

Yad Avraham Institute
WEEKLY TORAH COMMENTARIES SERIES
Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim
 May 5, 2006

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
May 5, 2006

B"H

Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

Dean

1. The Driving Force in Man

The Midrash states, "There were four commoners who because of what had emanated from their mouths were sent to gehenom.... Doeig, because of what he had said to Saul, Nov the city of Kohanim (Priests) was destroyed. King David had sought refuge in Nov, where the Kohanim harbored and sustained him. Doeig informed King Saul that the Kohanim of Nov had protected and accommodated David's (and his men's) needs. Consequently, King Saul gave the order that the Kohanim of Nov should be put to death. Tragically, 85 Kohanim who were qualified to be the High Priest were killed by the order of King Saul. Rabbi Elazar states, 'Whoever acts mercifully to those who are cruel will ultimately act cruelly to those who are merciful.'"

King Saul had been commanded by G'd to annihilate the Amalekites. Saul disobeyed G'd's command and spared the life of Agog, their king, out of compassion. Because King Saul did not heed the word of G'd he was no longer worthy to be king of Israel. He was ultimately killed in the war against the Philistines. How could Saul have justified sparing the King of the Amalekites, who personified the most extreme level of evil? In fact, Haman, who had issued the decree to destroy and annihilate every Jewish man, woman, and child, was a direct descendant of Agog. He is identified in the Megillah as "Haman, the Agogi (descendant of Agog)." The Gemara in Tractate Yoma tells us that Saul justified his actions based on a logical inference (Kal v'Chomer). He reasoned that if one were to come upon the corpse of one who was victimized outside of a city, the elders of that city needed to bring an *Eglah Arufa* (a calf that had its neck broken in a valley) in order to vindicate themselves and indicate that they were not responsible for the death of that individual. The ritual of the *Eglah Arufa* was to bring about atonement for the Jewish people from any responsibility for this death. Saul had reasoned that if the taking of one life is seen in the most serious context,

taking many lives is definitely unconscionable. A heavenly voice came to him and said, "Do not make yourself too righteous." If G'd commanded him to destroy Amalek, his own sense of compassion should not have any bearing on his decision process. His sparing of Agog, the Amalekite king was a demonstration of acting mercifully to the cruel. Ultimately, his emotion dictated that he should act cruelly to those who were merciful- the Kohanim of Nov.

Rambam states in the Laws of Character that one's characteristics should not be demonstrated in an extreme manner – for the positive or negative. Rather, one's inclination should be at the equidistant point between the two extremes. Meaning, that one's natural inclination should not have any bearing on one's decision process, but rather, in order for one to make proper decisions one must maintain total objectivity. If one allows his inclinations to dictate, although they may be positive (such as compassion), the result of that decision could be grave. As demonstrated through Saul's expression of compassion by sparing the life of Agog. Ultimately, because Saul's emotion prevailed, it caused him to act with extreme cruelty to those who were compassionate. He had 85 Kohanim, who were qualified to be the High Priest, put to death.

The Torah tells us that the Jewish midwives in Egypt who had spared the Jewish children were "Shifra" and "Puah." The Midrash explains that Shifra was in fact Yocheved, the mother of Moshe, and Puah was Miriam, Moshe's sister. Why were they called "Shifra and Puah?" Yocheved was called "Shifra" because in the Hebrew language "*l'shaper*" means to beautify. She was the midwife who was responsible for beautifying (cleansing) the Jewish newborns. Miriam was called "Puah" because she was the one who calmed the newborns (because when one calms a child one make the sound "pu pu pu.") Why did the Torah not simply refer to them by their names – Yocheved and Miriam? Why did the Torah choose to conceal their true identity?" The Torah identifies them in

this manner to reveal to us the essence of each of them. Yocheved cleansed and beautified the newborn Jewish children not as a responsibility, but rather with a sense of love and caring as if they were her own. Miriam's dedication and involvement with the newborns was identical to that of her mother. The love and care they had for the children of their fellows was equal to that of their own. One would conclude that because of their unique level of attachment and love for the Jewish children, they chose to disobey the order of Pharaoh to kill the newborn male children. A mother would prefer to be killed rather than kill her own child. Nevertheless the Torah attests to the fact that the reason Shifra and Puah spared the Jewish children and disobeyed Pharaoh was not because it was contrary to their essence, but rather because, **"They feared G'd."** This is a demonstration of behavior that is not dictated by emotion and inclination, but rather by an understanding of right and wrong

