

Yad Avraham Institute
WEEKLY TORAH COMMENTARY SERIES
Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim

April 26, 2007

Sponsored by:

Roberta and Robert Hadi

In Loving Memory of Robert's Father

Yehekel Ben Daniel

May his neshama have an aliyah

Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

<i>Inside This Week's Edition</i>	<u>Page</u>
<i>1. The Ultimate In Causality</i>	2
<i>2. Familiarity, A Double-Edged Sword</i>	3
<i>3. The Need of Spiritual Rehabilitation</i>	4
<i>4. Sensing One's Spiritual Essence</i>	5
<i>5. The Multidimensional Grasp of Rebbe Akiva</i>	6

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.

If you would like to receive this Weekly Torah Commentary Series by email

Please call 212-371-9555 or email:

info@yadavraham.org

TUNE IN TO OUR LIVE VIDEO BROADCAST OF CLASSES

And over

15,000 online classes 24 hours a day

www.yadavraham.org

Yad Avraham Institute
New York
April 26, 2007

B"H

Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

Dean

1. The Ultimate In Causality

The Torah tells us that when the High Priest officiated on Yom Kippur in the Holy of Holies he was only permitted to wear white vestments. He was not permitted to wear his gold vestments. The Gemara in Tractate Rosh Hashanah tells us that the reason for this is "a prosecutor cannot be an advocate." Since gold represents the sin of the Golden Calf, it is inappropriate to officiate with gold vestments while asking for atonement for the Jewish people. It is interesting to note that the Gemara in Tractate Yomah tells us that the word "HaSatan – the satan" has the numerical equivalent of 364. Meaning, satan may prosecute on every day of the year with the exception of Yom Kippur. The level of G'd's Mercy is so intense and overwhelming on that day that he is not permitted to prosecute the Jewish people. If the prosecutor is silenced on Yom Kippur there is no basis for concern that the prosecutor cannot be an advocate. Why is the High Priest not permitted to wear the gold vestments?

The Gemara in Tractate Zevachim tells us that the Priest only becomes qualified to officiate when he dons his priestly vestments. As it states, "If their vestments are upon them, their Priesthood is upon them. If their vestments are not upon them, their Priesthood is not upon them." Consequently, if the basis for the High Priest's qualification to officiate is his vestments, the gold vestments which remind G'd of the Golden Calf would be the basis for qualifying the High Priest to officiate in the Holy of Holies. Therefore it is inappropriate for the High Priest to be instated before G'd with a material that represents the most extreme level of failing. It would be unconscionable to stand before G'd in this state.

The Torah tells us that after G'd had forgiven the Jewish people for the sin of the Golden Calf, He said to Moshe, "**The day that I shall punish them, they shall be punished.**" Rashi cites Chazal who explain that until the end of time, whenever punishment will come upon the Jewish people for their failing, included in that punishment will be retribution for the sin of the Golden Calf. Why

would G'd not have simply punished the Jewish people for the sin of the Golden Calf as he punishes them for any other spiritual infraction? If in fact the punishment would be too severe, why can not He punish them over many generations, rather than coalescing it with other retribution?

The Gemara in Tractate Avoda Zorah tells us that when the Jewish people had made the declaration of "Naaseh V'nishma - we will do and we will listen" and had unequivocally accepted the Torah, they were reinstated to the level of Adam before the sin of the Tree of Knowledge. Had they not sinned with the Golden Calf, death would not have had any relevance to them. Because they had assumed such an advanced level of perfection at that moment, they would have lived eternally and not had relevance to sin. All existence would have been brought to a state perfection. However, after the sin of the Golden Calf the Jewish people reverted back to their deficient spiritual state.

