

Yad Avraham Institute
WEEKLY TORAH COMMENTARY SERIES
Parshas Vayakhel
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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 Vayakhel

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Dean

1. The Profound Effect of Performing a Mitzvah

The Midrash Tanchuma states, "G'd said to the Jewish people, "You must adhere to My decrees and My statutes because the reward of a mitzvah is an additional mitzvah and the reward for a sin is another sin." One would think that the reason the Jew must adhere to the Word of G'd is simply because it is His dictate. However, the Midrash tells us that the reason the Jew must adhere to the Torah is because the "reward of a mitzvah is another mitzvah."

One's incentive for observing mitzvos should not be for one's self gain. It should not be to merit reward in the world to come; rather, one should perform a mitzvah for its own sake because it is the Will of G'd. One must perform mitzvos to glorify the Name of G'd. As it states, "For My Glory I have created it (creation)." When the Midrash states that the reward of a mitzvah is an additional mitzvah, it means to say that the one who performs that mitzvah for the sake of G'd's Glory, He will give the individual greater opportunity to glorify His Name to a greater extent. The Midrash explains that the reason one performs a mitzvah is not only because it glorifies the Name of G'd presently, but it will also bring about the performance of another mitzvah, which in turn will be a glorification of G'd's Name. When one performs a mitzvah with the proper intent, it activates a cycle of spiritual development that fulfills the purpose of Creation. Conversely, when one sins it causes a diminishment of G'd's Glory – consequently bringing about a cycle of spiritual regression.

The Midrash continues, "Ben Azai says, 'Mitzvah brings about another mitzvah and sin brings about another sin. Reb Meir says, 'For every mitzvah that one performs an angel is created to protect the individual...'" The Mishna in Pirkei Avos tells us that when one performs a mitzvah it causes an "advocate" to be created on his behalf that will ultimately come to his defense on the day of reckoning. Conversely, when one sins, it causes a prosecuting angel to be created. The Midrash elucidates

the Mishna in Pirkei Avos that the advocate not only comes to our defense on the Day of Judgment but also in our present day existence. It causes one to merit protection in the physical sense as well as the spiritual sense.

When one has merit he either is not confronted with a setting of temptation or he is given the clarity and understanding to bypass that situation. This is a result of a protecting angel that was created through mitzvah performance. As it states, "The feet of His Devout He (G'd) protects. The commentators explain this concept with an allegory. When one often runs it is inevitable that over time he will sustain some sort of injury. However, regarding the devoutly righteous, G'd protects them from such happenings. Although many things in life are beyond one's control, G'd nevertheless insulates His devout from harm. However, when one is subjected to temptation, it is as a result of the prosecuting angel.

The Gemara in Tractate Chullin states, "When one stubs his finger (in this world) below it has been decreed from above." One does not falter in this world because of happenstance. Rather, one is put into tenuous situations because of a lack of clarity resulting from a lack of protection emanating from sin. The angels that come about from mitzvah performance give the individual clarity so that he should not fail.

The Gemara tells us that the study of Torah is equivalent of all of the mitzvos. Thus, the ultimate protection comes about through the study of Torah. The Vilna Gaon z'tl states that when Chazal tell us that the study of Torah is the equivalent of all the mitzvos combined, they are referring to even the study of one word of Torah. Thus, the level of protection which one merits through the study of Torah is the most advanced.

With this, we can understand the statement of the Gemara in Tractate Kiddushin -"I have created the evil inclination, I have created the Torah as its antidote." Every mitzvah provides some degree of protection; however it is not sufficient to defuse the power of the evil

inclination. The only mitzvah that is able to incapacitate the evil inclination is the study of Torah.

2. The All-Encompassing Characteristic of the Jew

The Torah states, **“The men came with the women; everyone whose heart motivated (*nadiv leiv*) him brought bracelets...”** Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that there is a difference between *“nadiv leiv-motivated heart”* which is a noun and *“asher yidvenu leibo-* to give from the generosity of heart,” which is a verb. *“Nadiv leiv”* is the essence of the person. One who is classified as *“nadiv leiv”* is innately one with a generous heart. On the other hand, the one who is classified as *“yidvenu leibo”* it is the one who performs an act of generosity only because it presented itself. It does not necessarily reflect on the person. He simply was motivated at that moment to act generously.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh continues that the one who is *“nadiv leiv”* gives without consideration for his own needs or taking into account his own limitations. It is the equivalent of one who is classified by the Torah as *“nisaoh leibo – inspired heart.”* The inspiration of this individual is so consuming that his focus is solely on the cause – ignoring his own needs.

The Gemara in Tractate Chagigah tells us that G'd values the ascent of all the Jews when they visit the Temple Mount during the three festivals of the year. The Gemara cites a verse which states, *“How beautiful are your steps, the daughter of the benefactor (bas nadiv).”* The Jews are referred to as the *“bas nadiv”* because they are the descendents of Avraham who selflessly gave his heart to G'd (*nadiv leiv*). Avraham gave of himself without limitation. There was nothing that was too difficult for Avraham to do in the service of G'd. In fact when he was thrown into the fiery kiln at Kasdim, he had intended to give his life.

Chazal present the principle of, *“Love disrupts/supercedes protocol.”* When one truly loves something, all that exists at that moment is the object of his love. Nothing else exists at that moment to interfere with his objective. Although Avraham was world renowned and one of the most wealthy individuals of his time, he hitched his own donkey to go to the Akeidah (binding of Yitzchak). All that mattered to Avraham at that moment was to fulfill the Will of G'd. His own existence was totally negated. As a result of his selfless behavior,

Avraham ascended to the level of being referred to by G'd as *“My beloved.”* His essence was *“nadiv leiv.”*

The Gemara tells us that mercy, shame/conscience, and acts of kindness are characteristics that are inherent in the Jewish people. This is because they descend from Avraham who possessed these characteristics. The Jewish people are referred to as the *“daughter of the benefactor - bas nadiv”* (Avraham our Patriarch) because every Jew inherently has the ability to give of himself selflessly as Avraham had done.

3. The Innate Value of the Mishkan and the Two Temples

The Midrash states, *“G'd showed Moshe three terumos (tithings). One was referring to the Mishkan, the second was referring to the first Bais HaMikdash (Temple) and the third was referring to the Second Bais HaMikdash. As it states, “gold, silver, and copper.” Gold corresponds to the Mishkan built by Moshe because it was precious and beloved to G'd as gold. Silver corresponds to the first Temple – as the verse tells us the level of wealth that the Jewish people possessed at the time of King Solomon was so great that silver no longer was valued. Copper corresponds to the second Bais HaMikdash because there were five things that were lacking in it- the Holy Ark, the kapores, the cherubs, the heavenly fire, and prophecy.”*

Reb Chaim of Volozhin zt'l in his work Ruach Chaim explains that a person is comprised of three parts: the life source (*Nefesh*), soul (*Nishama*), and spirit (*Ruach*). All physical movement emanates from the *Nefesh* that is contained within the physical being. This life source is shared by man and animal alike. The *Nishama* is the spiritual essence that man possesses which is the basis for him to be classified as an intellectual being. *Ruach (spirit - which means wind)* is the spirit that gives man the power of speech (ability of expression). Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin explains that just as each individual person is comprised of these three elements, the Jewish people (as a nation) also possess these three components.

Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, the founding fathers of the Jewish people, respectively represent each one of these components. Avraham, our Patriarch corresponds to the *Nefesh (life source)* of the Jewish people as we see his most prominent characteristic was *chesed*. This was expressed through his physical involvement/movement that emanates from the *Nefesh*. Avraham perfected the *Nefesh* of the Jewish people

through his unlimited acts of chesed. Yitzchak was the “unblemished offering.” Just as the Kohen needed to meet criteria regarding his thought processes when he officiated with a sacrifice (so that the offering should not be invalidated), so too was Yitzchak pure in thought when he was brought as an offering. Therefore he corresponds to the *Nishama/soul* of the Jewish people because he perfected the soul of the Jewish people. Yaakov, our Patriarch who was continuously engaged in Torah study, corresponds to the *Ruach* (power of speech) of the Jewish people because Torah is studied through its articulation. Thus, he perfected the Ruach/spirit of the Jewish people.

If one wanted to classify the Mishkan and the two temples according to the understanding of Reb Chaim of Volozhin, one would say that the Mishkan of Moshe corresponded to the Nishama (soul) of the Jewish people. The Gemara tells us that G'd gave the Jewish people three good shepherds – Moshe, Aaron, and Miriam. Moshe was the most spiritually advanced of them. His Mishkan was regarded by G'd as precious and beloved as gold. The Mishkan of Moshe addressed and perfected the spirituality of the Jewish people. The Mishkan was the dwelling place for G'd in this existence.

The First Bais HaMikdash built by King Solomon addressed and perfected the Ruach (spirit) of the Jewish people. The Gemara tells us that the First Bais HaMikdash was destroyed because the Jewish people did not recite the blessing of the Torah before their Torah study. They did not value the Torah as the wisdom of G'd; rather, it was studied as an intellectual pursuit. Thus, if the Temple was intended to perfect the Ruach of the Jewish people and they fail in this area, then they no longer deserved to have it. It was because the Jewish people did not value the Torah as a spiritual pursuit that the Temple was destroyed.

The Second Temple, which was lacking the Divine Presence as well as four other areas was intended to perfect the Nefesh of the Jewish people. The Second Temple was not on the same level of the First Temple that was meant to correspond to the spirituality of the Jew. The physicality of the Jewish people needed to be attuned to performing mitzvos. The Second Temple was destroyed because of *sinaas chinam* (baseless hatred) between Jews. Baseless hatred towards one's fellow is the antithesis of chesed (kindness) which was perfected by Avraham. G'd gave the Jew the Second Temple in order to perfect the manner in which he values his fellow. If however there was baseless hatred among Jews, the Temple must be destroyed.

Today, we do not have the Mishkan or the Bais HaMikdash. All we have is the Torah itself. The Torah is

the link that the Jew has to G'd – just as the Ruach links the Nishama which is totally spiritual with the Nefesh which is physical. Thus, every Jew has the opportunity to perfect his Ruach (speech) through words of Torah. When the Jew perfects his Ruach it impacts not only on his spirituality it also impacts on his physicality by infusing his actions with spirituality.

4. The Basis for the Sin is the Basis for the Correction

The Torah describes at length the materials that the Jewish people had brought for the building of the Mishkan and in the manner in which it was brought. The Jewish people not only provided the raw materials for the Mishkan, they also gave their jewelry, which is a personal item. They parted with these items for the sake of the Mishkan without issue.

The Torah refers to the Mishkan as “Mishkan ha'aidus – the Sanctuary of testament.” Chazal explain that the Mishkan was a “testament” that G'd had forgiven the Jewish people for the sin of the Golden Calf. Despite the gravity of their sin, G'd fully reinstated the Jewish people and dwelled in their midst. After transgressing so severely with the Golden Calf, how were the Jewish people able to repent and be full reinstated?

There is principle of “Meda kinaged meda – measure for measure.” This is the manner in which G'd punishes or rewards an individual based on his actions. For example, since the Egyptians had thrown the Jewish newborn males into the Nile to drown them, they in turn were drowned in the Sea when they were pursuing the Jewish people- measure for measure. Just as this principle is applied within the context of punishment it also has relevance to the positive- similarly regarding atonement.

The Torah tells us that when the Jewish people had fashioned the Golden Calf, they removed their earrings and nose rings (personal jewelry) and contributed them with alacrity for the making of the Calf. Identically, when the Jewish people gave towards the building of the Mishkan, which was the ultimate edifice in which G'd's Presence was to dwell, they contributed their jewelry with the same level of zeal. Thus, in the same manner in which the Jewish people had failed they were able to make the correction.

The Torah tells us that when the Moshe was about to pass away, he rebuked the Jewish people for the sins they had committed in various locations. One of the locations mentioned by Moshe was Di Zahav. Rashi cites

Chazal who explain that there is no such location as Di Zahav. Evidently, the name is an allusion to a specific failing of the Jewish people. Di Zahav is a reference to “dai zahav – enough gold.” Because G’d had given the Jewish such an abundance of gold, it contributed to their failing with the Golden Calf. The Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that when G’d wanted to destroy the Jewish people for the sin of the Golden Calf, Moshe pleaded on their behalf claiming that G’d was partially at fault for their failing since He had provided them with such an abundance of gold. It is similar to one who adorns his son with the finest clothes and perfume, provides him with a purse of gold coins, and places him in the entrance of a brothel. Is it not certain that he will come to sin?

Conversely, if it were not for the fact that the Jewish people were given so much gold, they would not have been able to build the Mishkan. G’d gave them an unlimited amount of wealth in order to make it relatively easy for them to build the Mishkan. But as with anything in life, it can be used for the negative or the positive. One has the ability to choose to dedicate his resources to advance his spirituality or diminish it. As the Rambam writes in Hilchos Teshuvah, one’s status as righteous or evil is not predetermined by G’d. Just as the Jewish people had abundant wealth that they used for the Golden Calf, they had it to build the Mishkan with a similar level of ease. It is true that the Jewish people had failed with the Golden Calf; however, G’d provided them the means to make the correction – in a similar vein as measure for measure.

5. The Importance of Understanding One’s Own Self-Worth (from Ki Sisa)

The Torah states, **“The people saw that Moshe had delayed in descending the mountain, and the people gathered around Aaron and said to him, ‘Rise up, make for us gods that will go before us, for this man Moshe who brought us up from the land of Egypt – we do not know what became of him!’”** Rashi cites Chazal that when Moshe did not descend from heaven where G’d was giving him the Torah, satan brought about intense darkness and confusion that enveloped all existence. The Jewish people thought that this chaos was as a result of the passing of Moshe. Consequently, they requested from Aaron to make a deity to go before them. Rashi cites the Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin which tells us that they “desired multiple deities.”