2. Torah- The All Encompassing

The Torah tells us that once the Mishkan was established, one was no longer permitted to bring a sacrifice outside of the Mishkan, as one was previously allowed to do. Once the Temple was built, if one needed atonement he was only permitted to bring the sacrifice within the context of the Temple. The Midrash states, "G'd said to the Jewish people, 'As long as the Temple stands, when you bring sacrifices within it, they will give you atonement.' How is one atoned if the Temple no longer stands? One needs to engage in Torah study, because its words are the equivalent of the sacrifices. As the Prophet states, 'Take to you the words (of the Torah) and you will return to G'd.' The Torah is equated to every type of sacrifice. During the time of the Temple, they had poured wine libations on the altar, so too is the Torah compared to wine. As it states in Proverbs, 'You shall drink the wine which I poured.' They had brought bread on the altar, so too is the Torah compared to bread. As it states, 'What is the bread of the Jew? It is the Torah.' As they brought oil to the altar, so too is the Torah compared to oil. As it states, 'Your garments should always be white and oil should not be lacking from your head.' (Meaning one should always be engaged in Torah study)." Presently, that we no longer have the Temple, the only way one can achieve atonement is by engaging in Torah study, which is the equivalent of all the sacrifices.

The Gemara in Tractate Menachos tells us that, although we do not presently have the Temple, one may bring about the equivalent atonement of the sacrifices by reciting the portions of the Torah that pertain to those sacrifices. As it states, "We shall pay oxen with our lips..." The Gemara explains the verse to mean that when one recites the portion of the sin offering it is considered as if he brought the sin offering. The same is true for every offering, which one would bring if the Temple had stood. The Gemara is addressing bringing about the equivalent spiritual results of the particular sacrifices by reciting the corresponding passages relating to those sacrifices. However, the Midrash is referring to the study of the Torah, regardless of the text, as being the spiritual rehabilitative method to fully reinstate the Jew. Since the Torah itself is the basis for all existence, as it is stated in the Midrash, "He gazed into the Torah and created the world." Every aspect of existence is energized and solidified through the study of Torah. Consequently, when one studies Torah, one re-establishes existence and its spirituality as it was intended to be. As the Prophet Jeremiah states, "If not for My covenant, which is in effect day and night, the statutes of heaven and earth would not be put in place." The Gemara in Tractate Nidarim explains that "the Covenant" is referring to the study of Torah, which must be in effect continuously in order to maintain existence.

Thus, if one sufficiently engages in Torah study with proper intent (for its own sake), he will be able to bring about re-instatement/atonement of any spiritual shortcoming because everything is rooted in the Torah itself.

3. Out of Sight, Out of Mind

The Torah states, **"Hashem spoke to Moshe after the death of Aaron's two sons, when they approached before Hashem, and they died."** The Midrash cites a verse from Koheles (Ecclesiastes), "King Solomon writes, 'Whatever happens to all, happens to all... (there is no differentiation between the righteous person (tzaddik) and the evil one (rasha)) Whatever happens to the pure person happens to the contaminated person...' King Solomon had gazed throughout the generations upon the righteous and the evil. He saw that what the evil person deserves comes upon the righteous...Avraham, who was a righteous person who introduced G'd to the world had the same predicament as Nimrod, the evil one who initiated the building of the

