the *Mishkan*. Therefore, when *Moshe* did not participate initially, it was truly to allow the Jewish people to have the spiritual opportunity. This was

rooted in *Moshe*'s exceptional humility and thus was praiseworthy.

Moshe's Exceptional Love of G-d (From Ki Sisa)

"...And now allow Me. Let My wrath flare up against them and I shall annihilate them; and I shall make you a great nation." G-d said this to *Moshe* after the Jewish people sinned with the golden calf.

Rashi cites *Chazal* who explain that because G-d said to *Moshe*, "Allow Me" regarding the destruction of the Jewish people, *Moshe* understood that if he were to sufficiently plead on their behalf with prayer, there was a possibility that he could nullify the decree by evoking the Attribute of Mercy.

Moshe said to G-d, "And now if You would but forgive their sin! – But if not, obliterate me now from this book that You have written (*Torah*)."

Sforno: "What is the meaning of 'Obliterate me now from this book...'"?

Moshe said to G-d, 'If You choose not to forgive their sin, then eliminate all of my spiritual merits and give them to the Jewish people.'

Rambam: The classification of "tzaddik" is one whose merits/accomplishments outweigh his sins. The classification of "rasha" is one whose sins outweigh his merits/accomplishments.

Rambam: This evaluation by G-d is qualitative and not quantitative. It is based on "Divine understanding" that cannot be fathomed by the mortal mind.

Since the Jewish people had sinned with the golden calf, which was a grave sin on the most extreme level, their classification had become "evil." In order to counter this evaluation, *Moshe* said to G-d to take all of his spiritual merits and accomplishments and accredit them to the Jewish people so as to sway the evaluation to the positive. As a result of this, they would not be destroyed.

However, after G-d would transfer *Moshe*'s spiritual record to the Jewish people, he would no longer be mentioned in the *Torah* since he would have forfeited his spiritual standing. *Moshe* was thus

willing to forgo all of his life's accomplishments for the sake of the Jewish people. It is the ultimate demonstration of his love for his fellow Jew, "ahavas Yisrael," that Moshe was willing to forgo his share in eternity for the sake of the survival of the Jewish people.

Midrash: "Why does the *Torah* juxtapose the death of the sons of *Aaron* to the portion of *Yom Kippur*? It is to teach us that just as *Yom Kippur* atones for sin, so too does the death of the devoutly righteous atone for the sins of the Jewish people."

When G-d decides to take the *tzaddik*, G-d does not consult with him if he wishes to be taken at that particular time in order to atone for the sins of the generation. Why would the *tzaddik* agree to have his life taken at that moment or being cut short for the sake of atoning for the sins of the generation?

There is a positive commandment which is mentioned in the *Shema*, "To love *Hashem* your G-d with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your assets...."

Gemara: "With all of your soul" teaches us that one must be willing to give his life for the sake of his love of G-d. There are certain situations which may arise such as being faced with committing one of the three cardinal sins or transgressing a custom during a time when there is a concerted effort to uproot Judaism, when a Jew is obligated to forfeit his life rather than transgressing. The basis for the Jew sacrificing his life in these instances is a demonstration of one's love for G-d.

When one sacrifices his life in order to sanctify G-d's Name, it is the ultimate expression of love for G-d. The *tzaddik* chooses to be devoutly righteous because of his exceptional love for G-d. He is thus willing to forfeit his life for the sake of G-d at any time.

The *tzaddik* understands that if he were to sacrifice his life for the sake of atonement for the generation, it would be a demonstration of his love for his fellow Jew, which is in itself the ultimate demonstration of his love for G-d.

Moshe negated himself completely to G-d and His Glory. He understood that G-d's Glory was dependent on the continued existence of the Jewish people. If they were to be destroyed, there would no longer be a representation of G-d in existence since they are the only people qualified to perfect existence through the study and performance of *Torah*.

If there would be no Jewish people, it would be the ultimate desecration of G-d's Name, and existence would come to an end because "there is no King without a people."

Therefore, *Moshe* was willing to forfeit his eternity because of his love for G-d. The Jewish people were only a means to glorify Him. G-d refers to the Jewish people as "My firstborn son." *Moshe* was willing to forfeit his life for the Jewish people because he understood what they mean to Him.