When Adam ate of the Tree of Knowledge, Adam not only brought limitation upon himself, he also caused that evil should be intermingled into all existence. This evil desensitized man of G'd's Presence and thus caused him to have relevance to sin. Every sinful act and Desecration of G'd's Name throughout history can be attributed to the sin of Adam. It was only because of his introduction of evil that mankind sins. Similarly, when the Jewish people sinned with the Golden Calf after they had reached their pinnacle of spirituality and had no relevance to sin, they had through their idolatrous act, reintroduced evil into existence as Adam had done. Thus, every transgression and Desecration of G'd that is brought about by a Jew is linked to the sin of the Golden Calf. The Golden calf is inextricably connected to every failing of the Jewish people until the end of time. Therefore, when G'd punishes the Jewish people for their transgressions, He also punishes them for the sin of the Golden Calf because the subsequent sin could not have come about unless they had sinned with the Golden Calf.

The High Priest is not permitted to wear the golden vestments for the service of the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur not because we are concerned of the prosecution of satan. Rather it is because gold represents the cause of all sin. Therefore regardless of satan's ability to prosecute, it is unacceptable and inappropriate that the advocate of the Jewish people, the High Priest, officiate in gold vestments.

The Gemara in Tractate Rosh Hashanah tells us that a Shofar made from the horn of a cow does not qualify because "a prosecutor cannot be an advocate." The cow's horn represents the sin of the Golden Calf. Thus, it does not qualify to be the mechanism that is used to silence the prosecution of satan on Rosh Hashanah. The Gemara asks, "If the High Priest officiates with his gold vestments on Rosh Hashanah because it is in the Outer Sanctuary, why does the horn of the cow not qualify to be used as the silencer of satan?" The Gemara answers that the effect of the blowing of the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah is for "remembrance." Meaning the Jewish people should be remembered in a positive and good context, which is the equivalent of entering into the Holy of Holies. Therefore the horn of a cow does not qualify as the instrument to be used for this purpose. This is similar to the High Priest who is not permitted to officiate in the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur with his gold vestments.

2. *Familiarity, A Double-Edged Sword*

The Torah states, **"Hashem said to Moshe: Speak to Aaron, your brother – he shall not come at all times into the Holy of Holies, within the Curtain...so that he should not die; for in a cloud I will appear upon the Ark cover."** The day of the year that the High Priest was permitted to enter into the Holy of Holies was Yom Kippur. Rashi cites Chazal who explain, "You shall not enter into the Sanctuary at all times because My Presence is there continuously with the pillar of My Cloud. Therefore you must be careful so as not to become too familiar (regilus) with Me." The Gemara in Tractate Zevachim tells us that Moshe was permitted to enter into the Holy of Holies whenever he chose to do so. However, Aaron his brother was only permitted to enter on Yom Kippur. Moshe was unique because he was the one who was chosen to ascend to heaven and receive the Torah on behalf of the Jewish people. It was only Moshe who was the most humble person who ever lived who was able to retain the clarity and appreciation for G'd. The High Priest needed to maintain an exceptional level of reverence and cognizance of G'd. If he were allowed to enter before His Presence whenever he chose to do so, that reverence for G'd would be dulled and blurred as a result of his sense

of familiarity with Him. Therefore the High Priests' entry into the Holy of Holies was limited Yom Kippur.

When one becomes accustomed and familiar with something, regardless of its special dimension of value, he will no longer see it in its true light. The Gemara in Tractate Yomah tells us that during the Second Temple period there were more than 300 High Priests who officiated over a 420-year period. In contrast, during the First Temple period, there were only 11 High Priests who spanned the 410 years. During the Second Temple period, every year a High Priest would enter into the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur and would die there. Rather than these individuals being sufficiently qualified for the position, they paid for the right to assume the office of High Priest. One must say that these individuals who died in the Holy of Holies, were not evil people. It is logical to assume that if one understood that death would be the inevitable result of entering into the Holy of Holies, one would not choose to enter. Evidently, these Priests believed that they were sufficiently devout and thus qualified to assume this auspicious position. Although they may have been righteous and pious, they did not have a sufficient level of reverence for G'd. They were no different then the one who develops a familiarity with the one who is truly special.

