

Yad Avraham Institute
WEEKLY TORAH COMMENTARY SERIES
Parshas Shelach

June 8, 2007

Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita

<i>Inside This Week's Edition</i>	<u>Page</u>
<i>1. Being Able To See the Forest Through the Trees</i>	2
<i>2. The Unique Element of the Jewish People</i>	3
<i>3. The Worthiness of the Jewish People</i>	3
<i>4. The Imperative of Reflection</i>	4
<i>5. Illuminating G'd's Presence</i>	5

Previous Topics

The Universal Ramification of the Kindling of the Menorah
The Innate Qualification of the Levy and His Role as Representative of the Jewish People
The Dual Value of Transferring the Status of the Firstborn to the Levites
It is Not in Heaven
The Untainted Light of the Menorah

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.

If you would like to receive this Weekly Torah Commentary Series by email

Please call 212-371-9555 or email:

info@yadavraham.org

TUNE IN TO OUR LIVE VIDEO BROADCAST OF CLASSES

And over

15,000 online classes 24 hours a day

www.yadavraham.org

Parshas Shelach

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

Dean

1. Being Able To See the Forest Through the Trees

The Torah tells us that Miriam became a leper because she had spoken critically (*Lashon Hara*) of her brother Moshe. Because of her status as a leper she was required to leave all the camps of Israel for a period of seven days. The Torah states, **“So Miriam was quarantined outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not journey until Miriam was brought in.”** Rashi cites Chazal who explain, “and the people did not journey” to mean that this was an honor accorded to Miriam by G'd because she had waited, at the time that her brother Moshe was put into the Nile, to see what his fate would be. The Midrash adds that since Miriam had waited to see the fate of her brother, the entire camp of Israel (millions of people), the Heavenly Clouds of Glory, as well as the Shechina (the Divine Presence) and the Holy Ark waited for her reinstatement.

One would think that it would have been considered a greater honor for Miriam's leprous status to be kept concealed from public knowledge rather than making it known to the entire Jewish people. Seemingly, making her condition known would be considered a disgrace rather than a reward. One could say that perhaps her predicament as a leper was not in fact known to the Jewish people, although they waited the seven day period for her. However, it is clear that this is not so. Chazal ask, “Why is the portion of the spies juxtaposed to the portion of Miriam?” The Midrash answers that the juxtaposition teaches us, “Although these evil people saw what had happened to Miriam they did not take heed.” Miriam's leprous status came about as a result of speaking *Lashon Hara* about her brother Moshe. When the spies returned from Canaan, they had slandered the Land. If Miriam's contaminated state was not known, how could have the spies drawn a lesson from her predicament? Evidently her spiritual failing was known to the entire Jewish people. If this is so, how could this be considered an honor and not a disgrace?

When the Jewish people saw that the Holy Ark, the Divine Presence, and the Clouds of Glory needed to wait for Miriam's re-entry into the camp because she had waited a few moments to see the fate of her brother, they were taught through this lesson the infinite value of a mitzvah. They understood that although there is no reward for the innate mitzvah in this world, nevertheless, G'd repays one measure for measure (orders of magnitude) for one's initial investment. Although Miriam had waited only a short period of time because she was concerned for Moshe's fate, the entire camp of Israel waited for seven days. Miriam's personal failing, through *Lashon Hara*, was used as a model to appreciate and understand the outgrowth and ramification of a mitzvah. The significance and benefit of communicating the value of a mitzvah subsumed the slight disgrace of her failing. We find something in a similar vein regarding the death of Aaron's sons, Nadav and Avihu.

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 deserved to die at the time of the giving of the Torah at Sinai because they gazed upon the Divine Presence with a lack of reverence. It was considered the equivalent of levity. They were meant to die at that moment; however, G'd postponed their death not to disrupt the joy of the receiving of the Torah. G'd waited until the day of their installation as Priests to die.

The death of the sons of Aaron was considered to be a Sanctification of G'd's Name. The Midrash tells us that Moshe had said to Aaron, “Initially I had believed 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 witnessing the death of Nadav and Avihu I understand that they are greater than us.” Nadav and Avihu, although they had failed at Sinai and deserved to die, their death was used to bring about the Sanctification of G'd's Name. Thus, their failing was subsumed by a greater spiritual accomplishment.

