

**Yad Avraham Institute**  
WEEKLY TORAH COMMENTARIES SERIES

*The Portion of*

**Terumah**

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**Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita***

<i>Inside This Week's Edition</i>	<u>Page</u>
<b>1. <i>The Altar, the Location of Atonement</i></b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. <i>The Mishkan, an Exact Replication of Creation</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. <i>Defining Truth</i></b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. <i>The Mishkan, A Replication of Sinai</i></b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5. <i>The Essence of the Jewish Court</i></b>	<b>5</b>

**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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# Terumah

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

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## 1. The Altar, the Location of Atonement

The Torah states regarding the building of the Altar (*Mizbeiach*), **“You shall make the Altar of acacia wood, five cubits in length and five cubits in width...three cubits its height.”** The Midrash states, “G’d said to Moshe, ‘Instruct the Jewish people to build an altar for burnt offerings so that it should atone for the sins of My children. I had made an agreement with Avraham, their forefather, that if his children should sin, they will be atoned through the offerings...What is the significance of the word ‘*Mizbeiach* (Altar)’? The word ‘*Mizbeiach*’ is an acronym. The first letter of the word is the letter ‘*mem*’ which represents ‘*mechila* (forgiveness).’ The second letter is ‘*zayin*’ which represents ‘*zechus* (merit).’ The next letter is ‘*beis*,’ which represents ‘*beracha* (blessing).’ The last letter is ‘*ches*’ which represents ‘*chaim* (life).’ In the merit of the burnt offering ‘*olah*’ you would be elevated. You will be deserving of life.”

The Midrash continues, “The Altar was made of acacia wood (*atzei shitim*) in the merit of Avraham, our Patriarch. He had hosted the angels and told them to rest under the shade of his tree (*eitz*). What is the significance of ‘*shitim*’? When the Jewish people had engaged in their ‘*shtus* (foolishness)’ through the Golden Calf, G’d had said, ‘Let the merit of Avraham (who had hosted the angels under his tree) atone for their foolishness.’ Another interpretation of ‘*shitim*’ is that it is an acronym: ‘*shin*’, which represents ‘*shalom* (peace)’; ‘*tes*’ which represents ‘*tova* (goodness)’; ‘*yud*’ which represents ‘*yeshua* (salvation)’; ‘*mem*’ which represents ‘*mechila* (forgiveness). The Torah states that the Altar was **‘five cubits in length and five cubits in width.’** What is the significance of this specification? When the Jewish people were given the Ten Commandments, five Commandments were written on one Tablet and the other five were written on the second Tablet. (Thus, there is a correlation between the height and width of the Altar and the Ten Commandments). The Torah states, **‘three cubits its height’** this corresponds to the three Redeemers of Israel. As it states, **‘I will send before you Moshe, Aaron and Miriam...’**”

The Torah continues regarding the building of the Altar, **“...You shall make its horns on its four corners...”** The Midrash explains that every aspect of the Altar alludes to something that is a basis for the Jewish people to be worthy of atonement. The Midrash states, **“‘You shall make its horns (*karnos*) on its four corners...’** The Altar needed to have four vertical protrusions on the corners ‘*karnos*’ to atone for the Jewish people who were elevated through four levels of special distinction (*keren*) that were bestowed upon them at Sinai. The first ‘*keren*’, level of distinction, that was given to the Jewish people was that G’d had elevated them at Sinai to give them special status...The second ‘*keren*’ was the Crown of Torah that was given to them ...The third level of distinction was the Crown of Priesthood...The fourth ‘*keren*’ that was given to the Jewish people was the Crown of Kingship...” Every aspect of the Altar alludes to the meritorious status of the Jewish people. It is that merit that allows the Altar to facilitate atonement and blessing on behalf of the Jewish people.

