

ACCEDING TO ONE'S DEMISE WITH ELATION

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Maatos-Maasei

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Understand the Sinister Intent of the Midyanites Behind the Seduction

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Counting the Jews Again: A Sign of Love

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Avrohom Becomes Qualifies to Father the New World

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The Power of Speech and its Articulation

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Our Speech as an Endowment to Generate Holiness

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The Laws of Oaths & Vows

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The Root of Antisemitism & the Demise of These Very Civilizations

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Delegating to Another to Avoid Misperception

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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



Intent, the Primary Aspect of One's Action

Torah: If an unmarried woman makes a vow or an oath, when she is still in the domain of her father, he may nullify her vow or oath without her knowledge. "If her father restrained her on the day of his hearing all her vows or prohibitions that she established upon herself shall not stand; and Hashem will forgive her..."

Rashi citing the *Gemara*: "The verse is referring to a woman who accepted upon herself Nazeritehood and her husband or father nullified it without her knowledge. Subsequently, she chose to violate her Nazeritehood by drinking wine or contaminating herself to the dead. Although factually the vow of Nazeritehood was no longer in effect because it had been nullified (without her knowledge), she will nevertheless require forgiveness. As it states, 'G-d will forgive her.' If a vow that was violated without one's knowledge requires forgiveness how much more so will a vow that is violated with one's knowledge require forgiveness!" If in fact her vow was no longer

in effect, why does she require forgiveness and atonement from G-d?

Gemara in Tractate *Yomah*: "The contemplation of sin, is more severe than the sin itself." The *Gemara* explains that if one intended to violate the law, although he did not, he is fully culpable for his action albeit permitted. For example, if one intended to eat pork and is served Kosher veal instead; however, as he is eating the Kosher veal he believes he is eating pork, he requires forgiveness because he intended to violate. However, if one intended to eat Kosher veal and inadvertently eaten pork, his liability is to a lesser degree. *Gemara* concludes: "The intent to commit a sin is more severe than the sin itself."

Maharsha: There are two aspects to a transgression. There is the essence of the sinful act, regardless of intent, because of the inherent prohibition that lies within the action or item, it damages and diminishes one's spirituality – such as eating non-Kosher.

Regardless of one's intent, if one ingests something that is forbidden he will be spiritually diminished. The other aspect of a sin is the intent; whether it is deliberate or in defiance of G-d. Despite the fact that G-d prohibited a certain behavior, one believes that his own desires and needs supersede G-d's Will. At a more extreme level, it is when one may chooses to defy G-d. He violates only to defy G-d and not to satisfy a desire or lust.

This is the meaning of the *Gemara* that the intent of sin is more severe than the sin itself. Regarding, the woman whose father or husband annulled her vow of Nazeritehood without her knowledge, when she drank the wine or contaminated herself to the dead; she did so believing that she was violating her vow. Since her intent was to violate through the action of drinking the wine or contamination, it is a demonstration that her priority is either her own desire or due to her defiance of G-d. She therefore requires forgiveness and atonement.

Gemara in Tractate *Kiddushin*: Regarding a non-Jew, "G-d considers the intent to transgress, is as if the individual had actually actualized the action."

Torah: Regarding *Lavan*, "...The Aramean destroyed my forefather (*Yaakov*)."
Yaakov and his family had fled from *Lavan* when he was not aware. When *Lavan* became aware that he was deceived by his son in law *Yaakov*, he vowed to destroy him and his family. If G-d had not come to *Lavan* in a dream and restrained him not to "do good or evil with *Yaakov*" he would have actualized his intent to kill *Yaakov*. Factually, *Lavan's* intent was never actualized. Nevertheless the verse states, "... The Aramean destroyed my forefather (*Yaakov*)."
G-d considers it as if the non-Jew actualized his evil intent although he factually did not. This is because the only reason he did not do so was because of circumstances that G-d brought about.

