

Yad Avraham Institute
Weekly Torah Commentaries Series
The Portion of

Nasso

June 5, 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
June 5, 2008

B"H

Nasso

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

Dean

1. The Profound Effect of Environment

The Torah tells us that the Jewish people traveled in the desert in a specific formation. The tribe of Levi encircled the center camp, which was the Camp of the Divine Presence (*Machne Shechina*), the location of the Mishkan. The Jewish people were comprised of four camps, each being made up of three tribes. The Torah states, **“Moshe, Aaron and their children were adjacent to the Camp of Yehudah.”** Included in the camp of Yehudah were the tribes of Yissachar and Zevulun. The Midrash states, “It is good for the tzaddik (devoutly righteous) and it is good for his neighbor. Because Yissachar and Zevulun were the neighbors of Moshe, who was engaged in Torah study, they became great Torah sages. As it states in Psalms, ‘Yehudah the legislator of law...’ The children of Yissachar were ‘*yodei binah*’ (those who possessed special insight and clarity). From them came 200 individuals who were qualified to be the head of the Sanhedrin (High Court of Israel). Even the tribe of Zevulun, who were seafarers involved in providing the material needs of the tribe of Yissachar to support their Torah study, had amongst them scribes.”

Although the tribe of Yissachar did not engage with Moshe to a greater degree than the other tribes, they nevertheless achieved a unique dimension of Torah scholarship. This is attributed to the fact that they were in the proximity of Moshe who was continuously engaged in Torah study. This is based on the principle, “It is good for the tzaddik (devoutly righteous) and it is good for his neighbor.” Being a neighbor alone, is sufficient cause to be the beneficiary of the tzaddik’s presence.

The Torah states in the Portion of Vayeitzei, **“Yaakov departed from Beersheva and went toward Charan.”** Rashi cites Chazal who ask, “Why is it important for the Torah to tell us from where Yaakov departed, it would have been sufficient to tell us that Yaakov was going to Charan.” The Midrash answers that

the Torah is teaching us that when a tzaddik leaves a location it loses its radiance, beauty and splendor. This is true in a general sense. However, in order for the impact of the tzaddik to be more profound, one must be in his direct proximity.

The Gemara tells us that the Torah is not “an inheritance (*yirusha*).” It is not something that is automatically transferred from one generation to the next. Even if one’s father is a great Torah sage, if the child does not engage in Torah study, he will not be a beneficiary of his father’s Torah knowledge. The Torah itself is a “morasha” which is a tradition that is incumbent on one generation to transmit to the next. Although one’s initiative is a prerequisite to acquire the Torah, one’s potential and growth is determined by one’s merit. Yissachar and Zevulun, being exposed to the presence of Moshe, the transmitter of the Torah, merited a unique potential which allowed them to ascend to unusual heights of Torah proficiency. This impact had a far-reaching effect. It was not limited to the generation that had been exposed to Moshe. It also affected their generations that followed. As the Chazal tells us, 200 members of the tribe of Yissachar were qualified to be the head of the Sanhedrin.

The Vilna Gaon explained to his students, who were few in number, the inner workings of the transmission of Torah between a teacher (rebbe) and his disciples. He said that a rebbe receives a degree of Divine Assistance to be able to process, retain, and transmit the Torah. The students become beneficiaries of the Assistance that he receives because of their relationship with him. It is similar to a large vessel of oil that is surrounded by smaller vessels. As the large vessel is filled with oil it overflows into the smaller vessels that surround it. As a result of this ongoing source of fuel, the smaller vessels are able to continue to illuminate. This is identically the reality of the relationship between a rebbe/teacher and his students. The rebbe, because of his dimension of spirituality, merits a certain degree of Divine

Assistance. His intimate circle of students who are dedicated and negated to him, become the beneficiaries of that influence. Thus, enabling them to become great Torah sages in their own right. This is the reason, the students of the Vilna Gaon, had developed into unique and influential Torah sages whose effect upon the Jewish people continues until the end of time.

2. Seeing Beyond the Obvious

The Torah states, **“It was on the day that Moshe finished erecting the Tabernacle...”** The Midrash states, “King Solomon writes, ‘The one who cares for the fig tree is the one who will eat its fruit. And the one who watches over his master shall be honored.’ G’d does not withhold the just reward from any creature. For whatever one toils and sacrifices, G’d does not withhold reward from him. This is the meaning of the words of King Solomon.”

