

Yad Avraham Institute
Weekly Torah Commentaries Series
Portion of Toldos

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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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Toldos

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita
Dean

1. Contentment, A Gift from G'd

The Torah states, **“And Avraham passed away at a good old age, mature and content, and he was gathered to his people.”** Ramban explains, “Avraham passed away in a satisfied and content state because he had seen all the aspirations of his heart fulfilled and was thus sated with all good. The Torah is telling us of the special kindness of G'd that He does for the devoutly righteous (tzaddikim). This is a gift that is bestowed upon the righteous. It is a positive quality of the tzaddik that he desires only what is needed and has no interest in excess...The Midrash states, ‘A person does not leave this world with half of his desires in his hand. This is because one who has one hundred, he desires two hundred. If he has achieved two hundred he desires four hundred...One who loves silver will never be sated...’” This particular aspiration has no relevance to the tzaddik. It is only the one who sees excess as necessity. Ramban states, “Chazal tell us that before a tzaddik leaves this world, G'd shows him the extent of his reward in the world to come, so that he should feel sated. Then he will sleep. Not only is the tzaddik satisfied because he has met the aspirations of his life, G'd also shows him the reward that awaits him in the world to come before he passes away.” Why is it important for G'd to show the tzaddik his reward in the world to come at the moment before his passing?

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that righteous people, after they pass, are considered as if they are alive; however, evil people, even when they are alive they are considered to be dead. How is this to be understood? It is because the tzaddik in his lifetime utilizes every moment and aspect of his physical existence as a means to spiritualize himself and advance the spirituality of the world. The physical is only a medium to bring about spirituality. When the tzaddik passes away, it is merely a transition to a more advanced level of spirituality. Although he is no longer physically alive, the state of his essence has not changed. He only exists in another venue. However, the evil person, although his mission and purpose in existence is to develop his spirituality to no less a degree than the tzaddik, he chooses to ignore its potential and allows it to wither. He focuses only on advancing his

material horizons. He exists and functions in the world as an intellectual animal rather than as a spiritual being. His spirituality has no relevance to his life. He is thus considered as if he is dead. This type of individual, because of his material aspirations is the one who is referred to by King Solomon in the Midrash, “If one has one hundred he desires two hundred...” The more one has, the more one desires. There is no end and no point of satisfaction for the one who is driven by his desires to accumulate the material. This is another reason that the evil one, who has no relevance or interest in the development of his own spirituality, is considered to be dead although he is alive. To live in constant pursuit of a goal that is not attainable can be equated to death.

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos contrasts the passing of a devoutly righteous person and the passing of an evil person with an allegory. When the soul of the tzaddik departs from his body its transition is as smooth and gentle as a hair being removed from milk. In contrast, when the soul of the evil one departs from his body it is the equivalent of the fleece of a sheep being torn from a briar bush. Because the soul of the evil one has been materialized and enmeshed with his physicality it does not want to depart from this world. It has difficulty separating itself from the body as the separation of fleece from a briar bush. However, the tzaddik, whose entire existence was imbued with spirituality, departs without being encumbered by his physicality.

King David writes in Psalms, “I rejoice (*sos*) over your words (the Torah) as if I found great spoils.” The word for joy that King David utilizes is “*sos*” rather than “*simcha*” or other terms for joy. Vilna Gaon explains that the word “*sos*” connotes a joy that is experienced with a sense of being denied. He explains this with a parable.

A king wanted to reward his loyal and dedicated subject for his service. He said to him, “You will have the privilege to enter into my royal treasury and take whatever you want but only for a period of an hour.” The king tells him that he will see objects of value that the commoner has never seen. When the subject enters into the treasury, he realizes that what the king had described was only a semblance of what he actually seeing. He understands that

time was of the essence. Although he had amassed within the hour a great amounts of wealth, simultaneously he was anguished and pained by the time constraint. This is because there was so much more that he could have taken if he only had the time. Similarly King David rejoiced over the Torah that he had come upon because he understood and internalized its infinite value; however, simultaneously he was distressed by the fact that there was so much more to be amassed, but he was limited by the length of his years. Because of his profound appreciation of the Torah he thus experienced a frustration because of his limitation of time.

