

Yad Avraham Institute
Weekly Torah Commentaries Series
The Portion of
Devarim
 August 7, 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
August 7, 2008

B"H

Devarim

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

Dean

1. Moshe, the All-Encompassing Person

The Torah states, **“These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Israel...”** Moshe rebuked the Jewish people, before his passing, for all of their failings from the time they had left Egypt until that moment. The Midrash states, “The Jewish people said, ‘We know that at the burning bush you had said to G’d that you were not a man of words because of a speech impediment; however, now you are speaking excessively.’ Reb Yitzchak says, ‘If one has an impediment of any sort, he should study Torah. Moshe initially had a speech impediment. Because he studied the entire Torah, he was healed.’ Initially when G’d commanded Moshe to go to Pharaoh to tell him to free the Jewish people Moshe had said, ‘You are bringing upon me a calamity! In Pharaoh’s palace they speak seventy languages so that they could easily converse with anyone from any location in the world in his own language. If I go to Pharaoh to fulfill Your agency, they will ask me, ‘Who do you represent?’ I will respond, ‘I am the agent of G’d.’ They will realize that I am not able to communicate properly because of my impediment. They will ridicule me and say, ‘Is this the agent of the Creator of the world and all languages? He cannot even utter a word properly! He cannot understand any of the seventy languages.’ Is this not a calamity? Therefore it would be a disgrace to Your Name for me to be Your agent.’ G’d said to Moshe, ‘Adam, the first man, was not taught by anyone the seventy languages, yet he knew them. As it states, **‘And the man assigned names to all the animals...’** The fact that the Torah uses the word ‘names’ rather than ‘name’ indicates that Adam knew seventy languages.’ Thus, at the end of the forty years in the desert Moshe interpreted the Torah into seventy languages.”

Adam was endowed with the ability speak seventy languages because he was a being that was nearly spiritually perfect. After Moshe had studied the entire Torah over the forty year period in the desert he was able to interpret it into seventy languages. What is the significance and value of Moshe’s ability to speak seventy

languages? The Jewish people only understood Hebrew and Egyptian. Thus, it could not be to teach the Jewish people the Torah in seventy languages. Was that value of the seventy languages related to availing the Torah to the nations of the world in all of their languages? This could not be so because they were not present to hear it.

Adam was initially created by G’d as the model human being. Prior to the sin of eating of the fruit of the Tree, he had a level of spirituality that was nearly perfect. His spirituality encompassed and touched upon all creation. As it states in the Midrash, “He was able to see from one end of the world to the other.” It was at this time that he was endowed with the ability to speak seventy languages, which signifies the seven days of creation. As a result of eating of the Tree of Knowledge, he became spiritually diminished. He was not able to recover from the level to which he had fallen. At Sinai, because the Jewish people were the offspring of the holy Patriarchs (Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov), had the ability to ascend to the level of spiritual perfection of Adam, before the sin. When the Jewish people accepted the Torah unequivocally with the declaration, “Naaseh V’nishma – we will do, we will listen,” they assumed the spiritual status of Adam, before the sin. Their classification became “adam.” As Yechezkel the Prophet states, “You (the Jewish people) are called *adam* (man)...” implying that the nations of the world are no longer called *adam* (man). At that point, the Jewish people were able to fulfill the original objective of existence, which is the fulfillment of Torah, which brings all man and existence to perfection. This is the reason the power of expression of the Jew must be dedicated to Torah. As the Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin states, “Man was created to toil, which is the verbal expression of Torah.”

When Moshe communicated the Torah, which encompasses all existence, in seventy languages, it was because he had ascended to the level of Adam, which was to an all-encompassing state. Moshe speaking seventy languages was only a confirmation that he had achieved

the level of perfection and embodiment of totality as Adam. The Torah being given in seventy languages was not so that the Jewish people should understand what he was saying, but rather it was to establish Moshe as the person of totality.

The Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin tells us that initially Moshe as an individual was the equivalent of the entire Sanhedrin (High Court of Israel), which was comprised of seventy judges. In order for one to be qualified as a member of the Sanhedrin, one needed to understand seventy languages. Simply one could understand this to be so, because there is a law that when witnesses present their testimony before the court, it must not be through an interpreter, but rather, it must be understood by the court directly from the witness. Thus, the judges need to be able to understand the testimony directly from the witness. However, with this understanding of seventy languages, as representing totality, we are able to appreciate the need for the Sanhedrin to understand seventy languages on another level.

