

Yad Avraham Institute
WEEKLY TORAH COMMENTARY SERIES

Parshas Ki Savo

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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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Parshas Ki Savo

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Dean

1. The Essence of Teshuvah

Rambam writes in Hilchos Teshuvah (Laws of Repentance), **“Teshuvah (repentance) is special/unique because it brings one close to the Shechina (Divine Presence). As it states in the verse, ‘Return Israel to Hashem, your G’d.’... If one does teshuvah, he will be able to attach himself to G’d. Teshuvah brings those who are distant, close to G’d. As recently as yesterday one was despised by G’d. He was considered detestable, distant, and an abomination. However, today after he does teshuvah he is considered by G’d as beloved, precious, and close...How many benefits are there in teshuvah! As it states, ‘Your sins separate you from your G’d.’ When one cries out G’d, He does not respond. As it states, ‘(As a sinner) when he does mitzvos G’d rejects them...G’d says, ‘Who is asking you to trample My courtyard?’ However after the sinner repents is states, ‘You are attached to G’d... when you cry out He will respond immediately.’”**

Rambam contrasts one being distant from G’d when he is in a state of sin and being close (Karov) to the Divine Presence after doing teshuvah. The consequence of repentance is closeness to G’d (Karov). When one is Karov, G’d views him as beloved and precious. It is interesting to note that we recite in the Ashrei, “G’d is close to all those who call upon Him sincerely (in truth).” One who is true, does not call upon another only in times of need. A true friend is continuously interested in the welfare of his fellow. When one calls out to G’d, if he at that moment appreciates and values who He is, he is considered to be calling out to G’d “in truth”- and is thus Karov. If one understands and appreciates G’d he will do teshuvah and be close to Him.

When Nadav and Avihu were struck down, G’d had said, **“I will sanctify Myself through those who are closest to Me...”** Indicating the special status of one who is “Karov (close).”

It is interesting to note that on Rosh Hashanah, although it is the Day of Judgment, we do not do teshuvah.

The prosecutor (satan) prosecutes the Jewish people unrelentingly, yet we do not repent. Rather we focus on the glory of G’d and coronate Him as our King. We pray for the elimination of chilul Hashem (desecration of G’d’s Name) and the unification of the Jewish people. One would think that at this time of intense prosecution, we should acknowledge our sins and repent. We do not do teshuvah on the Day of Judgment because our declaration and acceptance of G’d as our King is an expression of closeness. Acknowledging and recognizing G’d and focusing only on His glory brings about the same closeness as teshuvah.

When Avraham had been informed that his nephew Lot was taken captive he immediately went forth to do battle with the Four Mighty kings. Although he understood that he would need great miracles to be victorious he did not hesitate in his rescue of Lot. It was only after he had saved his nephew that Avraham was concerned that he had perhaps depleted his merits since G’d had performed many miracles on his behalf. Why did Avraham not have this concern prior to embarking on his mission? It was because Avraham’s love and concern for his nephew superseded any concern for himself. Similarly on Rosh Hashanah our love and reverence for G’d and His Glory is primary. We do not focus on ourselves or our need to repent in any way – thus, making our existence secondary to the Glory of G’d. This generates the highest level of love and closeness between G’d and the Jewish people – similar to that of doing teshuvah. Once one is Karov, his repentance/prayers/requests will be heard by G’d. Thus, the prosecution is silenced.

We refer to G’d as “Avinu (our Father) Malkeinu (our King).” The relationship between child and parent is naturally close and intimate. A child need not be concerned about his shortcomings because the parent understands that although he is not perfect, he is nevertheless loved by the parent because of the relationship. However, a subject must be concerned about his degree of adherence to the will of the king because of his obligation to serve him. Thus, if he were to fail, he would be culpable. This is not so regarding the relationship

of child and parent because of the nature of the relationship.

Chofetz Chaim cites Pirkei D'Rebe Lazar which states that it is easier to do teshuvah during the period of time from the beginning of the month of Elul through Yom Kippur. These days are identified as "the days of mercy." Even if one's teshuvah is not perfect, G'd is willing to accept it during this time because there is a special closeness between Him and the Jewish people. The prophet writes regarding the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, "Seek out G'd when He is close." On Rosh Hashanah, G'd is coronated as our King and on Yom Kippur we refer to Him as our Father, which is the ultimate in closeness-that of a parent to a child.

2. *Living Responsibly Rather Than Reflexively*

The Torah states, "**Remember what Amalek did to you...that he happened (*karcha*) upon you on the way...**" Rashi cites Chazal who explain the term "*karcha*", "The nations of the world were in awe of the Jewish people and were afraid to engage them in battle after witnessing the miracles of Egypt and the splitting of the Sea. However, Amalek was not afraid and attacked them without hesitation. By attacking the Jewish people, Amalek demonstrated to the world that there was no basis to fear the Jewish people. They dispelled the image that the Jew is unapproachable and invincible. It is analogous to a scolding bath that everyone is afraid to approach. A person came and jumped into the hot bath and was scolded. Although he was burned, he cooled the bath for the others to enter. Identically, when Amalek attacked the Jewish people, although they were defeated, they diminished and undermined the world's perception of the Jewish people."

One would think that the one who jumped into the scolding hot bath should be regarded as an unstable fool. However Chazal do not use this term. They refer to him as, "*ben bliyal*." The Gemara explains that "*bliyal*" is one who is "*bli oel* – without a yoke." This individual does not have the yoke of heaven. Thus, he does not have any conscience. Why should having a conscience be a deterrent to jumping into the scolding bath?

The Gemara in Tractate Bava Kama tells us that one is not permitted to mutilate himself. It is because one is endowed with his physicality by G'd. One does not have the right to destroy that which was given to him by the Creator. One who has a yoke, understands that he has

a Master. He is obliged to conduct himself in conformity with the will of the Master. However, if one does not have a yoke, he is not bound to anything other than his own interests and desires. This individual will act reflexively without conscience in order to achieve what he believes to be in his interest – regardless of the consequences. This is Amalek. As the verse states, "**They (Amalek) do not fear G'd.**"

A Jew has consciences because he believes that there is a system of reward and punishment for one's behavior/actions. One who lives with accountability does not act reflexively because he understands that there are consequences (positive or negative).

On Rosh Hashanah we coronate G'd as our King and accept His yoke. The Jew is bound to the will of the King. Because the Jew carries this yoke, he reflects on his actions and behaves in a deliberate manner with a full appreciation of the consequences. Thus, the Jew is able to maximize on the benefits of life because he does not act reflexively as an individual who has no conscience.

3. *The Linkage Between Torah and Material Blessing*

The Torah states, "**It shall be that if you hearken to the voice of Hashem, your G'd, to observe, to perform all of His commandments that I command you this day, then Hashem your G'd, will make you supreme over all the nations of the earth. All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you, if you hearken to the voice of Hashem, your G'd.**" Sforno explains that if one hearkens to the Word of G'd blessing will come upon him even if he does not take the initiative to seek out the blessing. This is because if one focuses his efforts on fulfilling G'd's Will, then his Torah is primary and his livelihood is secondary. If one's material pursuits are only an incidental and only a means, then blessing will come upon him. However if one's primary focus is the material then one must take the initiative to seek it out.

There is a classification of person that is applied to unique individuals – "*Torason u'mnason* – the Torah is his vocation." This is an appellation that applies to individuals whose commitment to Torah goes beyond making it his primary pursuit and his livelihood secondary. The one whose "Torah is his vocation" does not interrupt his Torah study for any reason and does not allow his time to be utilized for any other pursuit. However, one does not need to be at this level in order to be the beneficiary of

G'd's blessing. One only needs to make Torah his primary focus and blessing will come upon him.

If one's material pursuits are only a means to a spiritual end, then G'd will provide because He wants one to be focused on fulfilling His Will rather than on the means itself. If one's primary focus is on the means (the material) and not on the ultimate spiritual end, then he must devote himself to the pursuit of a livelihood.

The Torah tells us that Avraham, our Patriarch, interrupted his conversation with G'd in order to provide hospitality to the three wayfarers (angels). The Gemara states, "From here we learn that providing hospitality is greater than accepting the Divine Presence." If Avraham was engaged with the Divine Presence, which is the ultimate, how could he interrupt this to provide hospitality to three wayfarers who he had suspected to be idolaters?

We can understand this with an analogy. If the president of a company summons an employee for a meeting but he refuses to come because he is attending to one of the company's largest clients, the president would assuredly postpone the meeting without hesitation. This is because the employee is fully engaged in accomplishing the goals of the company and the will of the president. The objective of Avraham's hospitality was only to act as a vehicle to espouse monotheism. It is understandable that he should interrupt his conversation with G'd in order to accomplish His Will.

If the purpose of the Jew in existence is to fulfill the Torah, then it is logical and obvious that G'd does not want him to be engaged in anything that would be a distraction from that purpose. Therefore G'd provides blessing to the individual (without the need for initiative) if his focus is on fulfilling His Will.

The Torah tells us that when G'd created Adam, He created for him a helpmate, Chava. Chazal explain that the purpose of the helpmate, was so that Adam should not be distracted from engaging in Torah and mitzvos. Chava was to provide for all of Adam's material needs so that he could pursue his spiritual objective in existence. We see from the onset existence that creation was designed with the intent that the Jew should be able to focus completely on Torah and mitzvos. Thus, blessing would then come upon him without any initiative.