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos points out that the verse in Prophets initially refers to the Altar as “*Mizbeiach*” and then it refers to it as “*Shuchlan* (*Table*).” The Gemara asks, “Why is it initially referred to as Altar and then as a Table?” The Gemara answers that one’s table in his home can assume the significance of an altar that brings about atonement. If one allows the needy to benefit from the food of his table when he is eating, then his table atones as the Altar. Although we no longer have a Temple or an Altar to provide atonement, the Jew, has the ability through his conduct to elevate his table of his home to be the equivalent of the Altar. The Jewish people are not only the beneficiaries of the spiritual characteristics of the Patriarchs, by possessing them, but also their merits. They are merciful, people of conscience and have a propensity to do acts of kindness only because they descend from Avraham, Yitzhak and Yaakov. It is through our own actions and the merits of the holy Patriarchs do the Jewish people achieve atonement.

## 2. *The Mishkan, an Exact Replication of Creation*

The Torah at the beginning of the Portion of Terumah enumerates the materials that were needed for the building of the Mishkan, **“Gold, silver, copper...and ram skins that are dyed red”**. What do these materials symbolize? The Midrash explains, ‘Gold corresponds to the Babylonian exile. Silver corresponds to the Persian/Medes exile (Haman had given 10,000 talents of silver to Achashverosh (King of Persia) to seal the fate of the Jewish people. It was decreed that every Jewish man, woman, and child should be annihilated.) Copper represents the Greek exile. They were the lowliest of all the exiles. The ram skins that were dyed red correspond to the Roman exile (Edom), which is currently being experienced by the Jewish people. G’d said, ‘Although you will see four kingdoms behaving arrogantly and will come upon you, from the midst of the bondage I will bring you salvation.’”

G’d commanded the Jewish people saying, **“Make for Me a Sanctuary (Mishkan) so that I may dwell in your midst.”** The Mishkan was the holiest location in existence because it was the domicile for G’d’s Presence on Earth. The Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans were all evil empires that sought to destroy the Jewish people and remove G’d’s Presence from existence. They were the antithesis of spirituality. Despite their evil, they are nevertheless represented in the most holy location in the world. Maharal of Prague in his work *Gevuras Hashem* explains that the number four signifies total opposition. For example, Avraham went to battle with the Four Kings who had captured his nephew Lot. They were totally opposed to his existence. The exile that was decreed upon the Jewish people by G’d in the Covenant between the Parts was, that they shall be “strangers in a land that was not their own” for a period of 400 years (which is a multiple of four). The Jewish people are destined to experience four exiles until the end of time – Babylon, Persian/Medes, Greek, and Roman. Despite the fact that these four civilizations represent different aspects of evil and opposition to spirituality, they are nevertheless represented in the most holy location, the Mishkan. Why is this so?

The Gemara in Tractate Yomah tells us that the inclination for idolatry was an all-consuming force which was responsible for the spiritual decline of the Jewish people. It was more overwhelming than the sexual drive. The Men of the High Assembly had fasted and prayed to G’d to allow them to destroy this inclination. The Gemara

tells us that G’d responded to their prayers and consequently a fiery lion came forth from the Holy of Holies. They took this fiery lion, which represented the inclination for idolatry and trapped it inside a lead cylinder and disposed of it. Because of the action of the Men of the High Assembly, the Jewish people are no longer overwhelmed by the inclination for idolatry. How is it possible that the very essence of impurity should have relevance to the Holy of Holies, which is the location of the Divine Presence?

It is interesting to note that we find similar allusions to the future exiles in the process of Creation. The Torah states in the beginning of Book of Bereishis, **“In the beginning of G’d’s creating the heavens and the earth – when the earth was empty, with darkness upon the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of G’d hovered over the face of the waters. (*Bereishis bara Elokeem es ha’shamaiyim v’es ha’aretz: v’ha’aretz hoysa tohu v’vohu v’choshech al panei tahom v’ruach Elokeem merachefes al panei ha’mayim*.)”** The Midrash explains that each of the words in this opening verse of the Torah alludes to events that will take place in the future. Meaning, when G’d created existence, He preordained that certain events will unfold.

