

Parshas Nasso

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1. What is Truly a Blessing?

There is a Positive Commandment for the Kohanim (Priests) to bless the Jewish people. The priestly blessings are comprised of three berachos (blessings). The first is, “May Hashem bless you and watch over you.” Rashi explains, “May Hashem bless you” means that one’s possessions should be blessed and that “(Hashem) should watch over you” so that thieves should not steal that which was given. When a master gives a gift to his servant, he cannot guarantee that it will not be stolen. However, Hashem endows the Jewish people (His servants) with blessing and assures them that it will remain with them.

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh offers several other interpretations regarding the first blessing of the Kohanim. One is that Hashem should give such abundant blessing to the Jew that he would need protection so it should not be taken from him. A poor person for example does not require protection from thieves because he has nothing to steal. Another interpretation is, “Hashem should bless you with material wealth and this abundance should not have a negative effect on you.” When one has wealth, he is more susceptible to succumbing to the evil inclination. Thus, the blessing is that Hashem should protect the Jewish people from these pitfalls.

The ultimate example of blessing that was given to the Jewish people was the Manna (wafer-like food that sustained the Jewish people throughout the forty years in the desert). The Manna assumed the taste, texture and nutritional value of any food that one wanted, thus causing the Jewish people to be nourished and sated. They always had sufficient Manna regardless of the volume that they had collected. The Manna caused blessing “in their innards.” Another miracle of the Manna was that since it was absorbed in the inner organs, there was no need for bodily functions. However, the all-encompassing blessing was that the Jewish people did not need to be preoccupied with providing and preparing nourishment for themselves. Thus, they could be singularly focused on their spirituality.

Similarly, the Torah tells us that Hashem blessed the lechem ha’panim (showbread that was contained on the holy table of the Sanctuary). The Kohanim would divide the showbread every Shabbos amongst themselves during the daytime. When the Kohen would receive a portion that was as miniscule as a pea, he would be sated. After the passing of Shimon HaTzaddik (who officiated as the High Priest during the Second Temple for a period of forty years), the Mishna tells us that a curse went into the lechem ha’panim and it was no longer able to satiate the Kohanim to a greater degree than ordinary food. Thus, the effect of beracha (blessing) is that the intrinsic qualitative value has the effect of more, although it is less.

Every day we pray to Hashem in the closing of the morning blessings, “Accustom us to Your Torah and attach us to Your mitzvos and do not allow us to be disgraced or be subjected to tests.” Seemingly, we are making several requests- to be accustomed to Torah and not to be disgraced or tested. Another way to understand this is as one request: “Accustom us to Your Torah and attach us to Your mitzvos so that we should have an appreciation for spirituality to understand what is correct and thus not be disgraced and not tempted.” If one is accustomed to Torah and attached to mitzvos, he will not be tested – just as one who sees and understands the destructive effect of fire will not be tempted to

engage with it. One only transgresses when he believes and feels that what he is doing is not necessarily to his detriment. Therefore, we ask Hashem to “accustom us to His Torah and attach us to His mitzvos” to such a degree that there will not be a basis to be tested or disgraced.

Rabbeinu Peretz, (one of the Tosafists), explains that the Sandak (the one who holds the newborn child on his lap) at the time of the Bris (Circumcision) merits wealth just as it was merited by the Kohen who participated in the incense offering. The Gemara in Tractate Yomah tells us that the Kohanim would draw lots in order to determine which one would participate in the incense offering. Once a Kohen had participated, he was no longer allowed to be involved in its process until all of the other Kohanim had taken their turn. The reason each one must be given a chance to participate is that whoever did so became wealthy. Therefore, a Kohen who had already participated in the offering must give another Kohen the opportunity to become wealthy.

Rav Yechezkel Landau zt'l in his responsa Nodah B'Yehudah has difficulty with the position of Rabbeinu Peretz for two reasons. Firstly, we see that the Rav of a community officiates as the Sandak at all of the brissim (circumcisions) of the same family without offering the opportunity to others. Secondly, we have not seen these community rabbis becoming wealthy. Thus, Rav Landau concludes that there is no correlation between officiating as Sandak and participating in the incense offering.

