

# WITNESSING HIS MAJESTY

A Fulcrum To Eternity

Original Painting By:  
YORAM RAANAN

## YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Yisro

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

### Weekly Video: Extrication & Transition

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### The Pre-Qualification To Be Worthy

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1. The Jews came to Sinai on the first day of the third month.
2. Torah: "On THIS day" rather than "THAT" day; When studying Torah, experience it as new and vibrant.
3. Wherever this principle is alluded to was post Sinai; here it is prior to Sinai.
4. If this is so (the Torah has not yet been given), what does one experience as if it is "new"?
5. Torah: "They travelled from Refidim and came to Sinai desert."
6. Midrash: Torah juxtaposes Refidim to Sinai – As at Sinai they were in a repentant state, so too when leaving Refidim.
7. Gemara: R' Chiyah chose 5 students to teach – each one, one of the Books of Moses.
8. He planted flax to make nets in order to trap deer and use their hides to make parchment.
9. R' Chiyah then recorded the written law on the parchment he made.
10. Why didn't R' Chiyah just purchase the parchment from the market?
11. When studying or teaching Torah it must be done in the purest context from its inception.
12. Even prior to the giving of the Torah on the first of the month, one had to anticipate the special moment and so experience the study of Torah.
13. One must be worthy at the location; and one must be repentant.



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### Emerging Empowered From the Abyss

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1. Yisro heard many things resulting in his leaving Midian to become part of the Jewish People.
2. Midrash: The greatest of all the miracles was that G-d took the Jews out of Egypt.
3. The Jews left Egypt after the tenth plague; Egypt was decimated and reduced to rubble.
4. The Jews were driven out because the Egyptians believed they were all dying.
5. This is similar to a prison's walls that are destroyed so prisoners are able to escape.
6. Gemara: Pharoah's 3 advisors: Bilaam, Yisro and Job.
7. When the bondage was suggested by Bilaam, Yisro fled in protest.
8. Yisro understood the spiritual impurities of Egypt.
9. The Jews became pagans there, falling to the 49th level of spiritual impurity.
10. To purge and detoxify from this extreme impurity is an impossibility.
11. Gemara: Even if a devout pagan repents, G-d will cause him to die; ultimately he will return to pagan ways.
12. G-d wants him to die in a repentant state.
13. When Yisro heard the Jews were taken out of Egypt as a spiritual people to receive the Torah, he was astounded.
14. This miracle was truly greater than the others.

### A Critical Expose Yields a Sophisticated Judicial System

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1. One of Yisro's seven names: "Yeser" – To Add.
2. Yisro suggested a hierarchy within the infrastructure of the judicial system.
3. Yisro observed Moshe adjudicating great numbers of claims and disputes from morning until evening.
4. Yisro had two critical points regarding this manner of adjudication.
5. It is not befitting the Jewish People for Moshe to sit & the prospective defendants stand and wait their turn.
6. And the enormous physical burden will cause Moshe to wither.
7. He suggested a hierarchy of courts; only the most difficult questions will be brought to Moshe.
8. 36 days prior to Moshe's passing he recounts the events and behavior of the past 40 years.
9. He said to the Jews: "When the judicial system was put into place you embraced it wholeheartedly."
10. Would it not have been better to learn from one who studied Torah in a physically deprived state?
11. Moshe spent forty days and nights studying Torah without bread or water.
12. What Yisro saw as a belittlement of their honor was needed to elevate and expose them to an unequalled dimension of holiness.
13. G-d endorsed Yisro's plan because ultimately Moshe would have withered.





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## Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Yisro



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### Spiritual Rehabilitation, A True Miracle

The *Torah* states, “In the third month from the Exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt, on this day they arrived at the desert of *Sinai* (to receive the *Torah*).” The *Midrash* asks, “Why was the *Torah* not given to the Jewish people immediately after being redeemed from Egypt? G-d had said, ‘I will take this people out to serve G-d on this mountain...’ Seemingly, after the Jewish people left Egypt they should have received the *Torah* immediately.