The Gemara in Tractate Bava Basra states, "That individual should be remembered for good and his name was Yehoshua Ben Gamla. Had it not been for him, Torah would have been forgotten by the Jewish people." Yehoshua Ben Gamla was the one who structured and established the elementary Jewish education system. Yehoshua Ben Gamla was a High Priest. Tosfos tells us that although his wife had paid to have him installed to be the High Priest, he was nevertheless a tzaddik (righteous) and did not die upon entering into the Holy of Holies. It was because of his special level of devoutness that he had sufficient reverence for the Divine Presence.

King David writes in Psalms, "G'd is continuously before me." Ramah writes in his glosses on the Shulchan Aruch that this is the behavior pattern of the righteous. The righteous person continuously senses the Presence of G'd and thus behaves and acts accordingly. One behaves a differently when he is in the presence of a king then when he is no longer in his presence. It is not attributed only to an intellectual understanding but rather it is an internalization and sense of His Being.

Every day we say in the morning blessings, "G'd...accustom (*targileinu*) us to Your Torah and attach us to Your mitzvos..." Developing a familiarity with anything causes one to undervalue it. If Torah is the most

precious commodity and is the ultimate in spirituality because it is the Wisdom of G'd, why do we request that G'd should accustom us to it? The Torah tells us that when one studies the Torah he must relate to it and experience it as if it were given on that day at Sinai. It must be continuously experienced with a newness and excitement that can only be had when one does not become familiar with it. If this is so, then why do we pray to G'd to give us a familiarity with Torah, when this will cause us to experience it at a lesser level? The Talmud states in a number of locations, "I created the Evil Inclination and the Torah as its antidote." Since Torah has the innate ability to illuminate the individual and incapacitate the evil inclination, the more one becomes involved and familiar with it, the greater will the illumination increase. Thus allowing the person to fully comprehend and internalize its true value, which will result in the greatest level of reverence for G'd.

3. The Need of Spiritual Rehabilitation

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.

Torah has been in existence since Sinai and had preceded the Mishkan/Temple. If the study of Torah is able to bring about the same level of atonement as all the sacrifices, than what is the added value of bringing them? Why was it not sufficient to have engaged in Torah study

during the time of the Temple to bring about the equivalent atonement? Nevertheless we see that even the most advanced Torah sage that lived at the time of the Temple needed to bring a sacrifice when atonement was needed.

The Torah tells us that if one sins inadvertently in an area that carries, on a deliberate level, either the penalty of spiritual excision or death, one must bring a sin offering (chatos). However the Torah differentiates if the transgressor was a Prince, a High Priest, or an ordinary Jew. Each of them must bring a different species for the same sacrifice. In addition the blood ritual for the sacrifice is performed in a slightly different manner. Regarding the Prince or High Priest the blood must also be sprinkled in the Inner Sanctuary, while the blood of the ordinary Jew's sin offering was sprinkled only in the Outer Courtyard (Outer Sanctuary). If all of these individuals transgressed the Shabbos inadvertently, why does the Torah discern between their offerings?

The Gemara tells us that if the Sanhedrin (High Court) had ruled that a certain type of fat (cheilev) is permitted and thus may be eaten and subsequently retracted their ruling because it was revealed that they were in error, the consequences to those who had partaken of the non-Kosher fat will depend on certain criteria. If the majority of Jews transgressed by partaking of the forbidden fat because of the ruling of the High Court, a communal sin offering must be brought on behalf of the Jewish people. The blood ritual of this sacrifice is performed differently than the ordinary sin offering. The blood is sprinkled in the Inner Sanctuary in addition to the Outer Sanctuary. However, if only a minority of Jews had transgressed because of the ruling, then each individual brings his own sin offering. Evidently there is a difference in the degree of sin of the majority vs. the minority, thus manifesting itself in a different offering.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that when one brings a sacrifice, it is to atone, reinstate, and rehabilitate the spirituality of the individual or community to its original state prior to the sin. The greater spiritual dimension of the individual brings about a greater level of consequence. It penetrates and reaches levels that the ordinary Jew's sin cannot. Because of this differentiation, the various spiritual levels of individuals (Prince, High Priest, ordinary Jew), each one requires another species of animal and to indicate the greater level of spiritual damage, its blood must be sprinkled in the Inner Sanctuary. This can be understood with an allegory. A minister, because of his status, has access to the king and may enter into his inner courtyard. However, the commoner, because of his ordinary status, is not privileged

to have any degree of access to the king. Since the minister has a greater responsibility to the king, if he should fail, the ramifications would be more serious and far-reaching than the failing of the commoner.

