

ACCEDING TO ONES DEMISE WITH ELATION

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Maatos-Maasei

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

The Differentiator Between the Prophecies of Moshe & The Others

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The Ultimate Merit Accorded Despite His Intent

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Chosen To Complete His Vengeance

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The Ultimate Cell of MultiCultural Organisms

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1. The objective of creation is the study of Torah and the fulfillment of its mitzvos.
2. Zohar: Should there be any moment the Torah is not studied, the world would revert to preexistence.
3. Pirkei Avos: The world stands on 3 principles: Torah, Avodah, and acts of loving-kindness.
4. The Mishnah seems to contradict the Zohar.
5. Chazal: The study of Torah is the equivalent of all 613 mitzvos.
6. Vilnah Gaon: Each word of Torah is the equivalent of all 613 mitzvos.
7. Rambam: Great is the study of Torah that it brings to actualization; the performance of a mitzvah alone does not.
8. Midrash: I would have preferred they abandon me and keep my Torah because the (innate) illumination contained within it would have brought them back to good.
9. All mitzvos are connected to the study of Torah.
10. When one studies Torah, he has touched upon Avodah and acts of loving-kindness.
11. If one does not study Torah regardless of his level of engagement it will not touch upon Torah.

Emphasizing the Innate Value of the Speaking Species

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1. When taking an oath and violating it, one violates the negative commandment "Do not desecrate your word."
2. Gemara: Due to the sin of vows, one loses his wife and (minor) children.
3. The commandment of violating vows connotes there is sanctity to speech.
4. Vernacular: "One's speech is sacred."
5. Job: Man (Adam) was made to toil.
6. Gemara: "Toil" refers to the toil of the mouth, the articulation of Torah.
7. G-d blew a soul of life into his nostrils & he became a living species.
8. Targum: "Living" is interpreted as a speaking species.
9. Speech emanates from the spiritual components of the person, the soul.
10. G-d created the world for Torah & the Jewish People.
11. When one studies Torah it must be articulated.
12. Adam was endowed with the power of speech, which is essential for the study of Torah.
13. Violating one's word, which emanates from a spiritual source, has severe repercussions.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Maatos-Maasei



Turning Fact into Reality

The *Torah* recounts the 42 locations to which the Jewish people traveled in the desert over a forty-year period. Regarding the recording of these locations, “*Moshe* wrote their goings forth according to their journeys at the bidding of *Hashem*, and these were their journeys...”

Midrash: “G-d said to the Jewish people, ‘My children, be careful regarding the observance of My *mitzvos* and keeping of My *Torah*. Understand how many miracles and wonders I have performed for you from the time that I had taken you out from Egypt. I have toppled your enemies. I took you across the Sea and brought fear and dread upon your enemies... I have destroyed the Amorites and the giants. During the 40-year period that you were in the desert, I did not for a moment leave you unattended. Many enemies came upon you and you did not need to flee from them.

“How many snakes and scorpions did I kill in your presence in the desert? I did not allow them to harm

you. It is because of all these miracles that I want you (*Moshe*) to record all of the travels of the Jewish people in the desert so that they should know the many miracles that I performed for them within every travel.”

Why does G-d initially tell the Jewish people to be careful regarding the observance of His *mitzvos* and then explains the importance of recounting all of the miracles that He performed on their behalf? Evidently there is a linkage between the performance of *mitzvos* and having the capacity to appreciate and internalize the value of the miracles that G-d performed on behalf of the Jewish people. One must first be spiritualized to a degree through the performance of *mitzvos* and the study of *Torah* in order to have the capacity to appreciate the miracles that G-d performs on his behalf.