In contrast, until a Jew actualizes his evil intent, the presumption is that he would have never brought his evil intent to fruition. However, regarding the Jew who actualizes his intent, although he did not realize that his action was permitted, but rather believed that he was transgressing, his intent is classified as if it were a transgression. This is because he actualized his evil intent in an action, although it was a permitted one, he is culpable and requires forgiveness and atonement.

Yosef's Unique Love for the Land

Torah: "The daughters of *Tzelofchad*, son of *Chefer*, son of *Gilead*, son of *Machir*, son of *Manasseh*, of the families of *Manasseh* son of *Yosef* drew near...and they stood before *Moshe*, before *Elazar* the *Kohen*...saying, 'Our father died in the desert, but he was not among the assembly that was gathering against *Hashem* in the assembly of *Korach*, but he died of his own sin; and he has no son...Give us possession among our father's brothers.'" Since *Tzelofchad's* daughters were his only progeny, they came to claim his portion in the Land as his heirs. The daughters of *Tzelofchad* merited that the laws of inheritance should be communicated to *Moshe* by G-d as a result of their request for a portion in the Land.

Midrash: "Why does the *Torah* trace the pedigree of the daughters of *Tzelofchad* back to *Yosef*, the Patriarch of the Tribes of *Ephraim* and *Manasseh*? Since the verse identifies them as the descendants of *Manasseh*, it is not necessary to mention that *Manasseh* was the son of *Yosef*? The *Torah* needed to trace the genealogy of the daughters of *Tzelofchad* back to *Yosef* because he had a special love for the Land (of Israel) '*chibas haaretz*'. Where do we find that he had a special love for the Land?"

"The verse states, 'When G-d will surely remember you and bring you up out of this land (Egypt)...then you must bring my bones up out of here with you (to the Land of Israel).' Just as *Yosef* had a special love for the Land, so too did the daughters of *Tzelofchad* love the Land as it states, 'Give us a portion...' This is to teach us that all the daughters of *Tzelofchad* were righteous." The daughters of *Tzelofchad* desired a portion in the Land, not for its monetary value, but only because of their special love for the Land of Israel. How do we see from this request that *Yosef* had made of his brothers a special love for the Land?"

Rashi citing *Chazal*: The words "with you" can mean, "When your children will take out your remains from Egypt, you must ensure me that they will remove my remains with them." Every one of the Tribes wanted their remains to be removed from Egypt when the redemption would come about. Since every one of the Tribes wanted their remains to be removed from Egypt, why was *Yosef's* request an indication that his love for the Land was greater than theirs? In addition,

why was it necessary that *Yosef* request from his brothers that they should guarantee that his remains should be removed, when he could have asked his two sons *Ephraim* and *Manasseh* to remove his remains at the time of the exodus? If so, why was it necessary for him to make the removal of his remains a prerequisite for the redemption of the Jewish people?

If one desires something that he esteems, reveres, and loves at an unusual level, he will do everything that is possible to ensure that his request will be fulfilled and guaranteed. Because *Yosef* did not want to rely solely upon his children, as his brothers had done, it is an indication of his exceptional love for the Land. This is the reason he made the request, "...you must bring my bones up out of here with you."

Torah: When *Yosef* was initially taken by his brothers and sold into slavery, he encountered someone in the field who *Chazal* tell us was the Archangel Gabriel. The man said to him, "Your brothers traveled from this (*meezeh*)..."

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: The numerical value of the word "*meezeh*" is twelve. Meaning, what the angel was telling *Yosef* is that he should not believe that he is still part of the unit of twelve brothers but rather, the unit of twelve has been broken because he had been extricated from it. He no longer part of the twelve. *Yosef* understood that because of this diminishment of the "twelve" which represents the twelve tribes of Israel, the Jewish people needed to be reunified at some alter point.