Every tzaddik before he passes away experiences something that has a semblance of King David's experience. Although he feels privileged and fortunate that he had lived a life that was in accordance with G'd's Will, he understands at the end of his life how much more there is to accomplish. In order for the tzaddik to leave the physical existence in a state of peace and not feel denied, G'd reveals to him his share in the world to come in order to satisfy and calm him so that he should pass away in a tranquil state.

2. The Spiritual Capacity and Dimension of the Jewish people is Rooted in Their Antecedents- the Patriarchs and Matriarchs

The Torah tells us that Rivka our Matriarch was barren. Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains why G'd cause Rivka to be barren. Before Eliezer returned with Rivka to be the future wife of Yitzchak, his master, her mother and brother Lavan had given her a blessing **'Our sister, may you come to be thousands of myriads, and may your offspring inherit the gate of its enemies.'** Ohr Ha Chaim HaKadosh cites a Midrash that explains that the reason Rivka was barren was because if she would have conceived naturally, it would have been said that the blessing that was given to her by her evil Lavan, could bring about something that is truly good. This is not so. The evolvement of the Jewish people would have been attributed to the blessing of Lavan. Therefore, G'd caused Rivka to be barren in order to establish beyond any doubt that the essence of the Jewish people has no relevance to the blessing of this evil person. She was only able to conceive as a result of Yitzchak's special and intense supplications on her behalf. This caused G'd to perform a miracle.

The Torah tells us that initially Bilaam wanted to curse the Jewish people; however, G'd told him not to do so. After being restrained by G'd, Bilaam asked G'd if he could bless them. Again, G'd denied his request, saying **"I**

do not want you to bless them," Why did G'd not want Bilaam to bless the Jewish people since blessing is something of a positive nature? Chazal explain just as one says to a bee, "not your honey and not your sting!" G'd did not want Bilaam to bless the Jewish people because only evil emanates from evil. Although initially the blessing of an evil person may seem something of value, since it emanates from a source of evil, the outcome cannot have any positive value. Similarly, when Lavan, who epitomized evil pursued Yaakov when he had fled from his home, G'd said to Lavan in a dream, **"not good words and not bad words shall you speak to him"** This is because only evil could emanate from evil.

Chofetz Chaim writes that if one were to succeed materially by conforming to the dictates and guidelines of the Torah, G'd will protect that individual's possessions because his blessing comes from the "G'd's treasury." There is a Positive Commandment for the Priests (Kohanim) to bless the Jewish people. The priestly blessings are comprised of three blessings. The first is, "May Hashem bless you and watch over you." Rashi explains, "May Hashem bless you" to mean that one should be blessed with material blessing. and that "G'd should watch over you" so that thieves should not steal that which was given. When a master gives a gift to his servant, he cannot guarantee that it will not be stolen. However, when G'd endows the Jewish people with material blessing He assures them that it will remain intact. However, if one amasses material wealth in a manner that is not in conformance with the dictates of the Torah, it will ultimately be forfeited and cause even what was attained through legal means to be lost.

Because the Jewish people are G'd's holy people, they needed to emanate from the purest source, the Patriarchs and the Matriarchs. Rivka, our Matriarch needed to be barren so that no one could say that what had descended from her had any relevance to the blessing of her brother Lavan, the evil one. The purity and dimension of spirituality of the Jewish people cannot, under any circumstance, emanate from a source of evil, regardless of the intent of the evil one. In order to establish this fact beyond any doubt, Rivka needed to be barren and only conceive through a miracle.

