

*Yad Avraham Institute*  
**Weekly Torah Commentaries Series**  
**Portion of Vayeira**

November 5, 2009

**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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**New York**  
**November 5, 2009**

**B"H**

## Vayeira

*Presented by*

**Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita**

**Dean**

### **1. Avraham Reflecting the Love of His Benefactor**

The Midrash states, “Reb Chanina says, ‘Let us understand the special love that Avraham had for his Creator. For it was at the age of three that he recognized his Maker...’” What was the basis for the unique love that Avraham had for G’d?

The Mishna in Ethics of Our Fathers tells us that there were ten generations between Adam and Noach and they had failed in their service of G’d and were destroyed. In addition, there were ten generations between Noach and Avraham, our Patriarch. It was only Avraham who had recognized G’d and was able to bring about a sanctification of His Name that was not able to be achieved by anyone in all the generations that had preceded him. Why was this so?

Avraham understood that he was a beneficiary of a Creator. He believed that all existence came about through an Almighty benefactor to whom he owed a debt of gratitude. It was because Avraham had such a unique and overwhelming feeling of gratitude for his Maker that he relentlessly sought out to find Him and express his debt of gratitude. It was only because of his understanding of the love and concern that his benefactor had for him by creating such a universe, that it evoked in Avraham need to express his gratitude to his benefactor. He therefore rejected all the theological and philosophical beliefs of his generation. He would only be satisfied by discovering his true benefactor and serving Him selflessly as an expression of his indebtedness. What did Avraham perceive in existence that no one else noticed?

King David writes in Psalms, “How great are Your works Hashem...” Ramak explains in his work *Tomer Devorah*, that this is referring to the fact that the wisdom and greatness of G’d is imprinted and encoded on every aspect of creation. Although G’d’s full glory may be concealed in nature, His imprint on the world can be seen and perceived by anyone who has a desire to notice it.

Avraham was motivated by his love and desire to express his gratitude to the magnificent Being who brought about existence. He did notice and reflect upon the Creator’s imprint on every aspect of creation. He was able to see that His Greatness was emblazoned even on a grain of sand.

The Torah tells us that there is a Positive Commandment to love G’d, as it states in the Shema “You shall love Hashem, your G’d, with all your heart, with all your soul...” Love is not an intellectual concept but rather it is within one’s emotion and being. If it remains in the abstract and it is not something that is felt by the individual, although one may understand the importance of being dedicated to his Maker, because of the sacrifice that one needs to serve his Master, it is only a matter of time before the individual will no longer serve G’d.

Rambam writes in the *Laws of The Fundamentals of Torah (Yisodei HaTorah)* that although love is an emotion which cannot be dictated, one can come to love G’d by reflecting and perceiving His Greatness as it is manifested in existence. When one realizes and understands the unlimited dimension of wisdom that lies in creation, it will evoke love that will cause the individual to praise, glorify, and have an overwhelming desire to know the Great Name of G’d. This sense of majesty will cause one to become nullified and will bring one to love G’d. Avraham was the one who saw the world as a magnificent citadel that was illuminated. He wanted to come upon the Master of this edifice. He rejected all the beliefs of humanity and thus came upon the true Master and was able to express his gratitude and love.

### **2. The Consequences of the Survival of the King of Sodom**

The Torah tells us that when Avraham had become aware that his nephew Lot had been taken captive by the Four Mightiest Kings of the world, he went to battle to rescue him. As a result of the many miracles that G’d had performed on his behalf, Avraham was victorious. One of the kings that had been initially taken captive by the Four Kings was the king of Sodom. After Avraham had

vanquished the Four Mighty Kings and had returned the people and possessions to their appropriate location, the King of Sodom had approached Avraham with a demand. He had said, **“Give me the people and the possessions shall be yours.”** Avraham’s response to the King of Sodom was, **“I will not take from you as much as a thread or a bootstrap.”** Seemingly, the King of Sodom’s proposal was absurd. How is it possible that a person who is a captive and chattel of the victor able to dictate such terms? Nevertheless, because of his insolence and evil nature, he believed that he could negotiate with Avraham to give the spoils that were recaptured, while he would keep his own subjects, the people. Avraham rejected his offer. He wanted nothing from him that represented the community of Sodom. He did not want the spoils or the people.