When *Yosef* made the entire Jewish people responsible for bringing his remains out of Egypt to be buried in the Land of Israel, he was bringing about a correction to bring about the reunification of the Jewish people. As the verse states, "...then you must bring my bones up out of here with you (*meezeh*)." Indicating that he wanted to bring about the unification of the Jewish people. When *Yosef* said to his brothers "you must bring my bones up out of here with you" he was expressing his love for the Land of Israel. In contrast, his brothers did not initially intend that their remains be taken out of Egypt; however, when they heard to what degree *Yosef* esteemed the Land of Israel and thus wanted his remains to be taken out, they understood the special value of being buried in the Land of Israel.

It is only after *Yosef* had made the request of them that they instructed their descendants to take their remains

to the Land of Israel. *Yosef's* special love for the Land was the basis for the remains for all the tribes to be taken out of Egypt and buried in the Land of Israel.

The Praiseworthiness of Moshe as G-d's Servant

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.'"

Midrash: "*Rebbe Yehudah* says, 'If *Moshe* wanted to extend his life by many years he could have done so. G-d had told him that after he would avenge the vengeance of the Jewish people against the Midianites he would pass on. Thus, his passing was contingent upon waging war against the Midianites. Despite the fact that *Moshe* could have extended his life by delaying the vengeance upon the Midianites, he did not delay. We see from this the praiseworthiness of *Moshe*. He did not say, 'I will delay the vengeance against Midian so that I should extend my life.'"

Moshe had negated himself totally to the Will of G-d. G-d refers to *Moshe* as, "My servant *Moshe*; in My house he is the trusted one..." If *Moshe's* negation to the Will of G-d was so unique that G-d esteems him to be considered to be "the trusted one", why is it considered to be "praiseworthy" for *Moshe* not to delay the destruction of the Midianites? What would have been *Moshe's* consideration to delay the destruction of the Midianites, despite the fact that his passing was contingent upon their destruction?

Although the *Torah* tells us that G-d commanded *Moshe* to build the *Mishkan*, he did not participate in its actual building and the formation of the vessels, but rather his participation was limited to the raising of the beams after the Jewish people had completed the *Mishkan*. *Moshe* had initially said, "Let the people participate in the building of the *Mishkan* to the extent that they can, and whatever remains unfinished I will complete."

Midrash: The Princes of Israel donated the precious gems (the *avnei shoham* and *miluim*) that were needed for the breastplate worn by the High Priest. When the *Torah* writes the word "*Niseeim* (Princes)" regarding their participation in the building of the *Mishkan*, it is written with the letter "*yud*" deleted, despite the fact that this letter is usually needed to express the plural form of the word.

Chazal: This indicates that the Princes were deficient in their participation because they had delayed in bringing their gifts. The Princes did not immediately participate in the building of the *Mishkan*, but rather they waited until the end to contribute their gifts. They said, "Let the people participate in the building to the extent that they can, and whatever remains unfinished we will complete."

Chazal: The *Torah* is revealing through the deletion of the letter "yud" that the delay in their participation in the building of the *Mishkan* of the Princes was due to their lack of motivation, laziness. Seemingly the perspective of the Princes was identical to that of *Moshe* regarding the building of the *Mishkan*, yet *Moshe's* behavior is considered to be praiseworthy and admirable, whereas the Princes are rebuked for their lack of zeal. Why does the *Torah* differentiate between *Moshe* and the Princes, when both of their perspectives seem to be identical?

The *Torah* attests to the fact that *Moshe* was the most humble person who ever lived. He had negated himself totally to G-d as he said, "What are we?" Meaning, regarding *Moshe*, there was no trace of self. The characteristic of laziness and the basis for procrastination stems from one's sense of one's own value, regarding his own personal right to attend to his own needs. This is rooted in one's ego. The reason one procrastinates rather than addressing the issue immediately is due to one's not wanting to exert himself. This individual believes that the issue at hand can wait until later and does not require him to cease attending to his own needs.