*Reb Yehudah Bar Shalom* answers this question with an analogy. It is similar to a prince who had recovered from an illness. His father said, ‘Let him fully recover before he resumes his regular Torah studies.’ After the Jewish people left Egypt, they were blemished from their bondage. G-d said, ‘It will take time for them to be fully healed from their illness. Then they will receive the *Torah*.’”

What are the “blemishes” that the Jewish people needed to recover from before receiving the *Torah*?

*Chazal* tell us that at *Sinai* every Jew was healed from any physical handicap or ailment that he may have had due to being exposed to the Divine Presence. The *Midrash* indicates that the Jewish people needed to experience a type of rehabilitation prior *Sinai* that was not related to their physical condition.

The Jewish people had been enslaved in Egypt for 210 years where they were exposed to the most intense level of spiritual impurity. Although during the generation that had come to Egypt the Jewish people were spiritually unaffected by the impurity of the land, after that generation had passed away they began to have a spiritual regression to the point that they had fallen to the forty-ninth level of spiritual impurity.

Prior to leaving Egypt, the Jewish people were on the brink of spiritual extinction because they had fallen to the lowest level of impurity. Had they remained in Egypt a moment longer, there would have not been able to recover. After leaving Egypt, with every passing day, the Jewish people ascended to another level of

spiritual purity until they reached the pinnacle of their spirituality at *Sinai*, which was the forty-ninth level of spiritual purity. The Jewish people thus the recover that the Jewish people needed was to be fully purged from the spiritual impurity of Egypt, from which they had become blemished.

The *Torah* states, “*Yisro*, the sheik of *Midian*...heard everything that G-d did to *Moshe* and to *Israel*...-that *Hashem* had taken *Israel* out of Egypt.” *Rashi* cites the *Mechilta*, which states that the greatest miracle that G-d had performed on behalf of the Jewish people, was taking of them out of Egypt. After the ten plagues, Egypt had been decimated and the Jewish people could no longer be retained by their Egyptian masters. If this was so, why was leaving Egypt considered to be the greatest of the miracles? If one is incarcerated in a prison and its walls are destroyed and the warden and all the prison guards are no longer there to confine them, would it be considered a great feat for the prisoners to escape from their restricted environment? If so, why was *Yisro* overwhelmingly impressed and amazed that G-d had taken them out of Egypt?

The *Gemara* in Tractate *Sanhedrin* tells us that *Yisro* had been one of the three advisors to Pharaoh. When he heard that Pharaoh intended to enslave the Jewish people, *Yisro* fled to *Midian* as a sign of protest. *Yisro* had a grasp and understanding of the spiritual impurity that existed in Egypt. He understood that as a result of being enslaved in Egypt for 210 years, the Jewish people had become irreparably affected and infected with spiritual impurity. Their state of impurity was all-consuming and thus, they were beyond recovery. Their spiritual systems had become completely nonfunctional. They had no capacity to internalize or process anything that was of a spiritual nature. They no longer had the ability to choose between good and evil.

However, upon leaving Egypt, they were sufficiently purged to have the capacity to process and internalize all that was spiritual. They had been restored by G-d. Thus, *Yisro* recognized that the greatest miracle was not that the Jewish people had been freed to leave Egypt, but rather, G-d had restored and rehabilitated their terminally impure state.

*Ramchal* writes in *The Way of G-d* that when one recites in the third paragraph of the *Shema*, “I am *Hashem*, your G-d who has taken you out from the land of Egypt...” if one reflects upon what truly happened

when we had left Egypt, that G-d had removed the spiritual impurity of Egypt from the Jewish people, it will strengthen his level of free choice. As a result of the impurity that the Jewish people had absorbed in Egypt, they did not have free choice. They were so entombed in evil that their capacity to value goodness was nil. Therefore, when one reflects upon how G-d had restored the spiritual equilibrium of the Jewish people when they had been taken out of Egypt, so too will his level of free choice be strengthened.

## Transcending Limitation

The *Torah* states in the Song of the Sea, “I shall sing to *Hashem*....having hurled horse with its rider into the sea...” The *Midrash* asks, “Was there only one horse pursuing the Jewish people? Rather there were many horses; however, it was the equivalent of only one horse before G-d...When the Jewish people adhere to the Will of G-d, all of the nations of the world will be the equivalent of only one horse and chariot before them.” Regardless of the number of enemies and the numerical dimension of their forces, if the Jewish people are heeding the Word of G-d, it will seem to them as if there is only one horse that could easily be defeated. However if the Jewish people do not follow His Word, they will experience their enemies according to their overwhelming numbers.

