

Yad Avraham Institute
Weekly Torah Commentaries Series
The Portion of
Bamidbar

May 29, 2008

Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita

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About the Yad Avraham Institute

The Yad Avraham is a Torah learning institute located in midtown Manhattan. Classes are offered every day during the week starting at 5:50am and throughout the day. Classes in Chumash, Halacha, Hashkofa, Gemara, and general topics are well attended by businessmen, professionals, and students. The Yad Avraham invites you to participate in our extensive offerings of classes and events.

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Yad Avraham Institute
New York
May 29, 2008

B"H

Bamidbar

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

Dean

1. The Jewish People, Reflecting G'd's Unity

The Torah states, "**G'd spoke to Moshe... Count the children of Levy...**" The tribe of Levi was not to be counted along with the Jewish people, but rather, they were to be counted separately. The Midrash states, "The tribe of Levi is more beloved to G'd than all of the other tribes. As it states in the Prophet Samuel, 'I (G'd) chose him from all of the tribes to be the Priest and ascend My Altar, to bring the incense offering, and to wear the breastplate...' G'd had created the days of existence and chose one of them to be the most special. As it states, 'G'd created days but to Him there was one.' Which one was this? Reb Levi says, 'It is the Shabbos.' G'd had created years, but one of them is the most special to Him. This the Sabbatical year. As it states, 'It shall be a Shabbos for G'd.' G'd created multiples of seven years and one of them is the most special to Him. This is the Jubilee year. G'd created lands. He chose one of them for Himself. This is the Land of Israel. As it states in the Book of Yoel, "He seeks it out continuously." G'd created the heavens and He chose one of them...G'd created seventy root nations of the world, but He chose one of them. As it states, 'G'd chose them to be His people.' Why did He choose the Jewish people to be His? It is because He loved them the most. As it states, 'He loved them...' G'd created twelve tribes, but he chose one of them. This is the tribe of Levi. It is because they were the most beloved to Him."

It is interesting to note that the primary basis for G'd choosing the Jewish people to be His, is because they were the most beloved to Him. Chazal do not tell us that it is because the Jewish people were the most dedicated of all nations that they were chosen, rather it was out of love that they were chosen. It is understood that their unique level of dedication and sacrifice for G'd allowed them to be the most beloved; however, Chazal emphasize the fact that they were chosen out of love.

We recite in the Amidah (Silent Prayer) of the Holidays and Festivals, "You have chosen us from all the nations; You loved us and found favor in us..." On a simple reading, one would see the two statements as being separate. Meaning, G'd chose the Jewish people and loved them. However, based on the Midrash cited, the passage is understood to mean, "You have chosen us...(because) You loved us..."

According to the Midrash, although G'd created many aspects of existence, in many classifications of creation, He chose one to be considered special to Him. As we see demonstrated through the Shabbos, Sabbatical Year, the Jubilee year, and the Jewish people etc. G'd has greater relevance to something that reflects His own characteristic of unity (*echad*). G'd is one and the Jewish people reflect that unity/uniqueness. As it states in the Amidah of the Shabbos, "You (G'd) are One. Your Name is One. And who is like the Jewish people who are one people in the land?"

Although G'd cannot be quantified, nevertheless the appellation of "*echad*" (unity) has relevance to Him. The Jewish people, through their unique spiritual make up, reflect that characteristic. It is because they reflect G'd's unity that they are the most beloved of all the nations. The Torah tells us that there is a Positive Commandment to believe in the unity of G'd (*yichud Hashem*). As we say in the Shema, "**Hear, O Israel: Hashem is our G'd, Hashem is One.**" This is the declaration of the unity of G'd that the Jew is obliged to make twice a day (morning and evening).

There is a positive commandment "**to walk in His ways...**" Meaning, the Jew is obligated to emulate G'd's characteristics through his own behavior. By assuming G'd's characteristics as the Gemara states, "Just as G'd is merciful, you shall be merciful. As He is gracious, you shall be gracious, etc." one is considered to be walking in G'd's ways. Why is it incumbent upon the Jew to reflect G'd's characteristics? Why must this be included among

the other dictates of the Torah? We see that the objective of observing the mitzvos of the Torah is not simply to do G'd's Will but in addition it is to enable the Jew to reflect G'dliness within himself.

Reb Chaim of Volozhin explains in his work *Nefesh HaChaim*, based on the principle of the unity of G'd, that in truth everything in existence in its reality is one with G'd. Creation is not a separate entity from Him. It is only the human being's perception of his own reality that he is separate from Him, through his physicality. Since existence is in fact "echad" (one), with Him, the Jewish people must reflect that unity in their behavior by emulating His characteristics. When doing so, the Jewish people become testament to the fact that everything is "one."

2. True Leadership

The Torah states, **"Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness of Sinai..."** The Midrash says, "G'd said to the Jewish people, 'You are the generation that witnessed the Word of G'd. Yet you came with a claim against Moshe saying: Why did you take us up out of Egypt to die in the desert?' Did I treat you as if you were in a desert? If a mortal king were to go out into the desert, does he have the tranquility and comfort of his own palace? Does he have the same amount of food and drink available to him? In the desert, I accommodated you with a setting that is the equivalent of a palace. With Clouds of Glory, I took you out of Egypt where you were slaves to Pharaoh. In addition, I gave you three redeemers who accommodated your needs...In the merit of Moshe, you were provided with the Manna. In the merit of Aaron, you were provided with the Clouds of Glory... In the merit of Miriam, who sang praises at the Sea, you were provided with the wellspring."

We see from the Midrash that the primary characteristic of a leader of the Jewish people, is that he must be able to accommodate their needs. One's ability to address the needs of the people is dependent on one's merits. Moshe, who was the most special Jew who ever lived, had a unique level of merit and was therefore able to facilitate the sustenance of the Jewish people with the Manna. The necessity of the Manna was more than maintaining their physicality. It was integral to their spiritual evolution in order for them to have the capacity to receive and process the Torah at Sinai to its fullest. As it states in Chazal, "The Torah was only given to those who consumed the Manna." There is a direct correlation

between the receiving of the Torah and the consumption of the Manna.

Aaron was more than a leader. He also accommodated the needs of the Jewish people. Similarly, Miriam, in here capacity accommodated their needs. It is indicated from the words of Chazal, that her merit to bring about the wellspring is directly attributed to her leading the women in song at the Sea. They had articulated all aspects of what they witnessed at the time of the splitting of the Sea.

The characteristic of a qualified leader of the Jewish people is not limited to his intellect and leadership qualities, but must also have sufficient merit to be deserving of Divine Assistance. The three redeemers that G'd provided to the Jewish people had the capability to accommodate their physical and spiritual needs because of their own spiritual dimension of person.

It is interesting to note that the Midrash, when it discusses the effectiveness of the Clouds of Glory, it states, "It would burn-off all of the brush, snakes, and scorpions that were in the path of the Jewish people as they journeyed in the desert. The smoke that resulted billowed into the sky and was seen at a distance by the kingdoms of Canaan. They were taken aback saying, 'How special are the Jewish people! See how their G'd accommodates them!'" The outgrowth of Aaron's merit further sanctified G'd's Name. The Midrash tells us that the Manna would melt off in the morning and run into the streams. The deer would drink the water from the streams that contained the Manna. When those deer were slaughtered and eaten by the Canaanites, they had a sense of what G'd had provided the Jewish people. They had understood that it was something special. The Manna, that was in the merit of Moshe, also impacted upon the gentile to appreciate G'd's kindness to His Chosen. Chazal tell us that if one looked out upon the Kinneret Sea, one could see a stream moving within its waters. This is the wellspring of Miriam. Again this is a sanctification of G'd's Name because it reveals to all how G'd provides for his people. It was only because Moshe, Aaron, and Miriam had dedicated their lives to G'd, that He provided them with the opportunity that their merit should continue bringing about greater sanctification of His Name, through maintaining the Jewish people in the desert.

3. The Far Reaching Effects of the Jew

The Torah tells us that G'd commanded Moshe to take a census of the Jewish people. Sforno explains,

“Because the Jewish People were meant to enter into the Land immediately, Moshe needed to take a census of them. If it were not for the sin of the spies, they would have entered without delay. However, because they failed they were denied the right to enter into the Land. They perished over a forty-year period and only the future generation was permitted to enter. Initially, the Jewish people would have entered into the Land without resistance from the Canaanite nations. They would have fled from the Land, allowing the Jewish people to settle there...However because of the sin of the spies, the Canaanite nations remained in the Land for an additional 40 years – during which they continued to sin.” Because of their extreme spiritual failing, it was deemed that the Canaanites must be annihilated.

It is interesting to note that the reason there is a Negative Commandment to not allow any of the Canaanite nations to live is only because the Jewish people sinned by believing the false reports of the spies. If they had sufficient faith in G'd they would have rejected the foreboding of the spies and would have entered immediately. It was their lack of faith that created a setting for the Canaanites to spiritually fail to the point of needing to be destroyed. We see that the settings and circumstances are impacted and determined by the behavior of the Jewish people.

The nations of the world were awestruck by the Jewish people after hearing about the miracles that had transpired at the time of the splitting of the Sea. The world stood in trepidation of them and did not consider attacking G'd's people. The Amalekites were not impacted or astounded by the events of the splitting of the Sea and thus attached the Jewish people. Amalek demonstrated to the world that there was no basis to fear the Jewish people. They dispelled the image that the Jew is unapproachable and invincible. Chazal compare this to a scolding bath that everyone is hesitant and afraid to approach out of concern that they would be severely burned. A fool came about and jumped into the extremely hot bath and was scolded. Although he was burned, he cooled the bath for the others to enter. Identically, when the Amalekites attacked the Jewish people, although they were defeated and incapacitated, they dispelled the aura and reverence that the nations of the world had for the Jewish people. The impact of the Jewish people upon the world would no longer be as before the attack. Bilaam, the evil prophet of the nations prophesized, “Because the Amalekites were the first nation to attack the Jewish people, at the end of time they will be consumed.” Since they did not have the capacity to appreciate the revelation that had taken place at the splitting of the Sea, when G'd's Presence was blatant

and obvious, it is a confirmation that they had no capacity to process or appreciate spirituality. Thus, they have no relevance or place at the end of time, when G'd's Glory will be made known to all mankind.

The only reason the Jewish people were vulnerable to the attack of the Amalekites was because of their own spiritual failing that had taken place in Rephidim. The Torah states, “**Amalek came and battled Israel in Rephidim.**” Chazal explain that the reason the Torah identifies the location (Rephidim) of the battle with Amalek is, “Because the Jewish people's involvement in Torah study was not sufficiently intense, rather it was done in a haphazard and laidback manner.” As a result of the Jewish people not being fully spiritualized they were vulnerable to attack. Had the Jewish people not been lackadaisical in their study of Torah, the Amalekites, despite their disregard, disdain, and animosity towards G'd and His people, would not have been able to attack them. If the Jewish people would not have been attacked, the world would have come to a level of clarity to recognize G'd's Glory. However because of the failing of the Jewish people at Rephidim, that level of consecration of G'd's Name did not come about. In essence the Jewish people are fully responsible for the breach that had occurred.

The Torah states regarding Yitzchak's quantification of Yaakov, “**Hakol kol Yaakov v'hayadayim yidei Esav - the voice is the voice of Yaakov and the hands are the hands of Esav.**” Chazal explain this statement to mean that as long as the Jewish people utilize their “voice” as the “voice” of Yaakov (symbolic of Torah study) then they will not be subject to the hands of Esav (the Amalekites were a descendant of Esav). It is only when they are not sufficiently committed to Torah study that they will become vulnerable to the domination of Esav/Amalekites. As the Jewish people can affect existence negatively by sinning, so too can they affect the world positively by adhering to the Torah.

The Torah states, “**Yaakov departed from Beer-sheva and went toward Charan.**” Why is it important for the Torah communicate Yaakov's point of departure when the focus should be the destination to which he is going? Rashi cites the Midrash which states that when a tzaddik is in a location he is its “beauty”, “glory”, and “splendor.” Therefore when he departs from there the beauty, glory, and splendor depart with him. Yaakov's presence in Beer-sheva impacted and affected the community by affording them an exposure to the Divine- thus allowing them to gain clarity.

Chazon Ishe z'tl writes in one of his letters that if a community has people within it that study Torah for its own sake (I'shma) in purity and sanctity, the entire community will be afforded special Divine Assistance and clarity. Therefore it is a great merit to the community to have people within it who are dedicated to the study of Torah. Once again we see that the behavior of the Jew impacts upon all existence.