The Midrash explains that **“v’ha’aretz hoysa tohu – the earth was *unformed*,”** refers to the Babylonian exile. **“v’vohu- desolate”** refers to the Persian/Medes exile. **“Choshech - darkness,”** refers to the Greek exile; as the Chazal tell us, “they blackened the eyes of the Jewish people with their decrees.” **“Al panei sahom- surface of the deep”** alludes to the Roman exile, which is seemingly unlimited/endsless as the depth of the waters that covered the earth. (We are still experiencing the Roman exile after more than 2,000 years.) **“V’ruach Elokeem merachefes al panei ha’mayim - the Spirit of G’d hovered over the face of the waters”** is ascribed to the spirit of Moshiach who will only come in the merit of teshuvah (repentance) which is synonymous with water (*mayim*). As it is stated in Eicha, “Your heart will gush forth water when you stand before G’d.”

The initial intent of Creation was that physical existence should accommodate the Divine Presence. The world was meant to be the dwelling place for G’d. However, because Adam had sinned by eating from the Tree of Knowledge, he putrefied himself and all existence. The world was no longer qualified to be the location/receptacle to receive the Divine Presence. Consequently, G’d commanded the Jewish people to build the Mishkan so that it should be His dwelling place amongst them. Since the Mishkan assumed the function

and purpose of what existence was meant to be, by accommodating G'd's Presence, it needed to contain within it a representation of all aspects of Creation. The Mishkan was a microcosm of Creation. The reason Betzalel (whose name means *B'tzeil Kail* -in the shadow of G'd) was chosen to implement and oversee the building of the Mishkan was because he was endowed with a special understanding of the inner spiritual workings of existence. The Gemara at the end of Tractate Berachos tells us that Betzalel understood how to conjugate the letters of the Hebrew alphabet to unleash a spiritual energy that would infuse the Mishkan with the same energy that had brought existence into being.

At the time of Creation everything that was meant to be and to unfold throughout history was brought into existence. The four exiles which were to come upon the Jewish people were already set in motion at the time of Creation. The existence of the evil inclination that would plague man's spirituality was also brought into being at the time of Creation. Existence only has value if man is able to advance himself spiritually within the context of free choice. Therefore, the evil inclination is a necessary component of existence. Thus, there is a representation of evil in the most holy of places, which was the Mishkan, because it is the most important component in order to give creation meaning. Man's spiritualization of himself comes about only by rejecting evil.

### 3. Defining Truth

The Torah at the beginning of the Portion of Terumah enumerates the materials that were needed for the building of the Mishkan, "**Gold, silver, copper...and ram skins that are dyed red**". What is the significance of the ram skins? The Midrash explains, "It is the merit of Yaakov our Patriarch that the ram skins were used in the Mishkan. As it states, '**Go now to the flock and fetch from there two good goats...**'" Rivka, our Matriarch had instructed her son Yaakov to take the blessing from his father Yitzchak. If she had not told him to do so, Esav would have received the blessing. In order to come before his father to receive the blessing Yaakov needed two goats from which Rivka would prepare delicacies for Yitzchak. In addition, she used the hides to cover Yaakov's arms so that he should resemble his brother Esav.

The Midrash continues, "G'd said, 'The heavens cannot contain My Glory, but I will allow My Presence to dwell within the confines of the ram skins.'" It is interesting to note that G'd had mentioned the "ram skins" and not the Mishkan as being the location of His Presence.

This indicates that it is only in the merit of Yaakov that G'd's Presence dwelt amongst the Jewish people. Factually, Yaakov was the most special of the Patriarchs. He fathered the twelve tribes of Israel who were the Holy Tribes of G'd. He personified the Torah itself, which is the medium through which the Jew has a relationship with G'd. As it states, "**(Yaakov was) the perfect man who dwelt in the tent (of Torah).**" It is because of Yaakov's quantification as the Patriarch who embodied Torah that G'd's Presence dwelt in the Mishkan between the ram skins.