tower of Babel and attempted to remove G'd from this world. Just as Nimrod, the evil one died, so too did Avraham die. This is the ultimate evil of existence...King David, who built the Temple reigned for forty years and then died. Nebuchadnezzar (the Babylonian emperor) who destroyed the Temple reigned for forty years and then died. We see once again that the ultimate fate of the righteous and the evil is identical. Nadav and Avihu (the sons of Aaron) brought the incense and were struck down by G'd. Similarly, the leaders of the congregation of Korach also brought incense (in their fire pans) and were struck down by G'd. "This is the ultimate evil under the sun." Why does King Solomon consider these examples as the ultimate in evil in the world? It is a fact that every person who is born will ultimately die? It is true that Nadav and Avihu met a similar fate as the congregation of Korach; however, the two are not comparable. The death of Nadav and Avihu was the ultimate Sanctification of G'd's Name, as Moshe had said to his brother Aaron, "Through those who are closest to Me I will be sanctified." However, the death of the 250 leaders who had brought the incense offering were destroyed because they desecrated the Name of G'd. Why does King Solomon equate the two?

One of the blessings that G'd had given to Avraham was, **"The families of existence will bless themselves through you..."** Rashi cites Chazal who explain, "People will bless their children by saying, 'You should be like Avraham.'" Why is this considered such a blessing for Avraham? If Avraham were seen by mankind in a special light, they would choose to emulate his beliefs and values. Consequently, he would reap all the merit for their accomplishments. His influence would go beyond his own limited ability. All the other blessings, which Avraham had received such as wealth, fame, and children in a certain context, are considered secondary to this blessing.

This is the basis for the concept, which is stated in Proverbs "The memory of the tzaddik is for blessing." When one mentions a tzaddik, he must do so in the most illustrious manner. He must extol his attributes. This is because if the tzaddik is seen by the world as someone who is special he will be emulated. Mankind will be influenced positively through the mention of the tzaddik. In contrast, King Solomon states, "The name of the evil should rot." When evil is perpetrated, it should be condemned and have no representation. It should go into oblivion so that it should not be a position even to be considered.

King Solomon realized that the demise of the tzaddik is that of the rasha – the fate of both of them is the same - ultimately both will die. This is the "ultimate evil under the sun." The evil to which King Solomon is referring is not the physical passing of these two individuals. Rather, just as the evil that was perpetrated by the rasha will be forgotten, identically the representation of the good that was brought about through the devoutly righteous will be forgotten and no longer have any positive effect. The true "evil under the sun" is that people will only remember that the tzaddik died just as the rasha died. They will not recall or mention the differentiation between Avraham and Nimrod. Identically, regarding King David and Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian Emperor. All that will be recalled is that both of their reigns were forty years and then they died. Not many people have the ability to discern between the tzaddik and the rasha because the true value of the righteous is not appreciated. The death of Nadav and Avihu was the ultimate Kiddush Hashem (Sanctification of G'd's Name), while the death of the congregation of Korach was because of a Desecration of G'd's Name. However, people will view both instances in a similar manner- both the rasha and the tzaddik were struck down by G'd, rather than appreciating the true difference between them.

G'd created existence only to glorify His Name. G'd's Glory is achieved and disseminated through the tzaddik and the way he lives his life. However, if the actions of the tzaddik are glossed over because of his death, he will be seen no differently than the rasha who no longer exists. This is the ultimate evil under the sun because what could have been perpetuated is concealed.

4. The Spiritual Quotient of the Jew

The Torah states, **"Hashem spoke to Moshe saying – Speak to the entire assembly of the Children of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for holy am I, Hashem your G'd."** It is a Positive Commandment for a Jew to make himself holy (Kaddosh). Rashi explains that for one to assume the status of "kiddushah/holiness/sanctity," one must separate himself from forbidden sexual relationships and from other areas of transgression. The result of separating oneself from this type of behavior and observing Rabbinic fences, is that one achieves holiness.