The *Torah* states, “If you will follow My Statutes and observe My Commandments and perform them; then I will provide for your rains in their time. And the land will give forth its produce and the tree of the field will give forth its fruit.” *Rashi* cites *Chazal* who explain, “If you will follow My Statutes...” is referring to one’s unceasing toiling in the study of *Torah*. If one toils sufficiently in *Torah*, he will be deserving of this extraordinary and unlimited blessing. *Chazal* tell us that if one is sufficiently spiritualized even if he should eat an amount of food as small as bean he would be nourished and sated. It will be blessed in his innards. Quantity and amount becomes not important.

The *Mishna* in Tractate *Yomah* tells us that as long as *Shimon Ha’Tzaddik* (who was the High Priest for 40 years) was alive, there was blessing in the showbread (*lechem ha’panim*). The twelve loaves of the showbread were divided amongst the *Kohanim* (who officiated that week, as well as the incoming group who would officiate the following week). When they divided the

bread, even if they had eaten as little as the volume of a bean, they were sated. However, after the passing of *Shimon Ha'Tzaddik*, a curse entered into the showbread and it no longer contained miraculous properties. It no longer sated unless one would eat a sufficient amount. It was because the Jewish people had assumed a material and physical context.

The *Torah* tells us that regardless of how much Manna one would gather, whether it was a small amount or a large amount, one always had sufficient amount for himself and his family. In addition, depending on the spiritual status of the one gathering the Manna, it would determine the degree of preparation that was needed to make it fit for consumption. If one were devoutly righteous, the Manna did not need any degree of preparation. This is because the individual was spiritually sound.

If one were a “middle of the road” Jew then he would need to prepare the Manna to a small degree, because his spirituality also needed to be improved to some degree. However, if one were evil, whose spirituality was far from perfection, he needed to prepare the Manna to the same degree of ordinary food. One's spiritual status determines if one is bound by the physical or he transcends its limitation.

When the Jewish people live a life that is dictated by the *Torah*, they are elevated to a spiritual plane and are thus not bound or affected by physical limitation. This is the reason that the many nations of the world, the enemies of the Jewish people, are the equivalent of only one horse or chariot. However, if they do not adhere to His Will, which indicates that they have greater relevance to the material, then quantity becomes relevant.

The *Gemara* in Tractate *Sanhedrin* tells us that *Sancherev*, the Assyrian King came upon Jerusalem and the Temple to destroy it he did so with an army of unlimited soldiers. In an instant, his armies were miraculously destroyed by G-d. *Chizkiyahu* the king of Judah and the Jewish people were fully immersed in the study of *Torah* at the time of the destruction of *Sancherev's* armies.

The *Gemara* tells us that they merited the miracle because of the standard of *Torah* study that was established among the Jewish people. When *Chizkiyahu* assumed the throne as king, he had given the Jewish people an ultimatum by placing a sword along side

a *Torah* scroll. He had said to them, “You can either live by the *Torah* or be pierced by the sword.” Despite the fact that *Sancherev* came upon the Jewish people with an unimaginably powerful force, it was rendered irrelevant because the Jewish people had assumed a spiritual posture.

## **G-d's Ultimatum to the Jewish people**

The *Torah* states regarding the receiving the *Torah* at *Sinai*, “They stood under the mountain (*b'tachtis hahar*).” *Rashi* explains, “The simple understanding of '*b'tachtis hahar* (under the mountain) to mean that the Jewish people stood at the foot of the mountain. Another interpretation is offered by the *Gemara* in Tractate *Shabbos* which explains, that the word '*tachtis* (under)' literally means 'under the mountain.' G-d held the mountain over their heads 'like a barrel and said to them: If you accept the *Torah* it will be good (for you); however, if you do not, there you will be buried.”

