

Yad Avraham Institute
Weekly Torah Commentaries Series
The Portion of
Beshalach

January 28, 2010

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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Beshalach

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Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita

Dean

1. Succeeding as a Jew Despite the Influences of the World

The Torah states regarding the mitzvah (positive commandment) of eating the Pascal lamb, “...and you shall not break a bone in it.” When one partakes of the Pascal sacrifice, one is not permitted to break the bone to remove its marrow. Although the marrow itself is considered the meat of the sacrifice; nevertheless, the Torah Prohibits it. Chinuch explains the philosophical basis for the negative commandment regarding the breaking of the bone of the Pascal offering to eat its marrow. There is a fundamental principle that one is the product of his actions. Consuming the meat of the Pascal sacrifice symbolizes and demonstrates the Jew in a state of freedom. The slaughtering of the sheep/goat was a negation and rejection of the deity of their Egyptian masters. They had begun to establish their independence with the slaughtering of the Pascal sacrifice. If one gnaws on the bones of the Pascal sacrifice to remove its marrow, his behavior reflects the behavior of a dog and not of a free man. It is the way of a dog to gnaw on bones for its marrow. Chinuch states that if one does not believe that one's behavior will determine and affect his own development as a human being, that individual does not understand the dynamics of life. All of one's actions will determine one's spiritual development in the positive and in the negative. If one is an evil person and is compelled to do acts of righteousness, he will become, over time righteous. Conversely, if a righteous person is compelled to do acts of evil, he will become in time an evil person.

We live in a physical world that is steeped in philosophies that are corrupt and false. Mankind is compelled and driven to accumulate and amass material wealth without consideration for one's spiritual development. Even when one is associated with a particular theological position it is usually rooted in falsehood and evil. The Jew is exposed to evil and falsehood continuously on the obvious and subliminal level. How does one protect himself from these negative influences? If one is the product of his actions and involvements, then one must be extremely cautious to

choose a course of action that will allow him to assume a perspective of spirituality.

When one performs a mitzvah, it is predicated upon a blessing, “Blessed are You Hashem, our G'd. King of the universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments...” G'd has endowed the Jewish people with His commandments so that they can be sanctified and elevated. Through the performance of mitzvos the Jew is sanctified and is drawn closer to G'd. Since man is the product of his actions, then by performing mitzvos continuously, one would become spiritualized. Every Shabbos and Yom Tov we pray in the Amidah, “Sanctify us with Your Commandments...” Despite the fact that we live as physical beings and are continuously involved with the mundane, we supplicate G'd to allow us to be impacted positively through the performance of mitzvos. This sanctification will allow the Jew to have a capacity to process life with a spiritual objective.

Rambam writes in *Hilchos Deos* (The Laws of Proper Conduct) that one may be sanctified and spiritually advanced not only through the performance of the mitzvos themselves but also through the performance of one's daily behavior/routine. If one engages in physical activity in order to become a more effective servant of G'd, then that physical action assumes spiritual value because of its objective. If one eats healthy to serve G'd or one sleeps with that same objective, then he is in effect performing mitzvos. If one procreates in order to bring forth children who will be devoted and dedicated to His Torah and mitzvos, then even the act of cohabitation will become sanctified. If this is the mindset of the Jew, then all aspects of his life are considered mitzvah.

The only way one can create an insular setting for himself, despite the hedonism and affluence of society is to conduct oneself in the manner described by Rambam. Through the study of Torah, which is the equivalent of performing all of the mitzvos, one can come to an understanding that will allow him to appreciate value and the ramifications of his actions. It is only through Torah study that the Jew is truly ignited. As we say in the Amidah (Silent Prayer) in the blessing of Repentance, “Bring us back our Father, to Your Torah and bring us

near, our King, to Your service....” In order to be drawn closer to the service of G’d, one must first be brought back to His Torah.