The *Torah* tells us that three days after the splitting of the Sea, and the Jewish people had sung the song, which articulated every aspect of the miracle, they began to complain that they did not have water to

drink. What they had witnessed at the splitting of the sea was greater than what the Prophet *Yechezkel* had ever come upon in his prophecy. After the Jewish people received the *Torah* at Sinai, during which they all experienced prophecy at the most advanced level, G-d had spoken to them face to face, when *Moshe* was slightly delayed (because he did not return as they had expected), they sinned with the golden calf. After being exposed to the ultimate level of revelation and achieving such a level of clarity, how is it possible that the Jewish people could have regressed to such a degree?

A human being is completely consumed with his own interests and needs. This is rooted in one's physical make up which is entirely material. The only way one can address the handicap of physicality is through the spiritualization process, which can only come about through the performance of *mitzvos* and study of *Torah*.

Although the Jewish people experienced a unique level of revelation of G-d at the time of the splitting of the Sea and at Sinai, they were hardly engaged in the performance of *mitzvos* and the study of *Torah* because it was pre-Sinai. They were not sufficiently spiritualized to be able to internalize the G-dly events that they had witnessed. They were considered the equivalent of bystanders of spirituality rather than participants.

If one is not spiritualized through *Torah* and *mitzvos*, and reads about the miracles that G-d had performed on behalf of the Jewish people it would be no different than a history lesson. This is the reason G-d said, "My children, be careful regarding the observance of My *mitzvos* and keeping of My *Torah*. Understand how many miracles and wonders I have performed for you..."

A Jew who engages in *Torah* and *mitzvos* as prescribed by the *Torah*, and is able to sense his spirituality, he continuously sees and processes daily events differently than the ordinary person. Because of his degree of spiritualization, he is able to internalize G-d's Hand in creation. Thus, every day is an opportunity for further spiritual growth.

Rejoicing When Evil is Expunged

Torah: "G-d spoke to *Moshe* saying, 'Take vengeance for the Children of Israel against the Midianites..."

Midrash: "Why did G-d want *Moshe* to destroy the Midianites? It is because of what is stated in *Eyov* (Job),

'G-d does not want to deny the *tzaddik* what he desires to see with his own eyes.' From here, we learn that *Moshe* desired to see the destruction of *Midian* before he passed away. He thus requested from G-d that He should allow him to see their destruction with his own eyes. As it states in the verse in Psalms, 'The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance (of G-d)... 'The righteous will rejoice...' is referring to *Moshe*. He rejoiced in the destruction of the Midianites."

A *tzaddik* is one who is devoutly righteous and pure. He is one who lives his life to do the Will of G-d in the most meticulous manner through the performance of *mitzvos* and the study of *Torah*. Despite the *tzaddik's* quality of refinement, goodness, and purity, he will rejoice when he witnesses the destruction of the evil. Why does the *tzaddik* need to see with his own eyes the destruction of the wicked? Is not enough for him to know that G-d will ultimately destroy those who deserve destruction?

The *tzaddik* lives only for the Glory of G-d. He devotes his life to bring sanctification for G-d's Name and to prevent His Name from being desecrated, thus maintaining His Glory. One of the thirteen principles of Jewish belief is "I believe with perfect faith that G-d rewards those who keep His commandments, and punishes those who transgress them." When G-d metes out Divine Retribution it is a demonstration that there is "Judgment and a there is Judge." The *tzaddik* therefore desires to see Divine Retribution because it a demonstration and confirmation that nothing transpires in existence without G-d's notice and it is addressed as He chooses it to be- for the positive and the negative.

Torah: When *Nadav* and *Avihu*, the two most special sons of *Aaron* were killed for bringing an incense offering that was not authorized by *Moshe* their teacher, G-d immediately meted out His Justice and His Name was sanctified. *Moshe* had said to *Aaron* that he was aware that at the time of the inauguration of the *Mishkan*, the most special Jew/ or Jews would be taken as a sanctification of His Name. As G-d had said to *Moshe*, "I will be sanctified through those who are closest to Me."