The Sanhedrin convened on the Temple mount in the Chamber of Cut Stone, in the proximity of the Divine Presence. This is similar to Adam who stood in the presence of G'd prior to the sin. The Sanhedrin was the representation of what the human being should be. Just as Adam, because of his dimension of spiritual perfection, touched upon all existence, so too the Sanhedrin, representing the Jewish people, who are classified as the "adam (man)" touched upon all existence.

2. Conscience, The Guiding Light

The Torah states, "**Moshe said to the Jewish people... 'How can I alone carry your contentiousness (*tarchachem*), your burdens (*masachem*), and your quarrels (*rivchem*)?'" This interpretation of the verse is based on Sifri which is cited by Rashi regarding the meaning of the words, "*tarchahem*," "*masachem*," and "*rivchem*." Ramban explains the meaning of these words differently. He writes, "According to the simple meaning of the verse, Moshe is referring to the conversation that he had with his father-in-law Yisro (in the Portion of Yisro). Yisro had criticized Moshe for assuming the burden of the Jewish people by himself. Yisro claimed that it was too overwhelming for him to bear and ultimately he would wither under its load. As it states, **'The thing that you do is not good. You will surely become worn out...for this matter is too hard for you, you will not be able to do it alone.'** The meaning of the word '*tarchachem*' (strenuous**

effort) on an allusionary level it refers to the great effort that it took for Moshe to teach and communicate the laws and dictates of the Torah to the Jewish people after they left Egypt. '*Masachem*' (burden) is referring to the great amount of prayer and supplication of G'd that Moshe did on behalf of the Jewish people in the time of their need. (A true leader must pray on behalf of his flock). '*Rivchem*' (quarrels) is referring to the fact that Moshe needed to adjudicate all of the quarrels and disputes amongst the Jewish people."

Despite the fact that Moshe had proven himself to the Jewish people many times, there were those that suspected that his leadership was based on self-interest. At the time of the sin of the Golden Calf, Moshe prayed on their behalf so that G'd should not obliterate them. Similarly, he beseeched G'd not to destroy them after the sin of the spies. After the sin of Baal Peor, when the Jewish men engaged in idolatry and forbidden sexual relations with the Midianite women, Moshe once again prayed to G'd not to destroy the Jewish people. We see that Moshe was fully invested as a leader of the Jewish people, he continuously prayed on their behalf. He assumed all the responsibility of the Jewish people to the point that he was willing to forfeit all of his spiritual accomplishments/merits in order to quell the Attribute of Justice. When G'd wanted to destroy the Jewish people after the sin of the Golden Calf, Moshe responded, **"And now if You would but forgive their sin! But if not, erase me now from this book that You have written."** Sfrono explains that Moshe wanted to transfer all of his merits to them so that he should sway the balance and thus be judged favorably. They would thus be spared. This was Moshe's level of selfless dedication for the Jewish people.

The Gemara in Tractate Yevamos tells us there are three characteristics that are unique and innate in every Jew: compassion (*rachmanim*), shame/conscience (*baishanim*), and the need to do acts of kindness (*gomlei chasadim*). Since the Jewish people descend from the holy Patriarchs Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, they have inherited their special genealogy. If a Jew does not behave within the context of these characteristics, his pedigree is in question – whether he actually descends from the Patriarchs.

When Moshe needed to appoint judges when he had established the judicial system the Torah states that they needed to be, **"wise (*chachamim*) and perceptive/insightful (*navonim*)."** Rashi in his commentary interprets the word "*chachamim* (wise)" to mean "one with shame/conscience." If one possesses a unique level of conscience he will merit clarity, which will

manifest itself in wisdom. Because he has an acute sensitivity, he cannot do something that is contrary to the truth. Avraham, our Patriarch was able to survive the spiritual onslaught of his generation because he possessed an exceptional level of conscience.

The Torah states regarding the creation of man, **“G’d said, ‘Let us make Man (Adam) in Our image....’”** As Yechezkel the Prophet states, “You (the Jewish people) are called *adam* (man)...” inferring that the classification of the nations of the world is not *adam* (man). Meaning, since the Jew has assumed the classification of “adam” he must reflect and personify the characteristics of G’d Himself. He must live and heed His Law, which is the Torah. Because the essence of the Jew is his spirituality, he is sensitive to issues that are contrary to reflecting G’d’s Will. This is the basis for the Jewish conscience. As a result of this conscience, the Jew is able to come upon many correct decisions that make him wise. Wisdom to a degree, is an outgrowth of conscience. A judge is not permitted to differentiate between defendants regardless if he is wealthy or poor. Regardless of the amount of money that is involved in the case, even if it is as insignificant as one penny, the judge must act with integrity. The only one who is qualified to implement this is one who possesses a unique level of conscience.

