

Yad Avraham Institute
Weekly Torah Commentaries Series
The Portion of
Shelach

June 19, 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 19, 2008

B"H

Shelach

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

Dean

1. Understanding One's Limitation

The Torah tells us in the Portion of Beha'aloscha that Moshe was overwhelmed by the demands that were put upon him by the Jewish people as their leader. He said to G'd saying, **"Why have You done evil to Your servant...that You place the burden of this entire people upon me? Did I conceive this entire people or did I give birth to it..."** In response, G'd said to Moshe, **"Gather to me seventy men from the elders of Israel...I will increase some of the spirit that is upon you and place it upon them, and they will bear the burden of the people with you..."** After Moshe had gathered the seventy elders before G'd, the Divine Presence descended upon them. At that time the Torah states, **"Two men remained behind in the camp, the name of one was Eldad and the name of the second was Medad...and they prophesized in the camp..."** Eldad and Medad had prophesized, "Moshe will die and Yehoshua will bring them in." Meaning, Moshe would pass away and his disciple, Yehoshua Bin Nun will assume his position.

Chazal tell us that upon hearing their prophecy Tzipporah, the wife of Moshe exclaimed, "Woe to the wives of prophets!" Meaning, that since the Sinai event, when Moshe assumed his special status as prophet, he had separated himself from her, so too will the wives of these prophets experience a similar fate. She believed that since Eldad and Medad had become prophets, that they too would separate themselves from their wives. When Miriam, Moshe's sister, overheard Tzipporah's remark, she said to her brother Aaron, **"Was it only to Moshe that Hashem spoke? Did He not speak to us as well?"** Miriam could not understand the legitimacy of Moshe's decision to separate from his wife. Miriam and Aaron were also prophets and this was not sufficient cause for them to separate from their spouses. When she had spoken critically of her brother Moshe, Miriam was afflicted with leprosy, thus causing her to be sent out of the camp of Israel. The Jewish people were not able to travel for a seven-day period until she recovered from her leprous

state. Although, Miriam when she had spoken critically of her brother Moshe it was not with the intent of deprecation, she was nevertheless punished because it was considered to be *lashon hara* (negative speech).

The Midrash tells us that during the seven-day period, the Divine Presence, the Clouds of Glory, and the entire Jewish people waited for her recovery out of respect. Why did Miriam merit such honor? When Moshe's mother Yocheved could no longer conceal his birth in Egypt, she put him into a box and placed it into the Nile. The Torah states, **"Miriam stood at a distance and waited to see what would happen to him."** In the merit of waiting a moment to see what the fate of her brother would be, G'd rewarded her measure for measure. Just as she had waited for Moshe, so too did the Divine Presence, the Clouds of Glory, and the entire Jewish people wait for her to recover. This is to teach us the immeasurable value of a mitzvah. Although Miriam's positive act was only momentary, she was rewarded with many multiples. Thus revealing that when G'd rewards one for a mitzvah measure for measure He does so 500 times greater than when He metes out punishment measure for measure.

After the incident of Miriam, the Torah tells us about the spies who were sent to scout out the Land. They returned with slanderous and evil reports about the Land. As a result of this information the Jewish bemoaned their fate, believing that if they were to enter the Land they would die. Consequently, G'd punished them by having them perish in the desert over a forty-year period. The Midrash explains that the juxtaposition of the incident of the spies to the portion of Miriam is to teach us, "These evil people witnessed what had happened to Miriam and they did not take heed." They should have learned from Miriam, that just as she as a result of her limitation was not able to evaluate the true essence of Moshe's dimension, so too they, because of their limitation, are not able to fully grasp what they had witnessed in the Land of Canaan. Since G'd had already promised them that the Land would be a Land that flows with milk and honey, and they would

only thrive there, the spies should have had sufficient reason to understand that their perception of reality was not accurate.

It is interesting to note that because Moshe had said to G'd that being the sole bearer of the responsibility for the Jewish people was too overwhelming for him, a chain of events was set in motion. As a result of what he had said, the Torah tells us the Eldad and Medad prophesized in the camp. Their prophecy led Yocheved to make the remark, "Woe to the wives of prophets!" which was overheard by Miriam, her sister-in-law. Consequently, Miriam spoke critically of Moshe, resulting in her becoming a leper. Her predicament was public knowledge because for a seven day period, the Divine Presence, the Jewish people, and the Clouds of Glory did not travel until she recovered from her leprous state. There was sufficient time for the Jewish people and especially the spies, who were people of greater caliber than the average person, to reflect on what had transpired with Miriam. Because of their slander of the Land, they were classified as truly evil for not drawing the lesson that should have been learned.