3.. Yitzchak, the Patriarch Who Guaranteed Existence

The Midrash cites a verse from Proverbs, " 'The father of the righteous one shall rejoice. The one who gives birth to the wise one will rejoice with him.' To whom is King Solomon referring in the verse? It is to the

birth of Yitzchak, our Patriarch. When Yitzchak was born everyone rejoiced. Heaven and earth rejoiced. The sun and the moon rejoiced. The stars and the zodiac rejoiced. Why did all existence rejoice after the birth of Yitzchak? Had Yitzchak not been born, the world would have not continued. As the prophet Yirmiya states, 'If not for My covenant, which is in effect day and night, the extent of heaven and earth would not be put in place.' What is the covenant to which G'd is referring? It is Yitzchak – as it states in the Torah, **'My covenant I will establish with Yitzchak.'**"

The Torah states in the Portion of Bereishis, **"and it was the sixth day (yom ha shishi)."** Regarding all of the other days of Creation, the Torah refers to the day as "day one," "day two, etc." However, regarding the sixth day of Creation the Torah states, "the sixth day" indicating that there is something special about the sixth day. Chazal explain that this is alluding to the sixth day of the month of Sivan, when the Jewish people were to receive the Torah at Sinai. If they were to accept it on that day, when it will be offered to them, the world would continue to exist. However, if they choose reject G'd's Torah, the world would revert back to pre-existence. As it states in the Gemara in Tractate Avoda Zorah, "Existence was not tranquil until the Jewish people accepted the Torah." The world was only created for the purpose of the fulfillment of the Torah by the Jewish people who were the only ones qualified to be spiritualized through its laws. Had they not accepted the Torah on the sixth day of Sivan, Creation would have no value, thus causing it to come to an end.

The Gemara in Tractate Nidarim interprets the verse in Yirmiya, 'If not for My covenant, which is in effect day and night, the extent of heaven and earth would not be put in place' as referring to the study of Torah. If the study of Torah should cease for even a moment, existence would not be able to continue. The existence of the world is contingent, firstly on the Jewish people accepting the Torah and secondly on its study. In order for the Torah to be accepted at Sinai, there needed to be a people qualified to receive it. Had Yitzchak not been brought into existence, this would not have occurred. The miracle that allowed our Matriarch Sarah to conceive was necessary to guarantee the future of existence. Therefore when Yitzchak was born and was circumcised, it set forth the future of the Jewish people who would receive the Torah at Sinai and allow the world to continue. Yitzchak only had relevance to Torah and spiritual advancement after he was circumcised.

There is an argument in the Gemara in Tractate Nidarim regarding the words "if not for My Covenant

(Bris)" in the verse from Yirmiya, is referring to the study of Torah or circumcision (*bris milah*). R' Akiva Eiger explains that the opinion that states that "Bris" is referring to circumcision also concurs that it refers to the study of Torah. In order for one to have relevance to Torah, the foreskin must be removed. The removal of the foreskin allows the removal of a spiritual impediment that prevents the Jew from having relevance to his spiritual potential which is achieved through the study of Torah. Therefore when the covenant (*bris milah*) is in effect, do the Jewish people have relevance to continuous spiritual growth through the study of the Torah.

Every aspect of existence rejoiced with the birth of Yitzchak because heaven, earth, and all aspects of existence correspond to a spiritual world that functions through a hierarchy of angels. They carry out G'd's Will for the sake of His Glory. If the world would come to an end as a result of Sarah, remaining barren, the intent of Creation would never be realized and G'd's Glory would never be addressed.

4. Intense Supplication is Greater than One's Merit

The Midrash states, "Avraham, our Patriarch's wife was barren. Yitzchak, our Patriarch's wife was barren. Why did G'd cause the Matriarchs to be barren?...It is because G'd desired their supplications." Chazal tell us that G'd desires the supplications of the devoutly righteous. Why is this so? Although the tzaddik, when he prays to G'd it is always with a sense of self-negation; however, if he is in a state of need, he will pray with a greater level of intensity. Regarding Yitzchak's supplication (tefillah), the Torah uses the term **"vayetar,"** which is a powerful and urgent expression of prayer. The Gemara in Tractate Succah tells us that the tefillah of tzaddikim is compared to a pitchfork (which is referred to as *aatar*). Just as the pitchfork is able to overturn the hay and the straw, so too, so too does the prayer of tzaddikim overturn G'd's Attribute of Justice and establishes the Attribute of Mercy.

