

THE EXPONENTIAL VALUE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AS PART OF **THE WHOLE**



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YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Pekudei

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Building the Mishkan: Delicate Work by those with Wisdom of the Heart

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Moshe Gives an Accounting

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Accountability for Materials Donated to Build the Mishkan

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Moshe as a Conduit of the Shechina

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Mishkan: Testament that Hashem has Forgiven us for the Golden Calf

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Transcending Ego & Recognizing Truth

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1. In Heaven, Moshe was told by G-d, that his people had become corrupt (Idolatry).
2. The Egyptian rabble had 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 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: If a nation cannot stand on the merit of the 3 Holy Patriarchs, it cannot 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

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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 HaChaim Hakadosh: two 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. Avraham was 137 years old and had servants; why prepare his own donkey for the trek?
11. Bilaam, prophet of the nations - pompous, self-centered, and arrogant, rose early and hitched his donkey to curse the Jewish people.
12. Midrash: Intense love & 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

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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. Gemara: One comes to love G-d through dissemination of Torah to students & 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.

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Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Pekudei



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THE EXPONENTIAL VALUE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AS PART OF THE WHOLE

How Do We Surpass our Limitations?

Torah: Regarding the building of the *Mishkan*, “Every man whose heart inspired him came...”

Ramban in his commentary: When the *Torah* states “Every man whose heart inspired him” it is referring to the artisans and the craftsmen. The reference to those of “generous heart” relates to those who donated the necessary building materials for the *Mishkan*. The artisans and craftsmen who were “inspired” were able to perform the most creative and intricate workmanship despite the fact they were not mentored or trained by master craftsmen. These people initially engaged in the most primitive labor of brick and mortar in Egypt. Their incredible abilities came naturally because they were “inspired” by their heart. How did this happen?

Ramban: These individuals who previously had no training whatsoever approached *Moshe* and said to him, “What can we do? Whatever level of participation

G-d wants, we are available.” Their hearts were uplifted in the ways of G-d. It was because of this selfless dedication and desire to do whatever they could to bring about G-d’s Will, they were gifted by *Hashem* with unusual ability to build the *Mishkan*. *Hashem* endowed them with a level of understanding and creativity that was one of a kind. We can learn from this that even if a person is limited, if he is inspired to do the Will of *Hashem*, he will merit Divine Assistance that will allow him to surpass his limitations.

There is a Positive Commandment that every Jew must Love *Hashem* (as it is stated in the *Shema*).

Ramban in *Hilchos Yisodei HaTorah*: “What does one do if he does not “love” G-d?” Love is something that one “feels” and is not something that one “does.” Regarding the commandments of the *Torah*, even if one is not motivated to do the *mitzvah* or does not appreciate the wrong vis-a-vis the infraction, one can

force himself to be proactive or to remain in a passive state. However, regarding love, which is a feeling and an emotion, how does one develop that?

Rambam: If one looks at existence and sees G-d's unlimited wisdom within creation, it will cause him to be overwhelmed and awed to the point of negation, thus generating a desire to have a relationship with G-d (which brings about a feeling of love). Love is all encompassing and consuming. Without it, one cannot be inspired. When one realizes and internalizes who *Hashem* is and thus sees his own limitations, he will become inspired and desire to cleave to *Hashem*. When one has that level of inspiration, he will be taken beyond his limitations. The Jews were previously involved with brick and mortar in Egypt and had no relevance to fashioning gold or doing the other intricate, creative activities that were needed for the *Mishkan*. It was only because of their level of inspiration that they were endowed with this new ability.

Many are concerned with the catastrophic rate of assimilation. They point out the thousands of Jews assimilating for every one who returns to Judaism. It appears to be a hopeless situation. The question we must ask ourselves is – how deeply concerned are we about assimilation? If one is truly pained by a problem he does not leave a stone unturned until he finds resolution. If one is able to develop within himself that feeling of urgency and selfless giving, he will be endowed with an ability to deal with the issues that were untenable.