The *Gemara* continues, “Regarding the manner in which the *Torah* was presented to the Jewish people, there is a basis for a disclaimer if the Jewish people should fail, because it was given under duress. They were compelled to accept it....However, *Raba* states, 'At the time of *Achashveirosh* (*Purim*) the Jewish people reaffirmed their initial acceptance of the *Torah* with love. As it is stated in the *Megillah* of *Esther*, 'They fulfilled it and accepted it upon themselves.' (They fulfilled what they had initially accepted upon themselves at *Sinai* with love).” Because the Jewish people at the time of *Purim* the Jewish people understood the degree of G-d's love for them, they reaffirmed their acceptance of the *Torah* wholeheartedly and with love. Can the manner in which the Jewish people initially accepted the *Torah* at *Sinai* be considered as being “under duress?”

The *Torah* begins, “*Bereishis bara Elokim* – In the beginning G-d created...” *Chazal* explain that the word “*Bereishis*” in its grammatical form is to be understood that, “*B'shvil Reishis bara Elokeem*... – for the sake of 'the choicest' (which is the *Torah*) G-d created Heaven and Earth...” The term “*Bereishis*” also alludes to the Jewish people who are G-d's chosen, who will accept the *Torah* at *Sinai*. Thus, every aspect of creation only came about to be the setting for the fulfillment of the *Torah* by the Jewish people.



Every aspect of existence is needed for its fulfillment. If so, if the Jewish people would have rejected the *Torah*, the reason the world would revert back to a state of pre-existence is because the objective and intent of Creation would not have been met. If this is so, why was G-d's ultimatum to the Jewish people to accept the *Torah* a setting of coercion and duress? The only value of the world to G-d is if its objective is being fulfilled.

If one wishes to be hired for a position that requires an unusual level of commitment, it is understood that the employee must meet all its requirements and responsibilities to be eligible for that position. Regardless of the demands of the position, the employee's agreement to accept, is not considered to be coercive. If so, in a similar vein, if G-d's only objective in creating existence is for the specific purpose of the Jewish people accepting the *Torah*, why is the ultimatum being that is being presented to them considered to be coercive?

*Chazal* tell us that during the plague of darkness that four fifths of the Jewish people died because they did not want to leave Egypt. If they did not want to be redeemed, why does it justify the death of the vast majority of the Jewish people to perish? The only value of the existence of the Jewish people is for them to be at *Sinai* to receive the *Torah* and to fulfill it. If they have no interest in that objective, then there is no reason for them to exist. It is therefore understood why those who did not wish to leave Egypt died in the plague of darkness. Similarly, the ultimatum at *Sinai* was a mere statement of fact. If so, why was it considered a form of coercion?

The *Gemara* in Tractate *Avoda Zorah* tells us that at the end of time G-d will announce to the world, "Whoever has a share in *Torah* should come and receive his just reward." All the nations will respond by saying that each of them is deserving for his own contribution to *Torah*. However, G-d will prove to them that they have no basis for their claim. Ultimately, the nations of the world will complain to G-d that He favored the Jewish people over them. G-d will respond and prove to them that their claim is baseless. Despite the cogency of G-d's position to deny them reward, G-d will present them with a *mitzvah* opportunity to allow them to have one last chance to have a share in eternity. This is because G-d does not want that His creation should have a claim against Him (although it is baseless).

Although the giving of the *Torah* at *Sinai* under duress is a perception that has no validity; nevertheless, G-d does not want the Jewish people to feel, based on their own perception, that they were coerced into accepting it. He wanted them to accept the *Torah* wholeheartedly with love, so that they should understand and appreciate its innate value to be fully dedicated to it.

The *Torah* tells us in the portion of the curses that even if the Jewish people should observe the *Torah* and keep all of its *mitzvos*, the curses will nevertheless come upon them, because they did not serve G-d with joy and wholeheartedly. By not performing the *mitzvos* with joy, it is an indication that the Jewish people do not appreciate the gift that they possess and the privilege they have to serve G-d. It is similar to a king offering a commoner his crown that is studded with Jewels and the recipient accepts it in a begrudging manner. It is the ultimate level of disrespect and disgrace. Similarly, regarding the receiving the *Torah* at *Sinai*, although they do not have a valid basis for a disclaimer; nevertheless, G-d wanted them to ultimately accept the *Torah* with joy and appreciation, which is what had taken place on *Purim*.