The Torah tells us that every day, when the Jewish people were in the desert, they received their daily allocation of the Manna. Chazal ask, "Why was the Manna not given on a monthly or weekly basis? Why did G'd choose to provide the Manna only in allotments of one day at a time?" The Midrash answers that it is analogous to a king who loves his son and wishes to give him a daily stipend. The prince asks his father, "Why do you not give me a monthly or yearly stipend rather than me coming every day to receive my needs?" The king answers, "If I

were not to give you a stipend on a daily basis I would not have the pleasure of seeing you every day. It is because of my love for you that I desire to see you every day.” Similarly, G’d desires the supplications of the devoutly righteous because of His love for them. It is through their intense requests that they are drawn close to Him and receive His blessing. On the other hand, regarding the evil person, G’d will grant him his needs or even his desires because He does not want this person to be associated with Him. Thus, the evil one does not need to beseech G’d for his needs to the degree that a tzaddik does.

Anaf Yosef (a student of the Vilna Gaon) explains the words of Chazal “G’d desires the supplications of the devoutly righteous” in a different manner. This is based on the understanding of Rabbeinu Bachya in his work Kad HaKemach. He asks, “Is it not so that the devoutly righteous are continuously engaged in prayer and supplication to G’d? If this is so, then how do we understand the words of the Midrash that the reason the Matriarchs were barren was because G’d desires the supplication of tzaddikim? Seemingly, the Patriarchs had sufficient merit due to their own spiritual dimension to merit children. Why then were the Matriarchs barren? It is to teach us that one’s merit, despite its dimension is not sufficient to merit children. As the Gemara in Moed Katan states, ‘Children, quality of life, and livelihood are all based on *mazal* (zodiac).’ However, intense prayer is able to supersede and cause one to merit children.” In order for one to appreciate and understand the value of the prayers of the devoutly righteous, G’d caused that the Matriarchs should be barren. Thus, if they conceived after intense supplication, one would understand that the miracle was initiated by prayer and unrelated to merit. G’d desires the prayers of the tzaddikim not only because of His love for them but also to demonstrate to the world the exceptional value of prayer. The supplications of the devoutly righteous are able to overturn nature and bring about miracles.

The Torah states, **“Yitzchak supplicated G’d on behalf of his wife, because she was barren.”** Rabbeinu Bachya explains that the Torah should have first mentioned that Rivka was barren and therefore Yitzchak supplicated G’d. Why did the Torah choose to mention first his prayers and afterwards reveal the fact that she was barren? It is to teach us that the reason that G’d caused her to be barren is for us to appreciate the value of prayer.

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos cites a verse from Psalms, “ ‘There are things that are deprecated by man...’ There are things upon which the world stands that people belittle and do not value. What is it that the universe stands upon?” Rashi explains that it is the

supplication of man that ascends to heaven. The prayers of the Jew are able to alter nature and bring about miracles. Despite the innate reality of its power, mankind does not appreciate its value, and therefore belittles it. People invest their ability in the pursuit of amassing material. If mankind would understand the power of one’s supplication and its effectiveness, then one would invest greater amounts of time in prayer.

5. *One’s Responsibility as a Jew*

The Torah tells us that when Yitzchak, our Patriarch was in Gerar, he became exceptionally wealthy. His level of renown and wealth was so great that the subjects of Avimelech, the king of Gerar said that they would prefer the “dung of Yitzchak’s mules more than the silver and gold of Avimelech.” They believed that the “dung” of Yitzchak’s animals provided a greater value than his gold and silver. Avimelech, could not tolerate, that his subjects esteemed Yitzchak to such a degree. He thus expelled Yitzchak from his community.

The Torah states, **“He (Avraham) went up from there to Beersheva. Hashem, appeared to him that night and said, “I am the G’d of your father Avraham: Fear not, for I am with you; I bless you and increase your offspring because of Avraham My Servant.”** Yitzchak, our Patriarch was the equivalent of an angel. Because he allowed himself to be brought as a sacrifice at the Akeidah he was viewed by G’d as “the unblemished burnt offering.” One would think Yitzchak should merit the blessing of G’d in his own right, because of his own spiritual dimension and caliber. Nevertheless, G’d informs him that all the blessing that he will receive is only due to the merit of his father Avraham, who is referred to by G’d as “My servant.” The fact that Yitzchak’s blessing emanated solely from the merit of his father was an indication that he had a spiritual deficiency, despite the fact that he had chosen to conduct his life with the context of the attribute of Justice. He was exacting in every aspect of his service of G’d in the most perfect manner.