It is interesting to note that the Midrash explains that the red-dyed ram skins symbolize Edom (Romans), which is the exile currently being experienced by the Jewish people. The color red represents Edom because it connotes bloodshed. As the Torah states regarding Esav, "**...you shall live by the sword.**" If the ram skins represent Yaakov, why should they be dyed red which symbolize the characteristic of Esav? Yaakov was the Patriarch that embodied the Torah, which is truth in its essence. As it states, "...give truth to Yaakov." Nevertheless, when he went to receive the blessing from his father, he disguised himself as Esav by using the goat hides. He presented himself in a manner that appears to be contradictory to his essence. When Yaakov went to receive the blessings, he did so disguised as Esav. He assumed the posture of Esav, which is deception, that is represented by the color red.

Initially, Yaakov had resisted the notion of receiving the blessings through misrepresentation. However, he heeded the words of his mother Rivka, who was a prophetess. Prophetically she had instructed Yaakov to go in this deceptive manner to receive the blessings that his father Yitzchak. Although he received the blessing through deceit, it was not contradictory to truth, because it was the Will of G'd. Truth is subordinating oneself to the Will of G'd as it is transmitted through the Torah or by G'd Himself through prophecy. Yaakov merited the blessings from Yitzchak because he negated himself to heed the prophecy of his mother, despite the fact that it was contrary to his essence. Therefore, although the ram skins were dyed red, they in fact connote truth because it was only because it was the dictate of G'd that Yaakov disguised himself with the hides of the goats.

### 4. The Mishkan, A Replication of Sinai

The Torah states regarding the building of the Mishkan (Tabernacle), "**Hashem spoke to Moshe saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel and let them take for**

**Me a portion (terumah), from every man whose heart motivates him you shall take My portion.”** The only materials that were qualified to be given for the building of the Mishkan were those that were given selflessly and out of the generosity of one’s heart. If one felt compelled to give, it would not be considered valid for the Mishkan. The verse states, **“..take for Me a portion..”** and concludes with **“you shall take My portion.”** Seemingly, the second reference to taking G’d’s portion from the Jewish people is superfluous. Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that the Torah is revealing to us that it was only the portion that was given selflessly/wholeheartedly that was classified as **“My portion.”**

Ramban explains that the Mishkan was a replication of Sinai. The intensity of G’d’s Presence in the Holy of Holies in the Mishkan was the equivalent to that of the Sinai event. Just as G’d communicated to Moshe and the Jewish people at Sinai, He spoke to Moshe from between the Cherubs on the Holy Ark that was located in the Holy of Holies. Ramban presents many colorations, based on verses of how the Divine Presence in the Mishkan was the equivalent of Sinai.

The purpose of the Mishkan was to create a setting for G’d’s Presence to dwell in the midst of the Jewish people. As the verse states, **“Make for Me a Sanctuary so that I can dwell in your midst.”** One would think that such an important and crucial task of building the Mishkan would be incumbent upon every Jew. As we find regarding the giving of the *Machtzis Ha’Shekel* (the half silver coin that was compulsory for every Jewish male above the age of twenty to give for the sake of purchasing communal offerings). However, the Torah tells us that the materials that were presented for the building of the Mishkan were not given as a tax or obligation but only out of the generosity of the heart. In fact, this was the only circumstance under which they were acceptable. Why was this so?

When the Jewish people accepted the Torah at Sinai they unequivocally declared **“Naaseh V’nishma – we will do and we will listen.”** The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos tells us that when G’d heard this declaration He exclaimed, “Who revealed this secret to My children?” They had spoken in the same manner as angels conduct themselves. The angels do the Will of G’d without first hearing His Command. Thus, the Jewish people at Sinai were the equivalent of angels because they accepted the Torah without knowing the extent of its obligation. They selflessly dedicated themselves to doing G’d’s Will. However, as a result of the sin of the Golden Calf, the Jewish people forfeited their special relationship with G’d

that they had established at Sinai. In order to reinstate that relationship, G’d instructed them to build the Mishkan. Just as the Jewish people at Sinai dedicated themselves to G’d selflessly, as angels do, so too did their giving of the materials towards the building of the Mishkan needed to have a semblance of that selflessness.

The only way the Jewish people could be reinstated to the level of “Naaseh v’nishma”, is to once again assume the posture of the angel by giving to the Mishkan in a selfless manner. Because the Mishkan was built with materials that were given out of the generosity of the heart, it was able to function at the same level as Sinai. The Divine Presence dwelt in it to no less of a degree then It did at the time of the giving of the Torah.

Ramban, based on the Gemara in Tractate Moed Katan, writes, “When one chooses a rebbe (mentor/teacher) he should have a semblance of an angels.” What characteristic of the angel should the rebbe reflect? An angel is epitomized through “Naaseh v’nishma.” The angel selflessly executes the will of G’d without any hesitation or conflict. It is only through the individual who possesses this level of dedication that G’d’s Torah is communicated. Therefore, one should choose a rebbe who is selflessly dedicated to G’d because it is only through a teacher with this degree of dedication that the Torah is properly transmitted.

### ***5. The Essence of the Jewish Court (from Mishpatim)***

The Torah states at the beginning of the Portion of Mishpatim, **“And these are the ordinances that you shall place before them...”** The Midrash explains that the expression “place before them” means that one must present judicial matters before a qualified Jewish court (*beis din*) and not a secular court. Although the adjudication and verdict of the secular court is identical to that of the Jewish court, it is a Torah violation to go before the secular court. The Midrash concludes, “If one were to present a judicial matter before a secular court it is as if he denies G’d and the Torah itself.” If the verdict of the secular court is identical to that of the Jewish court, and is not in contradiction to Torah law, why then is it considered a denial of G’d and the authenticity of Torah?

It states in Psalms, *‘Elokim netzav ba’adas keil – G’d stands (associates Himself) with the congregation of G’d (proper Jewish court).’* Meaning, G’d associates Himself with the Jewish court when it convenes. One of the responsibilities of the Jewish High Court (Sanhedrin) is

to adjudicate capital crimes that will determine if a defendant is liable for the death penalty. If man is subject to err because of his limitations, then how could the Torah allow the court to pass judgment? Perhaps the court would be taking an innocent life. Because G'd associates Himself and convenes with a proper Jewish court, that meets all of the prescribed criteria, one does not need to be concerned because He elucidates the subject matter pertaining to the verdict so that the judges should render a proper judgment. Regardless of the facts and evidence pertaining to the case, whether the defendant is innocent or guilty, the verdict is determined by G'd. Meaning, if it were discovered after the defendant was put to death that the witnesses who had testified were found to be conspiring, although the basis for the verdict was faulty; nevertheless, the decision of the court is correct. This is because G'd convenes with the congregation of G'd. G'd Himself wanted this individual to be put to death through the process of the court. The court only facilitated G'd's Will. Thus, human fallibility has no bearing on the ultimate outcome.

Rambam rules in the Laws of Idolatry that if one's belief in G'd is based on his own intellect, although his position is in total conformance with the Torah, he is in violation of the negative commandment, **“Do not turn to idols.”** Rambam explains, “The intelligence of man is limited.” Meaning, that although one may be correct in his belief of G'd presently through his compelling intellectual evidence, because it is not rooted in fact, he may change his position of belief. Therefore it is similar to turning to idols which is based on one's own perception of truth. In contrast, if one's belief is based on the tradition that was transmitted from generation to generation, dating back to the Sinai event, where every Jew witnessed G'd's Presence and communicating His Will to Moshe as His Prophet, then one's belief is no longer based on one's perception of truth, but rather on fact.

When a Jewish court adjudicates a matter between two individuals, regardless of the evidence, the verdict is correct because G'd determines the outcome. Thus, it is the equivalent of embracing G'd and His Torah. However, if one goes before a secular court, whose process and verdict/decision may be identical to the Jewish court, if the evidence for the verdict is faulty then the decision of the court is a corruption of justice. This is because G'd had no relevance to that particular court. Therefore going the secular court in this context is the equivalent of rejecting G'd and His Torah.

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

##### **Tuesday**

12:10 - 1:10pm	<b>Torah Insight Based on the Parsha</b> Location: Yad Avraham
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##### **Wednesday**

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

##### **Thursday**

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