The Jewish people had experienced with their own faculties the first two of the Ten Commandments directly from G’d Himself. They had heard, **“I am Hashem, your**

G’d Who has taken you out of the land of Egypt... You shall not recognize the gods of others in My presence...” They had witnessed the miracles of the exodus and the events leading to the Sinai event. Their dimension of spirituality at Sinai was so advanced that they had been reinstated to the level of Adam before the Sin. The Jewish people fully internalized the falseness of idolatry. They understood that the powers in existence are only a manifestation of G’d Himself. Tosfos in Tractate Shabbos explains that at Sinai G’d had opened all the heavens from above and the depths of existence below to show the Jewish people that no one exists but He. After having such clarity of truth, how could they be deluded and deceived by satan to the point that their only salvation was only through the seeking out of deities?

Ramban writes that there are many positions regarding pagan beliefs. One position of paganism is that the world came about on its own and was divided among many powers/deities that control it. Another position of paganism is that the world was initially created by G’d Himself. However, because G’d is unlimited and infinite, He does not associate with the lowly mundane physical existence. After creating the world, He detached Himself from the world and transferred the responsibility of maintaining its existences to the various powers/deities. Thus, G’d is the Creator but because of the physicality/mundane of existence He disassociated Himself from it.

Before the sin of Adam, the physicality of existence was infused with the highest degree of spirituality. The Divine Presence dwelled in this world. After Adam was created as a physical/spiritual being the angels in heaven had confused his radiance with that of G’d Himself. The original intent of creation was that G’d should dwell in the physical/spiritual world on the terrestrial level among mankind. However Adam had sinned, evil/impurity was introduced into existence and thus creation became putrefied. G’d could no longer associate Himself with such an existence that is impure. The pagan belief was that after the sin of Adam, G’d had transferred power to the deities to oversee existence because He no longer wanted to be associated with it. This is the fundamental principle of paganism.

At Sinai, because the Jewish people were reinstated to the level of Adam (before the sin), G’d re-entered existence as was initially intended. The Torah tells us that at the time of the Sinai event, G’d brought heaven onto Mt. Sinai and thus the gap between the two no longer existed. The Jewish people understood that the transmission of Torah was only possible through Moshe,

who was the “Ishe Elokim – the man of G’d.” He was the only person qualified to be the conduit for the transmission of Torah. When the Jewish people heard the second Commandment “You shall not recognize the gods of others in My Presence...” they had understood this to mean that when G’d is associated with this existence, no other power exists other than G’d Himself. However, if Moshe in fact had died, the transmission of Torah to the Jewish people was not going to happen. Thus, the spiritualization of existence could not be maintained—causing G’d to ascend and disassociate Himself from this existence. Existence at that time would revert back to the state of Adam after the sin - which is controlled and maintained by the deities. This is the reason the Jewish people had demanded of Aaron to make them other gods to lead them. The prohibition against other gods is only in effect when it is in “His Presence.” Therefore their experience at the time of the Ten Commandments, when they had internalized the reality of G’d, is not contradictory (in their own minds) to their present position when Moshe was presumed to have passed away.

The Jewish people perceived themselves as a people who were undeserving of a relationship with G’d because of their idolatrous past. It was only because they had a person of Moshe’s dimension of spirituality representing them that they were able to have a relationship with G’d. They did not understand their own innate spiritual value. Moshe was able to ascend to his level of spirituality only because of the Jewish people – who are the descendents of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov.

Rambam writes in Hilchos Teshuvah (Laws of Repentance) that every Jew can be as great as Moshe Rabbeinu. Moshe, the “Ishe Elokim,” had a direct relationship with G’d. How is it possible that every Jew could ascend to that level? It is true that G’d does not speak to any Jew “face to face”; however, Moshe’s achievement was that he actualized his potential. This is within the ability of every Jew. When the Jew meets his potential, his accomplishment is no less than that of Moshe. G’d has relevance to this existence because there is a Jewish people. The Jewish people at Sinai did not appreciate their own spiritual dimension and potential. They believed that without Moshe this existence had no relevance to G’d – the Omnipotent Being. It was because of this misvaluation that they failed with the Golden Calf.

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5:50- 6:00 am	Chumash with Rashi
6:00- 6:15 am	Mishna
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
2:00 pm	Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

- 11:15 – 12:15pm **Talmud: Sanhedrin**
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
Enter on 54th Street
- 12:30 – 1:30pm **Talmud: Avodah Zorah**
Location: Shandholt 488 Madison Avenue
Between E.51st and E.52st

Tuesday

- 12:15 - 1:15pm **Torah Insight Based on the Parsha**
Location: Yad Avraham
- 1:30 – 2:30 pm **Talmud: Sanhedrin**
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
Enter on 54th Street

Wednesday

- 11:30 – 12:30 pm **Talmud: Sanhedrin**
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
Enter on 54th Street
- 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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