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MISHKAN:

G-d's Preference To Dwell On The Terrestrial

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Shemini

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Does G-d Prefer to Dwell on the Terrestrial with Man?

1. Aaron and his sons were installed as *Kohanim* on the eighth day.
2. The *Mishkan* assumed permanent status on the eighth day, the first of *Nisan*.
3. An opinion in the *Gemara*: the world was created in the month of *Nisan*.
4. *Gemara*: G-d's joy on the eighth day was the equivalent to the day of creation.
5. The initial intent of creation was for G-d to dwell on the terrestrial with man – not in heaven with the angels.
6. After *Adam* ate of the tree of knowledge and putrefied himself & all existence, G-d ascended from the terrestrial.
7. After the sin of the golden calf, G-d said to *Moshe* "Make for me a sanctuary so that I shall dwell in your midst."
8. The intent of creation came to be on the eighth day.
9. G-d's joy was no less than his joy before the sin of *Adam*.
10. *Shalah Hakadosh*: Before the sin of *Adam*, *Adam's* vestment to serve G-d was his body.
11. After eating of the Fruit of The Tree, the body became putrefied thus invalidating it as a vestment.
12. Aaron & his sons were installed as *Kohanim* on the first day of *Nisan* in their priestly vestments to qualify their service.

When One's Demise Has Greater Value Than Life

1. *Nadav* and *Avihu* were struck down by G-d on the eighth day of the *Mishkan's* inauguration.
2. Either they transgressed when they officiated after drinking wine, or had ruled without consulting *Moshe*.
3. *Moshe* said to Aaron: G-d told me that I will be sanctified with those who are closest to me.
4. "I had thought it was going to be me or you, now that they were chosen indicates that they are greater than us."
5. This was the only sin of their lives; The sanctification of G-d, even when one is slightly flawed, doesn't escape His retribution.
6. Aaron remained silent.
7. *Seforno*: He was consoled knowing their death was a sanctification of G-d's Name.
8. At Sinai, *Nadav*, *Avihu* and the Elders gazed directly at the Divine Presence.
9. They deserved to die at that moment; G-d delayed their death so not to undermine the joy of the giving of the Torah with tragedy.
10. The Elders died at a later date when the Jews desired meat.
11. *Nadav*, *Avihu* and the Elders were liable for the same disrespect, yet the death of Aaron's sons was a sanctification of G-d, but the Elders' was not.



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The Detoxification of the Body & Soul

1. The *Torah* classifies the *kosher* and *non-kosher* species.
2. The Hebrew term for undomestic species is *chaya*.
3. The *Torah* presents the permitted species which include the domestic as *chaya*.
4. *Midrash*: "*chaya*" is an expression of life (*chayim*: the Jewish people are attached to G-d), it is essential they should be spiritually alive.
5. "G-d separated them from impurity & proscribed to them *mitzvos*."
6. *Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh*: Observing negative commandments is to wean the person from spiritual impurities.
7. The value of positive commandments is to introduce illumination into one's soul.

Where Was The ROI On Moshe's Investment

1. *Moshe* tells *Aaron* he was chosen by G-d to be High Priest.
2. *Midrash*: *Aaron* asks: "Since you toiled for the *Mishkan*, you should be the High Priest."
3. Why ask if *Moshe* was established as the irrefutable spokesman of G-d at *Sinai*?
4. Those instructed to remove the remains of *Nadav* & *Avihu* from the sanctuary became contaminated.
5. Once contaminated, one can not participate in the Pascal Lamb.
6. In the second year they were in the desert the Jews brought a Pascal Lamb; those contaminated did not.
7. They complained to *Moshe*: "Why should we be minimized?"
8. *Sephorno*: Why were they penalized for doing a *mitzvah* removing human remains from sanctuary?
9. Their question was valid: G-d responded there is a makeup Pascal Lamb.
10. *Aaron's* question to *Moshe* was similar: If *Moshe* toiled for the *Mishkan*, should not The High Priesthood be his?

Weekly Video: Assuming The Capacity for G-d's Presence

Parsha Upfront: Why The "Animal" For Atonement

Weekly Torah Commentaries Series: Shemini



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The Jewish People, the Descendants of Yaakov

“It was on the eighth day...” On the eighth day of the inauguration of the *Mishkan*, Aaron and his sons were installed to be the *Kohanim* (Priests).