Chasam Sofer zt'l in his responsa responds to the difficulties posed by Rav Yechezkel Landau zt'l. The fact that the Rav of the community repeatedly officiates as Sandak does not refute the position of Rabbeinu Peretz- because the Rav of the community is the equivalent of the High Priest (Kohen Gadol). Just as the Kohen Gadol was able to repeatedly take any service for himself without entering into the lottery system (even regarding the incense), so too can the Rav of a community because of his special status.

Secondly, regarding the difficulty that we do not see the people who officiate as Sandak becoming wealthy is not a basis for refutation. If one merits great wealth and at the same time has a spiritual debt from a previous transgression, he deserves to have the wealth that he received to be taken from him in order to atone for his failing. What would one prefer – to be given the wealth, experience the benefit of the gift and subsequently have it taken from him (causing him anguish), or not to receive the wealth at all and have his spiritual debt be satisfied (without experiencing loss/anguish)? The obvious choice would be the latter, to protect the person from experiencing the pain of loss. Even during the time of the Temple when the incense offering gave the Kohen the opportunity to become wealthy, if that Kohen was deserving of punishment (that would cause him to lose his wealth), Hashem would simply have one offset the other. The reason the Rabbis do not become wealthy despite their participation as Sandak is because there are mitigating factors, which do not allow the wealth to be experienced.

We pray to Hashem to give us blessing and simultaneously we ask Him not to test us. If receiving material blessing is the cause of temptation then our requests are contradictory. Perhaps it is in one's best interest not to receive wealth. Therefore, the blessing of the Kohanim is vital to the success and the advancement of the Jewish people. Their blessing is that Hashem should favor us with material wealth and watch over us so that it does not become a cause of temptation. When we pray to Hashem to grant us specific things, we should also ask Him not to respond to our request if it is not in our best interest.

The Mishna in Tractate Berachos tells us, “If a person prays to Hashem that He should have mercy on him as He has mercy on the nest of the mother bird (one is only permitted

to take the eggs or the chicks after the mother bird is sent away), he should be silenced.” The Vilna Gaon zt”l explains that the reason one is silenced is because such a request is actually a curse. The mother bird after being sent away (knowing that her offspring are being taken) finds the nearest body of water to take her own life in order to relieve her intense pain.

Thus, when one prays to Hashem, he should only pray for something that is in his best interest.

2. Taking the Abstract and Turning it into Reality

The Torah tells us that if a woman had been forewarned by her husband not to sequester herself with another man and she subsequently defies his warning, the woman assumes the status of a sotah (a suspected adulteress) until proven otherwise. A woman who commits adultery is forbidden to her husband. Since it is unknown what had transpired during the time of seclusion, the only verification that can determine if she is truly an adulteress or not is through administering the mai sotah (water given to the sotah to drink). When the suspected adulteress claims her innocence, and the husband is interested in continuing his relationship with her, he must verify her innocence. He must take his wife to the Kohen at the Temple Mount to drink the mai sotah (the water into which the writ of the Sotah was obliterated). If in fact the woman had committed adultery, the water (upon entering into her body) would cause her belly to swell and bloat to a point when every vein in her body burst and her lower extremities became dismembered. However if the woman is found to be innocent, she will conceive if she was barren; previously if she had ugly children, she would bear beautiful children from this point on.

The Torah juxtaposes the portion of the nazir to the portion of the sotah. A nazir is one who has vowed to be a nazerite and is not permitted to partake of wine, cut his hair, or contaminate himself with the dead. The Gemara in Tractate Nazir asks, “What is the significance of the juxtaposition of these two portions?” The Gemara answers, “To teach us that if a person had witnessed the demise of the adulteress as a result of drinking the mai sotah one should accept upon himself nazeritehood.” It is important to note that the relationship, which precipitated the tragic end of the sotah, began with only socializing over a glass of wine. Thus, understanding the far-reaching negative consequences of wine, one should enter into a state of nazeritehood, which does not allow him to drink wine or even eat of the grape or any of its derivatives.