2. Creating A Receptacle For Blessing

The Torah tells us that spies had returned with slanderous reports about the Land that G'd had promised to the Jewish people. They had said, "**It is a Land that devours its inhabitants.**" Rather than embracing the word of G'd, and agreeing to enter into the Land, they had said, "We will not go in." They in effect accused G'd of misleading them. As a result of this sin, G'd decreed that the generation that was between the ages of 20 and 60 should perish in the desert over a 40-year period.

After the incident of the spies, the Torah states, "**Hashem spoke to Moshe saying, '...When you will bring a fire-offering to Hashem – an elevation offering or a feast offering...or a free-will offering, or on your festivals, to produce a satisfying aroma to Hashem...the one who brings the offering must bring a meal offering...and wine for a libation...'**" After the sin of the spies, if one were to bring a peace offering, burnt offering, etc. it must be accompanied with a meal offering and wine libations. Why does the Torah choose to mention at this point in time, the meal offering and wine libations that need to accompany the one's personal sacrifice?

Sforno explains, "Until the sin of the Golden Calf, if one wanted to bring a burnt offering to G'd it was sufficient for him to bring the meat offering by itself. Although it was not accompanied with the meal offering or

wine libation it was considered a fully appropriate offering. The offering produced a satisfying aroma to Hashem, as we find regarding the sacrifices of Abel, Noach, and Avraham. They had brought burnt offerings without any accompaniment. At the time of the giving of the Torah at Sinai, the youths also brought burnt offerings that were not accompanied with a meal offering and libations. However, as a result of the spiritual diminishment of the Jewish people that was caused by the sin of the Golden Calf, when a communal offering was brought it was no longer sufficient to be brought by itself. It needed to be accompanied with a meal offering and libations. After the sin of the spies, which caused even further spiritual diminishment to the Jewish people, when one brought a personal offering, it needed to be accompanied with a meal offering and libations. It was no longer sufficient to bring the meat offering by itself." The meal offering and libations that accompanied the burnt offering after the sin of the Golden Calf and the sin of the spies were to compensate for the spiritual failing of the Jewish people. It was only with this accompaniment that the aroma of the offering would be satisfying to G'd. Only in this manner would the Jewish people be fully atoned.

The Torah continues, "**Hashem spoke to Moshe saying, '...When you will eat of the bread of the Land, you shall set a side a portion for Hashem (challah)...'**" Sforno explains, "After the sin of the spies, the Jewish people also needed the mitzvah of *challah* (in addition to the meal offering and libations). One needed to perform a positive commandment before partaking of the bread of the Land so that he should be worthy of blessing to come upon him. As is states, 'When you give the first of your dough to the Kohen (Priest), it will bring blessing into your house.'" After the Jewish people became spiritually diminished from the sin of the Golden Calf and the spies, the burnt offering alone was not sufficient to bring about atonement. They needed to also bring a meal offering and libations to be considered complete. In addition, in order to be worthy of the blessing of G'd, the Jewish people needed to tithe their dough before partaking of it. Prior to the sin of the spies, they were not obligated in the mitzvah of *challah* because they were innately worthy of blessing.

The Gemara in Tractate Zevachim tells us that when one brings a sin offering it must be accompanied with a burnt offering. The sin offering, which brings about atonement, must precede the burnt offering. The value of the burnt offering that is brought subsequently, is the equivalent of a gift to G'd. The Gemara asks, "To what is this analogous? When one sins against the king, he must first make amends to be forgiven. After one is forgiven, he is not entirely in his good graces of the king. He must

bring a gift to the king to be fully reinstated and seen as a loyal and beloved subject.” Similarly, after one brings the sin offering, one is forgiven and fully atoned. However, in order to return to His “good graces,” one must bring a burnt offering as a gift.

Although the Jewish people compensated for their spiritual regression by bringing the meal offering and wine libations, that was not sufficient to be worthy of blessing. They were therefore given the mitzvah of *challah*. Only through tithing the dough and giving it to the Kohen, who is the representative of G'd, does one become worthy of blessing.

We find that before Yitzchak had given his blessing to Esav the Torah states, **“Yitzchak said to Esav, ...go out to the field and hunt game for me. Then make me delicacies such as I love and bring it to me and I will eat, so that my soul may bless you...”** Sforno asks, “Since Esav was the first born of Yitzchak, who was the Patriarch, seemingly, the blessing could have been given without being predicated on preparing delicacies for his father. Why did Yitzchak ask Esav to hunt game and prepare delicacies for him in order to receive the blessing? One needs to be worthy in order for a blessing to be effective, regardless of the holiness of the individual giving the blessing. Yitzchak wanted to create an opportunity for Esav to perform the mitzvah of honoring one’s father in order to be worthy to receive the blessing.” Yaakov, on the other hand, because of his dimension of spirituality and holiness was innately worthy of receiving his father’s blessing.