Because of this self interest, the true value of what is at hand, becomes blurred and minimized. *Moshe*, because he was totally negated to G-d did not have any trace of self. Thus, he had no relevance to laziness because there was nothing that could obscure the value of what G-d commanded him to do. Therefore, when *Moshe* said, "Let the people participate in the building to the extent that they can..." it could not be attributed to laziness, but rather it was for the sake of G-d's Glory that all the Jewish people should participate in the building of the *Mishkan*. It is because of *Moshe's* pure intent regarding what he had said about the people's building of the *Mishkan*, G-d said to him, "Yours (your participation) shall be greater than theirs..." After *Moshe* would pass away, *Yehoshuah* was chosen by G-d to be *Moshe's* successor.

Gemara in Tractate *Bava Basra*: "The face of *Moshe* is the equivalent of the face of the sun and the face of *Yehoshuah* is the equivalent of the face of the moon." Meaning, although *Yehoshuah* was exceptionally great, he was only a semblance and a reflection of *Moshe*, his teacher. Meaning, the profound and eternal effect of *Moshe* being the leader of the Jewish people, would come to an end with his passing, thus denying the Jewish people the unfathomable potential for spiritual advancement.

Had *Moshe* delayed the destruction of the Midianite people, he would have extended his life, not because of his own conflict of interest (just so that he should live longer), but rather for the sake of G-d's Glory. His leadership and mentoring would advance the Jewish people. His going to battle immediately would cause them to be denied his leadership and influence. If *Moshe* delayed the battle and extend his life, it would have brought about a greater sanctification of G-d. It therefore would have been logical for him to delay the battle and extend his life. Despite this rationale, *Moshe* did not delay because it was the command of G-d. Thus, his immediate action to go to battle against the Midianites demonstrated the praiseworthiness of *Moshe*.

Rejoicing for the Sake of G-d's Glory

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 the verse 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 with his own eyes their destruction. The verse in Psalms, 'The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance (of G-d), he will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.' 'The righteous will rejoice...' is referring to *Moshe*. He rejoiced in the destruction of the Midianites. '...Wash his feet in the blood of the wicked' is referring to *Bilaam*, the evil one." If the *tzaddik* is holy and pure, why does the *tzaddik* need to see with his own eyes the destruction of the wicked?

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. “*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 his true essence that he is able to rejoice over G-d’s Kindness to the Jewish people by destroying their masters. Thus, allowing them to be free men. It would thus put *Yisro* in an admirable light.

Sforno: The *Torah* is in fact depicting something that is critical of *Yisro*’s internalization of events. “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 accorded 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...’ Rather than rejoicing over the fact that G-d is meting out justice upon the evil ones, *Yisro* rejoiced over the good that G-d had done on behalf of the Jewish people. It is as one who feels compassion because of the tears of the victims.” Once the plight of the victims is alleviated, he will rejoice for them, rather than rejoicing when he sees the vengeance of G-d against evil.

Torah: Although G-d had told *Moshe*, “Take vengeance for the Children of Israel against the Midianites”, when he had instructed the Jewish people to go to battle he said, “Take G-d’s vengeance upon the Midianites.”

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: As a result of the sin of *Baal Peor*, 24,000 Jews died in a plague. Consequently, regardless of one’s spiritual level, when the Jewish people were summoned to go to battle against the Midianites, it would have been natural for them to feel personal anger and want to avenge the deaths of the Jews that had died. *Moshe* therefore instructed the Jewish people to understand that the focus of destroying the Midianites was purely to bring about G-d’s justice upon them. It was not a time for one’s personal vengeance. If the Jewish people focused on their own vengeance rather than G-d’s vengeance, it would have minimized the value of the battle.

The objective of the Midianites was to undermine the spirituality of the Jewish people, who are G-d’s representation in existence. It was thus a direct affront to G-d. Thus, the Jewish people needed to focus on this aspect. They needed to infuse their actions with

the intent, that it was for the sake of G-d and not their personal loss.