One would think that witnessing such obvious Divine retribution, as the gruesome demise of the sotah, would be sufficient to cause a person to be vigilant and act responsibly regarding his own behavior. Nevertheless, the Torah suggests that although one had witnessed the tragic end of the sotah, one should accept upon himself nazeritehood to fully appreciate the negative consequences of drinking wine. Why is witnessing the demise of the sotah in itself not sufficient to cause the person to assume the necessary precautions to prevent such an occurrence from repeating itself? {Ramban explains that even at the time of the Second Bais HaMikdash (the Second Temple) when there were no longer revealed miracles, the miracle of the sotah was still in effect for the purpose of guaranteeing and maintaining the purity of the Jewish People.}

The Midrash tells us that the maidservant who witnessed the splitting of the Sea experienced a level of revelation that even the Prophet Yechezkel did not experience. Nevertheless, after the miraculous event of the Sea, the maidservant remained a maidservant. She was not in anyway transformed or impacted by her experience, whereas Yechezkel internalized his prophetic experiences in a manner that caused him to be the

great prophet Yechezkel.

The Torah and Chazal are teaching us that even if one witnesses divine retribution in the most obvious way, such as the demise of the sotah, it is not sufficient to leave an indelible impression upon him to be vigilant in this area. One must actualize and concretize that feeling of inspiration, which one gains from that event. If one does not actualize his inspiration, it will quickly dissipate and fade into the recesses of one's memory. Thus, the Torah tells us in order for this experience to have an everlasting effect on an individual, he must accept upon himself the state of nazeritehood. For example, when people visit Eretz Yisroel and experience spiritual stirrings such as when visiting the Kosel (Western Wall) and other holy sites, if one does not actualize those feelings by committing oneself to some aspect of Torah Judaism they will fade into oblivion as if they were never experienced.

The Jewish people received the Torah at Sinai and heard the Voice of G-d. They had experienced the miracles of Egypt and witnessed the Splitting of the Sea. They had accepted the Torah unequivocally with the declaration of "Naaseh V'nishmah – we will do and we will listen." This declaration caused a Heavenly Voice to say, "who revealed this secret to My children?" However, after Moshe ascended to heaven and did not return at the time that they expected, they engaged in the Sin of the Golden Calf. How is it possible to engage in idolatry after having reached the 49th level of spiritual purity?

Since the Jewish people did not actualize what they had experienced, they were susceptible to failure. They did not yet have the Torah or the mitzvos. If a Jew does not have mitzvos, which enable him to actualize his feelings of spirituality, then it is only a question of time before he will go astray.

Every day we pray to Hashem that He should "Give us the ability to study, disseminate, retain, and to do His Torah." One would think that if one studies, disseminates, and retains Torah that he would observe it as well. Evidently, it is not as simple as it seems. One needs to pray to Hashem to do His Will because until one actualizes his beliefs/studies by the performance of mitzvos, they will not yet have left an indelible impression upon him.

It is interesting to note that there is no aspect of our lives that is not governed by mitzvos. For example, as the Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that one is not permitted to benefit from this world without first reciting a blessing. For example, one recites a blessing before eating or drinking, which acknowledges Hashem for creating that particular food or drink. However, that acknowledgement does not affect the person until he partakes of the food item.

When we are inspired to learn Torah we should not delay, but rather actualize that feeling immediately by doing. By immediately actualizing one's inspiration, it will become concretized and have an ever-lasting effect. However if one does not actualize his inspiration, it will eventually dissipate regardless of how strong it was initially.