## Elucidating the Object and the Objective

The *Torah* states regarding the receiving the *Torah* at *Sinai*, "They stood under the mountain (*b'tachtis hahar*)."  
*Rashi* cites the *Gemara* in Tractate *Shabbos*, "The word '*tachtis* (under)' literally means 'under the mountain.' G-d held the mountain over their heads 'like a barrel and said to them: If you accept the *Torah* it will be good (for you); however, if you do not, there you will be buried.'" The *Gemara* explains that at *Sinai* the Jewish people accepted the *Torah* under duress; however, on *Purim*, they reaffirmed with love what they had already accepted upon themselves at *Sinai*.

*Maharal of Prague z'tl* explains that the Jewish people reaffirmed their acceptance of the *Torah* out of love on *Purim* because they experienced G-d's unique love for them. There was a decree to annihilate every man, woman, and child and at the last moment G-d caused that victim to become the victor. The decree was annulled and an order was given by the king that on the thirteenth of *Adar* (the day they were to be destroyed) permitted the Jewish people to destroy their enemies. It was because of this demonstration

of love and concern for them that evoked a love in the Jewish people to reaffirm their commitment to the *Torah* that they had previously accepted at *Sinai*.

The prophet *Yermiya* states regarding Creation, “For My Glory I created it (existence).” Meaning, the objective of Creation is to bring glory to G-d. If the Jewish people accept and adhere to the *Torah*, they will bring glory to G-d, thus allowing them to be greatest beneficiaries of His Kindness. They would be able to cleave to their Creator, Who is the source of everything. Although as a result of glorifying G-d the Jewish people would be the beneficiaries of His Kindness, until their reaffirmation on *Purim* they had believed that their fulfillment of the *Torah* was purely for the sake of G-d.

Being beneficiaries was only an ancillary outcome of the main objective. They were only the means to this end. They felt that G-d only loved them so that they could facilitate His Glory. However, on *Purim* they understood it differently. They appreciated the fact that G-d truly loves them as a father loves a child. It is true that G-d created the world for His glory; however, that was only a means for the Jewish people to be the beneficiaries.

The *Torah* states before the *Sinai* event, “*Moshe* ascended to G-d, and *Hashem* called to him from the mountain saying, ‘So shall you say to the House of *Yaakov* and relate to the Children of Israel. You have seen what I did to Egypt, and I have borne you on the wings of eagles and brought you to Me.” *Rashi* cites *Chazal*, “G-d said, ‘This is something that is not part of your tradition.... I am not proving it through the testimony of witnesses, but rather you witnessed yourselves what I did to Egypt. They were already liable for many sins even before they afflicted you (the Three Cardinal Sins in addition to others), but I did not bring retribution upon them until they engaged with you.”

It is obvious and clear that G-d had demonstrated His unlimited love for the Jewish people before the *Sinai* event. If G-d only punished the Egyptians because they had afflicted His children, and subsequently He gathered millions of Jews in a moment for the exodus (which is the equivalent of bringing them out on the wings of eagles) one would think that this is a sufficient demonstration of G-d’s love for the Jewish people. If so, why did they need to experience G-d’s love on *Purim* in order to reaffirm their acceptance of the *Torah* out of love?

The *Torah* tells us that the first of the Ten commandments states, “I am *Hashem*, your G-d Who has taken you out of the land of Egypt...” *Ramban* asks, “Why does G-d identify Himself as the One who had taken the Jewish people out of Egypt?” One would think that He should have identified Himself as the One who Created the World. Although G-d is the Creator, He wants the Jewish people to understand that they are the only reason that Creation has value.

G-d identifies Himself as the One who had taken them out of Egypt to emphasize that their relationship with Him is intimate and personal. They should not regard themselves as subjects who have a relationship with the Creator, but rather, children who have been saved by their Father who loves them. By understanding G-d in this context, the Jew will be motivated to serve Him out of love. *Purim* was an irrefutable demonstration of G-d’s love for the Jewish people because He intervened on their behalf although they may not have been deserving. He only did so because of his unlimited love for them.