Midrash: “The *tzaddik* will sprout like the palm tree... they are planted in the house of G-d...” (Psalms) Who is the *tzaddik* who will sprout? It is Aaron as it states, “The staff of Aaron of the house of Levy blossomed.” (The blossoming of the staff of Aaron indicated that the Priesthood rightfully belonged to Aaron and his children).

When other trees are planted, they grow on their own in a straight (upward) direction; however, when the palm tree is planted its roots spread in all directions. Aaron planted and he had roots that spread in every direction. These roots were his children, who were all *tzaddikim*...”

“Yaakov is a rope to his inheritance...” (*Devarim*)

Sforno: “Yaakov and his children will be G-d’s subjects. His piety will extend beyond himself to his children like the rope, unlike the nations of the world, that although you may find among them one who is devoutly pious, it will not repeat itself by his children.”

If the non-Jew chooses to be righteous, it is an isolated incident that pertains only to that person. His state of piety is not indicative of his essence and thus cannot be passed on to his line. *Yaakov*, our Patriarch was devoutly righteous and was the father of the twelve tribes. He is compared by the *Torah* to a “rope” that extends beyond its beginning. The Jewish people descend from *Yaakov* our Patriarch and thus possess his essence. When a Jew chooses to be righteous, it has relevance to his essence, which reflects his forefather.

Just as the roots of the palm tree spread in all directions and may be distant from the tree, they are nevertheless attached to the tree. So too Aaron's children; although they are independent of their father, they reflect his righteousness. Just as Aaron was a *tzaddik* so too were his children.

Midrash: "It was on the eighth day..." When *Moshe* was at the burning bush, G-d said to him, "And now I (G-d) shall dispatch you to Pharaoh." *Moshe* argued with G-d because he felt that his older brother Aaron was no less qualified than himself. He suggested that G-d send Aaron as His agent.

"Please... send whomever You will send!" G-d responded "I swear on your life that because you have resisted being appointed as My agent now, when the time will come for the *Mishkan* to be erected, you will believe that you are the one qualified to be the High Priest; however, to your surprise, I will tell you to summon Aaron to officiate. As it states, "It was on the eighth day, *Moshe* summoned Aaron and his sons..."

Gemara: When Aaron married his wife, she is identified as "*Elisheva* the daughter of *Aminadav* the sister of *Nachshon*."

Midrash: Why were Aaron's children so special and *Moshe's* children were not? It is because *Elisheva*, the wife of Aaron was the sister of *Nachshon*, who was the prince of the tribe of Judah, who was special. We learn from this that one should look upon the brothers of the prospective wife before marriage because most of one's children assume the characteristics of the brothers of the mother.

In contrast, *Moshe's* wife *Tzipora* was a convert; therefore his children were not as special. Had *Moshe* not failed at the burning bush and accepted G-d's agency his children would have been qualified to be the *Kohanim* despite the pedigree of their mother.

It is clear that the innate characteristics of *Moshe's* or *Aaron's* children are unrelated to qualify them as *Kohanim*. According to Jewish law, even if a *Kohen* is classified as evil, when he blesses the congregation as a *Kohen*, his blessing has value. Why is this so?

It is because the *Kohen* is only a conduit for G-d's blessing as it states in "And I (G-d) will bless them..." The pedigree of the mother is not relevant for one to be an effective *Kohen*. He only needs to be from the line of Aaron to qualify to be the conduit of blessing.

The sons of Aaron were qualified to be *Kohanim* not because they were special in their own right, but rather because they were the sons of Aaron. Therefore, if *Moshe* would have not failed at the burning bush, his children would have been qualified to be *Kohanim* because they would have been the sons of their father *Moshe*. Then they would have been the conduit of blessing.

G-d, the All Just

The *Torah* tells us that on the eighth day of the inauguration of the *Mishkan* the Divine Presence entered into the *Mishkan*. It expressed itself as fire that consumed the offerings. When the Jewish people witnessed the Divine Presence coming upon the altar they sang G-d's Praises and prostrated themselves. At that moment, *Nadav* and *Avihu*, the sons of Aaron brought forth fire pans with incense, which was considered sinful.

"A fire came forth from G-d and consumed them, and they died before *Hashem*. *Moshe* said to Aaron: Of this did *Hashem* speak, saying, 'I will be sanctified through those who are nearest to Me, thus I will be honored before the entire people.' Aaron remained silent."

Midrash: Where did G-d tell *Moshe* that He would be sanctified through those who are "nearest to Me?" It states, "I will be sanctified with My own Glory..." The verse should not be read, "I will sanctified with My Glory..." but rather it should be read, "I will be sanctified through those who Honor Me..."

Moshe said to Aaron, "Aaron my brother, I knew that His House would be sanctified through those who are closest to Him. Initially I had thought it would be either me or you to bring about this sanctification through our death. However, after the death of *Nadav* and *Avihu* I understand that they are greater than we are.

What is the meaning of "I will be sanctified through those who Honor Me?" When G-d brings judgment upon the righteous, He becomes revered, elevated, and extolled..."

Chazal: *Moshe* was the spiritual equivalent of the entire Jewish people. Aaron was also considered to be as great as *Moshe* in a certain context. How is it possible that the death of *Nadav* and *Avihu* brought

about a greater sanctification of G-d's Name than *Moshe* or Aaron who both achieved the ultimate level of holiness?

Gemara: If one were to say that G-d overlooks and does not evaluate and judge every aspect of one's personal record, he deserves that his life should be compromised.

Meshech Chochmah: Regardless of how special one may be, G-d does not overlook any infraction (as small as it may be), because this would be a compromise in justice.

Chazal: The alien fire that was brought by *Nadav* and *Avihu* was the only sin that they had ever committed in their lives. By striking them down before the entire Jewish people, G-d was sanctified and extolled that He is the True Judge. It was demonstrated that even the most nearly perfect do not escape His Justice. *Nadav* and *Avihu* were thus the most qualified for this display of Justice and not *Moshe* and Aaron. Why was this so?

The desecration of G-d's Name may come about as a result of the Torah being violated or most often through the way an event or a behavior is perceived. Although the perception may have not bearing on the reality, if one is able to draw something negative from what is taking place which does not honor G-d, then it is a desecration of His Name.

Moshe was the greatest and holiest Jew who ever lived. However, he was not qualified to be the High Priest because of his obstinacy at the burning bush. He was thus disqualified to be the *Kohen*. *Moshe*, as a person was seen by the Jewish people as one who was not qualified for the Priesthood because he possessed a serious flaw.

Aaron, although he was chosen to be the High Priest, participated in the Golden Calf, which was the most serious failing of the Jewish people. If G-d had chosen *Moshe* or Aaron to be the one to sanctify His Name at the time of the inauguration of the *Mishkan*, the Jewish people would have believed that they deserved to die because of their serious spiritual failings.

Nadav and *Avihu*, on the other hand, were truly pure. Their only failing was that they brought the strange fire without consulting with *Moshe*. Seemingly, their spiritual failing was insignificant. Nevertheless, G-d's Divine Retribution was displayed to punish them

before the entire Jewish people. Their death brought about the greatest sanctification of His Name because G-d is exacting in His judgment even for the slightest infraction. Thus, they were more qualified in this context than *Moshe* and Aaron to bring about the sanctification of G-d's Name.

The desecration or sanctification of G-d's Name is based upon perception and not necessarily upon reality. Since the Jewish people are G-d's chosen people, they are His representation in existence. When a Jew adheres to the Torah and acts appropriately, he will bring about a sanctification of G-d's Name. On the other hand, if a Jew's behavior is perceived as inappropriate, although it may be a misperception, it will be classified as a desecration of G-d's Name.

The Human Being, the Equivalent of an Animal

In order for Aaron to be inaugurated as the High Priest, he needed to bring a calf as a sin offering to atone for his participation in the sin of the Golden Calf. In addition, Aaron brought a goat as a sin offering on behalf of the Jewish people to atone for their participation in idolatry.

Midrash: G-d had taken an oath that the world must function within the context of Justice.

Gemara: If one were to say that G-d overlooks and does not evaluate and judge every detail of one's behavior, his life should be compromised.

If this is so, then if one were to sin, he should be judged for death and not be allowed to bring a sacrifice in his stead for atonement.

Talmud Yerushalmi: They consulted with Prophecy (*Nevuah*): "What should be the fate of the sinner?" Prophecy responded, "The life of the sinner should be taken." They then asked G-d, "If one were to sin, what should be done with him? G-d responded, "He should bring a sacrifice and be atoned."

