

Yad Avraham Institute
Weekly Torah Commentaries Series
The Portion of
Vayikra

March 26, 2009

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
March 26, 2009

B"H

Vayikra

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Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita

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1. The Ramifications of our Verbal Expression

The Mishna in Tractate Shekalim tells us that at the beginning of the month of Adar they would announce that every male from the age of twenty and above needed to send his half-coin made of silver (*machtzis ha shekel*) to the Temple so that it should arrive by the beginning of the following month, which is Nissan. The *machtzis ha shekel* was used for the purchase of all communal offerings that were brought in the Temple. Every Nissan, new coins needed to be given for the purchase of these offerings. Although we no longer have the Temple, there is a custom that on the Fast of Esther the *machtzis ha shekel* is given to charity to commemorate the collection of the half-coin made of silver. What is the significance of this custom?

The Gemara in Tractate Menachos tells us that although we are not presently able to bring sacrifices to atone for our sins, one is able to bring about the equivalent atonement through the recitation of the portions of the Torah that pertain to those offerings. As it states in the verse, "We shall pay the oxen with our lips..." The Gemara states, "When one recites the portion of the sin offering it is considered as if he had brought the sin offering. When he recites the portion of the burnt offering..." Similarly, when one recites the portion pertaining to the *machtzis ha shekel*, it is valued by G'd as if it were received by the Temple for the sake of sacrifice.

We recite in the Mussaf Service of Rosh Chodesh, "...When they would bring before You offerings for favor and goats of sin-offering to atone on their behalf. They would serve as a remembrance for them and all salvation for their soul from the hand of the enemy..." The Jew is continuously under attack from various enemies, the most insidious of them all is satan, who attempts to bring about prosecution. It is only because of the Attribute of Mercy that his prosecution is held at bay. The communal

offerings were intended to evoke the Mercy of G'd on behalf of the Jewish people, thus offering them protection. Since today we no longer have the Temple, it is the recitation of the communal offerings in the Mussaf Service that brings about protection.

In the Megillah we read that in order to seal the fate of the Jewish people, Haman had given 10,000 talents of silver to Achashverosh (King of Persia). It was decreed that every Jewish man, woman, and child should be annihilated. In exchange for the silver talents, Achashverosh had given his ring to Haman in order to issue a royal proclamation throughout the Persian Empire regarding the destruction of the Jewish people.

The Gemara in Tractate Megillah states, "It was revealed and known to the One who Willed existence that ultimately Haman would expend coins to seal the fate of the Jewish people. Therefore, G'd preempted the coins of Haman with His coins (the half coin made of silver)." This is based on the concept "G'd creates the antidote before the ailment." Meaning, G'd initially commanded the Jewish people to donate the half-coin of silver so that it should be a counterforce/nullification of the actions of Haman that would come about in the future. Although there was a decree to annihilate every Jewish man, woman, and child, it did not come to fruition. G'd had initially established a protective mechanism for the Jewish people, known as the *machtzis ha shekel*.

It is in the merit of coins that were collected in the Temple and our ongoing recitation of the portion that states the obligation of the *machtzis ha shekel*, that the Jewish people are protected. The Jewish people are able to draw upon the protection offered by the coins and the communal offerings that were purchased with them by reciting the portions that pertain to them.

2. The Necessity of Moshe's Reflecting Upon G'd's Teachings

The Torah states, **“He (G'd) called (*vayikra*) to Moshe, and Hashem spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying...”** The verse tells us that G'd initially called out to Moshe and then He spoke to him. What is the meaning of this? Rashi cites Chazal who explain, “G'd called out to Moshe (*vayikra*) before speaking to him (communicating to him the Torah) as an expression of love. Perhaps G'd called out to Moshe even when there would be a pause (during His transmission of Torah to Moshe). The Torah states **‘Hashem spoke to him’** to indicate that G'd only called out to him to communicate but not to indicate that there would be a pause. What was the value of the pauses between one portion to the next? It was to give Moshe time to reflect between one subject matter and the next. If Moshe needed time to reflect from one subject matter to the next, how much more so should the ordinary person need take time to reflect from one subject matter to the next.”

The Torah states in the Portion Ki Sisa regarding the Mishkan **“And He gave to Moshe when he finished, *k'kaloso...*”** Rashi explains that without vowels this word can be read, “He had given His bride (to Moshe) *‘Kalah(so)’*.” Meaning, when G'd had given the Torah to Moshe on behalf of the Jewish people it was the equivalent of a bride being given to her groom as a gift. It was considered a gift because it was learned in its entirety forty days. Its transmission to Moshe was the equivalent of a miracle. If Moshe's processing and retention of the Torah that he received was miraculous, because it was beyond the human capacity, why was it necessary for him to take pause to reflect upon its meaning?