The Gemara in Tractate Niddarim tells us that one of the reasons the Jewish people were exiled to Egypt was because Avraham had failed regarding the incident with the king of Sodom. As the victor, Avraham should have demanded to take the members of the Sodom community under his dominance and jurisdiction. He would have been able to convert them to monotheism. He would have brought them “under the wings of the Divine Presence.” Avraham chose not to make that demand from the king of Sodom and allowed his subjects to remain with their pagan beliefs. This caused a liability for Avraham. Consequently, the Jewish people were destined to become pagans in Egypt (measure for measure).

The Torah tells us that after the Five Mighty Kings were defeated by the Four Kings, the king of Sodom had fallen into a lime pit, from which no one had ever survived. Miraculously, he emerged from the pit unscathed. The Midrash tells us, “...There was no one who had ever survived falling into a lime pit. G’d performed this miracle on behalf of the King of Sodom so that the nations of the world would believe that just as the King of Sodom had survived the lime pit although it had never happened before, so too Avraham had emerged unscathed from the fiery kiln of Kasdim, which was equally impossible. Until this point, the credibility of this fact was rejected..” What is the value of substantiating this information? It is clear that it was not to prove that Avraham was a spiritual being who had merited a miracle, because the King of Sodom who personified evil, merited a similar miracle. If so, what is the value of the King of Sodom surviving an impossible situation? It was only to prove to the nations of the world that just as the king of Sodom was able to emerge from the lime pit so too was Avraham able to emerge from the fiery kiln.

It is interesting to note that because the king of Sodom survived the lime pit he was able to negotiate with Avraham after his victory. Had the king of Sodom died, Avraham would have taken the people of Sodom as spoils of war and converted them to monotheism. The context in which Avraham had failed would not have existed and thus would not have required that his progeny be exiled to Egypt. The Gemara in Tractate Chullin tells us that the Jewish people merited the mitzvah of tzitzis because Avraham had rejected the king of Sodom’s offer by saying, **“I will not take from you as much as a thread...”** In the merit of Avraham saying, **I will not take from you as much as a...bootstrap”** The Jewish people merited tefillin. If the king of Sodom would have died, the context to reject the thread or bootstrap would not have existed and thus the Jewish people would have been denied these two mitzvos. The miracle that G’d had performed to save the life of the evil king of Sodom, brought about two results: one was exceptionally positive and the other was negative. We merited the mitzvah of tzitzis which corresponds to the 613 mitzvos of the Torah and the mitzvah of tefillin, which is referred to as “a sign between ourselves and G’d.” However, the negative result which evolved was that Avraham did not take the opportunity of retaining the members of the Sodom community. Rather he left them in the hands of their evil king to ultimately perish in an evil state.

### ***3. The Eternal Fruits of Avraham’s Hospitality***

The Torah states, **“Hashem appeared to him (Avraham)...while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day.”** Chazal tell us that it was the third day after Avraham had circumcised himself. This occurred when Avraham was 99 years old and it was the most difficult day of his recovery. Rather than remaining indoors in order to recuperate, Avraham sat at the entrance of his tent, seeking out individuals who were in need of hospitality. He had dedicated his life to espousing monotheism and refuting idolatry by engaging in theological dialogue with his guests. Hospitality was used as a means by Avraham to convert his generation from being idolaters to becoming believers in the Omnipotent G’d. Rashi cites the Midrash, “On that day, G’d had taken the sun out of its sheath....” G’d intended to create a setting that would not allow people to disturb Avraham so that he could have a respite in order to recover from his circumcision.

Avraham sat at the entrance of his tent in pain, not from his wound, but rather because he did not have anyone

to host. Every moment that Avraham did not engage in hospitality was another moment that allowed a pagan to remain with his false beliefs. When G'd saw that he was pained for His sake, He sent three angels in human form to be hosted by Avraham. The hospitality that Avraham provided to these individuals would prove to have far-reaching and eternal consequences upon the Jewish people.

The Torah states that when Avraham had seen the wayfarers, **“He ran from the entrance of the tent towards them.”** What was the significance of Avraham's running towards his guests? Firstly, it demonstrated the urgency of the moment to begin the process of engaging the wayfarers which would ultimately conclude with them becoming monotheists. Secondly, Avraham's running demonstrated to his guests their importance to him, to address their needs as quickly as possible.

The Midrash states, “When Avraham ran to greet the wayfarers the blood from his circumcision began to drip. G'd had said, ‘As a result of the blood that dripped from your wound from your circumcision (which demonstrated that you had no concern for yourself but only for My Glory), I swear by your life that I will have mercy on your children regarding the two bloods. Through these bloods they will vanquish their enemies. Yechezkel the prophet states, ‘I saw you wallowing in your bloods. Through your blood, you shall live. Through your blood you shall live.’” Since the Jewish people were devoid of mitzvos in Egypt, they needed to have a context of merit to be redeemed from their bondage. G'd therefore gave them the blood of circumcision and the blood of the sacrifice of the Pascal lamb. The “bloods” mentioned in the verse is referring to these two mitzvos.