Seemingly, the bringing of a sacrifice for atonement contradicts the principle of justice.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: It seems that if one's life would be taken for the sin that he transgressed, it would actually be a miscarriage of justice because

when one sins, it is not within the context of the behavior of a rational human being.

Zohar: A person does not sin unless he is overtaken by a spirit of irrationality (*ruach shtus*). When one sins, he is not sinning as a person with an intellect (as an adam), but rather as an unintelligible creature, the equivalent of an animal.

However, after one introspects and appreciates the wrong that he has done and repents, he assumes the status of a person (adam who has an intellect). When one sins, it is actually the animal aspect of the human being that has sinned and not the person. Therefore, it would be unjust to kill a person for the sin was committed by an animal.

After one repents he brings an animal as a sacrifice in order to atone for the sin that was committed by the animal. Although G-d is willing to accept the sacrifice in his stead, the sinner must appreciate that it is he who should have been slaughtered and burnt for the transgression. It is only because he has risen from the status of the animal to the status of the human being, due to his repentance, that he is able to bring the sacrifice in his place as atonement.

This is the understanding of the verse in Psalms, "Man together with the animal, G-d will assist." If one employs his intellect to understand the wrong that was committed due to his animalistic nature, then G-d will assist him."

Gemara: When one brings a sacrifice it must be predicated on repentance. If one should bring a sacrifice that is not predicated on repentance, it is considered to be abominable to G-d as it states, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination."

Gemara: The "signet of G-d is Truth." If one brings a sacrifice and does not repent, his offering has no relevance to atonement. It is something that is unacceptable because the individual has retained his animal profile. The act of bringing the sacrifice without predicated it on repentance is contrary to the characteristic of Truth and Justice.

The Spiritual Composition of the Jewish People

"It was on the eighth day, *Moshe* summoned Aaron and his sons..."

Midrash: There is a calling for greatness (when one is elevated). As it states, "*Moshe* called to Aaron (to become the High Priest). *Moshe* said to Aaron, "G-d has said to me that I should install you as the High Priest. Aaron responded, "You have toiled for the building of the *Mishkan*, and I should be made the High Priest?"

It is interesting to note that Aaron did not respond to *Moshe* by mentioning that he was G-d's spokesman to communicate or that he was the most holy Jew, but rather, Aaron understood that *Moshe* should be the High Priest because he had "toiled for the building of the *Mishkan*." *Moshe's* relevance and attachment to the *Mishkan* was greater than his.

Midrash: *Moshe* said to Aaron, "I swear by your life! Although you have been appointed to be the High Priest, I regard it as if it were I. Just as you rejoiced when I was chosen to be the Redeemer (although *Moshe* was the younger brother), so too do I rejoice in your advancement. As the Torah states, "G-d said to *Moshe*, 'When Aaron will be informed of your elevation, he will come out to greet you in the desert and he will see you and have joy in his heart.'"

What relevance does Aaron's joy of the fact that *Moshe* was chosen as the Redeemer have to do with *Moshe's* rejoicing that Aaron was chosen to be the High Priest?

There is a positive commandment to "love your fellow as you love yourself."

Tomer Devorah: Just as the body is comprised of limbs and organs that come together to make it complete, so too is the Jewish people. Although they are separate individuals, they are the equivalent of one body. Every Jew is a spiritual component within the Jewish people with a specific function and purpose, all coming to complement one another. Therefore, when one loves his fellow, it is as if he loves himself because they are both part of the same entity.

Gemara: Every individual's destiny and function is predetermined by G-d. Therefore, no Jew should be envious of his fellow's station because regardless of one's role (as menial as it may be), it was determined by G-d with a specific objective within the Jewish people.

When Aaron was informed that *Moshe* his older brother was to be the Redeemer, he rejoiced in his

heart. Not only was there no envy, there was joy, indicating that he had a special heart. Because he understood that G-d chooses and determines each individual's role in life to be the most effective, there was no basis to feel slighted, but rather, he rejoiced.

This special heart that contained this joy, qualified Aaron to be the one to wear the breastplate of the High Priest upon his heart where the names of the Tribes were inscribed. Aaron fully internalized the concept that there was no difference between *Moshe* and himself regarding each person's specific purpose. They are both part of the same entity, as limbs of a body. Since he fully internalized this understanding of the essence of the Jewish people, he qualified to be the spiritual representative of the entire Jewish people, to carry their names on his heart, and to be the High Priest.