Chazal tell us that when Moshe ascended to heaven for forty days and forty nights he was taught the Torah in its entirety every day by G'd. After each day Moshe would forget all that he had been taught. This process of being taught and forgetting at the end of each day, repeated itself for forty days. However, at the end of the fortieth day, Moshe was able to retain what he had been taught. Why did Moshe need to experience this forty-day repetitive pattern of studying and forgetting? As G'd had allowed Moshe to retain what was impossible within a forty day period, He could have had Moshe retain it all

after the first day of being taught. It was to teach Moshe that regardless of one's intellectual capacity and genius, it is not within the human context to retain and process Torah knowledge. Although Moshe's dimension of

spirituality was unique, his only relevance to be the repository for G'd's Torah was that he was chosen to be the conduit of this gift to the Jewish people.

The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos tells us that when Moshe ascended to heaven the angels asked G'd, “What is a mortal man doing among us?” G'd responded to the angels, “He is here to receive My Torah.” They replied, “Why do You not allow Your Glory to remain in heaven? What is man, who is not even worth mentioning?” G'd said to Moshe, “Answer them (the angels).” Moshe then proceeded to respond to the angels by demonstrating that they had no relevance to the Torah. Why did G'd not answer the angels Himself? Why did Moshe need to be the one to respond? It is to teach us that although the acquisition of Torah is a gift from G'd, one needs to take the initiative to be deserving of that gift. After one has taken sufficient initiative, G'd will provide him with Divine Assistance to have the capacity to acquire and retain the Torah.

Moshe's ascent to heaven was the beginning of the process for the acquisition of the Torah on behalf of the Jewish people. Moshe was told by G'd to respond to the angels in order to establish that man only becomes worthy to receive the gift of Torah when he has taken initiative. Although the Torah in its entirety was miraculously transmitted to Moshe, there had to be some aspect of its acquisition that can be attributed to his own initiative. Therefore Moshe had to take pause to reflect on what he was taught by G'd.

The Gemara in Tractate Bava Basra tells us that the kindling of the Menorah is symbolic of the Oral Law. The Oral Law, which is unlimited in its depth and breath is an elucidation of the Written Law. Regarding the making of the Menorah the Torah states, **“It shall be made...”** The Torah does not say, **“You shall make the Menorah...”** Rashi cites Chazal who explain that one of the areas that Moshe had difficulty with was the development of the Menorah. He was not able to infuse the Menorah with the necessary intent for it to represent the unlimited scope that is contained within the Oral Law. Therefore, G'd told Moshe to take a block of pure gold and cast it into the fire and the Menorah would form by itself. In essence, G'd made the Menorah. If the formation of the Menorah came about through miracle, why was it necessary for Moshe to place the gold into the fire? Once again, it is to teach us that although the understanding of the Oral Law comes about as a result of G'd's Assistance, one nevertheless take an initiative to merit it. The casting of the gold into the fire was the equivalent of human initiative.

The Gemara in Tractate Megillah states that if one says that he has toiled in Torah and has “found it” he is to be believed. However if he claims that he has come upon it without toiling, he should not be believed. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin z’tl points out that the Gemara does not use the term “he has understood” but rather it uses the term “He has found.” He explains that the understanding of the Torah is not based on one’s intellectual capacity alone, but rather it is a gift that is endowed by G’d to the person who toils sufficiently. This was the lesson that was taught to Moshe during his forty-day stay in heaven.

3. The True Torah Sage, Resembling an Angel

The Torah states, **“He (G’d) called to Moshe...”** The Midrash cites a verse from Psalms, “Bless G’d, His angels mighty in strength (*geborei koach*) that do His bidding to obey the voice of His word.” The Midrash explains, “Who are the angels that bless G’d? They are Moshe and Aaron who are identified as ‘angels.’ As the verse states regarding Moshe, **‘G’d sent an angel to take them out of Egypt...’** As it also states in Chronicles regarding the destruction of the First Temple, **‘They disgraced the angels of G’d...’**”

The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos tells us that one of the reasons that the First Temple was destroyed was because the members of that generation disgraced the Torah sages. To indicate that this was the basis for its destruction, the Gemara cites the verse in Chronicles- **“They disgraced the angels of G’d...”** Chazal understand, based on these verses, that Moshe, Aaron and those who are classified as Torah sages are identified as **“angels of G’d.”** It is only the one who possesses the characteristic of Moshe and Aaron who can truly bless G’d. It is interesting to note that an angel is a spiritual being who does the Will of G’d without any degree of deviation. Its focus is only to carry out His Will. Moshe and Aaron, as G’d’s representatives to take the Jewish people out of Egypt and lead them through the desert, were dedicated selflessly for that mission. They are therefore identified as “angels.” However we find that Torah sages, although they were not directly appointed by G’d are also identified as “angels.” How is this so?