Gemara in Tractate *Nazir*: “It is worthwhile to engage in *Torah* and *mitzvos* even if it is without a pure intent (*shelo l’shma*)...” the battle against the Midianites needed to be with a pure intent. If one engages in a *mitzvah* without the proper intent (ulterior motive) it will influence him to come to perform the *mitzvah* with a pure intent (*l’shma*). However, when one performs the *mitzvah* without the proper intent, it is minimized and not to be compared with the performance of a *mitzvah* that is performed with the proper intent, for the sake of G-d.

Perspective, the Determining Factor

Torah: “The children of *Reuvain* and the children of *Gad* had abundant livestock – very great.” The tribes of *Reuvain* and *Gad* chose to remain on the trans-Jordan side of the river because of their abundant livestock.

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. Wisdom, power and wealth created by man have no value... If these gifts are taken (grabbed) by the individual and are not granted to him by G-d Himself, they will ultimately come to an end....”

“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 the Jewish people, they were thus the first of the tribes to be exiled before the destruction of the First Temple. As it states, ‘..they separated themselves from their brothers for the sake of their livestock...’”

Gemara in Tractate *Makkos*: “In the path that one desires to walk, G-d will lead him along that path...” If one desires to be evil, G-d will present him with many

opportunities to actualize his desire. In contrast, if one is destined from heaven to be wealthy, for example, then it is a true blessing and it will endure. However, if one “grabs” wealth because he desires it, although he will attain wealth it is considered to be nothing.

The tribe of *Reuvain* and *Gad* wanted to remain on the trans-Jordan side and separate themselves from their brethren because their wealth was dear to them. Thus, they were willing to forfeit the primary for the sake of the secondary because they valued their possessions more than themselves. They said, “We will build corrals for our livestock and then we will build cities for our children.” *Moshe* said to them, “You shall not do this (your priorities are not correct). You will first address what is most important by building cities for your families, and then you will build corrals for your livestock.” Because they “grabbed” their wealth rather than it being bestowed upon them by G-d, it lead to negative results. There is an obligation to bring the first fruits/produce (*bikurim*) in the Land of Israel.

Gemara: Reb Yosi is of the opinion that on the trans-Jordan side one is not obligated to bring *bikurim* because, “One is obligated to bring *bikurim* from a location that G-d gave to them but not from a location that they had taken for themselves.” Meaning, had the tribes of *Reuvain* and *Gad* not taken the initiative to ask for the land on the trans-Jordan side they would not have received it. We see that they only received the land because G-d allowed them to have it after their request. If so, why is it considered as if they had “taken it for themselves?” It is because they initiated the process by requesting the land.

The ritual of the *bikurim* is to express one’s indebtedness to G-d for all the good that He has bestowed upon the

individual and the Jewish people. One must bring the first of his produce to the Temple and make a declaration, “...An Aramean tried to destroy my forefather, He descended to Egypt and sojourned there...*Hashem* heard our voice...*Hashem* took us out...” In this declaration, one gives thanks to G-d for all that He had done for the Jewish people since the time of *Yaakov*, our Patriarch. One expresses thanks to G-d for everything that was bestowed upon him because he cannot attribute anything to his own initiative.

However, regarding the trans-Jordan side, although G-d granted it to the tribes of *Reuvain* and G-d, it was only after their initiative to request it. Thus, one could attribute the receiving of the land to one’s own initiative to some degree. Therefore, one is not obligated in bringing the first produce from the trans-Jordan side because one’s sense of indebtedness is obscured.

However, based on the *Midrash* above we can understand the reason for not bringing the first produce differently. Since the trans-Jordan side was not a gift from G-d as the Land of Israel was for the Jewish people, it is something that is considered to be “grabbed” by man’s initiative. Because the tribes of *Reuvain* and *Gad* “grabbed” the land, it lead to negative results such as being the first tribes to be exiled. Because the first produce is holy and is associated with the gifts of G-d it is not to be brought from the produce of the trans-Jordan side.



Yad Avraham Institute