Ramban explains the mitzvah of, “**You shall be holy**” is not referring to separating oneself from that which is not permitted; but rather, “one should sanctify himself in areas that are permitted to him.” One only has relevance to kiddushah when one weans himself from the physical and the mundane that is permitted to him. For example, the Torah permits one to engage in sexual relations in a permitted context such as with one’s wife. The Torah permits one to eat and drink foods that conform to dietary laws. However if one indulges in these areas as a hedonist, although he did not violate the areas in which he is involved, this manner of behavior is the antithesis of holiness and has no relevance to spirituality. One can only have a sense of G’d – the Omnipotent Being – if one limits his involvement with the physical.

The Torah gives the Jew this Positive Commandment in order to spiritualize himself. By removing himself from the material, although it is something that is permitted to him, he achieves holiness which allows him to have a relationship with G’d. As it states, “...**You shall be holy, for holy am I, Hashem your G’d.**” Since G’d is holy, the Jew must also achieve holiness to establish a commonality with Him. We recite in the Shema, “Hear O Israel, Hashem our G’d, Hashem is One” – indicating a personalization with Him. Although G’d is The Master of the Universe, the Jewish people identify Him as “our G’d.” This intimate relationship only exists between G’d and the Jewish people.

The commentators explain that the original intent of Creation was that physical existence should be the setting in which G’d’s Presence would dwell. However, after Adam partook of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, the world was tainted. It no longer had the capacity to contain His Presence. As a result, G’d needed to command the Jewish people to build a Mishkan (Tabernacle) in which He would dwell amongst them. It is interesting to note that the 39 creative activities from which one must refrain on the Shabbos are all derived from the building of the Mishkan. The observance of the Shabbos is a testament that G’d is the Creator of the world. Since the Mishkan was in place of the world itself as the dwelling place for G’d’s Presence, it needed to possess all aspects of physical existence. It was a microcosm of creation- reflecting it in every respect. It is therefore fitting that all the creative activities employed in building the Mishkan should be the basis for the observance of the Shabbos. Just as G’d refrained from the creative activities which brought about existence on

Shabbos, so too the Jew must refrain from the creative activities utilized in the building the Mishkan on Shabbos.

The Torah states, “**Let us make man in our image...**” Man was intended to reflect G’dliness. Sforno explains that Man reflects G’d’s image as an intelligent being that has free choice. Man reflects G’dliness when he truly has control to execute that choice. As it states Ethics of our Fathers, “The only one who is truly a free person is the one who engages in Torah study.” When the Jewish people were given the Torah at Sinai, they were established as a people who could fully control their inclination in order to exercise free choice. One who is governed by his inclinations and desires is not his own master because his actions and behavior are dictated by drives that are rooted in instinct (which is common to the animal). Thus, the Jew is the equivalent of the “man” that was the initial intent of creation (pre-sin) because he is the only one that reflects G’dliness. For the same reason, the Jew was given the Positive Commandment of “You shall be holy” in order to maintain a balance between the spiritual and physical to reflect G’dliness.

The Prophet Yichezkel states, “You (the Jewish people) are called ‘man,’ inferring - they (the nations of the world) are not called ‘man’.” The non-Jew is also a human being. Why then is he not referred to as “man?” It is because Yichezkel is referring to the original human being/Adam who had total control to exercise true free choice. The Jewish people are the only ones who have this capacity. Thus, the Jew is classified as “man” which is not the case regarding other nations.

5. Israel, Through You I Will Be Glorified

The Midrash states, “G’d said to the Jewish people, ‘Before I created the world, the angels would praise and sanctify Me through you. They would say, ‘Blessed is Hashem, the G’d of Israel...’ When Adam was created, the angels asked G’d, ‘Is this ‘Israel’ to whom we refer when we give You praise?’ G’d said to them, ‘No, he is a thief.’ As it states, ‘**He ate of the tree...**’ When Noach came into existence, the angels asked, ‘Is this the one?’ G’d responded, ‘No, he is a drunkard.’ As it states, ‘**He drank of the wine and became intoxicated...**’ When Avraham came into existence, the angels asked, ‘Is this the one?’ G’d replied, ‘No, he is the convert from which Yishmael comes.’ When Yitzchak came into being, the angels asked, ‘Is this the one?’ G’d replied, ‘No, he loves My enemy.’ As it states, “**Yitzchak loved Esav...**”

When Yaakov came into existence, they asked, 'Is this the one?' G'd replied, 'Yes.' As it states, **'Your name shall not always be called Yaakov, Israel shall be your name.'** The Jewish people carry his name "Israel" as they are called "The children of Israel." At that moment, G'd sanctified the Jewish people for His Name. G'd said to the Jewish people, Israel, through you I will be glorified.' 'You were sanctified by Me before the world was created, therefore you must be holy because I am holy.'