The Midrash tells us that seventy elders of Israel at the time of the giving of the Torah at Sinai also deserved to die because that had gazed upon the Divine Presence in a similar manner as Nadav and Avihu. Their death was also delayed not to disrupt the joy of Sinai. However, their demise had no value other than bring about their own atonement. They were consumed by the fire that had risen up at the location in the desert known as "Taveirah." Because they did not have the merit, their death was uneventful. It was limited to their personal atonement.

2. The Unique Element of the Jewish People

The Torah states regarding the spies, **"Hashem spoke to Moshe saying, 'Send forth men (for yourself), and let them spy out the Land of Canaan...'"** The Midrash states, "The men that were chosen by G'd to spy out the Land were initially tzaddikim (righteous). They were G'd's agents."

The Midrash continues, "One who is an agent to perform a mitzvah (*shaliach mitzvah*) is considered to be beloved to G'd because he is willing to sacrifice in order to execute His agency...As we see Yehoshua Ben Nun (after the passing of Moshe when he assumed the mantle of leadership) had sent two spies, Pinchas and Calev, who sacrificed in order to perform their agency." A true *shaliach mitzvah* is one whose objective is solely for the sake of the performance of the mitzvah. Although the spies were initially tzaddikim, because of their failing they ultimately were considered "fools." It was because of their own lack of faith that they had perceived the events in a distorted fashion. The events that they had witnessed were Divinely orchestrated. G'd brought a plague upon the Canaanites so that they should be immersed in their grief and not notice the spies. However, the spies had seen this as tragic rather than as blessing. In contrast, Calev and Yehoshua had seen the same events, yet they saw them within the context of G'd's Kindness. It was only because Calev and Yehoshua were dedicated to G'd's agency that they were beloved by Him.

Maharal of Prague explains that the number four signifies something that is lacking in substance. It connotes a disarray and an absence of cohesiveness. For example, points on four corners of a square have no relevance to one another. However, if there is a point placed in the center of the four, it will draw them together to create one entity. An application of this concept is when G'd had told Avraham during the Covenant Between the Parts that his progeny would be strangers in a land that was not theirs for 400 years. Meaning they would not have an identity. 400 is a

100 multiples of 4, to connote this non-descript status of the Jewish people. In contrast the number five is a symbol of substance and cohesiveness/unification.

When the Jewish people traveled in the desert, it was in a formation of four camps – each comprised of three Tribes. In the middle of the four camps was the Holy Ark which was known as "the camp of the Divine Presence – *Machneh Shechina*"- the focal point of the Jewish people. Without the Divine Presence located in their midst, indicating their belief and focus, the Jewish people would have had no value as a special people. The Shechina was the unifying factor to establish the Jewish people as an entity of spirituality.

One of the names of G'd is composed of four letters "YKVK- Hashem," which connotes that "He is the Infinite Being, He was, He is, and He is in the future." If His Name is comprised of four letters it indicates that there is a fifth element that is needed to establish Him in this world as the Omnipotent One. What is the fifth element which is the unifying factor? It is the Jewish people, who are His representatives in this world. They have been chosen to fulfill His will and agency. As the verse states, "I have created it (existence) for My glory." It is only through the Jewish people fulfilling the Torah and its mitzvos, that G'd's Name glorified.

3. The Worthiness of the Jewish People

The Midrash cites a verse from Hosheiah, " 'The grass has withered and the blossom has faded, but the Word of G'd will always be.' We can understand this through an allegory. The king said to his intimate friend who he loved, 'Come with me so that I can give you a gift.' The king's friend accompanied him to receive the gift however he died before receiving it. The king said to his beloved friend's son, 'Although your father died I will not retract the gift that I had promised him – for he was deserving.' The 'king' in the allegory is referring to G'd the King of kings. The beloved friend of the king is Avraham, our Patriarch. As it states, **'...the progeny of Avraham, My beloved ...'** G'd had said to Avraham, 'Leave your land and go to a Land that I will show you...' G'd had asked Avraham to walk the length and breadth of the Land to demonstrate his dominion over it. G'd said to the Jewish people, 'Although Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov had passed away, I will not retract the gift that I promised them. You should send the scouts for yourselves to begin the acquisition.' This is the meaning of the verse from Hosheiah, 'The grass has withered...but the word of G'd will always be.' Although the Patriarchs, to whom the Land was promised, had passed away the promise of G'd continues forever."

