

Yad Avraham Institute
WEEKLY TORAH COMMENTARIES SERIES
Parshas Tzav / Purim
 March 23, 2005

Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

<i>Inside This Week's Edition</i>	<u>Page</u>
<i>1. G'd's Extreme Reaction to Deprecation</i>	2
<i>2. What are We Naturally Inclined to do?</i>	3
<i>3. The Consequences of Our Actions</i>	4
<i>4. How Does One Recognize Truth?</i>	5
<i>5. Clarity is Achieved Through Torah Study</i>	5
<i>6. The Purification of the Jewish People</i>	6
<i>7. The Importance of Reflecting on Life's Experiences</i>	8

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
March 23, 2005

B"H

Parshas Tzav / Purim

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Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*
Dean

1. Tues

The Midrash tells us that at the burning bush G'd attempted to persuade/entice (*mefateh*) Moshe for seven days to be the Redeemer of the Jewish people. During this period of time, Moshe continuously had reason to refuse the role of being the Redeemer. G'd consistently responded to every one of Moshe's reasons. After a week of dialogue with Moshe and satisfying all of his issues, the Torah states, "Moshe said to G'd, 'Please, my Lord, send through whomever You will send!' Meaning, G'd should choose Moshe's brother Aaron, who had been His agent previously. This final remark of Moshe was considered a failing because it was considered a disrespect to refuse G'd's request.

There are several instances in which the Torah uses the term "take" in order to mean "persuade." For example, the verse states, "G'd said to Moshe, 'Take your brother Aaron (to be the Kohen)...'" Rashi explains the term "take" to mean "persuade." The Torah also states, "He (G'd) took man and placed him in the garden..." The term "take" is usually used regarding an object or a creature that has no intelligence and not a human being who has the power of choice. When one is persuaded and convinced to act upon a suggestion, that individual no longer has choice. It is the equivalent of being "taken." Thus, when G'd presented the opportunity to Moshe to be the Redeemer, He persuaded him to the point where Moshe could not refuse G'd's offer. Despite this degree of persuasion, Moshe stubbornly refused. As a result of his obstinacy, he forfeited the Priesthood (Kehuna) to his brother Aaron. Although his intent was pure, not to offend his older brother, Aaron, nevertheless it was considered a failing.

The Midrash states that G'd said to Moshe that because of his refusal, he will some day experience a disappointment reflecting his behavior at the burning bush. One opinion cited by the Midrash is that Moshe beseeched G'd for the first seven days of the month of Adar to allow him to enter into the Land of Israel. He believed

ultimately that his prayer would be accepted and he would be permitted to enter. However, on the seventh day Moshe was told that he would not enter into the Land. This was measure for measure- just as Moshe had refused G'd's request after a seven-day dialogue, so too G'd refused Moshe's request to enter the Land. Another opinion cited by the Midrash is that prior to the eighth day of the establishment of the Mishkan, Moshe had officiated as the Kohen for seven days. He believed that since G'd allowed him to act as the Kohen during this period of time, he would retain the priesthood together with his brother Aaron. However G'd informed him on the eighth day that Aaron and his children were to be installed as the Priests. Thus again, we see measure for measure – as Moshe had disappointed G'd at the burning bush, so too was Moshe disappointed as a result of G'd's rejection. What is the significance of Moshe experiencing these disappointments? Is it merely an application of the principle of "measure for measure?"

In order for Moshe to be fully atoned for his failing at the burning bush, he needed to be treated in an identical manner that he had treated G'd and experience the disappointment that he had brought about. Chazal tell us, "One should not judge his fellow until he arrives at his place." Meaning, regardless of one's understanding and insight into another person's situation, it is not possible to fully appreciate and realize what the other individual is experiencing until one experiences that identical circumstance. Moshe, although he was the most humble person who ever lived, the greatest prophet, and the transmitter of the Torah to the Jewish people, needed to experience the circumstance of the burning bush in order to be fully atoned.

Rambam writes in Hilchos Teshuvah (The Laws of Repentance) that "quality repentance (*teshuvah me'ulah*)" is only possible when one resists temptation in the identical setting in which he had initially failed. Rambam states, "The same women, the same location, the same intensity of desire, and the ability to transgress as he initially had done..." It is only when one experiences an

identical circumstance, as he had initially, could it be confirmed that he had done a quality teshuvah. Thus, by replicating a setting for Moshe to experience disappointment as he had disappointed G'd, was he able to achieve "teshuvah me'ulah." He needed to officiate in the Mishkan for seven days, only to be replaced by his brother on the eighth day. He needed to believe that his power of prayer would persuade G'd to allow him to enter into the Land, only be disappointed in order for him to achieve "teshuvah me'ulah"/ "quality teshuvah."

2. Wed.

The Gemara in Tractate Megillah states, "This has been passed down in tradition from the Anshei Keneses HaGedola (Men of the Great Assembly) that whenever the word "*vayihee* – and it was" is mentioned, it is to indicate something of a tragic nature. For example, it states in the Megillah, "*Vayihee b'mai Achashverosh* – And it was in the days of Achashverosh (Persian Emperor)..." The Gemara asks, "We see, however, that this is not so- as the Torah states regarding the day that Aaron and his sons were installed as Kohanim/officiants in the Mishkan, "*Vayihee b'yom ha'shmini...And it was on the eighth day.*"

The Midrash states, "Whenever the word "*vayihee* – and it was" is mentioned, it is to indicate something of a tragic/sorrowful nature...There are five instances of tragedy in which the expression "*vayihee b'mai*" is mentioned. The Torah states, '*vayihee b'mai Am Rafel*...It was in the days of Am Rafel (Nimrod)." This instance of "*vayihee b'mai*" refers to the time in which the Five Kings went to war with the Four Kings and had taken Lot, Avraham's nephew, captive. Simply, one could say that the tragedy to which this expression is alluding is the actual war between the Kings and the consequent loss of life, persecution, and suffering. However the Midrash explains this differently, "The suffering/tragedy to which the expression "*vayihee b'mai*" is referring is the fact that the war came about only to entrap and kill Avraham our Patriarch. As it states, "They made a war..." The Torah tell us that Avraham was not harmed in any way and was ultimately victorious. If this is so, what is the "suffering/tragedy?"

If it was a possibility that Avraham would have been killed in the process of rescuing his nephew, it would have been forbidden for him to do so. The mitzvah of not standing by while one's fellow is being killed applies only if it is possible to rescue the individual and if one's own life is not in jeopardy. Why then did Avraham go to

rescue his nephew? He understood that it was within his ability to defeat the Four Kings. After he ultimately defeated the Four Kings, he was concerned that he had depleted his merits. To this concern G'd said to Avraham, "Do not be afraid..."

Chazal tell us that the "suffering/tragedy" was that the Kings had plotted to kill Avraham. Because their focus was to kill Avraham and not to see him as the special individual that he was, it was a tragedy. To see something that is the ultimate in goodness and spiritual value as something that is to be annihilated is "suffering/tragedy." This was a tragedy for the Kings who did not appreciate Avraham.

If one regards the Torah or those who study it in a negative manner and wants to undermine their efforts, it is a tragedy for that individual. As we see from the Midrash the "tragedy/suffering" is on the one who should esteem something but chooses not to do so – just as the Kings should have valued Avraham, yet they chose to kill him. Although the Kings did not actually accomplish their goal of killing Avraham, they are nevertheless culpable. The Gemara in Tractate Kiddushin tells us that if one has an evil intent but is not able to bring it to fruition, he is held fully culpable. The only reason Avraham was not killed was because G'd intervened on his behalf.

The Gemara in Tractate Succah tells us that if the nations of the world would have understood the value of the Bais HaMikdash (Temple), they would have encircled it with sentries to protect it. All the blessing that came to the world was because of the Bais HaMikdash. Unfortunately they did not value the Temple, rather they destroyed it. It is true that this was a tragedy for the Jewish people, but it was also a tragedy for the nations of the world because they did not understand and appreciate something that they should have.

The Torah tells us that the Jewish people are the "single lamb" surrounded by seventy wolves (referring to the nations of the world). The nations of the world regard the Jewish people negatively and are constantly plotting to undermine them. This translates into suffering for the Jewish people as well as the nations of the world- because they should appreciate the value of the Jew.

3. Thursday

The Torah states, "*Vayhi ba'yom ha'shmini – It was on the eighth day, Moshe summoned Aaron and his sons...*" The Midrash Tanchuma states that whenever

the term “*vayihē b'mai* - It was on that day (those days)” is found throughout scripture it is to indicate tragic events. The Midrash cites the five incidents of “*vayihē b'mai*” and expounds upon them. One of the examples cited is “*Vayhi b'mai Achaz Melech Yehudah* – These are the days of Achaz King of Yehudah.” The Midrash asks, “To what tragedy is the verse alluding?”

The Midrash cites the verse which states, “**Aram was in the east and the Philistines were behind them.**” The verse indicates that the Jewish people were surrounded by their enemies. If this was the case, then to what tragedy are words “*vayihē b'mai*” alluding? One would think that it is an obvious tragedy that the Jewish people were surrounded by their enemies. Thus, not requiring an allusion. The Midrash explains with an allegory. It is similar to a king who gave his son to a pedagogue to be educated and mentored. However the mentor despised the king and his son. He said, “If I kill the son of the king outright, I will be held responsible and be killed myself. What I will do is methodically deny him of sustenance and over time he will gradually pass away.” This is how Achaz wanted to destroy the Jewish people and eliminate G'd from existence.

Achaz the king of Yehudah denied a Torah education to the youth. By denying the Jewish people access to the Torah, he wished to gradually eliminate Torah from existence, thus removing G'd's interest from this world. Achaz had said, “**If there are no young sheep there will be no mature sheep. If there are no flocks then there is no need for a shepherd (Hashem). If there are no youngsters, being educated in Torah there will be no teachers. If there are no qualified teachers, there will be no *talmidim* (students). If there are no *talmidim* there will be no Torah scholars. If there are no Torah scholars there will be no Torah. If there is no Torah then there will be no synagogues and study halls. And if there are no synagogues and study halls then Hashem is removed from this existence.**” Achaz had denied the Jewish people access to the Torah. When the people understood what Achaz intended to bring about they began calling out, “Woe to us the world will be destroyed because they have annulled the Torah!”

The painful and tragic event that the prophet is alluding to is not the Land of Israel being surrounded by its enemies but rather to the ultimate end of existence because of the lack of Torah study. If Jews are not engaged in Torah study, then being surrounded by their enemies is a secondary problem. There are many

difficulties in the world today but if the Jew is connected to the Torah, he is connected to G'd.

The Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin that when the nations of the world destroyed the Bais HaMikdash, they prided themselves. A heavenly voice came to them and said, “You fools! You are only grinding flour which has already been ground.” Meaning, the Shechina (Divine Presence) had removed Itself from the Bais HaMikdash before it was destroyed. The structure that remained was only stones and bricks. As long as the Divine Presence was in the Temple, it could not have been destroyed.

The nations of the world are continuously plotting against the Jewish people; however, as the verse states, “All the mighty are meaningless in Your Presence. All of the wise among them are as if they have no intelligence whatsoever before You.” Being surrounded by the enemy is not the problem because of the Jew has Torah G'd will protect him. However if there is no proper Torah education then the Jew is vulnerable. This is the true source of sorrow and tragedy.