3. How One Structures His Own Spirituality

The Torah tells us that every day throughout a twelve-day period, the prince of each tribe (Nassee) brought gifts in honor of the inauguration of the Mishkan. The Torah delineates each of the gifts and offerings. Regarding the first Nassee (Prince) the Torah states, "The one who brought his offering on the first day was Nachshon ben Amminadav, of the tribe of Yehudah. His offering was..." Regarding the second Nassee, who was from the tribe of Yissachar, the Torah states, "On the second day, Nethanel ben Zuar offered, the prince

(nasee) of Yissachar...”

There are a number of observations to address in these two verses. Firstly, the Torah predicates each name of each prince with the appellation of “nasee (prince)” except for Nachshon ben Amminadav, the prince of the tribe of Yehudah. In addition, regarding Nachshon, the Torah repeats the term “korban – his offering”; this repetition seems superfluous. Another observation pertains to the second prince, Nethanel ben Zuar, from the tribe of Yissachar. The Torah mentions the appellation “nasee” after his name rather than before it as with all the other princes. How do we understand this?

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that there are two types of korban – the physical offering that is brought by the individual and the korban haNe’elam (concealed korban). The concealed korban reflects the merits and good deeds of the person who is bringing the offering. When one brings his offering, he is not only presenting the physical offering but also presenting his own spiritual uniqueness, which is based on his actions. The offering is considered something very special because it is enhanced by the individual’s spirituality.

The tribe of Yehudah was the most prestigious of all the tribes. They represent malchus (royalty), leadership and Torah. Nachshon was the most unique among all the princes because of his own spiritual accomplishments. In addition, he personified the characteristic of the tribe of Yehudah, which was malchus. The Torah identifies the leader of each tribe as nasee (prince) in order for one to take note of that person. Nachshon, on the other hand, did not need any level of introduction because of his own special dimension of person.

When Nachshon brought his physical korban it was complemented by his spiritual accomplishments and merits (korban haNe’elam). This is why the Torah repeats the term “korbanos - his offering” in order to indicate Nachshon’s special spirituality.

The tribe of Yissachar represents Torah study and scholarship at the most advanced level and is thus considered one of the most prestigious tribes. Although Nethanel ben Zuar was not at the level of Nachshon ben Amminadav, the Torah chooses to introduce him first by name and only afterwards identifies his status as “nasee”. The reason for this is to indicate that Nethanel also possessed a spiritual uniqueness; however, he was not at the level of Nachshon. Therefore, the term “nasee” follows his name to indicate that his title is considered secondary to whom he was as a person.

The psalm of Ashrei states, “Hashem is close to all who call upon Him- to all who call upon Him b’emmes (sincerely/with truth).” Simply, one could understand this to mean that Hashem is close to those who call out to Him with sincerity. However, this verse can also be understood to mean, “Hashem is close to those who approach Him with emmes (truth).” Meaning, if a person possesses emmes then Hashem will respond to his request. Hashem takes into account not only the sincerity of one’s prayer but also the spiritual worthiness of the individual who is making the request. Although one must approach Hashem at the time of tefillah (prayer) like a needy person (as it is ruled in the Shulchan Aruch - Code of Jewish Law), that is not necessarily sufficient for one’s prayers to be answered. One must possess the characteristic of emmes and also Torah (which is emmes – as King Salomon states in Mishlei, “acquire truth and do not sell it.”) to be worthy of Hashem’s response.

When one approaches Hashem with tefillah or a korban, Hashem takes into account the korban haNe’elam (concealed korban) which is the individual’s spiritual standing. Only G-d knows the level of one’s korban haNe’elam.

Ramban explains that although the gifts given by the Neseim were identical, the Torah continuously repeats them for each of the twelve princes. The reason for this is that each of the gifts was infused with the unique intent of the prince who presented them. Each had its own spiritual make-up, reflecting that characteristic of the individual tribe. Therefore, although in the physical sense the gifts were identical, they were worlds apart because of their individualized spiritual dimension.