The mitzvos of circumcision and the Pascal Lamb were given to the Jewish people as measure for measure. Had it not been for these two mitzvos that were brought about in the merit of Avraham's sacrifice, the Jewish people would not have merited redemption from Egypt. Avraham's act of hospitality that was performed with sacrifice was motivated by his concern for G'd's Glory. His personal predicament was irrelevant. G'd had said, “Just as you were willing to compromise on your self and allow your blood to drip for My Glory, two mitzvos which involve blood will be given to your children which will ultimately bring about the greatest level of My Glory.” Had the Jewish people not been given these two mitzvos, they would have never merited redemption to stand at Sinai and receive the Torah. The objective and primary purpose of creation was for the sake of the Torah and the Jewish people who were the only ones qualified to fulfill it. Through Avraham's initiative to glorify G'd he brought

about the ultimate sanctification of His Name which was the Jewish people accepting the Torah at Sinai and becoming His holy and priestly nation. By engaging in Torah on a continuous basis, the Jew spiritualizes and perfects existence and thus glorifies G'd. One can only come upon the truth of Torah when one is willing to sacrifice for it. As the Gemara states, “If you have toiled and you have found, you should be believed.” It is not only the result and outgrowth of the toil that glorifies G'd, but the process itself.

#### 4. *Securing Our Relationship with G'd*

The Torah tells us that G'd appeared to Avraham. Chazal explain that it was in order for G'd to pay a sick visit to the one who was ill (*bikur cholim*). At that moment, Avraham was recovering from his circumcision. Why did he merit this encounter with the Divine Presence? The Midrash states, “G'd said, ‘Wherever My Name is mentioned I will come to you and give you blessing.’ G'd said, ‘If one brings a burnt offering or a peace offering I come upon him and bless him. Avraham who had sacrificed himself for Me, how much more does he deserve that I come upon him and bestow My blessing?’”

The Torah tells us that Moshe blessed the Tribe of Levy saying, **“You have observed His word and Your covenant they preserved.”** Rashi cites Sifri that explains that although the Jewish people did not circumcise themselves during the forty-year period in the desert, the Tribe of Levy did. The Gemara in Tractate Yevamos tells us that after the sin of the spies the northerly wind ceased to blow in the desert, which is essential for the clotting of blood if one should have a wound. If one would circumcise himself during this time, he would be entering into a life-threatening state. The only Tribe among the Jewish people who continued to circumcise themselves, despite the fact that they was a possibility that they would die, was the tribe of Levy. They were the tribe that had the greatest spiritual capacity because they did not participate in the sin of the Golden Calf and were thus not tainted. They were willing to sacrifice themselves for G'd for the sake of His covenant. If this is so, making the greatest sacrifice, which was themselves, they merited that the Divine Presence should come upon them, which enhanced their level and capacity of spirituality.

The Midrash states, “G'd had given exceptional strength to Avraham. On the day that he had circumcised himself he also circumcised Yishmael his son, and all of the members of his household. How many individuals did he circumcise on that day, despite the fact that he became

infirm from his wound? There were three hundred and eighteen members of his household. In addition, he had circumcised all of his servants. Thus, G'd had given him exceptional strength on that day. There was a pile of foreskins in his household and a river of blood flowed out of his tent as a result of all of the circumcisions that were performed. G'd paid a sick visit to Avraham on that day. The angels in heaven said to G'd, 'Is this deficient man even worth mentioning that You should go and visit him in such an unclean and putrid location?' G'd responded, 'That smell that you perceive as a stench is more pleasing to Me than the fragrance that emanates from the burning of myre and lavona.'

The angels did not appreciate the value of man regarding his sacrifice for the sake of G'd. Similarly, when G'd wanted to give the Torah to the Jewish people the angels in heaven approached G'd with a claim, "Why should You give Your most valuable treasure to this deficient being who is not even worth mentioning." G'd said to Moshe, "Respond to them, (so that they should understand that they have no relevance to the Torah.)" The basis for its value is only in a context where one has choice to perform the Will of G'd or to transgress. This is the human predicament and state of affairs. Since the angel has no evil inclination he is not capable of understanding the necessity of sacrifice and value of initiative that man must take in order to perfect himself and all existence. The angels cannot understand that although man is a limited being, who is subject to his desires and his physical make up, could bring about a level of accomplishment that is considered unequalled by anything that an angel could bring about if he should succeed spiritually.