4. One's Level of Enthusiasm Reflects One's Level of Commitment

The Torah states in the tochacha (curses), "**But it will be that if you do not hearken to the voice of Hashem, your G'd, to observe all His commandments and all His decrees that I command you today, then all these curses will come upon you and overtake you...Because you did not serve Hashem, your G'd with joy (simcha) and wholeheartedness...**" The verse seems to be self-contradictory. It states that all the curses will come upon the Jewish people if they do not heed the Word of G'd; however, later it states that the curses will come upon them although they may have performed all the mitzvos without joy. It is clear that the Torah is telling us that unless one regards the mitzvos as a privilege, then one will not perform them with joy and wholeheartedness. If one experiences the Torah as a burden, then ultimately he will not perform the mitzvos at all.

The curses came upon the Jewish people because they did not serve G'd with joy, despite the fact that He provided for their every need. When they had entered the Land of Israel, they did not have any material concerns or distraction, yet the Jewish people did not serve G'd with joy. Evidently, they did not appreciate or internalize the privilege of being G'd's Chosen People.

Every day in our prayers we recite many things that identify us as the G'd's people. We say how privileged we are to be His Chosen People and have a share in His Torah. Yet, do we behave in a manner consistent with all of the declarations we make? Are we truly committed to G'd? Do we truly feel fortunate to "sit in the House of G'd?" If one does not serve G'd with love, he will regard the mitzvos as a burden and ultimately will stray from the path of Torah.

Yesod V'Shoreish Havodah writes that when he would hear that a Jewish child was born he would be overcome with tremendous joy because there would be another soldier born into the army of G'd.

From the beginning of the month of Elul until Yom Kippur, G'd is closer to the Jewish people than He is the entire year. He values and loves the Jew at this time in a special and unique way, which is the ultimate. We should take the opportunity to reflect on the privilege of being Chosen as His people and being given His Torah to fulfill with joy and wholeheartedness.

5. The Confession of the Tithes

The Torah states, “When you have finished tithing every tithing of your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give to the Levite, to the proselyte, to the orphan, and to the widow...then you shall say before Hashem, your G’d, ‘I have removed the holy things from the house...according to whatever commandment You commanded me; I have not transgressed any of your commandments...” After one had given all of the prescribed tithes he is to recite the “*vidoy maaser* – confession of the tithes.” If one had sinned he is obligated to confess as part of the teshuvah (repentance) process. As Rambam writes in The Laws of Repentance, if one does not make a verbal confession, he will not be atoned. What is the nature of the confession of the tithes? The one who recites the “*vidoy maaser*” may not have actually sinned.

Sforno explains the confession of the tithes to mean, “As a result of our sins and the sins of our forefathers the service was taken from the firstborn. (Because of their participation in the sin of the Golden Calf, the firstborn forfeited their status as being the officiants of G’d to the Levites/Kohanim). In truth the firstborn should have been the recipient of the tithes. The firstborn was sanctified by G’d in Egypt; however, because of our sins the tithes are given to the Levy and Kohen...” Since the Jewish people failed with the sin of the Golden Calf, the confession of the tithes is recited.

The Halacha (Jewish Law) dictates that every day one must mourn the destruction of the Temple (feel the pain of not having the Service before the Divine Presence). However, regarding the firstborn forfeiting their special role as the officiants of G’d, one could say this unfortunate circumstance only came about because of historical events and is something of the past. Since the Torah states that one must recite the confession of the tithes, it is an indication that even the service in the Temple, was not as it was originally intended to be. The firstborn was to be the Priest. He is truly the first/choicest of G’d since he opened the womb of the mother. However, because of the sins of the Jewish people he no longer functions in that capacity. Thus, the service in the Temple was diminished from its intended state.

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that a Heavenly Voice declares every day, “Woe is the Father who exiled His children from His Table. Woe to the children who have been exiled (thus causing pain to G’d).” G’d is pained continuously not only because the Temple was destroyed, but also because the service in the Temple

was not what He intended it to be – with the firstborn acting as the officiants. Just as existence was diminished because Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge, so too was existence diminished because the firstborn forfeited his special status. Although reciting the confession of the tithes alone will not correct the wrong that was done, it will make the Jewish people continuously cognizant of their predicament and cause them to reflect on what other issues could be corrected in their lives to bring about a reinstatement of the world to a more optimum level.

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6:15- 6:30 am	Mishna Berurah
6:30- 7:25 am	Halacha
6:30 -6:45 am	Mussar
6:45 -7:25 am	Talmud—Tractate Avodah Zorah
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi

2:00pm Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

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11:15 – 12:15pm **Talmud: Sanhedrin**
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12:30 – 1:30pm **Talmud: Pesachim**
Location: Shandholt 488 Madison Avenue
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Tuesday

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

Wednesday

11:30 – 12:30 pm **Talmud: Sanhedrin**
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1:00—2:00 pm Derech **Hashem**
Location: Yad Avraham

Thursday

10:30 –11:30am **Tehilim with Malbim**
Location: Yad Avraham

12:00 – 1:00 pm **Talmud: Sanhedrin**
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