If two Jews perform the identical mitzvah - is the spiritual structure of the mitzvah identical? Alternatively, does each person infuse his mitzvah with his own uniqueness thus causing it to take on a different spiritual structure? We are able to extrapolate from the gifts that were given by the Neseim. Although they were identical in the material sense, each of their gifts is identified as unique and individualized because of the intent with which they were infused. Even regarding the same individual, if one performs a mitzvah with a greater level of intensity and subsequently regresses and performs it at a lesser level, the two mitzvos that were performed take on their own, unique, spiritual structure.

4. What are the Necessary Amenities of Life?

Rambam in Hilchos Deos (The Laws of Pertaining to Character and Behavior) writes,

“One could say that since jealousy, desire, and honor are the things which take a person out of this world (destroy a person in the physical and spiritual sense), one should distance himself from them to an extreme level by denying himself meat and wine, by not living in a pleasant home, and by not wearing esthetically pleasing/comfortable clothing. Rather one should wear sackcloth or clothing made of hard wool (that lacerates the skin) similar to the garments worn by the priests of idolatry. However, to conduct oneself in this manner is not the proper path. It is forbidden to deny oneself to this degree.

As the Torah states regarding the nazir (who denies himself wine and grape products), “He has sinned against himself (his essence).” The Rabbis say, “If the nazir who only denied himself wine requires atonement, how much more atonement would one require if he denied himself the necessities of life.” Therefore, the Rabbis tell us that one should only deny himself those things, which are not permitted by the Torah. One should not impose vows and oaths upon himself to deny those things, which are permitted to him. As the Rabbis say, “Is it not enough that the Torah prohibits certain things? Does one need to go beyond these prohibitions by denying himself those things which are permitted by the Torah?” Those who are continuously in a state of fasting are not correct in their behavior. The Rabbis prohibited this. Regarding this type of behavior Shlomo HaMelech (King Salomon) said, “Do not make yourself too much of a tzaddik (righteous/devout person). Do not make yourself too wise because you will become desolate.” If a person lives his life in a manner that addresses all of his necessities so he can function and serve G-d, then satisfying all his human, material, needs is considered part of his service of Hashem.”

What is the meaning of Shlomo HaMelech’s statement, “Do not make yourself too much of a tzaddik (righteous/devout person). Do not make yourself too wise because you will become desolate.” If one is accustomed to eating a seven-course meal and limits himself to eating a two-course meal – is that considered becoming too devout? The Torah tells us that there is a Positive Commandment, “You shall make yourself holy.” Chazal explain, “One must sanctify himself with that which is permitted to him.” Seemingly this passage from Chazal is contradictory to the words of Shlomo HaMelech - “Do not make yourself too much of a tzaddik (righteous/devout person).” How do we understand this?

If a person requires six hours of sleep in order to function properly and he decides to sleep only two hours so that he should become more devout, he is acting foolishly. One should not deprive himself those amenities of life which are truly necessary for him to function properly and thus to serve Hashem. This is what is being communicated by the words of Rambam. The Positive Commandment of, “You Shall sanctify yourself from what is permitted to you” is referring to contexts in which engaging in what is permitted is considered excess. Meaning, if something is truly not a necessity, although it may be available, one should refrain from partaking of it. This is the fulfillment of the mitzvah – “You shall sanctify yourself.”

How does one determine what is necessary or what is excessive? If one is at a point that he does not appreciate or understand the value of spirituality and thus denies himself something that he considers a necessity, that person is acting foolishly. In this case, refraining from it will cause him to feel deprived. However, if one has reached the point that he understands where he wants to be and sees the lack of value in so many things, which people pursue, refraining from those areas is considered holiness (Kedushah). Distancing himself from those areas does not cause him to feel denied.

The Gemara in Tractate Kesubos tells us that Reb Yehudah HaNassi (Judah the Prince) - known as Rabbeinu HaKadosh (our Holy Teacher), raised his ten fingers towards heaven before his passing and declared, “I have not benefited from this world as much as my small finger.” Ramchal in his work, Mesillas Yesharim (Path of the Just) explains that although Reb Yehudah HaNassi did not benefit from this world as much as an iota, he did not feel denied or deprived because of his dimension of spirituality.

Reb Yehudah HaNassi is the only person other than Moshe Rabbeinu who is referred to as “Rabbeinu” (our Teacher). He was the redactor of the Oral Law and through his effort, the perpetuation of the Oral Law was guaranteed. Although he was a prince and had every conceivable amenity of life available to him, his involvement in the material was purely for the sake of Hashem’s Glory. Thus, he did not personally benefit from this existence to any degree. The Prophet says, “I (Hashem) have created this world only for My Glory.” Thus, if one utilizes this existence for Hashem’s Glory and not for his own pleasure then it is considered that he did not personally benefit from this existence. One is only permitted to distance himself from the material if it does not distract or cause him to feel denied. Only then is it considered the mitzvah of sanctifying oneself by separating from what is permitted to him. As Shlomo HaMelech tells us in Mishlei (Proverbs), “Its ways (Torah) are pleasant and all its paths are peace.” This is only possible when the person is at a level that the material is not considered a necessity.

5. To Fully Appreciate the Ultimate Partnership (Bamidbar)

The Torah tells us that the Jewish people traveled in the desert as four camps each comprised of three tribes. The camps were positioned in different directions – east, west, north and south. The camp of Yehudah included the tribes of Yisasschar and Zevulun and was the first to travel when the Jews were given the order.

When the Torah tells us the tribes that comprised the camp of Yehudah, it mentions Yisasschar and Zevulun. However rather than saying Yissachar “and” Zevulun, (in Hebrew: Yisasschar v’Zevulun), it states “Yisasschar Zevulun.” This is not the case when the composition of the other camps are mentioned which identifies the tribes with the vav (and) inserted between the names.

Baal HaTurim explains that the reason the Torah does not separate the tribes of Yisasschar

and Zevulun with the letter vav (and) is because the tribe of Zevulun was responsible for the material support of the tribe of Yissachar, who were fully dedicated to Torah study. The Midrash tells us that the tribe of Zevulun, who engaged in commerce, “placed sustenance in the mouth of Yissachar.” It should have said, “Zevulun supported Yissachar.” Why does the Midrash depict the support as “putting the sustenance in the mouth of Yissachar”?

The Prophet refers to the tribe of Yissachar as “those who know time – Yodei eetim.” Meaning their clarity was so advanced that they were able to do mathematical calculations to determine the calendar. The Gemara in Tractate Megillah tells us that when Achashverosh (the king of Persia) sought advice concerning the fate of his wife Vashti after she embarrassed him, he consulted with the members of the tribe of Yissachar because they had such exceptional clarity. The Midrash Tanchuma in the Portion of Vayichi explains that the reason for this was that they had no responsibility whatsoever for their material needs and thus were not distracted at all from their Torah study. Zevulun provided them with every conceivable tangible need.

Zevulun not only provided for Yissachar’s material needs but also they appreciated the value of Yissachar being fully immersed in Torah without having a moment’s distraction. Because Zevulun appreciated the value of Torah to such a degree, they went to every length to ensure that Yissachar was provided for without distractions. This is the meaning of the Midrash cited by Baal HaTurim, which states, “Zevulun placed the food in the mouth of Yissachar.” The Torah does not use the letter vav (and) to separate Yissachar and Zevulun in order to indicate that they are the equivalent of one tribe with each individual being responsible for another’s existence – both material/spiritual. This was the ultimate partnership.

The Torah tells us that there is a Positive Commandment to “love your fellow Jew as you love yourself.” When one values and loves his fellow as himself, he sees his fellow’s need as his own. Thus, there is no separation from one Jew and his fellow just as Yissachar and Zevulun were not separated. Although each of the twelve tribes had their own uniqueness and ability, they are viewed as one people.

Similarly, every Jew has his own ability and uniqueness. Despite this uniqueness, the Jewish people must be united as one. This can only be achieved when each values the other’s individuality and ability like the tribes of Yisasschar and Zevulun.