The Torah states, **"Bereishis bara Elokeem ais hashemayim v'ais haaretz – In the beginning of G-d created the heaven and the earth..."** The Midrash explains, that the world was created only for the sake of "Israel" –the Jewish people (who are referred to as "Reishis – the first/chosen") and for the Torah, which is also referred to as "Reishis." Israel (the Jewish people) is the ultimate, because all existence was created for their sake.

After Yaakov defeated the angel (the archangel of Esav) G'd said, **"Your name shall not always be called Yaakov, Israel shall be your name."** His name was changed to "Israel" because he "succeeded in dominating over man (Lavan/Esav) and G'd (the angel)." Yaakov (Israel) was able to supersede and dominate the physical as well as lord over the spiritual (as demonstrated by his defeat of the angel). There was nothing beyond his ability. Yaakov communicated to his brother Esav after being in the household of his father-in-law Lavan, the evil one, for many years he said, **"...to Esav... I have sojourned with Lavan and lingered until now – im Lavan gartie."** Rashi explains that the word "gartie" is numerically the equivalent of "taryag," the 613 mitzvos of the Torah. Yaakov was communicating to Esav that although he had lived for a period of twenty years in the home of his evil father-in-law, Lavan, his spirituality had not been diminished as much as an iota. Although he was in an environment that was contrary on the most extreme level to spirituality, Yaakov remained spiritually unscathed. Israel is the one who influences and is not influenced because he dominates physicality and spirituality. Identically, G'd affects without being affected. This is the essence of G'd, which is the basis for the commonality between Himself and the Jewish people.

The Jewish people need to reflect G'dliness because they were created to be in His image. They need to affect physical existence and not be affected by it (the material). Thus, they are called "the children of Israel"

which is an appellation that identifies the one who lords over the physical and spiritual. When the Jewish people reflect the characteristic of "Israel" they are fulfilling the purpose of creation, which was brought about only for "Israel." In order for them to achieve this level, they must make themselves holy. Thus, allowing them to be intimate with G'd. Only then will they have a relationship with G'd who is holy. G'd created existence for His Glory, therefore it is befitting that the angels praised and glorified Him as "the G'd of Israel." When the Jewish people reflect the characteristic of Israel, G'd's Name is glorified.

The first Commandment that was given to the Jewish people as a "people" in Egypt was the sanctification of the new moon. The Midrash states that G'd had said, "Until now, I was the One Who sanctified time, however, from this moment onward, you will be the ones to sanctify time." In fact, the blessing that we recite during the festivals concludes: "Hashem has sanctified the Jewish people who in turn sanctify time." G'd wanted the Jewish people to appreciate their true potential and spiritual worth- that they were not at all like the Egyptians or any other people in the world. He revealed this by giving them the ability to sanctify and affect the essence of time, which is the essence of existence. This is because the physical is only the circumstance of the Jew and not his reality. Because the essence of the Jewish people is "Israel," they are meant to affect existence and not be affected by it.

YAD AVRAHAM DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday Through Friday

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
2:00pm	Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

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

Tuesday

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

Wednesday

11:30 – 12:30 pm **Talmud: Taanis**

Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
Enter on 54th Street

1:00—2:00 pm **The Knowing Heart**

Location: Yad Avraham

Thursday

10:30 –11:30am **Tehilim with Malbim**

Location: Yad Avraham

12:00 – 1:00 pm **Talmud: Taanis**

Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington