

Yad Avraham Institute
Weekly Torah Commentaries Series
Portion of Beha'aloscha

May 27, 2010

Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita

<i>Inside This Week's Edition</i>	<u>Page</u>
<i>1. The Spiritual Profile of the Jewish people</i>	2
<i>2. The Sacrifice of the Tribe of Levy on Behalf of the Jewish people</i>	3
<i>3. Looking for an Alternative</i>	3
<i>4. Being Fortunate in Death</i>	4
<i>5. The Nazerite's Ascent in Spirituality</i>	5

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 27, 2010

B"H

Beha'aloscha

Presented by
Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita
Dean

1. The Spiritual Profile of the Jewish people

Rashi in his commentary in the beginning of the Portion of Beha'aloscha cites the Midrash, "Why does the Torah juxtapose the kindling of the Menorah to the celebration of the Princes (at inauguration of the Mishkan/altar)? When Aaron had seen all of the Princes participating in the inauguration of the Mishkan he was disappointed and pained. G'd said to Aaron, 'I swear on your life! Your contribution is greater than theirs. You shall be the one to kindle and perfect the lights of the Menorah.'"

Ramban asks, "Why was Aaron disappointed that he was not included by G'd to participate in the inauguration of the Mishkan, as the other Princes if in fact his qualification as the officiant of G'd was exclusive to him and his family? In addition, no other individual could have officiated on Yom Kippur other than the High Priest. Furthermore, the participation/contribution of the Princes was a momentary event, while Aaron's service in the Mishkan was ongoing. If so, what was the basis for Aaron's disappointment?"

Maharal of Prague explains that the Jewish people are comprised of thirteen tribes. Twelve of them received a portion in the Land of Israel and the Tribe of Levy did not (because "G'd is their portion.") He explains that the numerical value of the word "echad (one)" is thirteen. The Jewish people are a reflection of G'd's Unity.

Maharal further explains that not only does the number of tribes reflect the Unity of G'd, but also the spiritual infrastructure of the Jewish people reflects the most definitive aspect of "echad" (Unity). The most spiritual of the thirteen tribes was Levy because they did not participate in the sin of the Golden Calf. Because of their state of purity, they were chosen to be the officiants of G'd. In order to indicate their uniqueness and special status, they would be classified with the Hebrew letter

"aleph (one)." They are on a level unto themselves. Of the four wives of Yaakov, two of them were considered Matriarchs (Rachel and Leah) and the other two were considered concubines (Bilhah and Zilpah). Rachel and Leah, being Matriarchs had a greater spiritual status than the concubines. Thus, the children that they bore for Yaakov had greater spiritual potential. They bore for Yaakov eight sons. Leah mothered six and Rachel two. The number eight is denoted with the letter "*ches*." The concubines of Yaakov, who were of lesser spiritual status, bore him four sons, which are denoted with the letter "*daled*." The three spiritual classifications of Yaakov's children establish the spiritual infrastructure of the Jewish people which spells the word "*echad*": Levy (*aleph*), the sons of the Matriarchs (*ches*), and the sons of the concubines (*daled*). They reflect G'd's Unity in the most obvious context.

The Torah tells us that G'd had instructed Moshe that the Princes should bring their gifts and sacrifices over a twelve-day period in a specific order in honor of the inauguration of the Mishkan. The Torah delineates each of the gifts and offerings. The Torah repeats the identical gifts and offerings of the Princes, twelve times. It would seem that the Torah could have expressed itself in a more concise manner rather than repeating itself verbatim twelve times. There is nothing in the Torah that is superfluous. Every word and letter was written with a specific intent and purpose.

Ramban explains that although each gift and offering that was given by the Princes was identical in its physical feature, each of their gifts was not similar within a spiritual context. Each gift was infused with a unique intent of the Prince who represented his Tribe. Thus, every gift that was brought by the Prince was in fact a different entity because of its spiritual infusion.

Each of the twelve Princes, who were authorized by G'd to participate with their offerings and gifts in the inauguration of the Mishkan together represented the spiritual infrastructure of the Jewish people. If this was so,

Aaron, representing the Tribe of Levy, should have also participated in the inauguration in some manner. Why was he excluded? Aaron believed that he was not qualified to participate because of his association with the sin of the Golden Calf. He had believed that being chosen by G'd to be the High Priest was an indication that he had been fully rehabilitated from the past. However, when he realized that he was not asked to participate in the inauguration he was disappointed and pained. He realized that he was not fully reinstated. To this, G'd said, "Your participation is greater than theirs."