4. The Mitzvah of Spiritual Procreation

The Torah states, "**These are the offspring of Aaron and Moshe...These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the firstborn was Nadav, and Avihu, Elazar, and Ithamar.**" Although the verse is addressing the offspring of both Aaron and Moshe, it only mentions the sons of Aaron. Moshe's children are not mentioned. It seems from the verse that Aaron's sons are being identified as Moshe's sons. Why is this so? The Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin tells us that we are able to derive from this verse, "When one teaches Torah to his fellow's child, it is as if he gave birth to him." Seemingly, Chazal should have stated, "When one teaches his fellow's child Torah, it is as if he is his son." Why does the Talmud use the expression "it is as if he sired (fathered) the child?"

The appellation of "son" to identify a father's relationship to his child does not have the same connotation as the expression of "siring" a child. The connotation of "giving birth to" communicates the father's involvement from the very beginning of the child's existence. He is responsible for bringing his child into existence. Just as a father's relevance to his own child begins at conception, so too does a teacher who mentors another's child in Torah have a similar relevance to the student. Because Moshe had taught Torah to Aaron's children, it is considered as if Moshe had brought them into being ("gave birth").

The human being is a composite of spiritual and physical. One's spirituality can only be developed through a mechanism known as Torah and mitzvos. All existence was created for the sole purpose of providing the setting for the fulfillment of the Torah. The responsibility was given to the Jewish people. The one who transmits the Torah to his student is the one who is responsible for the development of that aspect/spirituality of his student. Without the mentoring of the teacher through the transmission of Torah, one's spirituality remains unaffected and thus his soul remains dormant. In this context, the soul's only value/function is to maintain life within the physical. This is the reason the Talmud states,

"The evil person, in his living state, is considered dead." His soul has no effective value because the evil person is involved in physical pursuits. The soul only has meaning and value if its needs are addressed, which can only be facilitated through the study of Torah and performance of mitzvos. Thus, whoever mentors/teaches his fellow's child in Torah, giving life and meaning (soul) to his spirituality, it is as if he had given birth to him.

The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos cites a verse from Psalms, "The dead are no longer able to praise G'd." The Gemara tells us that one should engage in Torah study and mitzvos before passing away because death will cause him to become detached from Torah and mitzvos - and G'd will no longer have praise from him. The Gemara is telling us that a Jew brings "praise" to G'd only through his study of Torah and performance of mitzvos. When the Jew engages properly in Torah and mitzvos, he is fulfilling the words of the Prophet who states in the name of G'd- "For My Glory I have created it (the world)." The purpose of existence is only to give glory to G'd.

If the Jew does not engage in Torah study and mitzvos, the objective and purpose of existence is not being addressed. Consequently, G'd's relevance to the world is limited just as the soul has limited affect on the body without Torah and mitzvos. It is interesting to note that the Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that there is a commonality between G'd's relationship to the world and the soul's relationship to the body.

Since the soul only assumes its potential through the *melamed* (Torah mentor), it is as though the mentor gave birth to his student. Reb Chaim of Volozhin z'tl, who was the main disciple of the Vilna Gaon z'tl, and the founder of the world-renowned Yeshiva of Volozhin, was once in a community away from his city. He was approached by an individual who asked, "What is your vocation?" Reb Chaim humbly responded, "I am a melamed." During that period of Jewish history, the term "melamed (teacher)" had a pejorative connotation, which meant that a person had limited capabilities and was only qualified to teach young children. Later, this individual discovered that he had spoken to Reb Chaim of Volozhin the world-renowned Torah sage. This individual again approached Reb Chaim and said, "When I had asked you about your occupation, you responded that you were a simple melamed. Why did you not divulge your true dimension of person - that you were the *rosh yeshiva* of Volozhin?" Reb Chaim of Volozhin responded, "We conclude the first blessing which we recite before the study of Torah - Blessed are You, Hashem, Who teaches (*hamelamed*) Torah to His people Israel. If G'd identifies

Himself as a "melamed" - should I not consider it the greatest honor to be identified as such?"

G'd is identified as the "melamed." Thus if one teaches his fellow G'd's Torah with the emphasis on advancing the individual's spirituality and fulfilling the purpose of creation, then he too is a "melamed." However, if one were to teach the Torah for the sake of transmitting Jewish intellectualism, he is not considered the one who brought that student into existence because it will not develop the spirituality of that individual. It is only if the Torah is communicated as the Word of G'd that it functions as the mechanism that perfects the recipient's soul. This is the reason the Gemara specifically uses the term - "one who is a *melamed* of Torah to the child of his fellow, it is as if he had given birth to him." It is only in this context that he is identified as fathering that child.