The Torah tells us that if one comes upon the remains of an animal that was mauled in the field (not ritually slaughtered), one is not permitted to partake of it. One should give it to the dog. The Gemara in Tractate Chulin tells us that the reason for this is, “G’d does not withhold the just reward from any creature.” At the time of the tenth plague in Egypt, the killing of the first-born, G’d had said that the dogs should not bark. Because the dogs had restrained themselves and did not bark, G’d rewarded them. The remains of the animal found mauled in the field should be thrown to the dog. We learn from this passage that G’d does not withhold reward even from a lowly creature. If the principle that G’d does not withhold reward from any creature is established from G’d rewarding the dog for not barking in Egypt, why does the Midrash need to cite a verse from Proverbs in order to establish the same principle?

The Midrash continues, “King Solomon built and completed the First Temple. However because King David had sacrificed selflessly for its building by purchasing its location and longing to be able to build it, he should be remembered. As it states, ‘G’d had promised: You should remember David and how he was afflicted to bring about the Temple. He yearned to be able to enter into My House.’ Thus, G’d did not withhold his reward. The Temple was identified with his name. As it states, ‘This is a song for the inauguration of the House of David.’ Was it King David who inaugurated the Temple? It was King Solomon, his son who had done so. However because King David sacrificed for it, the Temple is identified with his name. As it states in Proverbs, ‘The one who cares for the fig tree is the one who will eat its fruit.’ We also find

regarding the building of the Mishkan, that although every Jew had sacrificed for the building of the Mishkan...However, it was is because Moshe had given of himself selflessly and sacrificed to a greater degree, that the Mishkan is identified with his name...It states, **‘It was on the day that Moshe finished erecting the Tabernacle...’** If all of the Jewish people assisted in erecting the Mishkan, why does the Torah attribute its completion to Moshe? It was because of his sacrifice for it...”

There are times that one is able to succeed in an endeavor not only because he merits to actualize it, but rather, it is because someone who had preceded him set a certain dynamic in motion that allowed him to succeed. Although it was King Solomon who had built and completed the Temple, it was because of the sacrifice and supplications of his father King David, that he was able to do so. King David’s level of sacrifice and devout righteousness was the reason that King Solomon was able to build the Temple.

Similarly, it was only because of the sacrifice, righteousness, and supplications of Moshe, that the Mishkan was able to be completed. The Jewish people were only spared after the sin of the Golden Calf because of Moshe’s beseeching G’d on their behalf. It was only because Moshe had given his blessing that G’d’s Presence should dwell in their handiwork that the Mishkan was able to be functional. Had it not been for his blessing, the Mishkan would have only been an ornate edifice without G’d’s Presence. Moshe lived only for the glory of G’d and that the Jewish people should be the beneficiaries of G’d’s blessings.

G’d did not withhold reward from the dog because it did not bark. Similarly, any creature or human being would receive its just reward based on the principle that “G’d does not withhold the just reward from any creature.” The Midrash that cites the words of King Solomon in Proverbs teaches us, that this principle can also be applied in instances even when an individual is not directly involved in the outcome. Although King David was not involved in the building of the Temple; however, because of his selfless sacrifice for its existence that created a momentum that allowed it to come about, it identifies with his name. Because King David was pained that the Divine Presence was not in a permanent location, his son King Solomon was able to build the Temple.

If one lives a life that is dedicated to G’d through Torah study and mitzvah observance and years for His Glory; although he may not merit to see his aspirations and

prayers answered in his day, he will be the beneficiary of the ultimate outcome. Because he was a contributing factor to set the dynamic in motion, the end result identifies with him.

3. The Spiritual Capacity of the Jewish People Despite the Golden Calf

Sforno writes in his commentary that after the Jewish people received the Torah at Sinai they had been spiritualized to such a degree that they had the capacity to accommodate the Divine Presence within their midst without the need for a Mishkan. They had been reinstated to the level of Adam before he had sinned with the Tree of Knowledge. The Gemara in Tractate Avodah Zorah tells us that had they not sinned with the Golden Calf they would have lived eternally. However, because of the sin of the Golden Calf, they became tainted and were no longer qualified to be the location for G'd's Presence. They were thus given the mitzvah of building the Mishkan, which would function as a medium for G'd to have a relationship with the Jewish people.

The Midrash states, "How good are the tents (*ohelecha*) of Yaakov and the strongholds (*mishkanosecha*) of Israel. What is the difference between '*ohelecha*' and '*mishkanosecha*'? '*Ohelecha*' is referring to the tents of the Jewish people. '*Mishkanosecha*' should be read as '*mashkinosecha*', which means 'collateral.' G'd said to Moshe, 'Tell the Jewish people to build a Mishkan. It will be collateral for them. If they should sin, then I will remove the Mishkan from their midst.' Where do we see this to be so? After the Jewish people had sinned, G'd became disgusted with them. He then removed the Mishkan of Shilo from their midst..." From the words of Chazal, we see that the value of the Mishkan was meant to be the ultimate collateral, if the Jewish people should fail spirituality. In truth, although they had sinned with the Golden Calf the Jewish people were still qualified to be the location for His Presence. However, since they had reverted back to the level of Adam, after his sin, they were vulnerable to spiritual failure. If they should regress spiritually, the Jewish people would be culpable for severe Divine Retribution, which would destroyed them. G'd therefore, gave them the commandment to build the Mishkan so that it should act as the collateral if they should fail.

The First and Second Temples were destroyed because of the spiritual failings of the Jewish people. Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains, based on Chazal, that when the Temple was destroyed, G'd had "expended his Wrath

on the wood and stone" rather than on His children. If there were no Temple upon which to exact His punishment, the Jewish people would have been destroyed for transgressing His Word.

The Torah tells us that G'd denied Moshe entrance into the Land of Israel because he had struck the rock. Although he had supplicated G'd in the most intense manner, G'd would not allow him to enter the Land. If G'd is All-Forgiving when one repents sincerely, why did He not accept Moshe's supplications to enter into the Land? The Gemara in Tractate Sotah tells us that anything in which Moshe was involved had eternal permanence. It could not be destroyed. The Mishkan that he had built was hidden away and was not taken by the enemy, unlike the First and Second Temples which were destroyed. Had Moshe been allowed to enter into the Land, he would have built the Temple. It would have infused it with a level of sanctity that would not have allowed it to be destroyed. Consequently, if the Jewish people would have sinned, the Wrath of G'd could not be expended on the Temple, rather it would have come upon the Jewish people. Therefore, in order to guarantee the eternity of the Jewish people, G'd's Attribute of Mercy denied Moshe entry into the Land.

Although the Jewish people were qualified to be the location for the Divine Presence, G'd commanded them to build the Mishkan – demonstrating His love for them. Because they had become tainted through the sin of the Golden Calf, they were vulnerable to spiritual failure. Therefore, G'd gave them the Mishkan to act as collateral that could be taken away if they should fail. This was the ultimate kindness.

4. The Secret Behind the Tribe of Yissachar

The Torah tells us that when the Mishkan was completed the Princes of Israel brought offerings and gifts. The Midrash states, "The Princes of Israel...What did they say? 'The time has come to bring offerings with joy.' Why was this a particularly joyous time? The Divine Presence had descended into the Mishkan. The Princes asked, 'What should we bring?' They were answered, 'You should bring wagons to transport the Mishkan.' Who had given this important advice? It was the tribe of Yissachar because they were wise (*chachamim*) and powerful in Torah (*giborim baTorah*). Where do we find that they were so advanced in Torah? As it states, 'The Children of Yissachar had special insight and knowing times.' (The Gemara tells us that their profundity of thought was so exceptional that they were able to perform all the mathematical calculations to determine whether or

not the year should be extended. (If another month should be added). Although Yissachar was not the second child born to Yaakov, they nevertheless merited to be chosen to bring their offerings on the second day because of the special advice that they had given to their fellow Princes. As it states, **'On the second day, Nesanel son of Tzuar offered, the leader of Yissachar.'** ...They had asked, 'Why should we not bring our offerings before Yissachar? We are older than he.' Nevertheless, G'd decreed that Yissachar should bring his offering and gift on the second day."

The Midrash explains that the tribe of Yissachar were able to give such exceptional advice because they were "*chachamim*" (wise) and "*giborim baTorah*" (powerful in Torah. One would think that their wisdom emanated from their greatness in Torah. However, based on the words of Chazal it seems that their wisdom is unrelated to their greatness in Torah – as it states, "They were wise and powerful in Torah."

The Torah states in the Portion of Vayakhel regarding the building of the Mishkan, **"...and every wise-hearted man within who Hashem had endowed wisdom..."** The Midrash states, "G'd gives wisdom only to those who already possess wisdom." The Gemara tells us that a vessel can only contain blessing if it already has relevance to blessing. Reb Chaim of Volozhin asks, "If one is not born with wisdom and G'd only gives wisdom to those who already possess it, how does one initially acquire it?" King David writes in Psalms, "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of G'd..." Thus, the fear of G'd is the prerequisite for wisdom.

The Gemara in Tractate Yomah states, "The storage location for Torah is one's fear of G'd." As it is stated in the verse, "The fear of G'd is its (the Torah) storage location." Reb Chaim of Volozhin explains the Gemara with an allegory. If one wished to give a large amount of wheat as a gift, the recipient would need to have a sufficient storage location. If he does not, the wheat will ultimately be scattered and trampled upon. In that situation, the benefactor will withhold the gift because ultimately it will have no value. Similarly, it is the one who fears G'd who will have the capacity to esteem and revere the Torah sufficiently. Thus, G'd endows that individual with the ability to acquire Torah.

The Midrash tells us that tribe of Yissachar was able to advise their colleagues regarding their gift to the Mishkan because they were firstly "wise" and secondly they were "powerful in Torah." The qualification of "wise" is referring to their unusual level of fear of G'd.

Because of their exceptional level of fear of G'd, they therefore had the capacity to merit the most advanced level of Torah. They were the appropriate repository location to store the Torah in its most pristine state. Their greatness in Torah was a direct outgrowth of their reverence of G'd. They were therefore able to advise their fellow princes.

5. *Shavuos the Concealed Holiday*

The Kli Yakar points out that there are two festivals/holidays that are mentioned by the Torah whose essence is concealed. The holiday of Shavuos, which is the time of our nationhood when the Jewish people received the Torah at Sinai, and Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgment. Both are identified as something other than what they are. The Torah does not explicitly identify these holidays as it does regarding Pesach (Passover), Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), and Succos (Festival commemorating the clouds of glory, which offered the Jews protection). Regarding Shavuos, the Torah does not even mention that it was the time of the receiving of the Torah; rather it states, "...you shall count fifty days and you shall offer a new (chadash) meal offering to Hashem..." It is also referred to as the Festival of the bringing of the new produce. Similarly, the Torah does not refer to Rosh Hashanah as Yom HaDin (Day of Judgment) but rather it states, "yom teruah – day of the Shofar blast..." One would think that the Festival of Shavuos, which is one of the most important days in our history – the day the Jewish people became a nation and received the Torah – would have been identified in a more explicit manner by the Torah. Additionally, one would think that Torah would have alluded to the gravity of Rosh Hashanah, which is the day that G'd judges the world and decides its fate for the coming year. Nevertheless, the Torah chooses to conceal the essence of these two holidays. Kli Yakar asks why.

He explains that all meal offerings that were brought in the Temple were matzah (not chometz / leavened). The only two meal offerings that were chometz/leavened was the meal offering of the two loaves of wheat bread brought on Shavuos and the Todah offering (thanks offering). Chazal tell us that the leavening process represents the evil inclination. (One would think that the meal offering brought on Shavuos would be matzah and not leavened. Since Shavuos is the time of the receiving of the Torah when the Jewish people had reached the pinnacle of their spirituality and overcame the Evil Inclination, it seems contradictory that the meal offering that is brought on that day be leavened.) Kli Yakar asks why.

Accordingly, he explains the reason the Torah conceals the fact that Shavuos is the time the Jewish people received the Torah is to communicate that there is no specific time set for a Jew to study Torah. The obligation of Torah study is ongoing and continuous – throughout the day and night. Every moment has relevance to the study of Torah. Thus, the Torah does not want to designate a specific time for the study of Torah by explicitly revealing that Shavuos is the time of the receiving of the Torah.

A further explanation that Kli Yakar offers for the reason the Torah refers to the meal offering brought on Shavuos as a “new (chadash) meal offering,” is to allude to the fact that the Torah that one studies must remain chadash/new. One must experience mitzvos and Torah study every day as if he had received it at Sinai that day. If Torah and mitzvos do not retain their newness and vibrancy, the person would eventually become tired and disgusted with them – thus abandoning them. Therefore, one must continuously internalize and appreciate the preciousness of Torah.

He explains the reason the Torah conceals that Rosh Hashanah is the Day of Judgment is to communicate to us that one must introspect and reflect on his actions every day as it were the Day of Judgment. There is no set designated time when one must reflect on his behavior and do teshuvah (repent). As Pirkei Avos (Ethics of our Fathers) tells us, no one knows when his last moment will come. Thus, one must always be in a state of teshuvah. Rambam in Hilchos Teshuvah cites King Solomon who states, “All your life your clothing should be white.” Meaning, one must maintain a continuous state of purity through the teshuvah process/reflection and introspection.

Why is the offering brought on Shavuos leavened (chometz) and not matzah? The Gemara in Tractate Kiddushin states, “I (Hashem) created the yetzer hara (the evil inclination) and the Torah as its antidote.” The Torah is the only mechanism that can subdue and defuse the evil inclination. By commanding us to bring a meal offering that is leavened on Shavuos, the Torah is communicating to us that – it is true that man has an evil inclination (as symbolized by the chometz) but as long as one engages in its antidote – the Torah – one does not need to be concerned. It is the choice of every individual to study Torah and fulfill its precepts to keep the evil inclination in check.

With this understanding, we are able to appreciate the Gemara in Tractate Eruvin, which tells us that if one

has any difficulty in life, one should study Torah in order to eliminate it. When there are difficulties, it is only an indication that one needs to correct and rehabilitate his spirituality. The only way one can gain understanding and clarity of the issue is to study the Torah.

6. Anticipating the Ultimate

The Torah tells us that one must count seven weeks and 49 days starting from the second day of Passover until Shavuos. Chinuch explains that counting the days of the omer (sefiras ha'omer) from Pesach to Shavuos is significant because it is a counting towards the receiving of the Torah at Sinai. Just as a slave yearns for the moment that he is able to seek refuge from the sun in the shade, so too the counting of the omer toward the day of the giving of the Torah at Sinai is an expression of the yearning of the Jew for that special moment. It is an expression of his aspiration. It is true that the Jewish people counted 49 days after leaving Egypt until they stood at the foot of the mountain. However, what relevance does the mitzvah of counting the omer, which occurs during the same period, have to the counting of the past?

Maharal of Prague z'tl explains that whenever the Jew celebrates a holiday, it is more than merely commemorating an historical event that had occurred in the past. Whatever spiritual energies and influences that caused the event of the past to come about at that particular moment in history (such as redemption from Egypt – geula), those same influences are released again at that time every year. However, in order to be the receptacle for those forces/influences one needs to create a setting that is similar to that which existed at the time of the original event. Creating this setting is what enables the Jewish people to be full beneficiaries of these past events.

When one counts the days leading up to the giving of Torah at Sinai, he is in fact replicating a similar level of anticipation and yearning that the Jewish people had experienced during this period of time. The giving of Torah at Sinai event was the ultimate purpose of existence. It was the most momentous occasion that had ever occurred. One should understand and appreciate that every year on Shavuos those same influences and energies that were made available at Sinai are once again present for the Jew to benefit from. One's level of preparation leading up to the time of the receiving of the Torah on Shavuos, will determine to what degree he will be a beneficiary of those spiritual influences that will be available at that time. The degree of anticipation will determine one's capacity to be a

beneficiary of those influences. This is the value of the mitzvah of counting the days of the omer.

There is a question among the earlier commentators regarding if one were to miss counting one of the 49 days of the omer – does one continue counting or does the omission of the day cause him not to be able to complete the mitzvah. The Torah uses the term “timimos – complete” regarding the counting of the omer. If this expression (timimos) is referring to the entire 49-day period, then if one should miss a day, this period is no longer be considered “complete.” If the purpose of the counting is to express one’s anticipation and yearning for receiving the Torah on Shavuot, then why can one no longer continue counting if a day is missed day?

If one misses even as much as one day, it is a deficiency in his level of anticipation- thus interrupting the momentum of consecutive counting. If one truly felt that he was going to receive the most precious commodity in existence on a particular day, he would certainly anticipate and count every moment until he received it. One could not forget or be distracted from receiving the ultimate. Thus, if one misses one day of counting the omer, although he will still be a beneficiary to some degree of the spiritual energies available on Shavuot, his benefit will be at a deficient level.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos (Ethics of our Fathers) states, “If one should forget part of his Torah study, he is liable with his life.” One is only culpable if his forgetting is due to his own lack of initiative. Why should the liability be so serious? Torah which is the ultimate purpose of existence is described by G’d Himself as “a good commodity (the most precious).” How is it possible for one’s mind to be distracted even for one moment from any aspect of his Torah study if in fact he truly values it to this degree? Evidently, if in fact he forgot any aspect of his Torah, it is an indication that he did not value it sufficiently, which is the ultimate disgrace.

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.)
Enter on 54th Street

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)