G'd informed Aaron that his qualification to kindle the Menorah would have greater value than all of the Princes' participation combined. Just as the soul gives life to the physical body, so too does Aaron's lighting of the Menorah draw spiritual energy and Divine Assistance to give meaning and value to the Jewish people. The Gemara in Tractate Bava Basra tells us that the light of the Menorah represents the Oral Law. Its kindling draws all the Divine Assistance that is necessary for the Torah to be understood, processed, and internalized accurately by the Jewish people until the end of time. This responsibility was given to Aaron, the High Priest. The value of the kindling of the Menorah, in terms of its effect, is unrelated to the other areas in which the Kohen officiated. Although the service of Yom Kippur is vital for the forgiveness and atonement of the Jewish people, it is not the equivalent of the spiritual lifeline of the Jewish people that lies in the hands of the Kohen through the kindling of the Menorah. This was a declaration of Aaron's special and unique status representing the "aleph," the first and foremost in the spiritual infrastructure of the Jewish people.

2. The Sacrifice of the Tribe of Levy on Behalf of the Jewish people

The Midrash cites a verse from Psalms, " 'G'd tests the devoutly righteous...' G'd does not elevate one to a position of honor and greatness until he is first tested. If he endures and succeeds in the tests that were given to him, then G'd will elevate him to a position of status. We find regarding Avraham, our Patriarch that he was tested in ten areas. Only after he succeeded in all of these tests did G'd bless him, as it states, '**G'd blessed Avraham with everything.**' G'd had tested Yitzchak, our Patriarch with Avimelech. After he had succeeded he was blessed. G'd also tested Yaakov, our Patriarch with many difficulties and hardships such as those regarding Esav, Rachel, Dina, Yosef, Shimon, Binyamin, and regarding his material state when he fled from the home of his father. As it states, '**With my walking staff I crossed...**' After he succeeded

G'd blessed him... Yosef was tested with the wife of his master Potiphar and twelve years of imprisonment... but after he succeeded he ascended to be king... The Tribe of Levy gave their lives to sanctify the Name of G'd so that Torah should not be nullified. When the Jewish people were in Egypt they detested the Torah and circumcision. They all became idolaters. They were involved in all forms of abominations. However, during the days of darkness all those who were truly evil were removed from among the Jewish people... Those who did not perish during that plague had repented... Throughout the entire years of bondage the Tribe of Levy remained devoutly righteous. They observed the Torah and were circumcised. When the Jewish people had sinned with the Golden Calf, the Tribe of Levy did not participate... When G'd had seen that they were righteous, He tested the Tribe of Levy and they succeeded. After they had withstood the tests, the Torah states, '**The Levites shall be Mine,**' which is the ultimate level of exaltedness. However, regarding the evil ones who love corruption, G'd despises them."

It is interesting to note that the Tribe of Levy sanctified G'd's Name through the sacrifice of their lives for the perpetuation of Torah. The Midrash did not state that they had sacrificed themselves for the sake of G'd but rather for the sake of the spiritual life source of the Jewish people, which is the Torah itself. Before Moshe passed away, he blessed the Tribe of Levy, that they should be the disseminators of definitive Torah. It was because they had fully internalized the fact that the Jewish people could not survive without the Torah itself, they were thus chosen to be responsible for its dissemination.

3. Looking for an Alternative

The Torah states, "**The people took to seeking complaints; it was evil in the eyes of G'd and G'd heard and His Wrath flared, and a fire of Hashem burned against them, and it consumed at the edge of the camp.**" Who were those who complained? It was those who sought out complaint. G'd had provided all of the conceivable needs and amenities that were necessary for the Jewish people. They were given the Manna to sustain them physically and spiritually. They were given an unlimited source of water which flowed from the wellspring of Miriam. In addition, they were engulfed by the Clouds of Glory that provided every level of protection and comfort. They basked in G'd's Presence throughout this period of time. G'd's obviousness could not be denied. If this was their predicament, why would they seek out a reason to complain? They should have been fully content. The only basis for one to complain when one is lacking or unhappy. If in fact there was nothing to which their

happiness could be attributed, it is evident that it was G'd Himself. They were in essence saying that they had no interest in Him. This is the position of one who is defiant. Despite the fact that it was obvious that there was no alternative to G'd, they nevertheless sought to complain.

It is stated in the Ten Commandments, **“Do not covet your fellow’s house...your fellow’s wife...nor anything that belongs to your fellow.”** How is it possible for one who has an interest in his fellow’s belongings to control this inappropriate desire? Ibn Ezra explains this with an allegory. When the Prince chooses to marry the Princess, regardless of her beauty and other qualities, a commoner does not envy the Prince for marrying her. This is because the commoner understands with certainty that the Princess has no relevance to him as a commoner. There is no basis for consideration, since she is not within the context of his choice. Identically, if one would understand and internalize that every individual’s personal predicament is unique and specific for that person through G’d’s endowment, then he will not be envious of his fellow’s successes or possessions because they have no relevance to his existence. If one in fact does have designs on his fellow’s possessions it is only because he did not internalize this belief and reality.