3. Tracing Something to Its Source

The Torah states, when the spies had returned to deliver their slanderous reports about the Land, **“They went and came to Moshe and Aaron...”** It would have been sufficient for the Torah to state that they “came,” which was what they were actually doing when they returned. Why does the verse need to mention their departure in relationship to their return? Rashi cites Chazal who explain, “It is to associate their going with their coming. Just as when they had gone to scout out the Land it was with an evil intent, so too was their return (with the reports) with a similar evil intent.” The Torah states at the beginning of the Portion Shelach, regarding the spies, **“Send forth for yourself men...”** Rashi cites Chazal who explain, “The men that were chosen by G'd to spy out the Land initially were devoutly righteous (tzaddikim) and men of special status.” If the spies were initially classified as men of status, how do we understand the words of

Chazal that tell us that they had gone to scout out the Land it was with an evil intent?

The Torah initially states, regarding the sending out of the spies, **“Hashem spoke to Moshe saying, ‘Send forth for yourself men...’**” G'd had already promised the Jewish people that He was taking them to a Land that was filled with blessing. Despite the fact that requesting to scout out the Land before entering it was a breach of faith, G'd nevertheless allowed them to do so. The Midrash states, “G'd said to Moshe, ‘Because they wanted to see the Land before entering, I will put them in a precarious situation where they can easily fail through misinterpretation.’” If G'd had already proven His dedication and love to the Jewish people through the many instances of revealed miracles, why would that not be sufficient for them to believe that G'd would not carry forth what He had promised them? Their request was an indication that they had a lack of trust (faith) in G'd. Because of their breach of faith, He presented them with a setting in which one must have unswerving faith to be able to perceive truth. Their interpretation of the events that they had witnessed in Canaan was only due to their lack of trust in G'd. In contrast, Yehoshua and Calev, who were giants in faith and scrupulously pious, had interpreted the events correctly. Everything was perceived by them in a positive vein, which was a confirmation of G'd's dedication to His people. This is why the Torah associates their return with their departure.

Based on the principle of “*aveira goreres aveira*—one spiritual infraction (even of a minor nature) draws one to another (of an even more severe nature),” although the spies were initially classified as righteous because they did not intend to defy G'd; nevertheless, because their mission was an indication that they did not trust G'd, it led them to be put in a more precarious position that caused them to become evil. The end result, which was the slandering of the Land, reveals that their initial initiative was already spiritually tainted.

The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos states, “One’s speech (subject matter) on the Shabbos should be different from the weekday.” If one were to discuss matters that are not related to the Shabbos at their Shabbos meal in the presence of their family, although it may seem to be innocuous, the outcome of this could lead to something that would be regrettable. One who takes the words of Chazal lightly and thus easily dismisses them, will come to transgress in other areas that are more serious. This mindset will set a spiritual dynamic and momentum in the family, based on the principle of *aveira goreres aveira*, that will result in grave consequences.

4. *Trust, A Vital Component in Understanding G'd's Way*

The Torah tells us that ten of the twelve spies returned with slanderous reports about the Land. It was only Yehoshua and Calev who returned with a positive report about the Land, as G'd had promised the Jewish people. The spies had said, **“The Land through which we passed, to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants! All the people we saw in it were huge!...”** In contrast, Yehoshua and Calev had said, **“The Land that we passed through, to spy it out – the Land is very, very good...You should not fear the people of the Land, for they are our bread.”** Meaning, the Jewish people would be able to consume the inhabitants of the Land of Canaan like bread. Although the other spies had witnessed the same events as Yehoshua and Calev, they had processed them incorrectly. Why did the spies process everything that they had seen negatively while Yehoshua and Calev did not? Yehoshua and Calev had seen the events as a confirmation of G'd's Kindness. The basis for this difference is a matter of trust/faith. Why did Yehoshua and Calev have unswerving faith in G'd while the others did not?

Chazal tell us that when Moshe had come to Egypt to redeem the Jewish people, the process of redemption began. Ten revealed miracles were brought upon the Egyptians, through the ten plagues. G'd had said to Moshe, **“Although the Egyptian people have violated every cardinal sin, I have not brought My Wrath upon them. It was not until they enslaved and persecuted My firstborn, the Children of Israel that I am bringing upon them destruction.”** The ten plagues that came upon the Egyptian people were a confirmation of G'd's exceptional love for the Jewish people. It was only because G'd regards them as His firstborn, that He punished the Egyptians as He had. It was the first time in the history of existence that G'd revealed His Might to the world in the most obvious manner to demonstrate His love for the Jewish people.