## **Acknowledgement is not Indebtedness**

The *Torah* tells us that after *Moshe* had shared with *Yisro* his father in law, every aspect of the miracles that the Jewish people had experienced in Egypt and the splitting of the Sea, *Yisro* responded, “*Baruch Hashem!* – Blessed is *Hashem*, Who has rescued you from the hand of Egypt...” The *Gemara* in Tractate *Sanhedrin* tells us that although *Moshe* and the Jewish people were the direct beneficiaries of the revealed miracles of the exodus, they did not say “*Baruch Hashem!*” as *Yisro* had done. As the *Gemara* states, “We learned in the name of *Rav Papius*, ‘It is something unbecoming (and a blemish on their record) that *Moshe* and the 600,000 Jewish males above the age of 20 who left Egypt did not say ‘*Baruch* (Blessed *Hashem*)’ while *Yisro* said ‘*Baruch*.’”

After witnessing the splitting of the Sea, the Jewish people acknowledged G-d by declaring, “This is my G-d and I will exalt Him...” *Chazal* tell us, that G-d’s Presence was so palpable that the lowly maidservant was privy to a level of revelation that even the prophet *Yechezkel* was not. In the song of the Sea the Jewish people articulated and acknowledged every aspect of what they had witnessed.

If they had articulated in such detail all the good that G-d had done for them, why is it a claim against the Jewish people that they did not say “*Baruch Hashem*?” Seemingly, acknowledging G-d in such a level of detail that they had done should be considered the equivalent of declaring “*Baruch Hashem*.”

The *Gemara* in Tractate *Sanhedrin* tells us that *Chizkiyahu*, the king of Judah was qualified to be *Moshiach* and *Sancherev*, the Assyrian king and his armies were meant to be the *Armageddon*, (*gog umagog*). However, this did not come about. The *Gemara* tells us that *Sancherev*, the Assyrian king came upon Jerusalem and the Temple with millions of soldiers with the intent to destroy it. In order not to distract *Chizkiyahu* and the Jewish people from their *Torah* studies, G-d instructed the archangel *Gabriel* (the angel of Justice) to “sharpen his sickle.” That night, the entire camp of *Sancherev* was destroyed in an instant.

The miracle that had taken place was in the merit of the *Torah* study of king *Chizkiyahu* and the Jewish people. Although G-d wanted to designate *Chizkiyahu* as *Moshiach* because of what he had accomplished within himself and the Jewish people, the Attribute of Justice claimed that he was not qualified. The claim against him was that after being a beneficiary of a miracle of such magnitude, how could have *Chizkiyahu* not have said *shira* (praise to G-d)? He should have sung the praises of G-d just as *Moshe* and the Jewish people had done after the splitting of the Sea. It was because of this failing that *Chizkiyahu* was disqualified.

Although based on the Attribute of Mercy, *Chizkiyahu* was qualified to be *Moshiach*, the Attribute of Justice contested that decision. *Chizkiyahu* should have sung the praises of G-d for the miracle that had taken place, but he did not. If it is so obvious that after such a great miracle one should sing the praises of G-d why did *Chizkiyahu* not do so?

When *Chizkiyahu* became aware of the miracle that G-d had performed on behalf of the Jewish people while they were engaged in *Torah* study, he was not overwhelmingly impressed. He was at a level where it was evident that G-d dominates all existence. It was obvious to him, due to his emersion in *Torah*, that if one was so engrossed in *Torah* it is understood that G-d would provide all that is necessary. Thus, he did not feel the need to sing His praises. However, this does not reflect well upon him because, although from his perspective it was something obvious due to his immersion in *Torah*; however, to the world who has no understanding it should have been articulated.

Although the Jewish people had regressed to become idolaters in Egypt, after witnessing the splitting of the Sea and what followed (the destruction of the Egyptian armies) they sang the praises to G-d and articulated every aspect of His involvement in that event. They did not however articulate “*Baruch Hashem*,” which is a demonstration of their thanks to G-d. The fact that *Moshe* and the entire Jewish people did not do so is something unbecoming for them. We see that although one may acknowledge how wonderful and special G-d is for what He provides, if one does not thank Him through the articulation of “*Baruch Hashem*” the acknowledgement of His Omnipotence.



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