If every Jew would be able to internalize this understanding, there would be no envy among Jews. Each Jew would rejoice in the success of his fellow and be pained by his failure or tragedy.

Rambam: One who separates himself from the Jewish community has no share in the world to come. Who is this individual? It is one who says, "Their successes are their own and their failures are theirs and not mine."

Although this individual is fully observant, he will not have a share in the world to come because he considers himself as not being part of the Jewish people. He does not see himself as a component of the spiritual entity known as "G-d's people" who complement one another. The only way to have a relationship with G-d is by being part of the whole. By separating oneself from the Jewish people, he is separate from G-d and thus has no relevance to the world to come.

Dietary Laws, a Confirmation of the Eternity of the Jewish People

"*Hashem* spoke to *Moshe* and Aaron, saying to them: Speak to the Children of Israel saying: These are the creatures that you may eat from among the animals that are upon the earth."

Midrash: "G-d stood and measured the Earth. He saw and released the nations." (*Chavakuk*) What is the meaning of "G-d measured the Earth?"

When G-d wanted to give the *Torah* to the Jewish people, He evaluated the Earth (existence) and decided to give it in the desert in a public setting. Initially, when the nations of the world rejected the *Torah*, G-d was going to cause the world to revert back to a state of water (pre-existence). However, when the Jewish people accepted the *Torah* unequivocally with their declaration of "*Naaseh V'nishma* – we will do and we will listen," existence continued. Only when the Jewish people accepted the *Torah*, the world became tranquil. As it states in Psalms "The Earth was fearful and tranquil."

When the Jewish people accepted the *Torah*, the nations of the world received their release. They were permitted to eat the forbidden contaminated species such as rodents.

This is analogous to a doctor who evaluated two patients. One was deathly ill with no chance of recovery. The doctor told his relatives that he should not be denied anything that he wants to eat. Afterwards, the doctor evaluated the second patient and believed that he would recover. He then instructed the family that he was only permitted to eat certain foods; however, other foods must be withheld from him so that he should be able to recover.

After hearing the doctor's prescription to each of the patients, the doctor was asked, "Why do you differentiate between the two patients regarding what they are permitted to eat?" The doctor responded, "Regarding the patient who is deathly ill, since he will die in any case, there is no reason to deny him anything that he desires. However, the patient who has relevance to life must adhere to a strict dietary regiment if he is to live."

Similarly, G-d permitted to the nations of the world to eat anything they desired. However, since the Jewish people have relevance to eternity, they need to maintain their spiritual purity and sanctity. Therefore, G-d forbade them from eating the species that would contaminate them. As it states, "You who cling to *Hashem*, your G-d, you are all alive today."

Initially, G-d offered the *Torah* to the nations of the world. Each nation rejected it for its own reason. However, when the Jewish people chose to accept the *Torah*, they did so unequivocally with their declaration of "*Naaseh V'nishma*." Had the Jewish

people not done so, the world would have reverted back to a state of pre-existence. Because of their acceptance of the *Torah*, the world assumed a state of permanency.

G-d chose to give the *Torah* to the Jewish people in a public setting which was Mt. Sinai. Why did G-d choose to give the *Torah* in the desert, which is a location that is the ultimate setting of desolation?

Gemara: The desert is a location that is ownerless and barren. Just as the desert has no innate value, so too must the one who wants to acquire *Torah* render himself ownerless like the desert (humble). It is only through one's self-negation does one become a proper receptacle for the processing and retention of *Torah*.

G-d wanted the *Torah* to be given in the most public setting because He wanted the nations of the world to understand that the world only exists in the merit of the Jewish people. It was only because the Jewish people embraced the *Torah* unequivocally that existence has any value. The nations of the world needed to appreciate and understand that they owe their very existence to the Jewish people who dedicate themselves to G-d.

Midrash: The Jewish people were vulnerable to the Sin of the Golden Calf because the nations of the world had given them an "evil eye," which was rooted in envy. Had they received the *Torah* in a more private setting, they would not have been minimized by the envy of the nations.

Although the Jewish people were put in a compromised position as a result of the public setting, G-d chose to give the *Torah* before the eyes of the world so that they could understand that their existence is only due to the Jewish people receiving the *Torah* at Sinai.



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