Rashi citing *Chazal*: Divine Retribution causes a sanctification of G-d's Name because when *Nadav* and *Avihu*, although they were nearly perfect were held accountable for their transgression. It is for others to learn, how much more so is one culpable if he transgresses to a greater degree! This is a sanctification

of G-d's Name because it establishes Him as the Omnipotent King who Dominates all. Thus, the Jewish people will serve Him as they should. This sanctification of G-d's Name brings joy to the righteous.

We make many personal requests in our *Amidah* (silent prayer); however, there are certain requests which are unrelated to our personal needs, but rather for the sake of G-d's Glory. Requests such as the restoration of Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the Temple, and the coming of *Moshiach*.

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: When *Moshiach* will come, all evil will be removed from existence and there will no longer be an evil inclination to cause one to sin. One's only desire will be to do the Will of G-d. It will be a time when one's good deeds will no longer have any special value because they will not be performed within a context of choice. Despite this fact that the coming of *Moshiach* is not advantageous for one who is not at a special level, we nevertheless pray for his coming because it is for the sake of the restoration of G-d's Glory.

Torah: After *Moshe* had shared with *Yisro* in detail, every aspect of what had transpired at the time of the exodus– the destruction of the Egyptian army and how the Jewish people were miraculously saved.

Torah: “*Yisro* rejoiced over all the good that *Hashem* had done for Israel, that He had rescued them from the hand of Egypt...” It would seem that *Yisro*'s ability to rejoice over the good that G-d had provided for the Jewish people reveals to us that he was truly special. It should be seen in an admirable context. However, *Sforno* explains in his commentary that the *Torah* is communicating something that is critical of *Yisro*'s response.

Sforno: When *Yisro* had heard how the Egyptians were destroyed, he did not rejoice over their destruction. He did not behave as one who is zealous over the honor that is afforded to his Maker as a result of the destruction of His enemies. As the verse states, ‘The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance...’ One who lives for G-d's Glory would have rejoiced over the destruction of the evil and not His Beneficence.

Every day we recite in the *Amidah* (in the blessing against the heretics), “And for the slanderers let there be no hope; and may all wickedness perish in an instant; and may all Your enemies be cut down speedily...” We supplicate G-d that His enemies should be destroyed and that evil should come to an end. One would think

that since the requests of the *Amidah* are of a personal nature, they should focus on the destruction of our enemies because of our own issues. Although it is true that the enemies of the Jewish people are also the enemies of G-d, our primary focus is G-d's Glory. *Moshe* desired and thus supplicated G-d that he should personally witness the destruction of the Midianites because their past behavior was a disgrace to G-d and thus their destruction would bring about His Glory.

Yehoshua's Grave Mistake

Torah: “G-d spoke to *Moshe* saying, ‘Take vengeance for the Children of Israel against the Midianites; afterward you will be gathered unto your people (*Moshe* will pass away).”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: Despite the fact that *Moshe* understood that he was going to pass away after fulfilling the commandment to destroy the Midianites, “he nevertheless performed the *Mitzvah* with joy and did not delay.” If *Moshe* had decided not to act immediately upon the dictate of G-d, he would have extended his life.

Midrash: “*Yehoshua* was meant to live 120 years as his teacher *Moshe*. If this is so, why were ten years taken from his life? When *Moshe* was commanded by G-d to take vengeance against the Midianites, although he understood that he would pass away after the war, he did not delay. He did not ponder, ‘Why should I avenge the Midianites at this moment?’ But rather, he addressed the issue with alacrity. This was not so regarding *Yehoshua*.

“When it was time for him to wage war against the thirty-one kings he said, ‘If I defeat them, I will die immediately as my rebbe.’ What did he do? After defeating one king, he delayed and prolonged the process of conquering *Canaan*, because he wanted to extend his life. G-d said to him, ‘Is this the way you behave? I will thus remove ten years from your life because you did not act as your rebbe *Moshe*. As King David writes in Psalms, ‘There are many strategies in the heart of man but the plan of G-d will ultimately be established.’”