Although the act of circumcision is seen by mankind as an act of mutilation, it is the procedure that was given to man to perfect himself. By removing the foreskin, one removes the spiritual blockage and handicap that was a consequence of the sin of Adam. Adam was initially created in a circumcised state without a foreskin. The foreskin was only an outgrowth of his sin. Thus, this seemingly barbaric and physical act is considered to be the ultimate in spiritual accomplishment. When the skin was scathed from the body of Rebbe Akiva by the Romans, although it was a horrific and savage act, it brought about a level of sanctification of G'd's Name that will effect the Jewish people for eternity. Avraham understood that although circumcision is a mutilation of one's flesh; however, since G'd commanded that the foreskin should be removed, it became a holy and sanctified act.

## ***5. Ammon and Moav, a Direct Outgrowth of Lot's Ingratitude***

The Torah tells us that although Sodom was destroyed by the wrath of G'd, Lot, Avraham's nephew and two daughters were spared from annihilation. After they had escaped with their lives, Lot and his daughters sought refuge in a cave. The daughters of Lot believed that just as Sodom was obliterated by some cosmic force, so too was the rest of existence. They had believed that they and their father were the only survivors of humanity. The Torah states, "**The older one said to the younger, 'Our father is old and there is no man in the land to marry us in the usual manner. Come let us ply our father with wine and lay with him that he may give life to offspring...thus Lot's two daughters conceived from their father. The older daughter bore a son and she called him Moav...and the younger one bore a son and called his name Ben-Ammi, he is the ancestor of the children of Ammon until this day.'**"

After Lot's father perished in the fiery kiln of Kasdim, Avraham had taken full responsibility for raising him as a son. When Avraham left Charan to go to Canaan, he had taken Lot along with him. They had traveled together to Egypt because of the famine that was in Canaan. As a result of what had transpired in Egypt regarding Pharaoh wanting to take Sarah as his wife, both Avraham and his nephew became enormously wealthy. When they returned to Canaan with their great wealth and flocks, there was a dispute between the shepherds of Lot and those of Avraham. Avraham said to his nephew, "Because of our disagreement, we must part our ways. If you go to the right I will go to the left..." Avraham continuously was committed to Lot's life and well being, despite the fact that he had chosen to settle in the evil community of Sodom. When Sodom was destroyed by G'd, Lot deserved to perish because of his evil ways. He was only spared because of the merit of his righteous uncle Avraham. Lot never acknowledged or appreciated his uncle's contribution to his life. He was the consummate ingrate.

After Sodom was destroyed, Lot's daughters initiated their act of procreation with their father because they had believed that all humanity had been destroyed and they were the only survivors of the devastation. Just as at the beginning of creation G'd allowed Cain and Abel to procreate with their siblings for the sake of populating the world, so too did they believe that this was the beginning of a new existence. The fact that they believed that the world was destroyed and their father was the only survivor, is a confirmation that Lot never shared with his

family that he had special uncle who was beloved by G'd and was the holiest man in existence. Lot's degree of ingratitude towards Avraham was so profound that he never shared with his daughters any of the past events and miracles that had transpired and were directly responsible for his own existence.

The Torah tells us that until the end of time a Moabite and an Ammonite is not permitted, even after conversion to Judaism to marry into the Jewish people. This is because in the fortieth year of the Jewish people's wandering in the desert they had come upon the Moabites and Ammonites and were denied hospitality by them. As the Torah states, "**They did not offer them their bread and water.**" Rather than offering their hospitality, they commissioned Bilaam to curse them. Ramban explains that the reason the Moabites and Ammonites are disqualified for eternity from intermarrying into the Jewish people is because they should have shown their gratitude to the Jewish people for what Avraham had done for their ancestor Lot. Had it not been for Avraham, they would not exist.

Factually, their ancestor Lot was the consummate ingrate. Their behavior of ingratitude was rooted in their spiritual gene pool that they had inherited from Lot. A consequence of Lot's ingratitude was that his daughters had cohabited with him because he never shared with them righteousness of Avraham his uncle.

Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25<sup>th</sup> FL.)  
Enter on 54<sup>th</sup> Street  
1:00-2:00 pm **Ramchal: Derech Hashem**  
Location: Cedarview Capital 1Penn Plaza ( 45<sup>th</sup> FL. )

**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 (25<sup>th</sup> FL.)  
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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<sup>th</sup> FL)

**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**