Every day we conclude the Amidah (silent prayer) with the request that G'd should rebuild the Temple where we shall worship Him with fear and "the offering of Yehudah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to Him, as in the days of old and in former years." One would think that "...the days of old and in former years" is referring to the time period of the First Temple or the Mishkan when the Divine Presence dwelt in the midst of the Jewish people. However the Midrash explains that "days of old and in former years" is referring to the days of Adam before idolatry was introduced to the world. At the time of Adam, because the world was spiritually pure – free from idolatry, the offering that he brought had greater value because impurity did not exist in the world. G'd's Presence was more integrated and closer to existence - thus allowing the offering to be more effective. Therefore we pray that G'd should reinstate His close relationship with existence so that our offerings will be as pleasing to Him as when the world was not tainted with the impurity of idolatry.

When the Divine Presence was in the midst of the Jewish people during the time of the Mishkan and Temple periods, the consequence of their failings had greater negative ramifications. Thus, if one had sinned during that era, since the spiritual consequences of that failing was graver, the study of Torah was not sufficient to rehabilitate the individual; but rather, the sacrifice also needed to be brought. However, after the destruction of the Temple, when G'd's Presence no longer existed in their midst, the ramification of sin was less severe. Consequently, their personal spiritual diminishment was to a lesser degree. Therefore the study of Torah was sufficient to rehabilitate and reinstate what they were lacking.

4. Sensing One's Spiritual Essence

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 sanctify himself (kaddosh). Rashi cites Chazal who explain that for one to assume the status of "kiddushah/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 sanctity.

Ramban explains that the mitzvah of, "**You shall be holy**" is not referring to separating oneself from that which is forbidden; but rather, "one should sanctify himself in areas that are permitted." One only has relevance to sanctity 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 partake in foods that conform with dietary laws. However if one indulges in these permitted areas as a glutton and hedonist, although he did not violate the areas in which he engaged, this mode of behavior is the antithesis of holiness/sanctity and has no relevance to spirituality. When one engages in the physical in excess, he empowers his physicality and does not allow himself to become spiritualized.

The Gemara in Tractate Taanis tells us that if one imposes upon himself a voluntary fast, he is considered a sinner. This is only considered sinful when the denial of food and drink interferes with his ability to function as a person on an optimal level. It would be foolish to believe that denying oneself the physical, when it is necessary, to have any value. If one is only able to perform effectively regarding his service of G'd when he is sufficiently nourished, then it would be considered sinful if he should deny himself that nourishment. However, only partaking of the physical to the point of necessity is considered sanctity. Beyond that it would be considered superfluous and excessive.

One can only have a sense of G'dliness if one has a sense of spirituality. This can only come about if one's involvement in the physical is limited to the minimum then; the physical and mundane act assumes a spiritual character that impacts upon the person in a spiritual manner. G'd allows us to understand that the only way that one can have a relationship with him is if we reflect His Characteristics. The essence of G'd has no relevance to the material and mundane. Even engaging with the spiritual for one's own interest, does not necessarily generate sufficient spirituality to have a relationship with Him. However, if the motive and impetus for one's actions and involvements are only for the sake of G'd (whether it is physical or spiritual), one will become imbued with His Essence. This concept is stated explicitly in the Torah, "**You shall be holy, for holy am I, Hashem your G'd.**"

King David writes in Psalms, "May He dispatch your assistance from the Holy, and support you from Zion." The Midrash explains that "May He dispatch your assistance from the Holy" is referring to the holiness that

emanates from one's actions. Meaning, one will merit Divine Assistance based on one's involvement in mitzvos and good deeds. "...Support you from Zion (tzion)" is referring to one's meticulous performance of Torah and mitzvos. One's meticulously performed deeds will be seen as unique because of their level of perfection. If one is imbued and absorbed in the physical then all of one's actions are intermeshed with oneself. Consequently he will not be worthy of Divine Assistance. However, if one becomes imbued with G'd by disengaging from the physical and material, he would be able to perform mitzvos purely for the sake of G'd – thus making him worthy of special Assistance.