Gemara: “The face of *Moshe* was like the face of the sun and the face of *Yehoshua* was like the face of the moon.” *Yehoshua*, being the primary student of his teacher *Moshe*, had a semblance of all aspects of his teacher's qualities and abilities. This is similar to the moon reflecting the light of the sun. Why did *Yehoshua* choose to delay and not follow the teaching of his rebbe who did not delay? Why did he not draw this from *Moshe*'s behavior?

Devarim: G-d said to Moshe that the Jewish people would become idolaters only after his passing.

Rashi citing the *Midrash*: This is not so, because it is indicated in the book of *Yehoshua* that the Jewish people did not engage in idolatry until after the passing of *Yehoshua Bin Nun*, the student of *Moshe*.

Chazal: We learn from this that as long as one's disciple is alive it is as if the teacher is still alive. We see the influence and leadership of *Yehoshua* was similar to that of his teacher. He was able to lead and guide the Jewish people in a manner that they were able to maintain a level of clarity and understanding so as not to become pagans. *Yehoshua* was able to differentiate between the decision of his *rebbe* to go to war with the Midianites, despite the consequence of death. It was because *Moshe* understood that he had *Yehoshua* to succeed him and maintain the Jewish people within a context of spirituality, he therefore did not delay.

However, *Yehoshua* understanding that his own demise would bring about catastrophic results, that the Jewish people would become pagans, he delayed his passing by not engaging with all thirty one kings immediately because it would have caused his own death. Although his intension was honorable and an expression of his dedication to G-d, he nevertheless failed because he did not act with alacrity as G-d commanded him to.

Gemara: If one is presented with a *mitzvah*, one should not delay its performance, but attend to it immediately.

Rav Hutner z'tl: If one was to delay the performance of a *mitzvah*, but eventually did fulfill it perfectly – is that *mitzvah* considered a perfect *mitzvah*, although it was delayed in its performance and the deficiency lies in the individual for not addressing his obligation immediately? Or is it considered a deficiency in the *mitzvah* itself because it was not performed immediately.

Rav Hutner: Not performing a *mitzvah* with alacrity when it is presented to the individual causes the *mitzvah* to be diminished in its value. It is based on the principle, “when a *mitzvah* presents itself it must be performed immediately.” The *Torah* teaches us this principle from the verse, “You shall watch over the *matzos*.” In Hebrew the word *-matzos* without its vowels can be read – *mitzvos*.

Gemara: The *Torah* is communicating to us, “Just as one must watch over the *matzos* so that they should not become leavened, which can only come about if one prepares the *matzos* with zeal and alacrity, so too

when one performs *mitzvos* it must be done with zeal and alacrity.”

Rav Hutner: The *Torah* is comparing a delayed *mitzvah* with *matzah* that was delayed in its baking and thus became leavened. Just as the *matzah* that is not prepared and baked in its proper time has an innate deficiency, identically a *mitzvah* which is not performed with alacrity has an innate deficiency. *Yehoshua* was obligated to address the command of G-d to conquer the Land with a sense of urgency and not delay for any reason. Because he did delay, the conquest of the Land was considered deficient. G-d therefore punished him by taking ten years from his life.

Perspective, the Determining Factor

Torah: “The children of *Reuvain* and the children of *Gad* had abundant livestock –very great.”

Midrash: “G-d created three gifts for the world – wisdom, power, and wealth. If one merits any one of them, it is considered that he has achieved something of the most precious value. If one has wisdom, he has everything. If one has power, he has everything. If one has wealth, he has everything. When is it considered the ultimate good fortune? It is when it is a gift of G-d and it emanates from His Power directly.

“The wisdom, power and wealth created by man have no value. As King Solomon writes, ‘Those who are swift, will not be able to run. Those who are powerful will not be victorious in war...’ If these gifts are not granted to the individual by G-d Himself, they will ultimately come to an end. There were two wise men that existed in the world – one of them a Jew, the other a gentile – *Achitofel* was the wise man of the Jewish people, and *Bilaam* was the wise gentile. Both of them were lost from this world and the world to come.