The Torah tells us that the Holy Ark in the Mishkan, was the repository for the Tablets and the Torah. It is identified as a vessel that was cast in gold both on the inside and on the outside. The Gemara in Tractate Yomah explains that the symbolism of the Ark teaches us that only

the Torah sage whose outward demeanor is consistent with his inner understanding of Torah and purity of heart, is considered a Torah sage. A Torah Sage’s external presence must be a reflection of his inner purity, just as the Ark was cast in pure gold on the inside and on the outside. Only such a person qualifies to be a repository for the Torah as the Ark was. The Torah Sage is not merely a repository of information, but rather one who internalizes and reveres the Torah to implement it and live by its precepts. This caliber of person is classified as an “angel” because he is imbued with a dedication to perform the Will of G’d.

G’d created man for the sole purpose to perfect himself through conforming to the dictates of the Torah. By leading a life of spirituality, man will ultimately merit a share in the world to come. The Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that the devoutly righteous person (tzaddik) in their death are called “living.” Conversely, an evil person (rasha) in his lifetime is considered to be dead. Although the rasha is alive, his value is no greater than a corpse. A tzaddik, when he is alive, the value and focus of his existence is spirituality, dedicating his life to doing G’d’s Will. When he passes away he ascends to another level of spirituality, which is a transitional state from his previous level of spirituality. Thus, in his death, the tzaddik is considered to be living because his state of existence has only advanced itself. However, the evil person, although he is alive, since he does not address his spirituality, which is his essence, he is considered to be the equivalent of a dead person.

Only the one who assumes the characteristic of the angel can truly bless G’d. It is only the one who has a sense of his own spirituality can truly appreciate G’d’s essence. If one subordinates his physicality to pursue a higher objective that is in conformance with the Torah, he will assume the characteristic of an angel, whose focus is only to do the Will of G’d.

4. The Mightiest of the Jewish People

The Torah states, **“He (G’d) called to Moshe...”** The Midrash cites a verse from Psalms, “ ‘Bless G’d His angels mighty in strength (*geborei koach*) that do His bidding to obey the voice of His word.’ Who is considered to be mighty in strength (*geborei koach*)? It is Moshe. There was no one as mighty as he. When the Jewish people stood at Sinai, they were overwhelmed by the Voice of G’d. As the verse states, **‘If we continue to hear**

the Voice of G'd we will die....' Moshe was able to hear the Voice of G'd and was not harmed. From this we learn that tzaddikim (devoutly righteous) are even greater than

the most advanced angels. The greatest angel does not have the capacity to listen to the Voice of G'd – rather they stand and are overwhelmed. As it states in Yoel, 'G'd presented His Voice before His heavenly retinue. They stood and were overwhelmed.' However, tzaddikim have the capacity to hear His Voice... We also see this regarding Shmuel the Prophet, who was able to hear the Voice of G'd and was not overwhelmed.”

The Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin tells us that tzaddikim are greater than angels. Reb Chaim of Volozhin z'tl explains in his work *Nefesh HaChaim* that an angel is a spiritual being that is dedicated to doing His Will because it was created for that purpose. However, a tzaddik is devoutly righteous not because G'd ordained that he should be so, but rather because of his own choices. Through the subordination of his inclinations to do His Will, the individual becomes a tzaddik, who is a spiritually advanced individual. Therefore, the tzaddik is greater than the angel because he became what his is through his own initiative.

The Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin tells us that Chananya, Meshael, and Azaria were the only Jews who would not bow to the image of Nebuchadnezzar (Babylonian Emperor) and were therefore cast into a fiery kiln. Nebuchadnezzar had seen four individuals in the fire: Chananya, Meshael, Azaria, and an angel. The Gemara explains that since the angel is only mentioned as the fourth who was seen in the fire, it is an indication that the tzaddik is even greater than the angel. Within the context of the classification of tzaddik, Moshe and Shmuel the Prophet were on a level unto themselves. They were the only ones who had the capacity to hear the Voice of G'd and not be overwhelmed.

