

Yad Avraham Institute
Weekly Torah Commentaries Series
The Portion of
Vayakhel

February 28, 2008

Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita

<i>Inside This Week's Edition</i>	<u>Page</u>
<i>1. Actualizing G'd</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>2. Actualizing One's Potential</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>3. The Perspective that is Needed to Succeed in the Pursuit of Torah</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>4. The Jews' Perception of Moshe</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>5. Torah, the Purifying Factor for the Jew</i>	<i>6</i>

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
February 28, 2008

B"H

Vayakhel

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita
Dean

1. Actualizing G'd

The Torah states, **“Moses assembled the entire assembly of the Children of Israel and said to them, ‘These are the things that Hashem commanded to do.’”**

The Midrash states, “G'd said to Moshe, ‘Gather large assemblies of Jews and lecture before them in a public setting the laws of Shabbos so that future generations may learn from your behavior –to gather large assemblies of Jews each Shabbos in the study halls to learn. They will learn the laws of what is “forbidden” and what is “permitted”. You shall do this so that My Great Name shall be praised/extolled among My children.” The purpose of assembling and lecturing to large assemblies of Jews is not for the sake of the study of Torah, but rather to ultimately bring glory to G'd's Name through His children's praises.

The Prophet Yeshaya states, “I (G'd) created it (this existence) for My glory.” The only objective of creation is to glorify G'd. All that exists was created for that purpose. In order for one to have the capacity and clarity to internalize the value of G'd, one must study Torah through which he will understand what is forbidden and what is permitted to him. By living a life that is in conformance with G'd's Will, within His parameters, it will give the individual the ability to sense G'd's Presence and value. This realization will cause one to revere and glorify Him.

The first portion of the Shema states, **“You shall love Hashem, your G'd with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your resources...speak of them (words of Torah) while you sit in your home, while you walk on the way...”** One must love G'd to the degree that he is willing to forgo all of his possessions and even his life. Chazal explain that the only way one can come to this level of selfless love is to engage in and articulate the words of the Torah in all settings and predicaments. The ongoing articulation of the words of the Torah will touch

the spirituality of the Jew in a way that will give him a sense of G'd's omnipotence. Thus, it will evoke an overwhelming level of love that will allow him to act selflessly on His behalf.

The Midrash states, "The face and the structure of the head were created by G'd in a specific manner. There are many streams of fluids that flow through the head of a human being. The fluid of the eye contains salt.... The fluid that is located in the ear is fatty.... The fluid of the nose is putrid... The fluid that is in the mouth is sweet. Why is the fluid in the mouth sweet? There are times when one may eat something that does not agree with him and cause him to regurgitate. The sweetness of the mouth is to minimize its negative effect. In addition, one uses his mouth to study and read the Torah. As it states in Psalms, 'The Torah is sweeter than honey...' Since the Torah is sweet it must be associated with something that will not detract from its sweetness. Thus the saliva in the mouth is sweet."

Chazal tell us that the fluid in the mouth is sweet because the mouth's primary function is to engage in the articulation of the words of the Torah that are sweet. Although the taste buds in the mouth were created to experience physical sensation, the sense of taste in the mouth also has relevance to spirituality. This is indicated through the saliva that is found in the mouth, which is different from all the other fluids in the body. The Gemara in Tractate Eruvin cites a verse, "It brings life to those who come upon it..." The Gemara tells us that it should not be understood as "those who come upon it" rather it should be understood as "those who enunciate its word." The greatest impact and effect of Torah upon one's spirituality is when it is articulated through the mouth. The sweetness of the fluid found in the mouth is a confirmation of this verse.

The Gemara in Tractate Eruvin tells us that Bruria, the wife of Rebbe Meir, was passing a student who was studying silently without verbalizing what he was learning. She rebuked him and said that his manner of study was

incorrect because the verse states, "Life comes to the one who comes upon them" which is meant to be understood as, "life comes to the one who articulates its words with one's mouth." Why is meditating in Torah not sufficient, since in fact one is reflecting upon G'd's Word? It is only through the enunciation of the words of the Torah and engaging in dialogue that one can truly experience its true spiritual value and not merely as abstract intellectualism.

The Gemara in Tractate Kiddushin cites a verse from Psalms, "King David writes '...When they (the students of Torah) speak with enemies at the gate' What is implied by the words 'enemies at the gate'?" Reb Chiya bar Abba says: It refers even to a father and his son, or a teacher and his student who are studying Torah together. At first they become enemies of one another (through the process of debate, neither scholar is willing to accept the position of the other and vehemently tries to disprove it.) However, ultimately they become intimate friends through coming upon the truth of Torah." When one engages in the process of elucidating Torah concepts, he is engaged in the quest for truth. Thus, when one enters into Torah dialogue with his fellow, each one believing that his position is more cogent than the other, it will cause a strain between the two of them. This is the equivalent of being enemies. However, after debating the issues and coming upon a common understanding, this creates a good feeling and love between them because through their intellectual participation they came upon Divine truth, which is the Torah.

G'd commanded Moshe to gather large assemblies and teach them the laws of Shabbos. Through the process of engagement in Torah, the masses would gain an appreciation for G'd and thus evoke an intense level of reverence and love.

2. Actualizing One's Potential

The Midrash states, "G'd said to the Jewish people, 'Keep My Mitzvos and My Statutes. Because the reward for performing a mitzvah is a mitzvah and the consequence of a sin is a sin....'" The Mishna in Pirkei Avos (Ethics of our Fathers) states, "Reward for a mitzvah in this world does not exist." This is because the consequence of a mitzvah is infinite/eternal. Something of unlimited value cannot be given within a limited context. If one were to be rewarded for a mitzvah in the physical realm, it would be miniscule compared to what he truly deserves. Therefore, G'd rewards the individual who had performed a mitzvah by presenting him with an

opportunity to perform another mitzvah, which in its innateness has relevance to the infinite.

Conversely, when one transgresses he is presented with another spiritual pitfall that will lead him to transgress further. This is because when one sins, he creates a spiritual deficiency that causes him to be vulnerable to transgression.

The Midrash continues, "Ben Azai explains that this is the concept of *mitzvah goreres mitzvah* and *aveira goreres aveira* (a mitzvah encourages another mitzvah and a transgression encourages another transgression)." Reb Chaim of Volozhin explains, based on the Zohar, that when one performs a mitzvah a pure spiritual energy is created that engulfs the individual. The majority of this energy detaches itself and ascends to the spiritual realm. One's share in the world to come is comprised of all of the positive energies that were created over the course of one's lifetime through mitzvah performance and Torah study. A trace of the positive energy remains with the individual to motivate him to perform another mitzvah.

When one transgresses, a contaminated force/influence is created that engulfs the individual. The majority of this impure force ascends to the spiritual realm. This force is the *geheinom* that one is subjected to after he passes away. All the impurity that was created by transgressing during one's lifetime accumulates to create one's *geheinam*. A remnant of that contaminated force remains with the individual to act as an addictive influence that seduces the individual to transgress. However, if one should repent, the negative force is dispelled and the individual is free of this influence.

The Midrash continues, "Reb Meir says, 'For every mitzvah that one performs, G'd sends an angel to protect him. If one performs one mitzvah, he receives one angel. If he performs many mitzvos, he receives many angels to protect him. As it states in Psalms, 'The angels were commanded to protect you...'" In order for one to be protected from prosecution, one needs to have G'd's Mercy. The Attribute of Mercy is implemented through angels who protect the individual. Therefore if one had performed multiple mitzvos, his level of protection would be great. The Mercy of G'd manifests itself in two guises; firstly, the individual should not be prosecuted for his failings. Secondly, the individual is protected from sin/temptation.

The Midrash continues, "In addition to meriting angels for protection, if one is engaged in many mitzvos he creates for himself a 'good name.' We find that an

individual is identified by three names – the name that his parents gave him, one that he is called by others, and one that he acquires for himself. The greatest of the three is the one that he creates for himself... As it states in Ecclesiastes, 'Better is a good name from the most fragrant oil and better is the day of one's death than the day of one's birth.'...King Solomon explains that when one is born one does not know how the child will develop. (Will he be good or will he be evil) However, when one passes away with a good name... people will come to give their proper last respects to him..."

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos explains that the name that is given to one at the time of one's birth determines his destiny. Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that the naming of a child by its parents is semi-prophetic. G'd reveals the intended name of the child to the parents. Although the name that the child is given determines the potential of that child, it is uncertain whether he will meet his potential. One will only know if he had actualized his potential on the day of his death. The actualization of one's potential manifests itself through multiple proper choices throughout one's lifetime. Thus, the good name that one creates for himself is based on his personal positive initiative. The process that G'd had created for one to achieve this goal, is based on the principle that each mitzvah generates a circumstance that allows one to perform another. This mechanism is crucial and necessary for the Jew to actualize his potential.

3. The Perspective that is Needed to Succeed in the Pursuit of Torah

The Torah tells us that G'd commanded the Jewish people to build the Mishkan and fashion all of its vessels. The Torah outlines the intricate design and specification of all that was needed to create the Mishkan. How could have the Jewish people undertaken such an initiative that required the most advanced and sophisticated level of artisanship? They had been slaves in Egypt for hundreds of years and were only involved in primitive and menial tasks. They were not apprenticed or mentored for any of the skills that were necessary for the building of the Mishkan. The Torah states regarding Bezalel and those who were involved in the building of the Mishkan, **"He (G'd) filled him (Bezalel) with G'dly spirit, with wisdom, insight, and knowledge, and with every craft-to weave designs, to work with gold, silver...He (G'd) filled them (the Jewish people) with a wise heart to do every craft of the carver, weaver of designs, and embroiderer..."**

The Torah continues, **"...and every wise-hearted man within who Hashem had endowed wisdom..."** G'd only those who were wise with additional wisdom. The Midrash states, "G'd gives wisdom only to those who already possess wisdom." Reb Chaim of Volozhin asks, "If one is not born with wisdom and G'd only gives wisdom to those who already possess it, how does one initially acquire wisdom?" King David writes in Psalms, "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of G'd..." Rabbeinu Bachya offers two interpretations of this verse. The first interpretation is that fear of heaven is a prerequisite for being able to acquire wisdom. Another interpretation is that the fear of G'd is the beginning of wisdom itself. Thus, the fear of G'd is the setting for wisdom.

The Midrash states, "A matronly woman asked Reb Yosi Bar Chalafta, 'What is the meaning of the verse (from Daniel): G'd gives wisdom to those who are wise? It should have stated: G'd gives wisdom to those who are fools. Why would G'd need to give wisdom to someone who already possesses it?' Reb Yosi Bar Chalafta asked her, 'If two individuals approached you for a loan – one of them being wealthy and the other needy, to whom would you lend the money?' The matronly woman answered, 'To the wealthy one.' Reb Yosi Ben Chalafta asked, 'Why?' She replied, 'If the wealthy man were to somehow not be able to repay the loan, he would be able to do so at some point because of his wealthy. However, if the needy man were to lose my money, he would have no means to repay the loan.' Reb Yosi Ben Chalafta said, 'Your ears should hear what your mouth is saying. If G'd endowed the fools with wisdom they would sit in unclean locations and bathhouses. They would desecrate the wisdom that G'd had given them. However, if G'd endows the wise person with wisdom, he will sit in the study hall and in the synagogue and engage in Torah dialogue. He would not only preserve the pristine quality of the wisdom that G'd gave him, he would actually develop and advance it by interfacing with the elders..."

The Midrash continues, "If one were to go to a storekeeper to purchase wine, honey, olive oil, or fish brine, if the storekeeper was wise he would first smell the vessel before filling it. If he would smell the fragrance of wine in the vessel, he would fill it with wine. If he would smell the scent of honey, he would fill it with honey...Similarly, if G'd sees that one possesses wisdom, He will fill him with more wisdom. (Because if a vessel contains something other than what is being put into it, it will cause what is being put into it to become putrid)."

Chazal tell us *"Derech erez kadma l'Torah* - one's character traits are a prerequisite for Torah study." If

one has corrupted character traits, then he is not a proper receptacle for Torah. This is similar to the vessel that had contained fish oil and then being used to contain wine. If one with corrupted character traits would be able to acquire Torah, he would desecrate and putrefy it because of his corrupted character. Therefore, G'd does not allow this individual to acquire Torah. The Gemara in Tractate Megillah states, "If one were to say, 'I have toiled and have not come upon it (the truth of Torah).' You should not believe. If one were to claim, 'I have not toiled and have come upon it. You should not believe. If one were to say, 'I have toiled and have come upon it.' You should believe." It is only if one truly applies himself sufficiently and is willing to sacrifice for it, G'd will allow him to come upon the truth of Torah.

The one who toils and sacrifices for Torah has the capacity to do so because he esteems and appreciates its essence. Because the Torah is so precious to him, he is willing to sacrifice for it. However, if one does not toil sufficiently for the sake of Torah, it is an indication that he does not perceive it as the ultimate accomplishment. Therefore G'd will not allow him to acquire it because he would utilize it appropriately.

The Gemara in Tractate Taanis tells us that Reb Yehoshua ben Chananya was one of the greatest Torah sages of his time who was recognized for his exceptional wisdom. He was not physically an attractive person, but rather was extremely ugly. The daughter of the Roman Emperor asked him, "How could such beautiful wisdom be contained in such an ugly vessel?" He replied, "Tell your father's wine steward to take his best wines out of their earthen casks and transfer them into golden and silver vessels." She followed his instructions and in a number of days all the wine soured. When the Emperor had discovered what had taken place, he summoned Reb Yehoshua ben Chananya to explain why he had advised his daughter to do so. He responded to the Emperor, "Your daughter had difficulty understanding how could such exceptional wisdom be contained in such an ugly vessel? My response to her was that the Torah is compared to wine. When wine is contained in a golden vessel, despite the precious nature of gold, it sours because the properties of the metal intermingle with it causing it to sour. Wine is only able to retain its character and quality when it remains in its unadulterated state. This is only possible when it is stored within an earthenware cask. The earthen cask only absorbs but does not transfer any of its own properties into the wine. Similarly the Torah can only retain its integrity and purity when nothing else intermingles with it. If one, because of his ego, chooses to infuse within it his own genius, which is unrelated to what G'd had actually said,

the Word of G'd becomes altered. Thus, if one has no reason to pride himself, he will naturally be more humble. He then qualifies to be a greater receptacle for the Torah."

G'd bestows the gift of Torah only to the one who is the proper vessel to contain it. If one has sufficient reverence for G'd and an appreciation for the true value of Torah, then he will be endowed with the gift of Torah. If however, the individual is interested in the Torah only for its intellectual value, then he will not be allowed to acquire it.

4. The Jews' Perception of Moshe

The Midrash cites a verse from Proverbs, "You will find favor and good understanding in the eyes of G'd and man." To what is this referring? When G'd communicated the building of the Mishkan to Moshe he showed him how every vessel was to be developed...Moshe believed that since he was being instructed that he would be the one to oversee its building. As it states, You (Moshe) shall make the curtains...' 'You shall make the altar...' After everything was set in place in a specific order Moshe asked G'd, 'Who will oversee all of this?' G'd responded, 'See, I have proclaimed by name, Bezalel...' Moshe then communicated all that was told to him to the Jewish people...They asked, 'Who will oversee all of this?' Moshe responded, 'Bezalel will be the one.' The Jewish people began murmuring saying, 'G'd did not instruct Moshe to appoint Bezalel to oversee the building of the Mishkan, rather it was Moshe himself who decided to appoint him because he is a relative. Moshe is the king, his brother Aaron is the High Priest..etc. Moshe will dominate all of the building of the Mishkan. He is seeking for himself all of the glory by appointing only members of his family.' Moshe responded to them, 'There is nothing that I do that is my own initiative/decision, rather G'd Himself instructed me...' Moshe showed them clearly who Bezalel is. The Jewish people accepted Bezalel as the one to oversee the Mishkan. This is the meaning of 'You will find favor and good understanding in the eyes of G'd and man.'..."

The Jewish people saw clearly that Bezalel was truly chosen by G'd because he was infused with His spirit. They understood he possessed a Divine endowment that qualified him for this task. Chazal tell us that at the age of thirteen, Bezalel (whose name means "in the shadow of G'd" (*B'tzeil Kail*) understood the inner workings of existence. He understood how to conjugate the letter of the Hebrew alphabet to create energies that were similar to those that brought about creation.

After the Jewish people engaged in the sin of the Golden Calf, G'd wanted to destroy them. It was only because of the intense supplications of Moshe that they were spared. Moshe had said to G'd, **"If You destroy the Jewish people (as a result of their sin), You should erase me from Your Book."** Moshe was given a second set of Tablets on behalf of the Jewish people confirming that they were forgiven. G'd said to the Jewish people, **"Build for Me a Sanctuary so that I shall dwell in your midst."** Because of Moshe's efforts on their behalf, the Jewish people they were spared from destruction and were reinstated to have a relationship with G'd. Thus, they were instructed to build a Mishkan to be the medium for G'd to dwell in their midst. Despite Moshe's selfless dedication on behalf of the Jewish people(taking them out of Egypt, splitting the Sea, and receiving the Torah...);nevertheless, they suspected him of nepotism. His interest was only to glorify his own family. How could they have perceived Moshe in this critical light?

Although the mutiny of Korach had not yet taken place, the seeds of suspicion against Moshe were prevalent among all Jews. They had believed that within his leadership, Moshe had a degree of self-interest. Moshe was able to confirm that Bezalel was truly the qualified person who was chosen by G'd. The basis for the Jewish people being satisfied with Bezalel was not based upon their unwavering belief and faith in Moshe, as G'd's prophet. But rather, it was something that they had understood. Moshe's credibility had been breached by the people. This failing had far-reaching ramifications which resulted in the attempt of Korach to usurp the authority of Moshe- questioning the authenticity and validity of G'd's Word, the Torah.

If one questions the position of Torah sages and is only satisfied with their perspective after comprehending their view, it is considered a serious failing. It is a confirmation that the individual does not esteem the Torah sage as the ultimate authority, within the context of leadership. However, if one only questions for the sake of understanding the position of the Torah sage, not as a basis for rejecting it, it is not seen as a failing. At Sinai, the Jewish people embraced G'd's Word unequivocally with the declaration "Naaseh v'nishma – we will do and we will listen." In contrast, the nations of the world had asked G'd "What is written in it?" The question of "what is written in it?" clearly identifies their position- that even if the nations of the world were to accept the Torah it would be on their terms and not G'd's. What had taken place at Sinai is an indication that every Jew has the ability to esteem G'd at a level that is unique to the Jewish people.

5. Torah, the Purifying Factor for the Jew

The Torah states, **"Bezalel made the Ark of acacia wood (atzei sheetim)..."** The Midrash explains, "The reason the wood used for the Ark was 'atzei sheetim (acacia wood) is because it was revealed before G'd that the Jewish people would sin in the location of Sheetim..." In Sheetim, the Jewish males sinned with the Baal Peor and had forbidden sexual relations with the Midianite women.

The Midrash continues, "Therefore G'd gave the commandment that the Ark should be made of sheetim wood so that they could be atoned for that sin that will occur in Sheetim. The verse states, 'He cast it (the Ark) with pure gold...' This is symbolic of students of Torah who are pure. Just as the casting of gold onto wood enhances the wood, so too the more the students study the Torah they become enhanced and glorified. If they engage sufficiently in Torah study, it will enter into their hearts causing purity of the heart and kidneys. They will be referred to as 'pure gold.'"

The Ark was the repository for the Tablets and the Torah. The Torah by specifying that the Ark must be made of "sheetim wood" is alluding to the fact that through the Ark, one can be atoned from the most severe level of sin (idolatry and promiscuity - as mentioned regarding the incident of Baal Peor). Secondly, the reason the wood of the Ark was cast in pure gold, is to teach us that the study of Torah purifies the hearts (and kidneys which symbolize wisdom) of those who study it. Just as the gold enhanced the wood, so too does the study of Torah enhance and purify the person who studies it.

One can only appreciate and value something that he possesses if he truly understands its intrinsic value. The more a Torah scholar engages in Torah study he gains a greater capacity to appreciate its value. The purification process of Torah study causes one to gain a keener grasp and appreciation for the Torah itself.

Before World War II, an assembly of great rabbis and Torah sages convened in Warsaw. At this assembly, Reb Shimon Shkop z'tl, the Rosh HaYeshivah of Grodna Lithuania, had made a suggestion regarding certain issue which was summarily dismissed by many of the rabbis. Reb Baruch Ber Leibowitz z'tl, the Kaminetzer Rosh HaYeshivah (main disciple of Reb Chaim Brisker z'tl), had said, "Reb Shimon Shkop values Torah to such a degree that if he encounters a difficulty in one of the commentaries he becomes physically ill until he is able to

understand it. How could a person of this level of dedication to Torah be dismissed so quickly?" Meaning because Reb Shimon Shkop's dedication and immersion was at such a level, he merited a unique clarity that should be considered.

Chazal are telling us that those who dedicate themselves to Torah study are purified and enhanced through it, because it offers them clarity and wisdom. As they advance in Torah knowledge, they gain a new understanding of how precious it is - consequently it motivates them to dedicate themselves, even to a greater degree, to Torah study. This is why King David writes in Psalms based on his own perspective of Torah, "The words of Torah have greater value than thousands of pieces of gold and silver."

On the Shabbos and the Yom Tov we pray to G'd in the Amidah (silent prayer) that He should purify our hearts to serve Him with Truth. The only path to truth is through the purity of heart. Purity of heart can only be achieved through intensive Torah study because its essence is Truth. As King Solomon writes in Proverbs, "Acquire Truth, do not sell it." We pray that the Torah we study should purify our hearts and minds to be able to appreciate the truthfulness of G'd.

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 - Derech Hashem
6:45 -7:25 am	Talmud-Tractate Chulin
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna - Rabbi Rovner
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi
2:00pm	Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

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

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 Tehilim with Malbim

Location: Yad Avraham

12:30 - 1:30 pm Talmud: Megilah Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)