“There were two powerful people who existed in the world ...*Shimshon* was from the Jewish people and *Goliath* was from the nations of the world. Both of them were lost from this world. There were two wealthy people...*Korach* from the Jewish people and *Haman* from the nations of the world. Both of them were lost from this world. Why were they lost? It is because the wisdom, power, and wealth that they had, was not a gift from G-d, but rather it was something that they had grabbed for themselves.

"We see that the tribe of *Reuvain* and *Gad* had abundant livestock. They greatly valued their wealth. It is because of their attachment to their wealth that they were willing to settle outside of the Land of Israel and separate themselves from their Jewish brethren. Because they chose to live outside of the Land and were willing to remove themselves from their brethren, that they were the first of the tribes to be exiled before the destruction of the First Temple (by *Sancheirev*, the Assyrian king). As it states, '...they separated themselves from their brothers for the sake of their livestock...'" Thus, the *Midrash* differentiates between a gift that is endowed by G-d and the one who grabs it for himself through his initiative.

Gemara in Tractate *Niddah*: At the time of conception, an angel brings the droplet of semen before G-d, who pronounces upon it, its destiny, "Wise or foolish, strong or weak, wealthy or poor..." The only pronouncement that G-d does not make on the droplet is "*tzaddik* (righteous) or *rasha* (evil)." The *Gemara* concludes from this, that all is predestined except for one's fear of heaven. We see from this, one's material success is not a result of one's initiative, but rather it is ordained by G-d at the time of conception. If this is so, how can the *Midrash* make a differentiation between the one who is endowed with wealth as a result of G-d's Decree or the one who comes upon wealth through his own initiative?

One could say that G-d decrees at the time of conception that one is destined to be wealthy. However, if one is not worthy of receiving that wealth because he does not have the proper perspective of utilizing it for spiritual advancement, then that wealth will not come to him without taking serious initiative. As we see regarding the tribes of *Reuvain* and *Gad* who valued their wealth more than dwelling in the Land to be together with their brothers in an atmosphere that is conducive for spiritual growth. In contrast, one who is meritorious because he understands that the value of wealth is only for the sake of spiritual advancement, G-d will release His Divine Blessing upon that individual.

One may come upon individuals who do not have a livelihood and are in a constant state of need. Very often members of the community are critical of these individuals because they do not take sufficient initiative to earn a livelihood.

Chofetz Chaim: It is important not to judge these individuals negatively. One should not believe that they are incompetent, without interest to take initiative,

because they chose to be so, but rather, one should understand that when G-d decreed that the individual was destined to be poor he was endowed with a disinterest to pursue a livelihood. This is not because he is unfocused or lazy by choice, but rather he was created with a persona not to be able to succeed. One should not think that if this individual were to take initiative, he would become wealthy. If it were decreed that one should be wealthy and has the proper perspective, that the only value and purpose of wealth is to advance himself and the world in a spiritual way, then that wealth will be actualized as a gift bestowed upon him by G-d.

The Characteristic of Truth, Integral To Torah (from Pinchas)

Torah: The daughters of *Tzelofchad* approached *Moshe* with a claim regarding their father's inheritance in the Land. He had died with out any male heirs. They posed the question of inheritance to *Moshe*, to see if they were qualified to be the heirs of their father although they were women. *Moshe* was not able to respond.

Torah: "*Moshe* brought their claim before G-d."

Rashi citing *Chazal*: "The law pertaining to the order of inheritance was concealed from *Moshe*. He was denied because he had taken the crown (of glory) for himself. After the hierarchy of the judicial system (higher and lower courts) was established as a result of *Yisro's* suggestion, *Moshe* had said, 'The most difficult issues you will bring to me.'

"Since *Moshe's* statement could be construed to mean that he had a unique ability, which was attributed to himself, G-d withheld from him the laws of inheritance." *Moshe* being denied this particular law of inheritance- is it considered a punishment to him, for doing something that could be construed as lacking in humility? Or was it not a punishment but rather he was not worthy to be aware of the law of inheritance? Secondly, why was *Moshe* denied in the area that pertains to inheritance of the Land?