2. *Sacrifice, A Means of Acquisition*

The Midrash cites a verse in Shmuel, “ ‘This is a song for the inauguration of the House of David.’ Was it King David who inaugurated the Temple? It was King Solomon, his son who had done so. However because King David sacrificed for it, the Temple is identified with him. Where do we find something similar? The Torah states when Moshe was placed into the Nile, **‘his sister stood at a distance’** to wait and see what would be the outcome (would Moshe survive the Nile or not). Was not Miriam also the sister of Aaron? Why then does the Torah not identify her as **‘their sister?’** It is because she sacrificed for Moshe that she is identified with him. (She had put her life in danger by waiting to see the outcome of Moshe being placed into the Nile). We see also that after Dinah was defiled by the Prince of Canaan the Torah identifies Shimon and Levy as **‘the brothers of Dinah’** Were they not also the brothers of all the tribes? Why then are they only identified as her brothers? It is because they sacrificed their lives on her behalf that they identify as her brothers. We also see that regarding Cozbi, the Midianite Princess, who had publicly cohabited with Zimri, the prince of the Tribe of Shimon, for the sake of bringing about a desecration of G’d’s Name in order to evoke the attribute of Justice against the Jewish people, the Torah identifies her as **‘the sister of Midian.’** Was she the sister of all Midian? It is because she sacrificed her life for her people that she identifies with all of them.” Thus, the Midrash establishes a principle that when one sacrifices for something, whatever it may be, it identifies with him.

We find that the Torah identifies with Moshe as it states in the prophet, **‘The Torah of Moshe, My servant.’** The Torah is identified with Moshe because he sacrificed himself selflessly for its sake. The Torah tells us that Moshe tells the Jewish people regarding his acquisition of Torah in heaven, **‘For forty days and forty nights bread I did not eat and water I did not drink.’** The Midrash asks, “Why was it necessary for Moshe to share this with the Jewish people?” Seemingly it is irrelevant whether he ate or drank when he was in heaven receiving the Torah. Chazal explain that Moshe was saying to the Jewish people, “Just as I sacrificed my blood and fat for the sake of the acquisition of Torah, so too must you must be willing to compromise on your material comforts in order to acquire Torah.”

The Gemara in Tractate Shavuot tells us that a Torah sage is permitted to waive his honor, despite the fact that the basis for this honor is the Torah that he possesses. Why is the sage permitted to waive the honor of the Torah, which is considered to be “The Torah of G’d?” The verse in Psalms refers to the Torah, possessed by the Torah sage as “his Torah” and not the “Torah of G’d.” The Gemara asks, “Is it the Torah of G’d or his Torah?” The Gemara answers that before engaging in its study, the Torah is considered to be G’d’s; however, after one acquires it, it is considered to be his own. Chazal tell us that the only way one can acquire and retain the Torah that one studies, is to sacrifice oneself for its sake. If one is not willing to make the sacrifice for it, he will not come upon its truth and thus it will not become his.

The Torah tells us that at Sinai the Jewish people unequivocally accepted the Torah by declaring, **‘Naaseh V’Nishmah – we will do and we will listen.’** They had accepted the Torah without knowing the extent of their obligation. Despite their submission to G’d’s Will, the Torah tells us that He had put the mountain over them and said, **‘If you accept it (the Torah) it will be good, and if not, there will be your burial place.’** The Midrash Tanchuma explains that when the Jewish people had initially accepted the Torah by declaring **‘Naaseh V’Nishmah’** it was only regarding the Written Law. The Written Law is limited and defined regarding its tenets and obligations. However, when they were asked to accept the Oral Law, which is, as the verse in Job states, “longer than the earth and wider than the sea...,” they understood that they had to commit themselves to something that was all encompassing and limitless. In order for one to comprehend and acquire the Oral Law, one must dedicate himself, regardless of the cost in order to come upon its truth. This was something that the Jewish people were not willing to do. Therefore, G’d needed to give them this ultimatum in order to compel them to accept the Oral Law.

We learn from this that although the Torah and its mitzvos are the Word of G’d, one is able to acquire them in a manner in which G’d sees it as belonging to the individual who had sacrificed for its sake.

3. *Belief, A Prerequisite for Clarity*

The Torah states after the splitting of the Sea, **“...and they had faith in Hashem...”** Ramban explains that other than the Sinai event, there was no other time in history in which the Jewish people had reached such an advanced level of belief in G'd. This is understandable because the level of revelation at the splitting of the Sea was of such a degree that even Yechezkel the prophet did not merit to witness what the lowly maidservant had seen. They had declared, **“Behold, this is my G'd I will glorify Him!”** G'd's Presence was so palpable that one could point his finger at Him. Seemingly, having such a great degree of belief in G'd at that moment should not be considered a significant accomplishment. However, since the Torah does explicitly state at the time of the splitting of the Sea that the Jewish people had believed in G'd, despite the obviousness of G'd's Presence, indicate that their belief was something significant and valuable.