The Torah tells us that one must sanctify himself in that which is permitted to him. Meaning, one should not engage in the physical to an excessive level (more than what is necessary) because one would not be able to appreciate and internalize the true essence of spirituality/G'd.

5. The Multidimensional Grasp of Rebbe Akiva

The Torah tells us that there is a mitzvah to count the days of the Omer from the second day of Passover until the festival of Shavuos. The Omer period is a time of partial mourning, during which one does not engage in celebration. Haircuts and shaving during this time are also forbidden. The Gemara in Tractate Yevamos tells us that between the festival of Passover and Shavuos, 24,000 students of Rebbe Akiva passed away in a plague. They died over a 33-day period.

There are two opinions cited in the Code of Jewish Law regarding the time period that is observed as one of mourning. One opinion is that the students of Rebbe Akiva had died during the first 33 days of the Omer, culminating on the 33rd day (Lag B'Omer). Although the students had also died on the 33rd day, during the daytime period of the 33rd day one is permitted to engage in celebration (weddings, haircuts, shaving, etc. permitted). This is based on the principle that on the last day of a mourning period one must only observe part of that day. It is considered as if the day in its entirety was observed in mourning. (Sephardic Jews do not shave or have their hair cut until the 34th day. This is the position of the Shulchan Aruch (Bais Yosef)). There is another opinion that the students of Rebbe Akiva began dying on the first of the month of Iyar and continued dying until Shavuos, with the exception of the 33rd day when there was a respite.

The Gemara tells us that after the 24,000 students of Rebbe Akiva passed away the world was desolate and devoid of Torah. Given this level of tragedy, how do we understand that celebration is permitted on the 33rd day? According to the opinion that the students continued dying until Shavuos, one could say that when there was a respite on the 33rd day, it was believed that the plague had ceased, which would be cause for celebration. However, when the plague continued on the following day, in retrospect, it was realized that the tragedy was meant to intensify. After realizing the dimension of tragedy, why would one continue in the future to celebrate the 33rd day of the Omer when it was revealed to be only a single-day respite?

One could say that although the Attribute of Justice was only quelled for one day, it is sufficient cause to celebrate. This is because the world was able to benefit from having Torah sages of this caliber even for only one additional day. The benefit of such a day is unlimited. In addition, one would think that once the Attribute of Justice is unleashed, it is not possible to withdraw it until the entire measure of Divine Justice is meted out. The respite on the 33rd day of the Omer demonstrated that regardless of the intensity of the Attribute of Justice, the Attribute of Mercy can intervene. This day taught the Jewish people a lesson that they should not despair even in the most trying times. This is sufficient reason to allow rejoicing on the 33rd day, despite the fact that the students continued to die on the 34th day.

According to the opinion that the plague ceased on the 33rd day, we see that Rebbe Akiva was not overwhelmed with grief. He understood that he needed to establish an eternal continuum of Torah in the world. He immediately began laying the foundation for the future of the Jewish people. He chose five individuals to be mentored as his students to carry on the Sinai tradition until the end of time. As a result of this spiritual rejuvenation of Torah, all the kiddush Hashem (Sanctification of G'd's Name) throughout the generations was possible. The reason the Jewish people were able to continue as a spiritual people throughout the ages was because of what Rebbe Akiva had established immediately after the death of his students. This is sufficient reason to rejoice and celebrate, despite the untold spiritual devastation that had preceded that moment.