Chazal tell us, based on a verse from Song of Songs, that G'd's love for the Jewish people is the equivalent of a father's love for his child. However, G'd's love is at an overwhelming level. If the spies had fully grasped and internalized the reality of the relationship between G'd and His people, it would have been impossible for them to say that He was leading them into a death trap. Understanding G'd's unlimited love for them would have made it an impossibility to perceive the events in the Land as they had. Although they had witnessed the

miracles in Egypt and the splitting of the Sea, the spies did not fully understand the purpose for this level of revelation to take place. They believed that the Egyptians were destroyed because of their sins, unrelated to the nation that they had victimized. Yehoshua and Calev, on the other hand, had understood and perceived the events as G'd had wanted them to be seen. As a result of this perspective of G'd's relationship with the Jewish people, all the events that transpired were seen as a continuum of His love and kindness for His people.

The Torah tells us in the Portion of Beha'aloscha that when the Jewish people began to complain that they did not have meat to eat, Moshe said to G'd, **“Why have You done evil to Your servant?...that You place the burden of this entire people upon me? Did I conceive this entire people or did I give birth to it...”** Moshe was no longer able to bear the burden of the demands of the people on his own. Consequently, G'd increased his spirit upon seventy elders so that they should share the burden. Sforno explains, **“What is the meaning of Moshe's words, ‘Did I conceive this entire people?...’** A father is able to lead his children and contain the family in a cohesive setting, despite the fact that the children have divergent perspectives. It is because the children understand that since the father loves them, he will only act in their best interest, despite how they perceive the circumstances. Therefore, although the children may have differences of opinion, they will not question their father's motive. However, Moshe had said, **“I am not the father of these people. Therefore, they do not have an implicit trust in me. They continuously question and test me to prove myself to them.”**

One's trust in G'd is based upon how one perceives Him. If one believes that G'd as his father, who has unlimited love for his child, he will not question the father, despite the circumstance. However, if one does not perceive G'd as the Father, but rather as only as a Benefactor, then there is a basis to question G'd's motive. Since Yehoshua and Calev understood G'd's unlimited loves the Jewish people as a father loves his children, they saw all the events of Canaan in the most positive vein. However, the spies who did not see in this light, witnessed imminent destruction, if the Jewish people should enter into the Land.

5. *The Innate Value of the Kindling of the Menorah* (From Behaaloscha)

The Torah states, **“...When you kindle the lamps...”** The Midrash states, **“G'd said to the Jewish people regarding the kindling of the Menorah, ‘You shall**

illuminate My light.' The Jewish people said, 'Master of the Universe, how could You ask us to illuminate the lights before You? You are the illumination of the world and light dwells with You.'... G'd responded, 'The reason I am asking you to kindle the light is to elevate you. Just as I illuminated the way before you when you traveled, so too do I want you to illuminate before Me.'" Eitz Yosef, the commentator on the Midrash Tanchuma explains, "What is the meaning of 'so that you should be elevated?' G'd said, 'You should be seen as special in the eyes of the world through demonstrating your appreciation. The nations of the world will say that the Jewish people are not ingrates because they reciprocated to G'd. As He illuminated their way in the desert, so too do they illuminate for Him.' By doing so, the Jewish people will acknowledge the good that they received, '*hakaras ha tov*'" What is the value of making it known to the world that the Jewish people are not ingrates and are appreciative?

The Torah tells us in the Portion of Terumah that there were thirteen materials that were needed for the building of the Mishkan. The Midrash explains that the reason G'd asked for thirteen materials is to correspond to the thirteen kindnesses that He had provided for the Jewish people at the time of their redemption from Egypt. By providing the thirteen materials for the building of the Mishkan, they would demonstrate their appreciation and indebtedness to G'd for all that He had done for them. Once again, G'd wanted the Jewish people to demonstrate their "*hakaras ha tov*" (*appreciation*).

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that Avraham, our Patriarch, was the first human being to recognize G'd on his own as "Master." He was the only one to recognize G'd as the Omnipotent One in a pagan world. After coming upon monotheism, he espoused it selflessly to the world. What characteristic did Avraham possess that allowed him to come upon G'd, which no other human being merited? Avraham, had a need to identify his Benefactor because of his depth of appreciation for existence. He was compelled to identify the source of all blessing in order to express his appreciation. Before rejecting paganism, Avraham had entered into intellectual discourse with all of the intellectuals of his time. However, he rejected their positions because he had believed that they were not the basis for his existence. The Midrash tells us that Avraham's quest for truth to understand who is the Master was the equivalent of a person standing before an illuminated citadel, calling out "Who is the master of this citadel?" After calling out many times, the Master responded, "I (G'd) am the Master." Avraham's

unadulterated quest for truth allowed him to locate his Benefactor.

It is for this reason that G'd wanted the Jewish people to kindle the Menorah and provide light. By expressing their appreciation to G'd, with the kindling of the lights, they are revealing to the world the basis for their relationship with the Master of the Universe, G'd Himself. Just as Avraham, their Patriarch had come upon G'd through this unique characteristic, so too his children, the Jewish people are able to maintain their unique relationship with Him as a result of this characteristic.

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 FL)