The Midrash states, “Because the Jewish people had faith in G'd at the time of the splitting of the Sea, they merited to inherit the Land of Israel. We find that the reward that Avraham, our Patriarch, had merited for having faith in G'd was exceptional. After G'd had informed him that he would have a son, the Torah states, **‘And Avraham believed in G'd and He considered it to be righteous.’** Because of his belief he merited inheriting this world and the world to come.” At that time, Avraham was 99 years old. He had already dedicated his life to the selfless espousal of monotheism. He had been thrown into the fiery kiln of Kasdim, rather than bowing to the idol. He had also withstood the test of needing to leave his homeland, his birthplace, and his family. He did not question G'd when he was confronted with a famine in Canaan, causing him to go to Egypt. Despite all of this accomplishment, Chazal tell us that it was only because he had “believed (in) G'd” when he was told that he would have a son that he merited this world and the world to come. Why was Avraham's belief regarding having a child considered to be so exceptional? Evidently, despite all the reasons not to believe, Avraham did believe in G'd.

The Midrash continues, “We also see that the **‘the people believed’** regarding the battle against Amalek when Moshe had raised his hands in prayer...This is the gate through which the righteous shall pass when entering into the world to come. It is the gate of belief (emunah) in G'd. As it states, ‘Open the gates for the righteous nation that keeps the faith...’ ...Despite all the challenges that he needs to overcome, the tzaddik lives with his belief in G'd. As it states, ‘The righteous through his belief shall live.’

The ultimate redemption shall come only in the merit of belief. It was only in the merit of their belief in G'd that the Divine Presence came upon the Jewish people at the splitting of the Sea, As it states, **‘...they had faith in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant. Then Moshe and the Children of Israel chose to sing this song to Hashem...’**”

It was not because of a spontaneous feeling of elation and gratitude that they were able to articulate so clearly every aspect of the miracles that had taken place at the Sea. It was only because the Jewish people had believed in G'd that they merited the Divine Presence to dwell upon them, which endowed them with the ability to articulate their praises to G'd through the song at the Sea. Had it not been for their degree of belief, they would have not been the ultimate beneficiaries of the events that had transpired at the splitting of the Sea.

If one has a profound belief in G'd, he will merit to be able to understand and appreciate the Torah and its dictates. There are many aspects of the Torah and its spirituality that cannot be fathomed through human intellect alone. One must be endowed by G'd with a capacity to be able to process these areas. The one who has sufficient belief in G'd, and thus accepts all of the principles and laws of the Torah without question, will be enlightened by G'd in order to comprehend the concepts that are conveyed and principles that are communicated through the Torah. Belief in G'd is a fundamental prerequisite to be able to process and perceive existence for what it truly is.

The area of Statutes (Chukim), is one aspect of the Torah. Statutes are laws that cannot be understood within a rational context. For example, the prohibition against wearing a combination of wool and linen (shatnez), dietary laws, and the Red Heifer are all classified as Statutes. Sforno explains that when one observes a Statute, he demonstrates his belief in G'd. This is only because he is adhering to the Statute only because it is the Will of G'd and not because he has any sense of its meaning. One may refrain from stealing because he senses in the act a degree of evil by taking something that is not rightfully his. It is only through one's belief in G'd that one can merit His endowment of understanding in order to process life through His eyes.

4. The Antipathy of the Nations of the World Against the Jewish People

The Torah states when the Jewish people left Egypt, **“Hashem went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them on the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light....”** The Midrash cites the verse “ ‘All Heaven and Earth I (G’d) fill...’ The world is filled with His Glory. If this is so, why does the Torah tell us that ‘He went before them?’ (If the entire world cannot contain His Glory it seems denigrating for G’d to go before the Jewish people and lead them through the desert.) G’d went before the Jewish people in order to reveal to the world His love for them. The purpose of this revelation was so the nations of the world should accord the proper level of respect that is befitting for them. However, not only did they not offer the proper respect to the Jewish people, the nations of the world murdered and victimized them in the most severe manner. It is because of this mistreatment of the Jewish people the verse states, ‘At the end of time I will gather all of the nations and bring them to the valley of Yehoshafat. I will judge them there for My nation and portion, Israel, that they had dispersed among the nations.’ The verse does not say that G’d will judge the nations for being idolaters, murders, or adulterers but rather because they victimized His Portion, Israel. Egypt will become desolate and Edom will be annihilated.”