Every day we pray in the Kaddish that the great Name of *Hashem* should be advanced, exalted, and sanctified throughout existence. On a daily basis, we see heresy and denial of G-d's existence on the rise. Does this mean to say that our tefillos (prayers) are falling on "deaf ears" G-d forbid? What can we do to stem the tide and make G-d's existence known and revered in the world? If we would truly be inspired and selflessly dedicated to bringing about the sanctification and glorification of *Hashem's* Name, it would happen because through inspiration one is able to surpass limits and break down barriers that would have otherwise been impregnable.

Utilizing One's Ability to its Utmost

Ramban: The craftsmen and artisans of the *Mishkan* were those who were "inspired" by their heart. It was

because of their selfless dedication to do the Will of G-d, that He gave them the ability to perform all the necessary tasks for the building of the *Mishkan*.

Torah: "In the heart of those who have wisdom, He (*Hashem*) gave wisdom (*chochmah*)."

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: *Hashem* added wisdom only to the heart that had already contained it. If a vessel has relevance to blessing, then blessing can be added to it.

Torah: When *Moshe* was merely an infant of three months, his mother placed him in a box among the reeds in the Nile (to save him from the Egyptian decree that all Jewish male children should be thrown into the Nile). The daughter of Pharaoh at that time was bathing in the Nile. When the Egyptian princess noticed the box floating in the water, she sent "*amasah* (her maidservant)" to retrieve the box.

Rashi citing the *Gemara* in Tractate *Sotah*: The *Gemara* interprets the word "*amasah*" not to mean "maidservant," but rather as "her hand" (since the arm is the length of a cubit which is an *amah*). This means that *Bas Pharaoh* (daughter of Pharaoh) extended her hand to retrieve the box. The *Torah* is telling us that the hand, which is normally the length of a cubit, extended itself to become many cubits- so that she was able to retrieve the box. Seemingly, this was an unusual miracle. What precipitated it?

Maharal of Prague in *Gevuras Hashem*: The human hand was created with the capacity to retrieve and extend itself. Since the hand has this inherent function, when a person has an overwhelming desire to utilize it, he is able to activate a mechanism which allows the function to go beyond its limits. If a person has a strong desire to retrieve something, *Hashem* would extend the hand to do so only because the hand already has that capacity.

Gemara in Tractate *Megillah*: Another example of this is that in order for someone to be admitted into the throne room of *Achashverosh* (the Persian emperor), it had to be with the extension of the king's scepter. If the king did not do this to indicate that the person was welcome, the person would be put to death. When *Esther* was told by *Mordechai* to go to *Achashverosh*, she was concerned that since she was going without the invitation of the king, he might not extend his scepter

to admit her. This would seal her fate. *Mordechai* told her that if she wants to have this opportunity to save the Jewish people, she must take advantage of the moment. When *Esther* entered the throne room of *Achashverosh* (her husband), he extended his scepter to indicate that she was welcome.

Gemara: A miracle transpired and the scepter extended itself to such a degree that *Esther* was able to touch it although she was at a distance. According to one opinion in the *Gemara*, it extended itself as much as fifty cubits (approximately 70 feet). Based on the *Maharal's* principle regarding the hand of the daughter of Pharaoh, we are able to understand what precipitated the miracle of the scepter. The extension of the scepter indicated that *Achashverosh* desired his wife and thus extended the scepter for her to approach him.

There is an argument in the *Gemara* as to how far the scepter was extended; the length reflected the degree to which he desired her. If a person has innate wisdom, he is endowed by G-d with a greater degree of wisdom. As it is stated, "In the heart of those who have wisdom, He (*Hashem*) gave wisdom (*chochmah*)." The person who has wisdom in his heart and is inspired by it to utilize his ability to the point that he is consumed by that desire, *Hashem* will enable him to go beyond his limitations. Every Jew has the potential of becoming a *tzaddik* (devoutly righteous person). A *tzaddik* is one who meticulously observes the *mitzvos* and does the Will of G-d. This is clearly indicated by the fact that a Jew is held to a standard that he is culpable if he fails in the observance of the *mitzvos*.

If there is culpability then it must be that every Jew has the ability to observe all the commandments meticulously or there would be no basis for culpability. We must ask ourselves - how much do we desire to succeed in the area of spirituality? Do we truly want to become the *tzaddik*? If a person desires to become the *tzaddik*, he will receive the assistance to achieve his wishes. G-d will extend his abilities beyond their limitations in order to attain this goal.

The Essence of the Jew

Pekudei: The *Torah* refers to the *Mishkan* as, "*Mishkan Ha'aydus* (Tabernacle of Testimony)."

Rashi citing *Chazal*: The reason for this reference is that the *Mishkan* was a testimony for the Jewish people that *Hashem* had forgiven them for the Sin of the Golden Calf. Since *Hashem* allowed His Divine Presence (*Shechina*) to dwell in their midst, it was an indication that they had been reinstated. However, the *Midrash* explains "*Mishkan Ha'aydus* (Tabernacle of Testimony)" differently.

Midrash: "*Rebbe Yishmael* says that the *Mishkan Ha'aydus* was a testament to the nations of the world that (G-d's) forgiveness exists only for the Jewish people. It is a testament that *Hashem* was receptive to the penitence of the Jewish people." How do we understand the *Midrash's* statement, "(G-d's) forgiveness exists only for the Jewish people"?

At the Covenant Between the Parts, after *Hashem* had promised *Avraham*, our Patriarch, that the Jewish people would inherit the Land of Canaan, *Avraham* asked G-d, "How will I know that my children will inherit it?" *Avraham* understood that man is inclined to sin and thus the Jews would inevitably become unworthy to retain the Land. In addition, he understood that if one sinned, the consequence of his failing would be terminal because his spirituality would be diminished and could no longer be rehabilitated. Thus, if his children were to sin, ultimately the Land would be taken from them.

To this *Hashem* responded, "take for yourself a calf, a sheep, etc..." which alludes to the various species that the Jewish people brought as communal offerings. This indicated to *Avraham* that there is a concept of spiritual rehabilitation through sacrifices, which is relevant to the Jewish people. Penitence, in conjunction with the communal offering, can bring about atonement and full reinstatement.

Maharal of Prague: When a Jew sins it is only "circumstantial." The sin does not emanate from the essence of the Jew, which is the quality of his soul. Since this is the case, the consequence of sin can be corrected.

Gemara in Tractate *Kiddushin*: When a Jew is committed to performing a good deed, although it may not come to fruition (because of unforeseen circumstances), he is fully credited with the good intention, as if it were performed. However, when one is committed to doing evil, for the Jew there is no culpability until the act is

perpetuated. However, this is not the case regarding a non-Jew. The *Torah* refers to *Lavan* (the father-in-law of *Yaakov* our Patriarch) as “*Arami* who destroyed my father (*Yaakov*).”

Gemara: “Why is *Lavan* referred to as the Aramean who destroyed *Yaakov* when he only contemplated destroying him?” The *Gemara* answers, “*Hashem* regards the contemplation of sin by a non-Jew as if he actually committed the sin.” What is the difference between the Jew and the non-Jew in this regard? The essence of the Jew is pure. When a Jew sins it is only because of circumstance, as the *Maharal* explains.

However, a non-Jew does not possess this purity. This is why *Hashem* values the positive contemplation of the Jew as if the good deed came to fruition and does not hold him accountable for his evil contemplation. A *korban* (offering) is therefore meaningful to correct the failing, which is only superficial. This is why the offering of atonement only has relevance to the Jew, whose sin is circumstantial (superficial). It does not emanate from his essence.

With this explanation, we can understand the *Midrash*, which states that the *Mishkan Ha’aydus* was a testament to the nations of the world that G-d’s forgiveness exists only for the Jewish people. It is not that the non-Jew does not have a share in the world to come. If the non-Jew fails in his spirituality, there is no context through which he can be rehabilitated. However, since *Hashem* allowed his Divine Presence to dwell in the midst of the Jewish people, it reflected the dimension of the Jew’s spirituality and that his sin is superficial and circumstantial.

Adar- The Month of Redemption

Regarding a leap year in which there are two months of *Adar*, the *Gemara* in Tractate *Megillah* rules that *Purim* is celebrated during the second *Adar*. The initial consideration in the *Gemara* of celebrating *Purim* during the first *Adar* is based on the principle that if one should come upon a *mitzvah*, he is not permitted to pass over it in order to perform another. Thus, since *Purim* can be celebrated during the first month of *Adar* it should not be delayed until the second one. However, the ruling is that we celebrate *Purim* during the second *Adar*. The basis for this is that we want to “juxtapose redemption to redemption.”

The month of *Nissan* (which follows *Adar*) is the time of redemption because it was during this month that the Jews were redeemed from Egypt. *Purim* is the time when the decree to annihilate every Jewish man, woman, and child was rescinded and our enemies, the Amalekites, were destroyed. Therefore, *Purim* is celebrated during the second *Adar*, which is juxtaposed to the month of redemption, which is *Nissan*.

Gemara in Tractate *Taanis*: “When the month of *Av* enters one decreases his joy. When the month of *Adar* enters one increases his joy.” The month of *Av* is the time when the first and second Temples were destroyed among many other tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people. Therefore, it is a month in which the *Gemara* states that one should limit his business activities, refrain from undertaking refurbishment of one’s home, as well as other activities that would bring about joy.

While the *Gemara* enumerates what one should do in order to decrease joy in the month of *Av*, it does not suggest what one should do to increase it in the month of *Adar*. However, the *Gemara* does say that if a Jew has a court case with a non-Jew, he should bring it to trial in the month of *Adar* because the *mazal* of the Jew is strongest during this month. Conversely, during the month of *Av* one should not go to trial with a non-Jew because the *mazal* of the Jew is weak during this month. How does one increase his joy with the entry of the month of *Adar*?

Gemara in Tractate *Megillah*: *Haman* chose the month of *Adar* to institute his decree to annihilate every Jewish man, woman, and child because he believed that this month represented a bad omen for the Jewish people since *Moshe*, their teacher, passed away during that month. What *Haman* overlooked was that *Moshe* was also born in the month of *Adar*, which indicates that it is the most positive month. In fact, he passed away on the same day of his birth. Therefore, the *mazal* of *Adar* is the strongest for the Jew.

There is an argument in the *Gemara* in Tractate *Rosh Hashanah* as to when the world was created. *Rebbe Eliezer* is of the opinion that it was in the month of *Tishrei* and *Rebbe Yehoshua* is of the opinion that it was created in the month of *Nissan*. They also argue regarding the month in which the Patriarchs were born. *Rebbe Eliezer* is of the opinion that it was *Tishrei*

while *Rebbe Yehoshua* believes that they were born in *Nissan*. What is the correlation between the birth of the Patriarchs and the creation of the world?

In order to support his opinion, *Rebbe Yehoshua* cites a verse in *Malachim* (Kings) which refers to the month of *Nissan* as “the month of beauty.” This indicates that the Patriarchs, who were the radiance and beauty of the world, were born during that month. Just as *Nissan* is the month when existence came into being, identically the world assumed special significance when the Patriarchs were born – which is the month of *Nissan*.

It was not coincidental that *Moshe* was born in the month of *Adar*. We see a correlation between the special *mazal* for the Jew in the month of *Adar* and the birth of *Moshe Rabbeinu*. *Moshe*, who is the link and the conduit between G-d and the Jewish people, was born during this month only because it was most special vis-a-vis the Jewish people. Thus, the decree of *Haman* would ultimately be annulled.

The Jew is not bound to a *mazal* (the zodiac), as it is stated in Tractate *Shabbos*, “*Ein mazal l'Yisroel* -- the Jewish people have no *mazal* (are not bound to the zodiac).” This is because *mazal* can be altered through *tefillah* (prayer). Nevertheless, every Jew has a *mazal*. *Hashem* metes our reward and punishment through the system known as the zodiac (*mazal*). The month of *Adar* is a time when reward and G-d’s kindness is more readily available to the Jew.

However, the month of *Av*, which connotes tragedy and suffering vis-a-vis the Jewish people, there is a greater susceptibility to punishment. One may say that if a person is deserving of a guilty verdict it should not make a difference which month he goes to trial. However, the *Gemara* tells us differently. The optimum month is *Adar* and the least favorable one is *Av*. Winning or losing a court case has to do with merit, which will determine the verdict.

Since the *mazal* of the Jew is at its zenith during the month of *Adar*, one has the opportunity to draw upon this wellspring of blessing. If one prays sincerely in this month for spiritual and material well-being, his prayers will be more readily answered during this month. Therefore, we should all beseech *Hashem* especially during this month to bring about the ultimate redemption, the coming of *Moshiach*.

The Importance of Reassurance

The *Torah* refers to the Tabernacle as “*Mishkan Ha’aydus* (Tabernacle of Testimony).”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: The reason for this reference is that the *Mishkan* was a testament to the Jewish people that *Hashem* had forgiven them for the Sin of the Golden Calf. The proof of *Hashem*’s forgiveness was that He allowed His Presence (*Shechina*) to dwell in their midst. If this is the case then why is it necessary to refer to the *Mishkan* as the Tabernacle of Testimony, if G-d’s Presence was sufficient evidence that they had been forgiven?

We find that throughout the years of wandering in the desert, the Jewish people failed a number of times due to a lack of trust in G-d. The most serious of their failings was the Sin of the Spies. G-d had promised them that they would receive a land that “flows with milk and honey” – the Land of Canaan. When the Jewish people approached the Land of Canaan, they asked *Moshe* to send spies to scout out the Land in order to conquer it.

After forty days of surveying the Land, the spies returned with their report, which was ominous and bleak. They had said that it was a land that devours its inhabitants, a land of giants, and therefore it cannot be conquered or inhabited. The Jewish people believed that *Hashem* had brought them to this point only to destroy them because they were not fully forgiven for the Sin of the Golden Calf. If the presence of the *Shechina* in their midst was sufficient proof that G-d had forgiven them, then why would they think otherwise?

Sforno: The Jewish people believed that *Hashem* had not forgiven them for their idolatrous ways in Egypt. They were suspect that *Hashem*’s interaction with them was a mere ploy to eventually destroy them. Thus, their own sense of unworthiness was the basis for their lack of trust of *Hashem*. They could not understand how it was possible to be engaged in activities which are seen by G-d as abominable (idolatry), and despite that be embraced by Him. Therefore, *Hashem* identified the *Mishkan* as “*Mishkan Ha’aydus*” so that the Jewish people would know that they were forgiven. If in fact G-d continuously proved to the Jewish people through the daily miracles (the manna, wellspring, and Clouds of Glory) in addition to those that had already transpired, then why were they not thoroughly convinced that they were worthy?

The *Midrash* that is cited by *Rashi* states that the *Mishkan* is referred to as “*Mishkan Ha’aydus*” so that the Jewish people should know that “*Hashem* overlooked (vetair)” the Sin of the Golden Calf. The *Midrash* does not say that *Hashem* fully forgave them for their sin. It was because of this that the Jewish people were not convinced that they were forgiven.

Gemara based on a verse in the *Torah*: Every punishment that will befall the Jewish people until the end of time will contain in it part of the punishment for the Golden Calf. There still exists a connection between the spiritual condition of the Jewish people and the Golden Calf. If we had been fully reinstated and spiritually rehabilitated, we would not have needed the *Mishkan* to accommodate *Hashem’s* Presence. The Divine Presence would have dwelled in our midst without the need of an external structure.

Hashem refers to the *Mishkan* as the “*Mishkan Ha’aydus*” so that we can know and understand that our actions and *mitzvos* have meaning. Without this testimony, we may have believed differently. The Jewish people are *Hashem’s* “kingly, priestly, and holy nation.” Our actions have eternal value and do affect all existence.

Every day we say in the *Aleinu* that *Hashem* did not make us like the nations of the world and we thank Him for this. We differentiate ourselves by stating that we pray to the King of the Universe while they pray to emptiness and to futility. If a Jew truly believed and internalized this declaration, he would understand the true significance of his *mitzvos* and would approach them with the greatest degree of reverence and zeal. We should therefore appreciate the opportunity at hand and make a greater effort to fulfill the *mitzvos* in a more dedicated manner.



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