The Torah continues, **“He built an altar there, invoked Hashem by Name, and there he pitched his tent...”** Immediately after this the Torah tells us, **“Avimelech went to him (Yitzchak) from Gerar with a group of his friends...generals of his legions. Yitzchak said to him, ‘Why had you come to me? You hate me and drove me away from you!’ And they said ‘We have indeed seen that Hashem has been with you...let us make a covenant with you...He made them a feast and they ate and drank.”** What transformation took place that Yitzchak should be seen in such a different light in their eyes?

Sforno explains, “Avraham was always considered special and beloved to G’d because he invested his life in loving kindness. As it is stated, **‘What are the ways of Hashem? Kindness and Truth and to advise sinners to walk the proper path.’** Avraham’s kindness was expressed by bringing pagans under the wings of the Divine Presence by espousing monotheism. As it is stated, **‘and he called in the Name of Hashem.’** Avraham selflessly interacted with mankind to dispel paganism from existence. He was a paradigm to the world of what G’d wanted a human being to be....On the other hand, Yitzchak’s service of G’d was directed to his own self-perfection. He did not impact upon the world in the same way that his father had done. However after Yitzchak chose to call out in the Name of G’d (as his father had done), indicating that he began to espouse to mankind G’d’s existence, he became worthy in his own right.” It was only after Yitzchak assumed this new role that the Avimelech and the community of Gerar perceived and appreciated that G’d’s Presence was associated with Yitzchak. Thus, they wanted to end the dispute and enter into a covenant with him so that they should benefit from the blessing that was upon him.

The Torah tells us that Noach only fathered his three sons at the age of 500. Sforno explains that although during the generations of Noach people began fathering children at an earlier age, he was not able to father a child until he was 500 years old. It was only after he began building the Ark, which was meant to be a medium for him to admonish his generation and interact with them to repent, did he merit to have children. Although prior to that moment he was considered by G’d to be a devoutly righteous individual who was unique in spirituality in all of his generations, he did not merit to have children until he began to interact with the world. He needed to assume the responsibility for his generation. We see that it is not enough for one to be focused on perfecting one own service of G’d in order to fulfill one’s objective in life. One must assume the responsibility for his fellow and affect him in a positive manner to his best ability.

We find that the blessings of the Amidah (Silent Prayer) are said on behalf of the entire Jewish people. Although one is obligated to recite the Amidah to supplicate G’d for his own needs, the text of all the blessings are written in the plural. For example the blessing for repentance states, “Bring us back, our Father...” The blessing for forgiveness states, “Forgive us, our Father...” G’d wants every Jew to repent and cleave to Him. It is every Jew’s responsibility, as a servant of G’d, to dedicate himself to affecting his fellow. Avraham was

referred to as “My servant” by G’d only because he dedicated himself to the espousal of monotheism to all mankind. Until Noach engaged in building the Ark, which was the means for him to impact upon his generation, he did not merit to have children. Until Yitzchak called out in the name of G’d and assumed responsibility for his fellow human being, he needed to rely in the merit of his father to be deserving of blessing.

One must understand that the only reason one merits blessing and success is because G’d deems it so. If one feels the responsibility to do G’d’s Will, then he will merit G’d’s Assistance. However, if one is occupied with own personal spiritual growth, it is not sufficient to be a full beneficiary of G’d’s blessing and Assistance.

YAD AVRAHAM DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday Through Friday

5:50- 6:00 am	Chumash with Rashi
6:00- 6:15 am	Pirkei Avos (Maharal)
6:15- 6:30 am	Mishna Berurah
6:30 -6:45 am	Mussar – Path of the Just
6:45 -7:25 am	Talmud—Tractate Chulin –Gid Hanasheh
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna - Rabbi Rovner
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi- Bava Basra
2:00pm	Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

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