Shaul was anointed by Shmuel the Prophet to be the first King of Israel. King Shaul was commanded to annihilate the Amalekites; however, after defeating them he allowed the Jewish people to take their livestock as spoils and he did not kill Agog, the King of the Amalekites, as he was commanded to do. This was considered a grave sin. G'd communicated to Shmuel the Prophet that he had regretted having installed Shaul as King and wanted to dethrone him. Thus, decreeing that he should die. The Gemara in Tractate Taanis tells us that Shmuel the Prophet beseeched G'd on his behalf. Consequently, Shaul's reign was extended by two and a half years. The basis for Shmuel's plea to G'd was, “We

see that Moshe's handiwork was not destroyed in his lifetime. Why should my handiwork be destroyed in my lifetime (referring to the anointing of Shaul)?” The

Gemara explains that Shmuel had a right to equate himself to Moshe. As the verse in Psalms states, “Moshe and Aaron were among His priests and Shmuel was among those who invoke His Name...” Indicating that Shmuel's status of spirituality was similar to that of Moshe's. (Although Aaron is mentioned in the verse, he did not have the same capacity as Moshe and Shmuel to hear the Voice of G'd.)

We can now truly appreciate the basis for Korach's mutiny against Moshe. Korach attempted to usurp Moshe's authority and contest his appointment of his brother as High Priest. Korach had accused Moshe of nepotism. Chazal tell us “His eye misled him.” He had seen in a Divine vision that a “special chain” will descend from him. One of those descents was destined to be someone that will be the equivalent of Moshe. This individual was Shmuel the Prophet. This fact confirmed to Korach that his accusation was valid. The entire community of Korach was destroyed except for his two sons, who had repented at the last moment. Shmuel had descended from one of these sons. Korach did not believe that his sons would disgrace him by acknowledging Moshe as G'd's true spokesman.

5. *The Cause of Entitlement*

The Midrash cites the words of King Solomon (Proverbs), “The arrogance of a person lowers him. The one with a lowly spirit (humility) will bring about honor. The one who pursues honor (prestige), honor will flee from him. The one who flees from honor, honor will pursue him.’ King Shaul fled from honor. He had said to them, ‘I am not worthy/qualified to be the king. Consult the Urim v'Tumim (Breastplate worn by the High Priest). If G'd says that I am qualified, then I will be agreeable to assume the position of king. Otherwise I feel that I am unworthy.’ G'd was consulted and it was deemed that Shaul was the most qualified person to be King of Israel.” The Midrash continues to explain that Moshe was another example of one who fled from honor, yet honor pursued him. He attempted to extricate himself from assuming the position of Redeemer of Israel. He had entered into a seven-day dialogue with G'd in which he repeatedly claimed that he was not the one suited for the position. G'd, nevertheless, appointed him as the Redeemer because he was the most worthy. Why does the arrogant/unqualified person believe that he is the most

qualified and the most qualified/humble person believe that he is not qualified?

King Solomon, the wisest person who ever lived, explains that the basis for the unworthy person believing that he is qualified is rooted in arrogance. Conversely the one who is truly qualified is the humble person who does not believe that he is worthy. The arrogant person has an overwhelming sense of entitlement, which makes him feel qualified/deserving. Whenever the arrogant person sins, he justifies it by rationalizing the action- thus minimizing its severity. Therefore the arrogant person, although he may have a seriously flawed spiritual record, he does not see it as problematic. In contrast, the humble person, who does not have a sense of entitlement, if he should sin he appreciates the failing to its fullest. To him, there is no basis to justify the wrong that he had perpetrated. Therefore his spiritual failings, as minute as they may be, render him unworthy. Thus, the arrogant person who believes he is qualified is in fact unworthy, while the humble person who is the most qualified, believes he is not worthy. In order to give the arrogant person a sense of his reality, G'd causes that the more he pursues honor, it flees from him.

One can only develop an appreciation for one's own spiritual failings through Torah study. The Gemara in Tractate Taanis tells us that if one sees an astute young Torah sage in a state of anger due to witnessing a transgression of the law, one should give him the benefit of the doubt (see him in a positive light). The verse states, "The words of Torah are like fire." The Gemara explains that the young Torah sage is only angered because "the fire of Torah is burning within him." The young Torah sage truly appreciates the severity of the wrong more than the average person. Rashi explains that Torah study gives one a depth and breadth of heart which broadens and deepens his understanding of reality. The Torah sage perceives the true value of doing a mitzvah and the severity of transgression. It is not only an abstract concept. As fire illuminates, so too when one engages sufficiently in Torah it will illuminate. It is only through Torah study that one can appreciate one's own spiritual failings.

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

1:00-2:00 pm **Ramchal: Derech Hashem**
Location: Cedarview Capital 1Penn Plaza (45th FL.)

Tuesday

12:10 - 1:10pm **Torah Insight Based on the Parsha**
Location: Yad Avraham

Wednesday

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

1:00—2:00 pm **Daas Tevunos**
Location: Yad Avraham

Thursday

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