Understanding G’d’s special love for the Jewish people, as He had demonstrated when they were taken out of Egypt, the nations of the world when they victimize the Jew, is it is considered an affront against G’d. It is evident that the opposition and derision against the Jew is only because of what he represents, which is the spirituality of G’d.

The Torah tells us that after the incident of Baal Peor, G’d told Moshe to destroy the nations of Midian saying, **“Avenge the vengeance of Israel against Midian....”** However when Moshe addressed the Jewish people he said, “Avenge G’d’s vengeance in Midian.” The Midrash tells us that G’d said to Moshe, “if I had told you to avenge the vengeance of Israel in Midian, why did you say to the Jewish people to avenge the vengeance of G’d in Midian?” Moshe responded, “Before the receiving of the Torah at Sinai, the nations of the world did not have this degree of enmity towards the Jewish people. It was only after they received Your Torah that they increased their level of hatred towards them because of our relationship with You. Thus, the basis of their hatred is our representation of G’d in the world. Thus it is the

Vengeance of G’d against Midian.” The nations of the world victimize, persecute, and kill the Jewish people only because they represent G’d’s Presence in this existence, which is something that they cannot tolerate. They abhor spirituality and G’dliness.

G’d openly displayed His love for the Jewish people by leading them after their departure from Egypt. Although the nations of the world are culpable for violating the three cardinal sins, they will be judged and condemned because they were opposed to G’d’s intent of Creation, which is to recognize Him as the Master. The world was only created for the sake of the Jewish people to fulfill the Torah. Therefore, by victimizing them the nations are in effect rebelling against G’d Himself.

The only reason the Jew has been persecuted throughout history is because of his spirituality. Amalek has no capacity to value the spirituality of the Jewish people or G’d. Because they are G’d’s chosen people, their representation is something that the Amalekites cannot tolerate. Therefore, the Torah states, “My Throne cannot be complete until Amalek is obliterated from under the heaven.”

Chazal depict the Amalekites as “the fool who jumped into the scolding bath. Although he is scolded by the hot water, he nevertheless cools the bath for others.” After the Splitting of the Sea and the destruction of the Egyptian armies for the sake of the Jewish people, the world stood in awe and fear of them. No nation would dare engage with G’d’s people after witnessing His wrath. Nevertheless, the Amalekites attacked the Jewish people without any concern for the consequences of their actions. They are likened to the fool who jumps into the scolding bath and is burned. However, they ultimately diminished the world’s perception of the Jewish people.

The value of G’d leading the Jewish people was not only for the sake of the nations of the world to understand the innate value of the Jew, it also to communicate to each individual Jew his own level of value. G’d chose the Jewish people to be the testament to the world that He created existence. Every Jew must ask himself, “Why was I chosen?” Evidently it is because he has a very special spiritual potential. Understanding this, the Jew must take advantage of the opportunity that we may not fully appreciate.

5. The Uniqueness of The Laws That Were Given at Marah

The Torah states, "**There (in Marah) Hashem established for (the nation) a Decree and an Ordinance, and there He tested them.**" Rashi cites Chazal, "Marah was the first location in which the Jewish people were given portions of the Torah for them to engage in. What were the portions that were they given? The laws of the Shabbos, the laws pertaining to the Red Heifer (Parah Adumah), and laws pertaining monetary issues (Dinim)." Before the giving of the Torah at Sinai, the classification of the Jewish people was "Noahides." They were not yet bound by the laws of the Torah. G'd gave them these three areas of law in Marah not so that they should be obligated to observe them, but rather, only for them to engage in their study. Since they had not revered Moshe sufficiently, despite all of the miracles that he had brought about, it was evident that the Jewish people needed to be spiritualized. This spiritualization could only come about through the study of Torah. Although the Jewish people could have been given any portion of the Torah to study, G'd specifically gave them the laws pertaining to the Shabbos, the Red Heifer, and monetary laws. Why was this so?

Baal Haturim explains, "The tree that Moshe was told to throw into the bitter spring in order to sweeten it was in fact bitter itself. However, it was able to make the bitter water sweet. Similarly, the ritual of the Red Heifer has the ability to purify the one who is contaminated and it contaminates the one who is pure." The mitzvah of Parah Adumah was given to the Jewish people in Marah because it reflected the miracle that had transpired regarding the water. This however does not give us any understanding why the laws of Shabbos and monetary issues were given in Marah?