The only reason one has a sense of lack and unhappiness is because he believes that greater success and opportunity is available to him. This is the understanding of the dictum that is stated in the Mishna in Ethics of our Fathers, “Who is the wealthy one? It is the one who is happy with his lot.” This is the person who truly internalizes the fact that what G’d had given him is meant to be his and not more. The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos states, “One’s material allocation (for the year) is set from Rosh Hashanah to Rosh Hashanah.” One cannot earn or achieve, within the material realm, more than what G’d had allotted to him, regardless of his initiatives. G’d became enraged at those who sought to complain in the desert because, understanding and realizing His Omnipotence, there was no basis to feel lacking. It was only because they believed that there was an alternative to G’d that they sought to complain.

Chavos Ha Levavos writes that one should be overwhelmed with thankfulness to G’d for everything that He has bestowed upon him. If so, then why is one not content and satisfied? It is because one chooses to focus on what he does not have rather than on what he does have. Because one has a tendency to focus on what his fellow possesses, it causes him to focus on what he does not have.

When Esav had met his brother Yaakov, after not seeing him for many years, he noticed the camps of Yaakov’s people and asked, **“Who are these (people) to you?”** Yaakov responded, **“The Children who G’d has graciously given to your servant.”** Esav then asked Yaakov regarding the gift that was sent to him. Yaakov answered that it was sent to find favor in his eyes. Esav responded to Yaakov by saying, **“I have much. My brother, let what you have remain yours.”** Yaakov urged his brother to accept the gift as an expression of his reverence for him. He urged Esav saying, **“Please accept my gift which was brought to you, inasmuch as G’d has been gracious to me and inasmuch as I have everything.”** Yaakov expressed himself regarding what G’d has given him as having “everything” because he recognized that whatever he was meant to have would be provided by G’d, unrelated to his initiative. However, Esav who was the one who personified the material, believed that all his successes were due to his initiative and ability. Therefore, he did not believe that he had everything because there was so much more for him to accomplish and acquire.

4. Being Fortunate in Death

The Torah states, **“The rabble that was among them cultivated a craving, and the Children of Israel also wept once more and said, ‘Who will feed us meat?’ ...we have nothing to anticipate but the manna!...Moshe said to Hashem, ‘Why have You done evil to Your servant...Why had You placed the burden of this entire people upon me?...Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Gather to Me seventy men from the elders of Israel...and they shall bear the burden of the people with you...’** Rashi cites Chazal who ask, “What had happened to the original group of seventy elders who had been with Moshe in Egypt? Seemingly, these elders were newly appointed. The original seventy elders had died in the fire that had consumed the edge of the camp of Israel when the Jewish people had begun to seek out complaints. G’d’s Wrath flared up against them and His fire consumed the edge of the camp.”

The Midrash continues, “Actually the original group of seventy elders were deserving to die at Sinai because they had openly gazed in an inappropriate and disrespectful manner upon the Divine Presence. It is similar to one who bites into his bread in the presence of a King. Why did G’d not strike them down at Sinai? Had He done so it would have disrupted with the level of joy experienced by the Jewish people at the time of the giving

the of the Torah. It would have been inappropriate to have a grieving period at the time of Sinai.”

The Torah tells us that the sons of Aaron were struck down by G'd because they had sinned when they had entered into the Sanctuary. However, Chazal tell us that Nadav and Avihu in fact deserved to die at the time of the giving of the Torah at Sinai because they along with the original seventy elders of Israel had gazed upon the Divine Presence with a lack of reverence. They were meant to die at that moment; however, G'd also postponed their death not to disrupt the joy of the giving of the Torah. They were not left to be consumed in the fire along with the original seventy elders who were culpable for the same sin. G'd waited until the day that Aaron and his children were installed as priests in order to be taken.

The death of the sons of Aaron, Nadav and Avihu was considered to be a Sanctification of G'd's Name. The Midrash tells us that Moshe had said to Aaron, "Initially I had thought that the one who would be struck down by G'd would be either you or me.(G'd had previously told Moshe that on the day of the inauguration of the Mishkan. 'I will be sanctified by those who are closest to Me.') However, after seeing that Nadav and Avihu were the ones chosen to die, I understand that they are greater than us." Nadav and Avihu, although they had failed at Sinai because and deserved to die, they were taken at a time that brought about the ultimate Sanctification of G'd's Name. Although they had died because of their spiritual failing, it was subsumed by a greater spiritual result- "I will be sanctified by those who are closest to Me.”