5. The Profoundness of Man's Image (from Bechukosai)

The Torah states, **"If you will follow My Statutes and observe My Commandments..."** The Midrash states, "G'd said to the Jewish people, 'If you will follow My Statutes and observe My Commandments, I will leave the upper levels of existence and I will dwell amongst you.' The reason the Jewish people were taken out of Egypt was for them to be able to build the Mishkan to be the dwelling location for the Divine Presence...G'd said, 'If you do My Will, My Divine Presence will not be removed from you.' Why is this so? Just as G'd has an abode in the heavens, G'd wanted a dwelling place on the terrestrial level." Chazal tell us that the reason the Jewish people left Egypt was so that they should receive the Torah at Sinai. However, this Midrash reveals to us, based on the verses it cites, that G'd redeemed the Jewish people from Egypt so that they should build the Mishkan to be His dwelling place amongst them. How do we reconcile these two statements of Chazal?

The Jewish people can only have a relationship with G'd is if they adhere to the precepts of the Torah. They need to be sufficiently spiritualized in order to for them to have the capacity to accommodate the Divine Presence. Thus, the receiving of the Torah at Sinai was a pre-requisite and a means for the Jewish people to be able to achieve the ultimate, which is having G'd in their midst. The Mishkan, was a temporary location for the Divine Presence. G'd's ultimate location on earth was to be in the Land of Israel. As the verse states, "I have not come yet to the portion and the resting place..."

It is interesting to note that when G'd created Man, He did so in His image and form. As it states in the Portion of Bereishis, **"Let us make Man in Our image, in our form."** The physical make up of man was created to be a reflection of his spiritual infrastructure. Thus, every aspect of the human being was created to be a reflection of G'd Himself. By establishing that commonality, man becomes the receptacle for G'd's Presence. However, if man violates the Torah and rejects G'd, then the individual is no longer fit to be that receptacle. The Talmud tells us that all those who were put to death by stoning because they had transgressed certain laws of the Torah, must have their remains displayed. However, the remains must be removed by the end of the day because the Torah states, **"the curse of G'd is being displayed."**

Rashi cites the Midrash that explains the "curse of G'd" with an analogy. There was a king and a notorious bandit who were identical twins. There was a bounty that was placed on the head of the bandit. When the bandit was finally caught, he was executed and his remains were hung for all to see. Those who saw the corpse said, "Look! The body of the king is hanging!" Since it was a disgrace to the king, although it was the corpse of his evil brother, it was removed and buried. Identically, if a Jew, who was created in the image of G'd behaves in a manner that is contrary to the Torah, not reflecting G'd's spirituality, it is a disgrace to Him. When one assumes the posture of an animal by succumbing to his human inclinations and desires, his existence becomes a disgrace to G'd. Therefore, G'd disassociates Himself from that individual.

The objective of existence for a Jew is to reflect the image of G'd by living the precepts of the Torah. By doing so he will be worthy of having a relationship with G'd and establishing himself as a dwelling place for the Divine Presence. This was the initial objective of existence; however, Adam failed when he succumbed to temptation and ate of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The responsibility that was placed upon the Jewish people was to reinstate that special setting for G'd, so that He should be able to dwell in their midst as their King.

YAD AVRAHAM DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday Through Friday

5:50- 6:00 am	Chumash with Rashi
6:00- 6:15 am	Pirkei Avos (Maharal)
6:15- 6:30 am	Mishna Berurah
6:30 -6:45 am	Mussar – Derech Hashem
6:45 -7:25 am	Talmud—Tractate Chulin
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna - Rabbi Rovner
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi
2:00pm	Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

11:30 – 12:30pm Talmud: Megilah

Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
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Tuesday

12:10 - 1:10pm **Torah Insight Based on the Parsha**
Location: Yad Avraham

Wednesday

11:30 – 12:30 pm **Talmud: Megilah**
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
Enter on 54th Street

1:00—2:00 pm **Daas Tevunos**
Location: Yad Avraham

Thursday

11:00 –12:00pm **Duties of The Heart**
Location: Yad Avraham
12:30 – 1:30 pm **Talmud: Megilah** Sunrise Capital 641
Lexington (25th FL)