The Torah states in the Portion of Chukas, regarding the mitzvah of the Red Heifer, "Zos ha'Torah adam ki yamus b'ohel...This is the Torah, (when) a man dies in the tent..." Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh asks, "Why does the verse state, 'This is the Torah...'? If the Torah is presenting the laws pertaining to spiritual impurity and purity, it should have stated 'These are the laws of contamination and purity...'" He explains that when the Jewish people left Egypt, G'd commanded them to engage in the Pascal Sacrifice (Korban Pesach). Although one is not permitted to engage in something that is consecrated in a state of contamination, nevertheless, the Jewish people did partake of the Pascal Sacrifice, despite their status. At this point, spiritual impurity was not a problem because their classification before Sinai was "Noahide." The laws

of spiritual im/purity only apply to the Jewish people, which is related to the status that they had attained when they received Torah at Sinai. Through the Torah, they had ascended a spiritual level that caused them to be susceptible spiritual contamination. The intense contamination that is brought about by exposure to the dead only has relevance to someone of an intense spiritual make up because the nether forces in existence, which are the basis for all impurity, seek out to attach themselves only to a source of immense spirituality. Therefore, the Torah is the prerequisite for giving the Jew relevance to the laws of spiritual contamination and purity- thus requiring them to engage in the Parah Adumah.

King Solomon, who was the wisest person to ever live was able to comprehend all of the laws and statutes of the Torah, except for those of the Red Heifer. He had said, "It is beyond me..." Why was King Solomon not able to grasp this particular statute? The status and dimension of spiritual impurity is only a consequence of receiving the Torah at Sinai. As we see, one who is not bound by the Torah has no relevance to spiritual impurity. The Torah itself, which an expression of the infinite wisdom of G'd, cannot be understood in its entirety by any finite being. Since, the basis for the contamination of the Jew is rooted in something that is beyond comprehension, King Solomon was not able to understand the laws of the Red Heifer.

When G'd wanted to spiritualize the Jewish people, He chose to give them the portion of the Parah Adumah because it encompasses the entire Torah. It touches upon the every aspect of the Torah in its fullest. In order for them to ascend to the level of Sinai, they needed to be impacted by the study of something that was a microcosm of the entire Torah. The laws of the Parah Adumah reflect the infinite aspect of Torah.

The Gemara states, "If one violates the Shabbos it is as if he rejected the entire Torah. If one observes the Shabbos it is as if he fulfilled the entire Torah." Thus, the portion of the Shabbos is also an all-encompassing mitzvah and a reflection of the entire Torah. Thus, it was one of the portions that was given to the Jewish people in Marah, to impact upon them through its study.

The laws pertaining to monetary issues and damages has relevance to the relationship between man and his fellow. One must be sensitive to the needs of his fellow and treat him with the same level of respect and concern that one expects himself to be treated. This touches upon the concept of unity. By behaving as one entity, the Jewish people reflect the Oneness of G'd which

is a necessary prerequisite to have a special relationship with Him. As the verse states before the giving of the Torah at Sinai, "Israel camped (vayichan) there..." The word "vayichan" (camped) is written in the singular to indicate that the Jewish people were unified as one individual with "one heart." Since the unity of the Jewish people is integral to the entire Torah, the laws pertaining to "Dinim" were given in Marah.

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 Makkos
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna - Rabbi Rovner
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi- Bava Basra
2:00pm	Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

11:30 – 12:30pm	Talmud: Megilah
	Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 th FL.)
	Enter on 54 th Street
1:00-2:00 pm	Ramchal: Derech Hashem
	Location: Cedarview Capital 1Penn Plaza (45 th FL.)

Tuesday

12:10 - 1:10pm	Torah Insight Based on the Parsha
	Location: Yad Avraham

Wednesday

11:30 – 12:30 pm	Talmud: Megilah
	Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 th FL.)
	Enter on 54 th Street
1:00—2:00 pm	Daas Tevunos
	Location: Yad Avraham

Thursday

11:00 –12:00pm	Duties of The Heart
	Location: Yad Avraham
12:30 – 1:30 pm	Talmud: Megilah Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 th FL)