

Yad Avraham Institute
Weekly Torah Commentaries Series
Portion of Vayikra

March 18, 2010

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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Vayikra

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita
Dean

1. The Fruits of One's Labor

The Torah states regarding the Pascal lamb that was brought in the desert, **“Hashem spoke to Moshe, in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the second year from their exodus... ‘The Children of Israel shall make the pesach-offering in its appointed time. On the fourteenth day of this month...There were men who had been contaminated by a human corpse and could not make the pesach-offering on that day; so they approached Moshe and Aaron on that day saying, ‘We are contaminated through a human corpse; why should we be diminished by not offering Hashem’s offering in its appointed time?’”** After hearing their claim, Moshe approached G’d on their behalf. G’d told Moshe that if one is not able to bring the pesach-offering in its time because he was contaminated with the dead, he must bring it in the following month (*pesach sheni*) on the fourteenth day of Iyar, after he had achieved spiritual purification. These individuals who were not able to bring the pesach-offering because of their contaminated status was due to circumstances beyond their control. They were exempt from the mitzvah and were thus not held culpable. It is similar to one who is not able to don tefillin (phylacteries) because his arm was amputated. Under those circumstances, one is exempt from the mitzvah of tefillin and there is no liability to him. If this is so, what was the basis for the claim that was presented to Moshe, if in fact they had no obligation because they were contaminated? In addition, since Moshe presented their claim to G’d it gave veracity to it. Why did he do so?

The first Pascal sacrifice that was performed in Egypt was a significant ritual. It terminated the Jewish people’s relationship with paganism. The lamb was one of the deities that was worshiped by the Egyptians. By slaughtering the sheep, they nullified and negated its significance, thus allowing them to establish their relationship with G’d. When the Jewish people brought the lamb in Egypt to have it slaughtered, they were still slaves under the dominance of their Egyptian masters. They risked their lives when it became apparent to the Egyptians that the Jewish people were going to slaughter their deity. This was one of the qualifying factors that gave them merit

to leave Egypt. The Jewish people in the desert truly wanted to fulfill this mitzvah, which had great meaning and significance to them.

There is an argument in the Gemara in Tractate Sukkah regarding the source of contamination of those who had come to Moshe with their claim. One opinion is that the basis of contamination was the removal of the remains of the two sons of Aaron, Nadav and Avihu, from the Sanctuary of the Mishkan. The sons of Aaron had brought an inappropriate offering before G’d and were therefore killed for their transgression. There remains were a source of contamination that existed in the Mishkan. There is a negative commandment that prohibits the Mishkan from being contaminated. It was therefore, a mitzvah to remove the corpses. Thus, those who had participated in the removal of Aaron’s sons became contaminated as a result of fulfilling a mitzvah. There is a principle that is mentioned in the Mishna in Ethics of Our Fathers “One mitzvah brings about another mitzvah (*mitzvah goreris mitzvah*).” If this is so, then how could these individuals be denied the mitzvah of the pascal-offering because of their contaminated state, when it resulted from a mitzvah? Because their claim was compelling, Moshe presented it to G’d. It was revealed to Moshe that those who became contaminated would not be denied but rather their pesach-offering would be delayed by one month. Thus, they were not denied the mitzvah.

The Jewish people who were unable to bring the pesach-sacrifice felt pained and denied because of their inability to perform the mitzvah. It was because of this yearning to do the Will of G’d that pesach Sheni was introduced through them. Similarly, the Torah states, **“The daughters of Tzelofchad stood before Moshe ...saying, ‘Our father died in the desert...and he has no son...Give us possession among our father’s brothers.’”** Since their father Tzelofchad had died in the desert without any male offspring (heirs), his daughters approached Moshe to be considered his heirs and thus have a right to their father’s inheritance. They wished to receive his portion in the Land of Israel. Moshe posed their question to G’d and was told that that the daughters of Tzelofchad were correct in their claim and were qualified to inherit their father’s portion. Chazal explain that it was

only because of their special love for the Land of Israel that they had come with their claim. Thus the portion of inheritance was revealed through them.

Avraham, our Patriarch, on the third day after his circumcision, which is the most difficult day of recovery, was pained because he had no guests to host. G'd had taken the sun out of its sheath thus making it the hottest day since the beginning of existence. He had done so in order for Avraham to have a respite from hosting guests. Despite his infirmity, Avraham stood at the entrance of his tent searching for guests. Although Avraham had no obligation to engage with anyone at that particular moment because there were no guests to be found, nevertheless he was pained because he was denied the mitzvah of hospitality, which was his vehicle to espouse monotheism. G'd thus provided him with the most special guests to host. They were angels in human form.

2. Man's Ability to Convert Evil into Good

The Torah in the Portion of Vayikra mentions the species of animals that qualify as offerings to be brought in the Mishkan/Temple. Ramban in his commentary cites Ramban's position regarding sacrifices that is mentioned in The Guide for the Perplexed. Ramban writes that bringing sacrifices is an outlet for one's innate need to be subservient to a higher power. Since idolatry existed in the world, man needed a permitted avenue of worship because if it were not made available, man's need for subservience would have expressed itself in serving idolatry. Ramban disagrees vehemently with the interpretation of Ramban. He explains that the purpose of sacrifices is to coalesce and activate the various spiritual influences in order to bring about a positive spiritual result, such as atonement, etc.

Reb Meir Simcha of Dvinsk explains that Ramban misunderstood Ramban's explanation in the Guide to the Perplexed. In truth, Ramban fully concurs with Ramban regarding the sacrifices that were brought in the Mishkan/Temple. Ramban is addressing a time during which the Torah permitted an individual to bring private offerings on his own altar. The basis for this was so that the Jew should be able to address his need to be subservient to G'd through his private offering, wherever he desired to do so. Had this expression of subservience not been permitted the Jew may have succumbed to idolatry.

We find that since man possesses a positive and negative inclination, the Torah very often provides one with an outlet to be able to express his negative inclination

in a positive context. For example, one could express his love as a desire to be close to G'd or it could be expressed in a context that is antithetical to holiness. The Gemara at the end of Tractate Shabbos tells us that if one is born under the "red star" he will have an innate inclination to shed blood. In order to express this inclination in a positive manner, the Gemara tells us that this individual should become a *mohel* (one who performs circumcisions), a ritual slaughterer (*shochet*), or a blood-letter. The Torah addresses every aspect of one's life and prescribes how one should fully invest every aspect of his being. For example, the Torah legislates that one should don tefillin upon his arm. Thus, his arm was utilized to perform a mitzvah. Since one was gifted with the ability to see, his eyes are meant to read and study the Torah and see G'd's Hand in existence. One is endowed with the ability to speak, which should be utilized to articulate words of Torah. If one chooses to sanctify every aspect of his physicality, his natural inclination to sin would be kept at bay. However, if one should choose to allow his inclination to dictate his actions, he will misappropriate his faculties that were endowed to him. By using the faculty of speech for destructive expression (*lashon harah*) one putrefies the mouth that was intended for holiness.

We say in the Shema, "You should love G'd with all of your heart, all your soul, and all of your resources." Chazal explain that "all of your resources" also refers to both the good and evil inclination. One should even utilize his negative inclination to serve G'd by channeling it in a positive manner. An example of this is the negative characteristic of deprecation. The Gemara in Tractate Megillah tells us that all deprecation is forbidden except for the deprecation of idolatry. Deprecation of idolatry is an expression of one's belief in G'd.

3. Moshe's Contribution to the Mishkan

The Midrash cites a verse in Proverbs, " 'There is much gold and there is an abundance of diamonds, but the most precious vessel is the lips that speak wisdom.' If one possesses much gold, silver, and precious gems, although he may possess all the wealth in the world, if he has no common sense and wisdom, then what is it worth? There is an idiom, 'If one has wisdom, what are you lacking? But if one does not have wisdom, what do you truly have?' To whom is the verse 'There is much gold ...' referring? It is referring to the fact that the Jewish people donated much gold to the building of the Mishkan. To whom is '...an abundance of diamonds...' referring? It is referring to the gifts of the Princes who had donated the *shoham* stones. To whom is 'the most precious vessel is the lips that speak wisdom' referring? It is Moshe.

The Midrash continues, "G'd came to Moshe and saw that he was melancholy because the entire Jewish people had participated in the building of the Mishkan, but he did not contribute. G'd responded, "I swear on your life! Your words to Me are more precious than what they have contributed.' As we see despite the fact that Moshe did not participate in the building of the Mishkan, the verse states, **'He (G'd) called to Moshe.'** In the portion of Pekudei the Torah continuously states, **'G'd commanded Moshe...'** regarding every aspect of the Mishkan. This is analogous to a king who asked his subject to build for him a palace. The subject selflessly built the palace and inscribed the name of the king on every part of it...When the king entered into the palace that his subject had built for him, he saw that every aspect of the palace had his name inscribed on it. The king said to the servant, 'All of this honor that has been bestowed upon me is due to my subject. Should I be on the inside and he remain on the outside?' The king immediately summoned his subject to enter because he understood the special love and dedication that he had for the king. Identically, G'd had commanded Moshe to build the Mishkan for Him." Everything that Moshe had done was solely for the glory of G'd.

The Torah tells us that Moshe was personally involved in locating and removing the remains of Yosef from Egypt at the time of the exodus. King Solomon writes, "A wise heart takes mitzvos." The Gemara in Tractate Sotah explains that this verse is referring to Moshe because he chose to locate the remains of Yosef while the Jewish people were preoccupied with borrowing the silver and gold vessels from the Egyptians. Although it was also a mitzvah for them to borrow the personal effects of the Egyptians, as G'd had commanded them, Moshe chose to seek out Yosef's remains because he understood that without them there would be no exodus. He chose this task to bring G'd's Word to fruition. It was his wise heart that gave him clarity to do so.

Everything that Moshe did was only for the sake of G'd. He wanted to allow every Jew to have the opportunity to participate in the mitzvah of the building of the Mishkan. Factually, the Jewish people had completed it on their own without his participation. Nevertheless, he felt denied because he did not contribute to the location of G'd's Presence. He did not participate in something that contributed to G'd's glory. Therefore, G'd explained to Moshe that He was not excluded. Moshe's imprint was on every aspect of the Mishkan. Everything that he had done was for the sake of G'd. It therefore states, **"He (G'd) called to Moshe..."**

Although one may perform mitzvos and study Torah, one needs to understand the true motivation for

doing so. If one engages in Torah study for its intellectual value, despite the fact that he is fulfilling the mitzvah of studying Torah, his participation is considered deficient. The more selflessly one performs a mitzvah the greater is its spiritual worth. This will in turn bring about greater glory to G'd.

4. Transcending Human Limitation

The Torah states, **"When a man among you (mikem) brings an offering..."** Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains this verse on an allusionary level, "G'd called out to Moshe in the presence of the Jewish people and brought him close. He was called to enter into the Tent of the Meeting, which demonstrated that he had merited an intimate relationship with G'd. The only reason that Moshe had merited this exceptional level of closeness to the Omnipotent One was because of the Jewish people (*mikem*). It was not due to his own merit. It was only through the Jewish people that he had attained such an exalted level. The only reason G'd had openly communicated with Moshe on a continuous basis was because of the worthiness of the Jewish people. From where do we see this? During the thirty-eight years that followed the sin of the spies, because the Jewish people were in a semi-excommunicated state, G'd's communication with Moshe was at a diminished level. If Moshe had not personally failed, then why was his communication with the Divine Presence no longer on a continual basis? It was because G'd's relationship with the Jewish people had been diminished due to their sin, that Moshe was denied the special level of relationship that he once had. It is thus important for the Jewish people to know that Moshe's exalted level was only due to their merit." Why was this necessary for the Jewish people to know?

The rabble who had been taken out of Egypt by Moshe had instigated the sin of the golden calf. They had said to the Jewish people, **"The man Moshe is no longer among us..."** They believed that it was Moshe's own dimension of spiritual greatness that allowed enabled them to leave Egypt. He was the one responsible for bringing about all the revealed miracles that had taken place until that moment. Therefore, since he had not returned at the designated time that he had said, the Jewish people no longer had any hope of survival without Moshe. The rabble thus convinced the Jewish people to contribute to the golden calf in order to have an intermediary upon which to rely.

Moshe was only effective and qualified as the Redeemer because the Jewish people needed to be taken

out of Egypt through revealed miracles. Moshe was thus given special ability to bring that about. G'd endows individuals with special abilities in order to fulfill their destiny vis-à-vis themselves and the Jewish people. However, if one chooses to live his life only for self-interest he will remain limited and confined because special abilities have no relevance to his life.

Chazal tell us, "If one brings merit to the Jewish people, he merits special Divine Protection that he will protect him from sin." Why is this so? An individual in his own right does not deserve such a level of protection. However, if one chooses to live for the Jewish people as G'd wants him to do so, then he will be granted Divine Protection from sin, thus going beyond his human limitation.

5. The Ultimate Offering

The Torah states, "**When a man among you (mikem) brings an offering to Hashem...**" Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains this verse on an allusionary level, "The Torah is commanding those who are the true soldiers of G'd to take the initiative to bring close those who are far from Him. The Jew who is brought back to the way of Torah is called 'an offering to Hashem.' Why is this so? The Jewish people have been chosen to be attached to G'd; however, as a consequence of sin, one is removed from his Father in Heaven. As the verse states, '**You are attached to G'd...**' Since the Jewish people are considered to be His Children, He desires that they be brought close. Thus, anyone who is capable of doing so, is obligated to inform and direct the Jew who has strayed to bring him close to G'd. If one has the ability to do so and does not, he is deserving of punishment." If one sees his fellow drowning, he is obligated to do everything that he can in order to rescue him. If he does not, he is held culpable for his death. Similarly, every Jew is responsible for the spiritual wellbeing of his fellow. If as a result of one's passivity, his fellow is not brought close, then he is held accountable.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh continues, "Those who are the most accomplished in Torah have the greatest degree of obligation to bring close those who have strayed from G'd. The one who brings merit to those who have distanced themselves from G'd will receive reward. As it states in Chazal, 'If one brings merit to the Jewish people, he merits special Divine Protection that he will not sin.' G'd will protect him from inadvertent sin...When one brings back that he who has strayed from his roots, it is the ultimate offering to G'd. He does not need to bring other

offerings. He does not need to bring a sin offering or a guilt offering..."

The verse in Prophets states, "We will pay the oxen with our lips." The Gemara in Tractate Menachos explains that since we no longer have the Temple in which to bring offerings, when one articulates the portion of the offerings in the Torah, it is valued as if he had brought those particular offerings. If one takes the opportunity to bring a Jew back to his spiritual roots, then it will be valued by G'd as if he had brought the ultimate offering. This is greater than even the offerings that were brought in the Temple because it is considered as if one had saved the life of his fellow in the physical and spiritual sense.

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 Makkos
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 Basra
2:00pm	Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

11:30 – 12:30pm	Talmud: Megilah Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 th FL.) Enter on 54 th Street
1:00-2:00 pm	Ramchal: Derech Hashem Location: Cedarview Capital 1Penn Plaza (45 th FL.)

Tuesday

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

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