

*Yad Avraham Institute*  
**Weekly Torah Commentaries Series**  
*The Portion of*  
**Bamidbar**

May 21, 2009

Robert and Roberta Hadi in memory of his father Yeheskel Ben Daniel

**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 21, 2009

B"H

## Bamidbar

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

Dean

### ***1. Being Qualified to Become G'd's People***

The Torah states, **“Hashem spoke to Moshe ..., saying ‘Take a census of the entire assembly of the Children of Israel according to their families...’”** The Torah continues, **“They gathered together the entire assembly on the first day of the second month, and they established their genealogy according to their families, according to their fathers' household, by number of the names...”** Rashi cites Chazal who explain, “Each tribe established and proved their genealogy by presenting their documents of pedigree.”

The Midrash tells us that after the giving of the Torah at Sinai, the nations of the world asked G'd, "Why did You give the Torah to the Jewish people and not to us?" G'd responded, "Can you establish your pedigree as My children have established theirs?" The nations of the world could not respond. They understood that due to their promiscuous behavior which included forbidden sexual relationships, their progeny were illegitimate. Thus, they did not have the purity that was necessary to have a relationship with G'd. When the nations of the world became aware of the purity of the Jewish people, they were astounded and began singing the praises of the Jewish people. As it is stated in Proverbs, "*Kamu vaneha vayashruha* - her children had risen and praised her." Why was the purity of pedigree a necessary prerequisite for receiving the Torah and having a special relationship with G'd.

The Gemara in Tractate Makkos tells us that all human beings are compelled by their inclination to engage in forbidden sexual relations and the accumulation of wealth. These are inclinations that are difficult to control and cause many to fail. However, if despite the difficulty, one is able to take control and not succumb, it would demonstrate that he is able to remain unaffected although

one's natural inclination is overwhelming. Maharal of Prague explains that the characteristic of a spiritual being is to affect and not be affected. This is because G'd Himself affects all existence and He is not affected. Because the Jewish people were able to control their inclination in the area of forbidden sexual relations, they demonstrated that their essence was spiritual, which remains unaffected. Despite the fact that the Jewish people were slaves in Egypt for 210 years they maintained their legitimacy and were not sexually defiled despite the influences of the Egyptian culture. Unlike the nations of the world who failed in this area.

It is interesting to note that despite the depravity of generation of the Great Flood, the transgression that sealed their fate was stealing. They had failed in the two areas in which a human being is driven; namely, satisfying his sexual needs and amassing the material, despite the forbidden means. The fact that they could not restrain and control the inclination for theft indicated to G'd that the generation needed to be destroyed because they had forfeited their capacity for spirituality.

Rambam explains that before the giving of the Torah at Sinai, a man chose a wife by noticing her on the crossroads and then cohabiting with her. Remaining together as husband and wife was considered to be marriage. When they chose to separate, it was considered a divorce. However, after Sinai, G'd gave the Jewish people definite laws governing marriage and divorce. This is so that procreation can be governed under the dictates of the Torah to be able to identify the parentage of one's offspring. Had these laws not been given it would have led to incest such as a brother marrying his sister, without even knowing that it was an incestuous relationship. The earth would be filled with promiscuity and illegitimacy. Existence would become spiritually corrupted. It is interesting to note that the term referring to marriage is

“kiddushin” which means “holy/exclusive.” Thus, the Jewish people were able to maintain their holy status through the union of marriage as dictated by the Torah. When a woman is married she remains exclusive to the one who betrothed her until a writ of divorce is given.

G'd Himself attested to the purity of the Jewish people. When the Torah enumerates the paternal family names of the tribes, it adds to each name the letters “yud” and “hey” which are letters that comprise the Name of G'd. Rashi cites the Midrash, which explains that the nations of the world came to contest the pedigree of the Jewish people by claiming, “How is it possible that the Jews have a pure pedigree? The Egyptian masters dominated every aspect of the physicality of the Jew, even to beat and kill him, is there a question that the physicality of the Jewish women were also under their control?” Meaning, it was incomprehensible to think that the Jewish women were not defiled by the Egyptian men. In order to counter and dismiss this slander G'd added His holy Name of “yud” and “hey” to the names of each of the families to personally attest to their pedigree. As King David writes in Psalms, “The tribes of G'd - who attests to Israel.”

## ***2. One's Difficulty Regarding Submission to G'd***

The Torah states, "**Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness of Sinai...**" The Midrash cites the verse from Yirimiyah, "G'd said to the Jewish people, 'You are the generation that witnessed the Word of G'd. Have I been a desert to Israel, a land of darkness? 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."

It is clear from the words of Chazal that the Jewish people were provided with every conceivable amenity that was needed in the desert. Not only did G'd provide for all of their physical needs through miracles, He gave them exceptional spiritual leaders such as Moshe, Aaron, and

Miriam. In addition, He had an intimate relationship with the Jewish people. If this is so, then what was the basis for their complaint, “Why did you take us up out of Egypt to die in the desert?” In fact, the location that they were in had no semblance of a desert because G'd had provided them with all that was needed.

The Jewish people complained despite being given all their material needs because they would not subordinate themselves to G'd. Although their entire existence was under His direct control in the desert, they did not want to submit themselves to Him and thus negate their own interests. Despite the fact that Adam was in the Garden of Eden and was given only one commandment to observe in order to bring existence to a special level, he chose to defy G'd. Regardless of his exceptional level of clarity, he chose to exercise his own free will and thus ate of the Tree of Knowledge. Consequently, Adam putrefied himself and contaminated all existence because he was not willing to subordinate himself to G'd's Will.

Despite the fact that the Jewish people did not experience any of the harshness of the desert because of G'd's beneficence, they defied Him because they chose to retain their independence. If one wants to cleave to G'd, one must be willing to subordinate his own desires and interests for His sake. This was something that the Jewish people were not willing to do. They therefore complained continuously, “Why did you take us out of Egypt to die in the desert?”

We say in the Ashrei prayer, which was authored by King David, “Praiseworthy are those who dwell in Your house...Praiseworthy is the people whose G'd is Hashem.” Although one may recite this with fervor and proper intent, does one truly feel privileged to be the chosen of G'd? Is it possible for one to have fully internalized the fact that the Master of the Universe has chosen him to be His subject, and then in another instance rush off to one's workplace without taking the sufficient amount of time to complete one's study and prayer?

The prophet states, “G'd said, ‘Did I treat you as if you were in a desert?’” Although one does not deny that G'd bestows unlimited blessing and good fortune by providing for one's needs, one is still driven to amass the material rather than address his spirituality responsibly. Given the fact that today the affluence of our lives is unparalleled by any other time in recent history, one truly has no legitimate reason to absolve himself from Torah study and serve G'd through proper prayer. Despite the lack of good reason to extricate oneself from his obligation to G'd, one chooses to chart his own course, because the

innate characteristic of every human being is to assert his own will and ego, rather than submit to G'd. Consequently, he will find reasons to justify his lack of involvement in his own spiritual development and advancement as the Jewish people had done when they complained in the desert.

### ***3. Perceiving Life Within a Proper Context***

The Torah states, "**Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness of Sinai...**" The Midrash cites the verse in Yirimiyah, "G'd said to the Jewish people, 'You are the generation that witnessed the Word of G'd. Have I been a desert to Israel, a land of darkness? 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? (G'd provided the Jewish people with every conceivable amenity in the desert)...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."

Chazal tell us, "The Torah was given to those who ate of the Manna." Meaning, the Torah was given to the generation who were sustained through the spiritual nourishment of the Manna. The Gemara in Tractate Yomah tells us that the Manna was heavenly food. It is referred to as "*lechem abeirim*" The Manna was composed of the spiritual nourishment that sustains the angels in physical form. Through their spiritual nourishment the Jewish people were able to comprehend and internalize the concepts of the Torah on the most profound level. Since Moshe was the individual who was qualified to be the conduit through which the Torah was given to the Jewish people, it is logical to say that the Manna, which is spiritual in its essence, should be given to them in his merit. Chazal do not reveal to us the linkage between the Manna and Moshe.

The Clouds of Glory were given to the Jewish people in the merit of Aaron, the High Priest, who was the spiritual equivalent of his brother Moshe. The Clouds of Glory protected the Jewish people in the desert for forty years. What was unique about Miriam that her merit should provide the wellspring on behalf of the Jewish people for forty years?

Miriam together with her mother Yocheved were the Jewish midwives who defied the dictate of Pharaoh to kill the newborn Jewish males. The Jewish people thrived

in Egypt in the merit of Miriam and Yocheved. They did not heed the command of Pharaoh because "**they feared G'd.**" It was because of this exceptional level of reverence for G'd that they merited to have "houses." Regarding Miriam, she merited to have the "house of kingship (*malchus*)." However, it was not because of this that she merited the gift of the wellspring, but rather the Midrash tells us it was because "she sang praises at the Sea." Moshe sang the praises of G'd at the time of the splitting of the Sea for the men, but it was Miriam who led the women in song. Why was her expression of song so significant that the Jewish people should merit the wellspring on her on her behalf?

Miriam articulated and delineated the praises of G'd in a unique and expressive manner to the women. Because she elucidated the events that transpired at the Sea in song, she brought the women to another level of clarity and appreciation of G'd. In addition, the women's expression of praise was a public sanctification of G'd's Name. Through Miriam's articulation of what had transpired at the splitting of the Sea, she merited that the wellspring come about through her.

Ramban in the Portion of Bo explains that it is crucial for the Jewish people, throughout the generations, to continuously recall the fact that G'd taken them out of Egypt through miracles. Since not every generation merits to witness revealed miracles in their time, it is therefore imperative to remember the exodus from Egypt in order for one to know that there were revealed miracles. When one becomes aware that G'd is involved in existence after His act of Creation, which was confirmed through the revealed miracles of Egypt, one will simultaneously understand that all aspects of existence transpire because G'd Wills it to be so. In essence, the natural order is no less an act of G'd than the supernatural, which is revealed miracles. Nature itself is a concealed miracle. Ramban writes, "If one does not believe that nature is a concealed miracle, he has no portion in the Torah of Moshe." Meaning, that this individual is a heretic.

If one is able to reveal G'd's involvement in the ongoing function of existence, it is a sanctification of His Name. It will give others an opportunity to appreciate and recognize G'd's Presence in their day. This is what Miriam had done at the Sea through her articulation of the events that had transpired. It was because of the level of clarity that she brought to the Jewish women to appreciate what G'd had done at the Sea, that she merited the Wellspring that provided millions of people with water for a period of forty years. In addition, the water of the wellspring was not ordinary, as it is explained in the Midrash, it was

intermingled with a component that provided a special sense of spirituality to those who partook of it. Because Miriam opened the eyes of the Jewish women and sensitized them to see and appreciate the Hand of G'd she merited the miracle of the wellspring.

Chazal tell us that the level of revelation experienced by the maidservant at the Sea was greater than that of Yechezkel the prophet. Even the lowly maidservant was able to point and exclaim, "This is my G'd and I will extol Him." How was the maidservant able to come to such a level of appreciation of G'd's Presence? Seemingly, she should have glossed over the various aspects of the Splitting of the Sea because of her lack of capacity to process spirituality. It was only because Miriam had articulated every aspect of the Splitting of the Sea that the lowly maidservant became enlightened to appreciate and see G'd's Presence that was beyond what was experienced by Yechezkel.

We recite in our prayers in the blessings of the Shema, "How great are Your works..." Ramak explains in his work *Tomer Devorah*, that this is referring to the fact that the wisdom and greatness of G'd is imprinted on every aspect of creation. Ramak explains that because of this one is not permitted to denigrate any part of G'd's Creation because it is a reflection of His Creativity and Greatness. Similarly, Miriam revealed, through her song at the Sea the Glory of G'd which brought the Jewish women to an advanced level of clarity in order to be able to process the events. If one is able to share an insight regarding G'd's involvement in nature and existence, in order for another to appreciate His Divine Providence, the value of this accomplishment is something unfathomable. It is similar to what Miriam had provided for the women at the Sea.

#### ***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 Yeshivah 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 yeshivah* 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. G'd's Reaction to One's Denial Of Reality*** *(From Bechukosai)*

The Torah states, "**If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments... then you will dwell securely in you land.**" If the Jewish people adhere to the

Torah then G'd will bestow upon them unlimited blessing. However the Torah continues, "**But if you will not listen to Me and will not perform all of these commandments...**" then many tragic events will come upon them. The portion that discusses these curses is referred to as the Portion of the Tochacha (curses). Chazal tell us that the value of punishment is to alert the individual that he has strayed from the proper path. By experiencing something that is out of the ordinary, in the negative sense, it will cause one to introspect and appreciate he has a spiritual failing, thus causing him to repent.

After the Torah discusses three series of punishments that will befall the Jewish people if they continue to sin, it states, "**If you behave casually (*kerie*) with Me and refuse to heed Me, then I shall lay a further blow upon you...**" Rashi cites Chazal who explain, the word '*kerie*' means happenstance. Despite the fact that the Jewish people will experience consecutive tragedies affecting many aspects of their lives, they will choose to attribute these unfortunate events to happenstance. Rather than realizing and understanding that these tragic occurrences are due to their own spiritual failings, they will attribute them to external factors such as market conditions or other issues. As a result of denying that these tragedies are spiritual warning signs, G'd will intensify His level of punishment to the point that the Jewish people will repent. As the Torah states, "**Because you have made My Commandments secondary to your lives, you will become secondary to Me.**" Unfortunately, the Jewish people have made this tragic mistake numerous times throughout history.

Rabbeinu Yonah writes in the Gates of Repentance that if one sins and has the opportunity to repent but he does not do so, then the Wrath of G'd will intensify itself upon him. It is as if the individual was given the opportunity to extricate himself from his evil ways and become spiritually rehabilitated but chose to remain spiritually encumbered. Rabbeinu Yonah explains this point with an allegory. It is analogous to a situation in which prisoners in a maximum security prison had broken out of their cells and escaped confinement. When the warden came to inspect the cells of the inmates, he found only one solitary prisoner who remained behind because he chose not to escape. When the warden realizes what had occurred, he began beating the prisoner, although the prisoner had actually not violated any law by remaining behind. Why did the warden beat the seemingly innocent prisoner? It is because the warden realized that the only plausible reason that he did not escape was because he did not experience his incarceration as something confining

and painful. Had the prisoner suffered as he was meant to, he would have fled as the others had. Therefore, the warden became infuriated and beat him so that the prisoner should understand that he is deserving of punishment. Similarly, G'd intensifies the punishment upon the one who attributes his suffering to happenstance and chooses not to recognize the true cause of his tragedy and repent.

The Gemara in Tractate Chullin states, "When one stubs his finger (in this world) below it has been decreed from above." One does not falter in this world or experience pain to any degree without it being decreed by G'd. Nothing is by accident. Therefore, if one attributes negative occurrences in his life to happenstance, his problems will intensify in order to awaken him to the reality of his predicament. Thus, pain and tragedy can actually be a blessing when they are utilized properly as a means to achieve clarity for one to correct his ways and repent. If one utilizes the negative situation in order to repent, he will be viewed as special by G'd. As the Gemara in Tractate Berachos states, "In the location where baalei teshuvah (repentant people) stand, even absolute tzaddikim (righteous people) do not stand." This is because the repentant, through his own initiative recognized his failings and corrected them. He needed to contend with a formidable foe, his evil inclination to which he had already succumbed, which the absolute tzaddik did not.

### 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 – Path of the Just
6:45 -7:25 am	Talmud—Tractate Chulin –Gid Hanasheh
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna - Rabbi Rovner
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi- Bava Kamah
2:00pm	Mincha

#### **Special Weekday Classes**

##### ***Monday***

11:30 – 12:30pm	<b>Talmud: Megilah</b> Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 <sup>th</sup> FL.) Enter on 54 <sup>th</sup> Street
1:00-2:00 pm	<b>Ramchal: Derech Hashem</b> Location: Cedarview Capital 1Penn Plaza ( 45 <sup>th</sup> FL. )

##### ***Tuesday***

12:10 - 1:10pm	<b>Torah Insight Based on the Parsha</b> Location: Yad Avraham
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##### ***Wednesday***

11:30 – 12:30 pm	<b>Talmud: Megilah</b> Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 <sup>th</sup> FL.) Enter on 54 <sup>th</sup> Street
1:00—2:00 pm	<b>Daas Tevunos</b> Location: Yad Avraham

##### ***Thursday***

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