The Torah states regarding the giving of the Land to the Holy Patriarchs, **“The Land shall be yours and to your progeny after you...”** It is understood that if the Land was given to the Patriarchs their progeny will inherit it as an heir inherits his forbearer. Why then does the Torah need to state that the Land shall also be given to the progeny of the Patriarchs? If one owns land that is subsequently conquered, the right of ownership transfers to the conqueror. Thus, if the Land of Israel would ever be conquered it would no longer belong to the progeny of the Patriarchs. Therefore the Torah states that although the Land will be occupied throughout the millennia by foreign elements, it will continue to belong the Jewish people because they, as individuals, were given the Land in the merit of the Patriarchs. Consequently, the Land of Israel will always belong to the Jewish people.

The Jewish people’s request for spies to scout out the Land should be considered the ultimate disrespect because it demonstrated a lack of trust in G’d. He had promised that the Land would be all good and flowing with milk and honey. This is especially true after witnessing all of the miracles that G’d had performed on their behalf from the time of Egypt (Ten Plagues) and all that had transpired afterwards in the desert. It was only because of G’d’s love for the Patriarchs was He willing to tolerate this affront to Him.

The unusual level of spirituality that the Jewish people have merited throughout the ages is unrelated to their own personal worth. Rather it is because of G’d’s special love for their Forefathers. To be able to ascend in fifty days (after leaving Egypt) to a level that they were able to declare *“Naaseh V’nishma – We will do and we will listen,”* was only because of what the Patriarchs had inculcated into their own spirituality.

4. The Imperative of Reflection

The Midrash asks, “Why is the portion of the spies juxtaposed to the portion of Miriam? It is to teach us that although these evil people saw what had happened to Miriam they did not take heed (and draw a lesson from it).” Miriam’s leprous status came about as a result of speaking inappropriately (Lashon Hara) about her brother Moshe. When the spies returned, the Torah tells us that they had slandered the Land.

The Torah states regarding the report of the spies, **“We arrived at the Land to which you sent us...But, the people that dwell in the Land are powerful, the cities are very greatly fortified, and we saw the offspring of the giant...”** The report that the spies had brought back about

the Land was factually accurate. Nevertheless, the Torah is communicating to us through the juxtaposition of the two incidents that the spies should have drawn a lesson from the incident of Miriam. Seemingly there is no basis of comparison between the incident of the spies and what had happened with Miriam. The spies in fact did not lie, but rather, they had processed the information based on their understanding of events. On the other hand, Miriam’s failing was an unfounded criticism of Moshe.

The Torah tells us that when Miriam, who was a prophetess, became aware that Moshe had separated himself from his wife after the giving of the Torah at Sinai, she had expressed her criticism of Moshe to her brother Aaron. Miriam said to Aaron, **“Was it only to Moshe that G’d spoke? Did He not speak to us as well?”** The Torah tells us that upon making this comment, Miriam became a leper because of what she had said.

The Torah tells us that G’d explained to Miriam and Aaron that there was no comparison between their level of prophecy and Moshe’s. Moshe retained the prophetic level of Sinai, which was “face to face (with G’d).” In addition, Moshe’s prophecy manifested itself in a wake-state when he had full control of his physical faculties. The reason Miriam had made a critical remark was because she truly did not understand or appreciate the dimension of Moshe as a prophet. Identically, the spies had interpreted what they had seen negatively, despite the fact that G’d had said that it is a Land replete with blessing. If G’d made such a promise, how could the spies have communicated a negative report? It was only because they did not appreciate what had happened to Miriam. Miriam had only spoken negatively about her brother Moshe because she did not understand the consequences of her statement. If the spies had fully internalized that when one speaks one must bear the full consequence of his words, then they would have refrained from speaking critically of G’d.

Ramban explains that there is a Positive Commandment for one to verbalize what G’d had done to Miriam as a result of her speaking inappropriately about Moshe. This is one of the six remembrances, which are Positive Commandments, that one should verbalize every day. Ramban states that if one articulates what happened to Miriam, it would cause one to refrain from speaking Lashon Hara. Chofetz Chaim asks if in fact articulating this verse causes one to refrain from Lashon Hara, then why do people who fulfill this Positive Commandment continue to speak Lashon Hara? He explains that if one truly understood and internalized the meaning and significance of this remembrance, one would be cognizant of the ramifications of his speech. The fact that one does speak

Lashon Hara is an indication that his verbalization of what had transpired with Miriam is only the recitation of words.

G'd gave us this mitzvah to always remember what had happened to Miriam for us to always draw upon this lesson, thus causing us to not speak Lashon Hara.

5. Illuminating G'd's Presence

The Torah states, **“Speak to Aaron and say to him: When you kindle the lamps, toward the face of the Menorah shall the seven lamps cast light.”** The Midrash states, “G'd said to Moshe, ‘It is not because I need the light of mortal man that I command you to kindle the Menorah. Rather, I want you to illuminate for Me as I have illuminated for you.’” The Torah tells us that in the desert, G'd provided the Jewish people with a pillar of fire that illuminated their way. Perhaps one could say that G'd wanted the Jewish people to kindle the Menorah because He provided them with the pillar of fire, which provided illumination. However, this cannot be so because G'd had already stated, “I do not need your light.”

There is a Positive commandment, “You shall walk in the way of G'd.” Meaning, the Jew must emulate His ways. As the Gemara in Tractate Shabbos states, “Just as I am Merciful, you should be merciful. Just as I am gracious, you should be gracious...” Although there is a Positive Commandment that a Jew must be Holy “Kedoshim Tiheyu” as the Torah states in the Portion of Kedoshim, **“Hashem spoke to Moshe saying – Speak to the entire assembly of the Children of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for holy am I, Hashem your G'd,”** when one fulfills this mitzvah he is also fulfilling the Positive Commandment of emulating G'd. It is when one establishes a commonality with G'd that he can cleave to his Creator. Thus, by kindling the Menorah, the Jewish people are emulating G'd's way. Just as He provided the pillar of fire in the desert, He is asked that the Jewish people kindle the light for Him. In so doing, the Jewish people could cleave to G'd by emulating His ways.

The Midrash continues, “Why did G'd command the Jewish people to kindle the Menorah? It is to elevate them in the eyes of the nations of the world. When they will see the Jew lighting the Menorah, they will say, ‘See how special the Jewish people are! G'd the Creator needs their light.’” On one hand the G'd said that He does not need the light of the Jewish people and on the other hand He wants their light so that nations of the world should say that G'd needs their light, although He does not. How do we understand this?

The Torah states “Shabbos is a sign between Me (G'd) and the Jewish people.” Chazal explain that when the nations of the world see that the Jewish people are observing the Shabbos, they will understand that there is an exclusive and special relationship between G'd and His people. Similarly, when the nations of the world see the kindling of the Menorah in the Temple, they will appreciate the unique relationship that the Jew has with G'd. It is not that G'd needs the light of the Jew for Himself, but rather the nations of the world will realize that He had given this mitzvah to the Jewish people to emulate Him. Just as He illuminated their way in the desert so too He desires that they should kindle the Menorah before Him. This emulation of His way is to establish a commonality between the Jewish people and G'd. Thus, this mitzvah is quantifying the Jewish people. Only they have the capacity to have an intimate relationship with Him.

If the Jew would understand and appreciate the intrinsic value of mitzvos, he will not regard them as a burden. In addition, there are mitzvos through which the Jew can emulate G'd, thus enabling him to secure the relationship to Him to an even greater degree. We have established a compatibility and commonality with Him.

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—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

11:15 – 12:15pm **Talmud: Taanis**
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
Enter on 54th Street

12:30 – 1:30pm **Talmud: Pesachim**
Location: Shandholt 488 Madison Avenue
Between E.51st and E.52st

Tuesday

12:15 - 1:15pm **Torah Insight Based on the Parsha**
Location: Yad Avraham

Wednesday

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

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

Thursday

10:30 –11:30am **Duties of the Heart**
Location: Yad Avraham

12:00 – 1:00 pm **Talmud: Taanis** Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL)