

Yad Avraham Institute
Weekly Torah Commentaries Series
The Portion of
Ki Savo

Dedicated by Rabbi Kalatsky *shlita* and family

In loving memory of
Reb Moshe Ben Yosef Kalatsky z'l
May his neshama have an aliyah

Also dedicated by

The Spiegel Family

In loving memory of
Reb Yisroel Ben Tzvi Spiegel z'l
May his neshama have an aliyah

And

Dr. Albert Waitman and Family

in Loving memory of
Reb Yitzchak Eliyahu Ben Yehudah Waitman z'l
May his neshama have an aliyah

August 27, 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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Yad Avraham Institute
New York
September 3, 2009

B"H

Ki Savo

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*
Dean

1. The Self-Centeredness of Man

The Torah tells us that after the Jewish people entered into the Land and possessed it, G'd gave them the Positive Commandment of bringing the newly ripened produce (*bikurim*) to the Temple in order to make a declaration of appreciation to G'd as prescribed by the Torah. One must recount events that demonstrate G'd's beneficence to the Jewish people as far back as Yaakov, our Patriarch. G'd had spared him from annihilation by the hands of his evil father-in-law, Lavan. The Torah states that when one brings the *bikurim* one must make the declaration, **"An Aramean tried to destroy my forefather. He descended to Egypt and sojourned there...The Egyptians mistreated us and afflicted us, and placed hard work upon us. Then we cried out to Hashem... He heard our voice and saw our affliction, our travail, and our oppression. Hashem took us out of Egypt with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm, with great awesomeness, and with signs and with wonders. He brought us to this place, and gave us this Land, a Land flowing with milk and honey. And now, behold! I have brought the first fruits of the ground that You have given me, O Hashem!"** After making this declaration one prostrates himself before G'd as a sign of submission and self-negation.

The Torah states in the Portion of Eikev, **"You will eat and you will be sated, and bless Hashem, your G'd for the good Land that He gave you."** This is the basis for the positive commandment that one is obligated to acknowledge G'd (through the recitation of the blessing of thanks) after having partaken of any of the grains that are mentioned in the Torah.

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos states, "The obligation for the blessing that one recites after the meal is explicit in the Torah. However, what is the basis for the blessing that one recites before one partakes of food?" The Gemara responds that it is based on the concept of *Kal V'Chomer* (logical deduction, which is one of the thirteen methodologies that were ordained to Moshe at Sinai to

interpret the Written Law). Just as the Torah obligates one to acknowledge G'd after one is sated, is it not logical to say that one must acknowledge G'd before one eats, when one is in a state of hunger?" The Gemara concludes, "The reason one recites a blessing before one partakes of food is based on the principle that one who benefits from this world without a blessing (acknowledging G'd) is considered as if he had benefited from something that was consecrated."

Reb Meir Simcha of Dvinsk explains that the blessing that one recites before eating is only of Rabbinic nature while the after blessing (*birchas hamazon*) is a Torah obligation. Since the Gemara suggests that the basis for the pre-blessing, before one eats, is based on *Kal V'Chomer* concept, seemingly the nature of this blessing should assume the force of a Torah law. Why is it only Rabbinical?

Reb Meir Simcha explains that although the Gemara does not refute *Kal V'Chomer*, there is a fallacy in its logic. The Torah obligates one to recite a blessing after one is sated because when one is complacent and feels secure one has a tendency to forget G'd. As the verse states, **"When Yeshurun (the Jewish People) become fat (financially secure) they bolt (from G'd)."** The Torah therefore obligates one when he completes his meal to immediately acknowledge the source of that satiation and complacency. However, when one is in a state of hunger and feels in need, one tends to have greater clarity and recognizes the source of his blessing. He is fully cognizant that G'd is his benefactor. Thus, the Torah does not require one to recite the pre-blessing before eating.

. The mitzvah of *bikurim* addresses a similar concern regarding human behavior. One must bring the newly ripened fruits to the Temple from the Land that G'd had endowed him, in order to give thanks to Him. One must acknowledge that the basis for his own existence and the blessing that he has received is only because of the many miracles that G'd has performed on behalf of the Jewish people. It is more than simply acknowledging and thanking G'd for the blessing of the bounty that one has

received, it is a recounting of all the events that have come upon the Jewish people from their beginning. This declaration is to understand that had G'd not continuously provided and intervened on behalf of the Jewish people, they would not have survived. One cannot forget for a moment that it is only because of G'd's endowment of blessing that one is able to stand upon the Temple Mount with his new bounty. The bringing and declaration of the bikurim is to give one focus and understanding as the blessing that is recited after meals. Both of these mitzvos do not allow one to become arrogant and pompous by attributing his success to his own capability.

The first of the newly ripened fruits (bikurim) possess a level of sanctity which causes them to be permitted only to the Kohen. Simply, one could understand that just as the first tithing of the first produce of Israel (terumah) is innately holy and therefore must be given to the Kohen, identically the bikurim being the first fruits to have ripened must also be given to the Kohen. However, in addition to that understanding, one may say that since the bikurim are basic and fundamental to one's service of G'd, allowing one to maintain clarity and focus, they assume as classification of innate sanctity. The bringing of bikurim facilitates the objective of Creation, which is as the prophet Yeshaya states, "G'd said, 'I created it (this existence) for My glory.'"

2. Actualizing the Abstract

The Torah tells us that one brings the newly ripened fruits (bikurim) to the Kohen on the Temple Mount and must make a declaration of appreciation to G'd as prescribed by the Torah. One must recount events of the past as far back as Yaakov, our Patriarch (who had fathered the twelve tribes), which demonstrate G'd's beneficence to the Jewish people. One must express his thanks to G'd with the understanding that had it not been for His continuous Providence, the Jewish people would have perished. Only as a result of the redemption from Egypt could the Jewish people have come to the Promised Land and reap its bounty. Thus the Torah states that when one brings the *bikurim* one must make the declaration, **"...And now behold! I have brought the first fruits of the ground that You have given me, O Hashem!"** After making this declaration one prostrates himself before G'd. As it states, **"And you shall prostrate yourself (*v'hishtachvesah*) before Hashem, your G'd."**

It is important to note that when the Torah uses the term "*v'hishtachvesah* – and you shall prostrate" it does not simply mean bowing at the waist but rather it is full prostration on the ground. This gesture signifies total

submission and subservience to G'd. It is an act of negating oneself completely before the Creator.

The Torah tells us that after one has made the declaration and prostrated himself before G'd the verse continues, **"You shall rejoice with the goodness that Hashem, your G'd, has given you and your household..."** Seemingly, one's ability to appreciate the good that G'd has given him and thus rejoice from one's good fortune is contingent upon the act of prostration. Why is this so?

Chazal tell us that regarding the accumulation of the material, "if one has a hundred, he desires two hundred. ..." Meaning, regardless of what one possesses, one desires a multiple of that measure. Consequently, there is no end to one's pursuit of material because it continuously increases exponentially. Chavos HaLevavos explains that rather than focusing on what one has, one focuses on what one does not have. If one would recognize the blessing of which he is the recipient, he would be overwhelmed with appreciation to G'd, regardless of what he possesses. It is only because one does not choose to focus on what he does have that he seeks out multiples of what he possesses.

Man's inclination to seek out greater multiples of what he possesses is based on the perception of one's self worth. The individual believes that if he succeeded to a certain degree, it is confirmation of his value and ability. This causes him to have a greater sense of entitlement. This behavior is fueled by arrogance. If one would truly recognize that his financial success is unrelated to his capability, but rather solely on G'd's blessing, his focus would be on what he possesses and not on what he does not possess.

The Torah tells us Eliezer, the servant of Avraham, was instructed by his master to seek out a wife for his son Yitzchak. After Eliezer succeeded in locating the perspective wife for Yitzchak and had made a request from her family for her hand in marriage, the family had said, **"...Here Rivka is before you; take her and go, and she shall be the wife of your master as G'd has spoken."** When Eliezer had heard their response the Torah states, **"So the man, (Eliezer) bowed low and prostrated himself to Hashem."** Rashi cites Chazal, who explain that it is from here we learn that one must give thanks when receiving good tidings. Seemingly it is obvious that when one receives something of great value that is beneficial to himself, one should give thanks to G'd for bringing it about. Why is it necessary for the Torah to teach us something that is obvious and evident.

Eliezer understood that in order to fully internalize the kindness of G'd and to sense his indebtedness to Him, it was imperative to prostrate himself on the ground. Since prostration is an act of submission and total negation, it gives one a sense of unworthiness. By pressing one's body against the ground one is in essence making a statement that his value is no more than the dust of the earth. Only after one's ego has been nullified could one truly appreciate what he has received and achieved. Eliezer understanding this fact, first prostrated himself in order to be fully appreciative to G'd. He had been successful in his mission on behalf of his master only because of His assistance. The Torah is teaching us that for one to be appreciative and respond to G'd's Kindness, it is not sufficient to intellectually understand that one is a beneficiary of the good. One must make take the initiative to bring that sense about. The prostration of the Jew on the Temple Mount after bringing the new fruit expresses that same concept. Only after one has prostrated himself before G'd in His location can one fully focus on what he has received and rejoice in His blessing.

3. The Commonality Between Bikurim and Tefillah

The Midrash at the beginning of the Portion of Ki Savo cites a verse from Psalms, "Let us prostrate ourselves and bow, let us kneel before Hashem, our Maker.' What is the meaning of this? Moshe had gazed through his divine vision (spirit) into the future and saw that the Temple would be destroyed. (Consequently) the bringing of the first fruits (bikurim) will cease to be. Moshe therefore enacted that the Jewish people are obligated to stand in prayer (tefillah) three times a day. (Why did Moshe choose the prayer service to compensate for the lack of the Temple and bikurim?) It is because prayer is more beloved to G'd than all good deeds and all of the sacrifices. As it states in Psalms, 'Let my prayer be established before You as the incense offering, and the lifting up of my palms as the evening sacrifice.'" Why is prayer more beloved to G'd than all good deeds and all of the sacrifices?

King Solomon writes in Proverbs, "The beginning (pre-requisite) of wisdom is the fear of G'd." Meaning, that although one may be endowed with superior intelligence and an unlimited capacity for knowledge, if he does not revere G'd sufficiently he will not process and implement his knowledge properly. Because of one's conflict of interest, his understanding of truth will be

flawed. Revering G'd is the basis for maintaining objectivity and thus achieving clarity. If one lives his life with a sense of G'd's Presence, then all avenues of wisdom will be opened. Not only will he be able to understand life in its proper context, he will merit Divine Assistance to be able to transcend his own initial capacity for understanding.

When one brings the bikurim accompanied with the declaration of one's indebtedness to G'd one realizes that every aspect of his existence is dictated by G'd Himself. If it were not for Him, the Jew would not have been able to be in a position to come to the Temple Mount to bring a portion of His bounty to the Kohen. After one had performed the ritual of the bikurim on the Temple Mount, which is the location of G'd's Presence, one gained a unique sense of clarity and vision. However, after the Temple was destroyed and the bikurim came to an end, the setting to enable the Jew to gain that level of clarity no longer existed. What could compensate or even surpass that experience? Moshe therefore enacted that the prayer service (tefillah) should be performed three times a day. This would restore a continuous cognizance of G'd and thus give the Jew ongoing clarity.

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that the Amidah is the equivalent of standing before the King (G'd). The Shema, in contrast, is a declaration of one's belief in G'd and the acceptance of the yoke of heaven. When one recites the Amidah one must understand that it is the equivalent of having an audience with G'd Himself. The Amidah is comprised of blessings that acknowledge that every aspect of one's life is determined and dictated by G'd. One's intelligence, health, and material situation are dependent upon G'd.

The Jew acknowledges G'd's Omnipotence, Greatness, and Beneficence three times every day through the recitation of the Amidah. Thus, throughout the day one is continuously confirming and reminded that every aspect of his life is only attributed to G'd's orchestration of existence and not his own ability. Moshe understood that if the Jew would stand before G'd three times a day in the Amidah, it would create a cognizance that would be the equivalent of being on the Temple Mount and actualizing the ritual of the bikurim and the bringing of sacrifices.

4. *The Ability to Esteem the Mitzvos for What they Truly Are*

The Torah tells us that after one had distributed all of his tithes, one recites the “confession of the tithes.” The Torah states, **“When you have finished tithing...you shall say before Hashem, your G’d, ‘I have removed the holy things from the house...I have not transgressed any of your commandments...Gaze down from Your holy abode, from the heavens, and bless Your people Israel...as You swore to our forefathers.”** Rashi cites Chazal who explain, “I have performed all that was commanded of me to do. I have rejoiced and have allowed others to rejoice. Gaze down from Your holy abode and give to us what You had promised. To what is the statement ‘I have performed all that was commanded...’ referring? It is referring to what G’d had said as it states in the verse **‘If you will follow My Statutes and observe My Commandments and perform them; then I will provide you with rain in its time’**”

Rashi in the Portion of Bechukosai cites Chazal who explain, **“If you will follow My Statutes...”** is referring to one’s selfless toiling in the study of Torah. If one toils sufficiently in the study of Torah, he will be deserving of extraordinary blessing. It is only when the Jewish people toil in Torah that the Land will give forth its unlimited bounty. What relevance does toiling in Torah have to the confession of the tithes in which one verbalizes that he has given all that was necessary to be given to the Kohen, Levy, and the needy? The only way one could relinquish his own possessions, which he had toiled to acquire, and give them to others without restraint, is if he has an appreciation of the fulfillment of these various mitzvos. It is only when one internalizes their value that one can perform them properly. If a Jew truly toils in Torah he will have a sense of value of the mitzvos and consequently have the willingness to give the tithes, rather than relinquish them. Not only will he be able to fulfill his obligation, he will do so with joy and cause others to rejoice.

The Gemara in Tractate Kiddushin states, “Great is study (of Torah). Because it brings to actualization (of the mitzvos).” If one toils in Torah sufficiently, it will bring him to actualize the mitzvos. We say every morning, “We are fortunate- how good is our portion! How pleasant is our lot!” This is not referring to our material success but rather that we, as Jews are fortunate to be able to rise early in the morning and stay late at night to declare our belief in G’d. It is only the Jew who toils in Torah and dedicates his life to His Will who can truly feel fortunate and rejoice

in the fulfillment of the Torah. Therefore the Torah states, **‘If you will follow My Statutes and observe My Commandments and perform them; then I will provide you rain in its time’**”

5. *Creating an Energy that Will Determine Man’s Success or Failure*

The Torah states, **“If a man marries a wife, and comes to despise her...”** After the man comes to despise his wife he chooses to slander her, claiming that she had committed adultery. He subsequently brings false witnesses to substantiate his claim which would ultimately cause her to be deserving of the death penalty. The Torah tells us that when the witnesses are proven to be false and conspiring, the man is given lashes and must pay a penalty of a hundred silver to the father of his wife. As it states, **“They shall fine him one hundred silver (shekels) and give them to the father of the girl, for he had issued a slander against a virgin of Israel.”** How could a relationship between husband and wife, as a result of the dislike of the husband’s dislike of his wife, deteriorated to the point where he commissions false witnesses to have his wife put to death?

Rashi cites Chazal, “The deterioration of the relationship is based upon the principle of ‘one sins brings about another sin (*aveira goreres aveira*).’ There is a negative commandment that one is not permitted to harbor hatred for one’s fellow Jew in his heart. Because the husband violated this commandment he chose to slander his wife. Ultimately he brought false witnesses to testify that she had committed adultery. This sinful behavior was a consequence of his sin of speaking evil against his wife (*lashon hara*)...”

The Torah tells us that if one commits an inadvertent act of murder he must flee to a city of refuge, where he would be protected from the family of the deceased who wish to avenge the blood of their relative. However, if one commits murder deliberately, he is not eligible to seek refuge in any of these cities. He deserves to be avenged by the family of his victim. As the Torah states, **“But if there will be a man who hates his fellow, and ambushes him...and strikes him mortally and he dies, and he flees to these cities- then the elders of the city shall...place him in the hands of the redeemer of blood, and he shall die.”** Why does the Torah need to give the background and circumstance that brought the man to lie in ambush and commit murder by stating **“a man who hates his fellow?”** Rashi cites Sifri, “As a result of the hatred that the man had in his heart against his

fellow he came to murder him. We see from this that if one violates a less severe infraction, one will come to transgress on a more severe level. Since he had violated the Negative Commandment not to hate one's fellow, he advanced to a point where he chose to commit murder (*aveira goreres aveira*).

This principle is not only limited to the negative, it is also functional and applicable in the positive, "if one performs a lesser level mitzvah, he will be motivated and compelled to perform a greater mitzvah (*mitzvah goreres mitzvah*)." There is an innate spiritual energy that is generated when one performs a mitzvah that will motivate the individual to perform other mitzvos. If one performs a mitzvah with a pure intent (for its own sake – l'shema), because the initial mitzvah was done at an advanced level it will motivate and compel him to do a greater mitzvah at an advanced level. This is not the case if the initial mitzvah was done with an ulterior motive, not for its own sake (*shelo l'shema*).

It is stated in the Mishna, "The study of Torah is the equivalent of all of the mitzvos (*Talmid Torah kenegeid kulam*)." When one studies Torah the spirituality that is generated through that initiative is the equivalent of the spirituality that comes about as a result of the observance of all of the 613 mitzvos combined. This is true even if one does not study Torah with a pure intent. However, if one engages in Torah study for its own sake, which is the ultimate, the level of advancement for the individual is unlimited. Based on the principle of *mitzvah goreres mitzvah*.

The Gemara in Tractate Kiddushin states, "Great is the study (of Torah). Because it brings to actualization (of the mitzvos)." Why does the study of Torah compel one to actualize the mitzvos? Since the study of Torah is the equivalent of the performance of all the mitzvos combined, regarding its spiritual value, if one were to engage in Torah study with the proper intent he will be compelled to actualize the mitzvos. This is because through the study of Torah, the individual accesses energies that have relevance to every one of the 613 mitzvos. The performance of mitzvos does not necessarily bring one to the study of Torah because the spirituality that is formed and emanates from the mitzvah is not the equivalent of that which is all-encompassing, which is the study of Torah itself.

There are six positive commandments that one can fulfill on a continuous basis. One of these mitzvos is "to love Hashem your G'd." If one continuously is in a state of fulfilling this positive commandment, he is in a position to be compelled to fulfill other mitzvos, not because love is a

motivating factor but rather because of the principle of *mitzvah goreres mitzvah*. The opportunity to advance oneself spiritually will continuously present itself to him. This touches upon another principle "Merit presents itself to those who are meritorious." If one lives his life with a perspective that the objective of existence is to do the Will of G'd, then continuously unique mitzvah opportunities will present themselves to him.

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 Kamah
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
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1:00—2:00 pm	Daas Tevunos Location: Yad Avraham
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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)