6. The Relevance of Torah to the Jewish people (Bamidbar)

The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos tells us that after Moshe received the Torah, satan asked Hashem, “Master of the Universe, where is the Torah? It is no longer in heaven.” Hashem responded, “I gave it to the earthly existence.” When Hashem informed him that the Torah was in the earthly realm, satan continued his search by asking the angel of the earth and the angel of the sea, “Where is the Torah?” They both responded that they did not have the Torah. Satan returned to Hashem and asked, “I asked the earth and the sea and they responded that they did not have the Torah. Where is the Torah?” Hashem responded, “I gave it to ben Amram (the son of Amram - Moshe).” Hearing this, satan approached Moshe and asked him if he had the Torah. Moshe responded, “Do you think that I am worthy to receive G-d’s Torah? Who am I?” Hashem said to Moshe, “You spoke untruthfully to satan. I gave you the Torah.” Moshe responded, “Master of the Universe, Your hidden treasure in which you have great pleasure when You engage in it every day, -what relevance do I have to it? Who am I that I should have Your Torah?” Hashem said to Moshe, “Because you belittled yourself (you have spoken with extreme

humility), the Torah will be identified with you – as it stated in the verse, “The Torah of Moshe My servant.” How do we understand various dialogues that transpired?

Maharsha explains in his commentary, since the verse states, “The Torah is broader than the earth and deeper than the ocean,” Satan had difficulty understanding how is it possible that the Torah (which is unending in every sense of the word) could have relevance to the earthly realm, which is finite and limited. Satan approached the angel of the earth and the angel of the sea to try to understand how the Torah could have relevance to the earthly domain, which is a finite existence. When Satan approached Moshe, he responded that he has no relevance to Torah. Since Torah is broader than existence and deeper than the sea, how could man –who is limited have relevance to the Torah?

Chazal tell us that every day of the week has a “mate.” For example, the mate of the first day of the week is the second day of the week and mate of the third day is the fourth day, etc. The Midrash asks, “Who is the mate of the seventh day (Shabbos) [which is the odd number]?” Hashem said that the Jewish people are the “mate” of the day of Shabbos (the seventh day). How do we understand the commonality and relevance of the Jewish people to the Shabbos? The seventh day of the week is a 24-hour period, which is identical to all the other days of the week. However, the seventh day, which is Shabbos, has an innate spirituality, which is equated by the Talmud to the world to come, “A semblance of the world to come” that cannot be quantified.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos (Ethics of our Fathers) tells us that one of the miracles of the first Temple Period was that the Jewish people would stand pressed together in the Sanctuary. However when it came time for them to prostrate themselves there was sufficient room to accommodate them. Within the physical context, this is something which is an impossibility and something that the human mind cannot comprehend or process to any degree. It is important to note that the walls of the Sanctuary did not expand. How is it possible that the same location, which could barely contain them while standing, accommodated them while they were prostrated? Although the Bais HaMikdash was a physical location, its value and significance was spiritual and thus had an unlimited capability. Although Shabbos is a period comprised of 24 hours, its inherent value and significance is spiritual. It is a semblance of the world to come, and thus its capacity is unlimited.

The Jewish people, although they are physical beings, have a spiritual essence. Therefore, their capacity is unlimited. The Torah, which is broader than the earth and deeper than the sea, cannot be contained within physical existence, which is finite. However, the Torah was not given to the world at large. It was given to the Jewish people whose essence is unlimited. Satan did not fully comprehend this reality.

Hashem told Satan to go to “ben Amram – Moshe” because He had given the Torah to him. Moshe Rabbeinu was the spiritual equivalent of the entire Jewish people. Satan could not relate to the fact that one man could be the equivalent of the entire Jewish people. Moshe’s dimension of spirituality was unlimited. When Moshe responded and said, “Who am I to merit G-d’s Torah” he was highlighting the fact that as a mere mortal/limited being he has no relevance to the unlimited Torah. By negating himself as a limited physical being, he assumed a spiritual status of infinite dimension, thus giving him the capacity to have relevance to the unlimited spirituality of the Torah.