After Adam had eaten from the Tree of Knowledge he realized that he was naked. The Torah states, **“Hashem G’d called out to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ He (Adam) said, ‘I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was ashamed because I am naked, so I hid.’”** Why was Adam ashamed of his nakedness at that moment? Before Adam had eaten from the Tree of Knowledge he radiated with holiness that had a semblance of G’d’s radiance. However, after the sin, he became irreparably diminished. His diminishment was the equivalent of light being extinguished. When G’d called to him, Adam understood that he had putrefied himself and destroyed the spiritual splendor and radiance that he had possessed. He could no longer look upon himself, understanding the level of damage that he had wrought upon himself. The Jew, being a descendant of the holy Patriarchs has an innate sense of conscience that would not allow him to deviate beyond a certain point. Even after the Jew has failed, his sense of guilt facilitates the repentance process. Thus, ultimately giving the Jew the chance to come back and be reinstated.

3. One’s Perception of Another is Within One’s Own Framework

The Torah tells us that Moshe rebuked the Jewish people before his passing about all of their failings from the time that they had left Egypt. Regarding the incident of the spies the verse states, **“You did not want to ascend, and you rebelled against the word of Hashem, your G’d. You slandered in you tents and said, ‘Because of Hashem’s hatred for us did He take us out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hands of the Amorite to destroy us.’”** The Jewish people were subjected to hard labor during their years of bondage in Egypt for 210 years. At one point, Pharaoh had given a decree that all the Jewish newborn males should be thrown into the Nile. After unending persecution and affliction how could have they thought that G’d had extricated them from their bondage because of his hatred for them? How could a rational person put the events of the exodus in this context?

The Midrash states, “They had spoken negatively about G’d. You said that He hated you; however, He actually loved you. But you hated Him. As it is expressed in the vernacular, ‘What you have in your heart about your friend is what you think is in his heart about you.’ (Meaning, if one hates his fellow, he will believe that his fellow hates him.) It is because of this that you believed that G’d took you out of Egypt because of His hatred towards you. (It is a reflection of their own feelings towards G’d) It is analogous to a mortal king who had two sons. He wished to divide two fields between them. One field was naturally irrigated and fertile while the other relied on rainfall and thus needed to be manually irrigated. He thus gave the field that relied on rainfall to the son that he despised. Egypt was a fertile crescent that was naturally irrigated by the Nile rising and watering its fields. However, the land of Canaan that was given to the Jewish people relied upon occasional rainfall and thus needed additional irrigation. Thus, they said, ‘Why did G’d take us out of such a fertile location and bring us to an arid land, where our existence will be difficult and in jeopardy?’” The Jewish people had believed that if G’d truly loved them, He should have destroyed the Egyptians and allowed them to remain in the fertile land. The only rational perspective would be that He took them to the land of Canaan is because He hates them. This was their rationalization. The slanderous reports of the spies was the catalyst for the Jewish people to express their latent feelings towards G’d.

There are many difficulties and unanswered questions in life. Most often one is able to gloss over them without incident. However, if one is confronted with something that is untenable and overwhelmingly all-consuming, one will see his relationship with G'd in another light because of his pain. This perception of G'd is only a result of one's lack of love for Him. If one truly loved G'd, it would not be possible to see Him in a negative light. There is a positive commandment that one must love G'd. As it states in the Shema, **"You shall love Hashem, your G'd, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your resources."** A Jew must demonstrate his love for G'd on many levels. He must be willing even to give his life for the sake of G'd. If one truly fulfills this commandment properly, one will feel a love for G'd in his heart. He will believe and feel that G'd loves him. As Chazal tell us, what one has in his heart is what he will project upon another. Consequently, if one truly loves G'd, regardless of one's difficulties, he will believe that his predicament is a result of G'd's concern/love for him. This is in fact the reality of life. As it states in the Gemara, "Whatever the Merciful One does is for the good." The only way one can process life properly and feel secure, despite his trials and tribulations, is to truly love G'd. How does one develop this level of love?

Rambam writes in The Fundamentals of Torah that one comes to love G'd by gazing upon existence and seeing G'd's Majesty expressed in creation. When one will be overwhelmed with the awesomeness of existence/nature, it will make him feel that he is insignificant and thus evoke within him a sense of love for His Maker. Chofetz Chaim sites a Sifri that states that the way one comes to love G'd is through the study of Torah. As it states in the Shema, **"You shall love Hashem, your G'd...Let these matters that I command you today be upon your heart. Teach them thoroughly to your children and speak of them while you sit in your home..."** Meaning, the way that one comes develop a love for G'd it to engage in His Torah. Through the study of Torah one will come to understand and appreciate G'd for Who He is. The love that is established through the study of Torah is unconditional. Therefore, regardless of one's predicament (for good or for bad), his love for G'd will remain unwavering.

4. Torah in its True Light

The Gemara in Tractate Yoma tells us that the First Temple was destroyed because the Jewish people had violated the three Cardinal Sins: murder, idolatry, and forbidden sexual relations. The Second Temple was

destroyed because of baseless hatred among the Jewish people. They had asked Reb Yochanon, "The members of which generation was greater- the members of the First Temple Period or the Second?" Reb Yochanan answered, "Look at the Citadel (Temple)! The First Temple was rebuilt after only 70 years; however after the destruction of the Second Temple, we are still waiting for it to be rebuilt." This indicated that the people of the First Temple period were greater because they were able to appreciate their failure and repent sufficiently to merit the rebuilding of the Second Temple. In contrast, the Third Temple has not yet been rebuilt, indicating that we have yet to appreciate our failing in order to repent sufficiently to merit the rebuilding of the Temple.

Chofetz Chaim writes in the introduction of his work, Chofetz Chaim, that critical/negative speech (*lashon hara*) about another, where there is no constructive value, is an outgrowth and symptom of baseless hatred. We see that although one does not want anyone to speak negatively about him, very often people do speak negatively and critically of others without any constructive value. In most instances, the one who is speaking *lashon hara* has many justifications that allow him to believe that he is not in fact transgressing. Baseless hatred expresses itself in many guises throughout our lives. Therefore the Temple has not yet been rebuilt because the cause of its destruction has not been addressed.

The Gemara in Tractate Nidarim tells us that they had asked the Torah Sages, "Why was the Land destroyed? (the First Temple destroyed and the Jewish people exiled to Babylon)?" The Torah Sages were not able to respond. They then asked the prophets who also were not able to respond. Ultimately they asked G'd himself. He answered, "They abandoned My Torah." The Gemara explains this to mean that their Torah study was not predicated on the recitation of the blessing that is recited before the study of Torah. How do we reconcile this with the Gemara in Tractate Yoma which states that the First Temple was destroyed because the Jewish people had violated the three cardinal sins?

Ran, in his commentary on Tractate Nidarim cites Rabbeinu Yonah (author of Gates of Repentance), who explains that although the generation of the First Temple had studied the Torah unceasingly (day and night), it did not impact upon them positively. Because their Torah study was not predicated with a blessing it is an indication that it was not studied for the sake of spiritual growth or becoming a greater servant of G'd, but rather, it was for the sake of intellectual pursuit. As a result of this, the

clarity that is normally afforded by Torah did not come about.

The Gemara in Tractate Taanis tells us that the Torah itself could wither be a life potion or a death potion. The Gemara derives this from a verse in the portion of Haazinu, **“My Torah will decapitate as hard rain and My Word will flow like the dew.”** Moshe said to the Jewish people, that Torah study itself could either destroy a person like destructive rain, or invigorate and advance one like gentle flowing dew. The Gemara explains that if one studies the Torah for its own sake with a pure intent (l’shma) then the Torah becomes a “life potion”. However if one studies Torah with a sinister intent (shelo l’shma) it will destroy that individual. We see from the Gemara in Tractate Taanis that although both individuals had studied with the same level of analysis and dedication; however, because the process of study was not infused with the same intent, the results were diametrically different.

The Gemara in Tractate Kiddushin states, **“G’d created the evil inclination and the Torah as its antidote.”** The only way man is able to contend with the evil inclination and subdue it is to engage in Torah study. Torah study only gives one that level of clarity when one engages in it with a purity and intent to perfect one’s service of G’d. However, if one engages in Torah for the sake of intellectualism, it does not bring about a spiritual result. The person is not spiritualized and advanced as a Jew. Torah only provides clarity when it is rooted in holiness and purity. As King Solomon states in Proverbs, **“The mitzvah is the equivalent of the candle and the Torah is the illuminator.”** With this understanding we are able to reconcile the contradiction between the Gemara in Tractate Yoma and the Gemara in Tractate Nidarim.

During the First Temple period the Jewish people did in fact study Torah diligently; however, the Torah did not impact upon their spirituality. Their inclination for evil was not under their control. They therefore succumbed to temptation and violated the three cardinal sins. This was because their Torah study was for the sake of intellectual pursuit rather than the service of G’d. We are now able to appreciate the question that was posed to G’d in another vein. How is it possible if the Jewish people are dedicated to Torah at a level where their study is day and night that they should fall to a degenerate level to violate the three cardinal sins? G’d’s answer was, **“They had abandoned My Torah”** for what it truly is.