Moshe was the one chosen by G-d to receive the *Torah* on behalf of the Jewish people. What was the unique characteristic of *Moshe* that qualified him to be the conduit for the *Torah* to be given to the Jewish people?

Gemara in Tractate *Shabbos*: "The signet of G-d is truth." The *Torah*, being the Wisdom of G-d, is truth in the absolute sense. As it is stated in Proverbs, "Acquire truth

and do not sell it.” Thus, the one who is most qualified to receive the *Torah* must possess the characteristic of truth on the most profound level. *Moshe* was thus qualified to be the receiver of the *Torah* and the spokesman of G-d because he possessed this characteristic of truth. *Moshe* was the adopted son of the daughter of Pharaoh. He had lived in the palace as a prince of Egypt.

Chazal: Pharaoh had exceptional love for *Moshe*. When he came out of the palace to see how his brethren were faring, he saw an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Jew. *Moshe* killed the Egyptian without hesitation because of the unconscionable act that the Egyptian had done. He had raped the wife of the Jew. *Moshe* acted with immediacy and did not consider for a moment the consequences of his actions. He would jeopardize his prominent and powerful position in Egypt. He could no longer be an advocate on behalf of the Jewish people. If he would flee from Egypt, where would he go?

All of these issues were not taken into consideration. *Moshe's* action was based upon his truthfulness. Regarding justice, one should not compromise for any reason. Upon arriving in *Midian*, after fleeing Egypt, rather than remaining inconspicuous as a fugitive fleeing for his life, when *Moshe* witnessed another injustice, he again responded immediately. He could not tolerate witnessing the victimization of the female shepherds who were being attacked by the male shepherds. Although these people were unknown to him, he nevertheless saved them from their attackers. Once again, *Moshe* demonstrated his uncompromising position of Truth.

Because *Moshe* himself internalized and lived truth, he was qualified to be the recipient of *Torah* on behalf of the Jewish people. He was the conduit for the transmission of truth, which was the *Torah*. G-d Himself attests to the fact that *Moshe* was the most humble person to ever live. *Moshe* had expressed his humility by saying, “What are we?” Meaning, we are nothing. *Moshe* was fully negated before G-d.

What was the basis for *Moshe's* humility to be at such a unique level? It emanated from his characteristic of truth. Because *Moshe* recognized the Omnipotence, Majesty and Awesomeness of G-d, he was negated before Him. It was his standard of truth that did not allow him to consider himself to have any value. If one fully internalizes and recognizes the essence of G-d, one cannot not be negated in His Presence. However, to be negated on a continuous basis, one cannot compromise on the standard of truth. *Moshe's* exceptional humility was a consequence of his essence of truth. Recognizing that before G-d one is negated and nothing, is an aspect of truth. *Moshe's* exceptional humility was a consequence of his essence of truth.

When *Moshe* said to the judges, “The most difficult issues you will bring to me” it was tinged with a minute aspect of self, which is a compromise of truth. In order for *Moshe* to be qualified to be the conduit of *Torah* he needed to maintain his essence of truth on an absolute level. If it should be compromised as much as an iota, he could not be a conduit for *Torah*, which is the absolute truth. *Moshe*, speaking in this manner created a state that caused a detachment from truth and was thus denied the understanding of the laws of inheritance.

The lesson of *Moshe's* failing that one's relevance to *Torah* is dependant on one's standard of truth, needed to be preserved for posterity. Every Jew must fully grasp and understand this lesson to guarantee that this will be fully understood, the lesson manifested itself regarding the laws of inheritance. It became known that the laws of inheritance came about through the daughters of *Tzefofchad* and not *Moshe*. It was only because he had expressed himself in a manner which seemed to put an emphasis on himself, it created a detachment from G-d and thus the laws of inheritance were withheld from him.



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