In contrast, the death of the original seventy elders went unnoticed because they were consumed with the fire of G'd along with the evil ones who complained. We see that even when one is atoned through Divine Retribution, the context in which their death occurs reflects their spiritual dimension. It is true that death comes about as a result of sin; however, the context of one's death could their be the sanctifying G'd's Name or limited to Divine Retribution.

5. The Nazerite's Ascent in Spirituality

The Torah states, **“A man or woman who shall dissociate himself by taking a Nazerite vow of abstinence for the sake of Hashem; from new or aged wine shall he abstain, and he shall not drink...anything which grapes have been steeped...a razor shall not pass over his head...the growth of hair on his head shall grow...he shall not come near a dead person....he shall**

not contaminate himself upon their death...for the crown of G'd is upon his head. All the days of his abstinence he is holy to Hashem.” One may choose to take upon himself the vow of Nazeritehood in order to become close to G'd. When one assumes this status it is considered that he is carrying the “crown of G'd” upon his head. He must abstain from grape products, cutting his hair, or contaminating himself to the dead. The Torah tells us that upon the completion of the period of one's Nazeritehood, which is thirty days, one must bring three offerings.

It is interesting to note that although an ordinary Kohen is not permitted to contaminate himself to the dead, he is permitted to contaminate himself to the remains of his seven closest relatives. The High Priest (Kohen Gadol) on the other hand is not permitted to contaminate himself to anyone, including his closest relatives. The Nazerite, regarding the contamination of the dead, assumes the identical status as the High Priest because the “crown of G'd” is upon his head. The Gemara tells us that if a High Priest who is also a Nazerite comes upon the corpse of a Jew that was left unattended (*meis mitzvah*), he is obligated attend to his burial needs despite the fact that he will be contaminated. For the sake of human dignity of the corpse, the High Priest and the Nazerite must contaminate themselves.

It is understandable that the High Priest is not permitted to enter into a contaminated state because he carries the responsibility of atonement for the entire Jewish people. However, the Nazerite who has no relevance to the atonement of the Jewish people, why should he have the same level of restriction as the High Priest? What is the crown of G'd that he carries upon his head?

Simply, one could say that since the Nazerite has chosen to deny himself the pleasure of wine and its derivatives for the sake of G'd, he is elevated to a unique spiritual level. The Gemara in Tractate Pesachim tells us that when one celebrates it is only over wine. Wine is synonymous with Joy. As the verse states in Psalms, “Wine brings joy to the heart of man.” This allows us to understand the restriction of wine regarding the Nazerite; however, why should he be prohibited from cutting his hair or contaminating himself to the dead regarding his state of spirituality?

The Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin cites an argument regarding the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. One opinion is that the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge was wheat. Another opinion is that it was the grape. The Gemara tells us that we find that many tragedies that come

upon man is because of wine, through his excessive drinking. Thus, it would be compelling to say that the fruit that brought about the greatest tragedy of all, which was the sin of Adam, was the grape. Initially Adam was intended to be an eternal being. However, because he transgressed by eating of the fruit of the Tree, he became finite and was thus subject to death. Prior to Adam's sin, spiritual contamination of the dead had no relevance to existence. Pirkei D'Reb Eliezer explains that until Adam had eaten from the Tree of Knowledge he did not have hair growing on his body. He was covered with something that resembled the texture of a fingernail. The hair that grew on his body was only an expression of spiritual impurity that he had introduced into himself. The Nazirite grows his hair in order to remove it and burn it in the sanctuary under the pot in which is peace offering was being cooked. The Nazirite seeks to revert to the status of Adam before the sin by denying himself wine, which had brought about death with all of its consequences.

The Nazirite's intent is to remove himself from every level of impurity in existence in order to become close to G'd. Therefore, when one enters into a state of Nazirithood, he has ascended to the level of wearing the crown of G'd upon his head. The only reason that the Jewish corpse that is left unattended overrides the Nazirite status is because the Jew represents the initial creation of man who was created in the image of G'd. Leaving the Jewish corpse unattended would be considered to be a disgrace to G'd.

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 Makkos
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 Basra
2:00pm	Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

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

Tuesday

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

11:30 – 12:30 pm	Talmud: Chagigah Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 th FL.) Enter on 54 th Street
1:00—2:00 pm	Rambam Hilchos Talmud Torah Location: Yad Avraham

Thursday

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