5. *The Ascent of the Jewish People* (From Masei)

The Torah states regarding the journeys of the Jewish people, **“They journeyed from Esam and he turned back and camped in Pi-Chiross...They journeyed from before (*mipnei*) Chiross and passed through the midst of the Sea...”** Why does the Torah first mention the location as “Pi-Chiross: and when it is written again in the next verse it referred to as “*mipnei* Chiross?” In addition, in the Portion of Masei the Torah writes the word “Chiross” with the letter “vav” deleted. However, in the Portion of Beshalach, it is written in its full form with the letter “vav.” What is the significance of the deleted form? Baal Haturim explains, **“When the Torah mentions the location Chiross in the Portion of Beshalach it is written in its full form with the ‘vav’ because the word can be read as “*cheirus* (freedom) without the vowels. This to teach us that Moshe had told the Jewish people that he was commanded by G’d to take them out of Egypt so that they should be ‘free’.”**

When the Jewish people were taken out of Egypt they actually traveled in the direction of their enemy, the Egyptians. One would think that if they were fleeing from harm, they would not be agreeable to travel towards the Egyptians. As it states, **“G’d spoke to Moshe saying, ‘Speak to the Children of Israel and let them turn back and encamp before Pi-Chiross...Pharaoh will say of the Children of Israel, ‘They are locked in the Land...’”** They traveled towards the enemy because they had faith in G’d who had guaranteed them that they would be free men. Consequently, because of their faith they were not concerned for their safety. This is the reason the word “Chiross” is written in its full form with the “vav”, which can be read, **“*Cheirus* (freedom).”**

Baal Haturim explains, **“The reason the Torah refers to the location as “*mipnei* Chiross (from before Chiross)” and not “Pi-Chiross” as it was originally referred to, is because when the Jewish people traveled away from there they believed that they would be free.**

The Torah states regarding the Covenant Between the Parts, **“G’d said to Avraham, ‘Know with certainty that your offspring shall be strangers in a land not their own, they will serve them, and they will oppress them for four hundred years. But also know the nation that they shall serve I shall judge, and afterwards they shall leave with great wealth.’”** It is because of this promise that G’d told the Jewish people to borrow all the material wealth of their Egyptian masters before they left Egypt. Consequently, they went out of Egypt with great

material wealth. However, it seems from the Midrash that the “great wealth” is referring to something else. The Midrash asks, “What is the ‘great wealth’ that they will receive after leaving Egypt? It is the Torah.” The Magid of Dubno asks, “How can the Midrash say that the great wealth that G’d had promised the Jewish people was the Torah itself, if the verse in the Torah indicates that the promise to Avraham was the material?” He explains it with an allegory.

There was a young man whose father had arranged for him a summer position with a close friend. The job entailed that his son needed to perform physical tasks from dusk until dawn every day. After completing three months of hard work, the employer gave the young man a check for a large sum of money. The young man, being illiterate, could not appreciate the value of what he was given. He returned home in a distraught state. He said to his father, “I worked unceasingly for three months and all I received is a piece of paper with something scribbled on it.” The father, understanding the limitation of his son, called his friend and told him, “My son does not appreciate what you have given him because he cannot read. Could you please give him a few shiny coins so that he could feel a sense of accomplishment?” Although the few coins that he had received had little value compared to wage that he had been paid, the young boy was ecstatic.

Similarly, when the Jewish people left Egypt they were at the 49th level of spiritual contamination. They had become pagans in Egypt under their taskmasters. At that time, they did not have the capacity to appreciate the true value of spirituality. Thus, the Torah being given to them as the ultimate gift would have been a disappointment. They were therefore given the material wealth at the time of redemption. Over time, as they extricated themselves from their impurity and ascended to other levels of purity, they developed the ability to appreciate the Torah. At Sinai, when they had reached the pinnacle of spirituality, the Torah became the ultimate. They understood at that moment that the material wealth that they had taken out of Egypt had no innate value.

When the Jewish people left Egypt, although they had been pagans, they had faith in G’d’s promise that they would become free men. It was because of that faith in G’d that they were able to travel towards their enemy. Despite the fact that they had not yet ascended to any level of spirituality, by merely leaving Egypt they were extricated from a level of impurity that allowed them to have a relationship with G’d and thus trust Him. Regarding the Ten Commandments that were given to the Jewish people at Sinai, the verse states that the words of the Tablets were

“etched on them (*charus*).” The Mishna in Pirkei Avos (Ethics of our Fathers) states that the word (without vowels) “*charus*” could be read as “*cheirus* (freedom).” Meaning, the only truly “free” person is the one who engages in Torah study.

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)