

Yad Avraham Institute
Weekly Torah Commentaries Series
The Portion of
Vayakhel-Pekudei

March 18, 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, Hashkafa, 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 18, 2009

B"H

Vayakhel-Pekudei

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Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita

Dean

1. Sensing G'd Through the Study of the Torah

The Torah states, **"Moshe 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 you –to gather large assemblies of Jews each Shabbos in the study halls to learn what is "forbidden" and what is "permitted". You shall do this so that My Great Name shall be 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. One would think that gathering large assemblies of people in the synagogue to pray and sing His praises would be considered extolling His Name. As Ramban explains in his commentary in the Portion of Bo, that a synagogue is a location of assembly in which the Jewish people gather to acknowledge G'd and sing His praises. However, the Midrash is teaching us that the true praise of G'd can only come about through the study of His laws, understanding what is "forbidden" and what is "permitted." Why is this so?

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..."** One must demonstrate his love for G'd to the point that he is willing to forgo his life and all that he owns for the sake of G'd. Sifri explains that the only way one can come to this level of love is to engage in and articulate the words of the Torah in all settings and predicaments. As it states, **"Let these matters that I command you today be upon your heart. Teach them thoroughly to your children..."** The ongoing articulation of the words of the Torah will touch the spirituality of the Jew that will give him a sense of G'd's omnipotence. The process will evoke an intense

level of love that will allow him to express his devotion to G'd in all settings.

G'd communicated to Moshe that through large gatherings of Jews for the sole purpose of engaging in Torah study, and understanding the intricacies of the laws that pertain to what is forbidden and permitted, will give them an appreciation and reverence for G'd which will cause them to extol His Great Name. Being touched in this context gives one an ongoing sense of G'd. Singing G'd's praises alone, such as within the context of the synagogue, is an expression that emanates from something that is more abstract rather than something that is concrete and tangible, which is the case regarding the study of Torah. True reverence and love only emanate when one has a sense of G'd's Presence.

Every day we say in our closing prayers of the morning (*uva l'tzion*), "May He open our hearts with His Torah and place in our hearts His love and fear..." One can only overcome spiritual impediments with Divine Assistance. The only way one can truly love and fear G'd is through the medium of the Torah. This is the reason the love of G'd is predicated on the study of Torah. We therefore ask G'd to open our hearts with His Torah so that we can love Him.

2. The Jewish Perspective of the Performance of Mitzvos

The Torah tells in the Portion of Vayakhel that Bezalel son of Uri, son of Chur was appointed to be the one to oversee the building of the Mishkan. The Midrash tells us that when Moshe was in heaven receiving the second set of Tablets he was instructed and taught by G'd all the aspects relating to the building of the Mishkan. G'd informed Moshe that he would not be the one to oversee its building, but rather it would be Bezalel. Moshe had initially believed that he would be the one to be responsible for its building because he was the most

qualified to infuse the necessary intent into all of its components. Nevertheless, G'd informed Moshe that Bezalel would be the one.

The Midrash continues to tell us that when Moshe returned to the Jewish people and told them that they were to commence building the Mishkan, they had asked him, "Who will be the one to oversee its building?" He responded, "Bezalel, son of Uri, son of Chur." They were taken aback because Bezalel was the nephew of Moshe. The Jewish people said, "Moshe, you are the king over the people. Your brother Aaron has been chosen to be the High Priest. His sons are the priests and his assistants. Your family carries the most important vessels of the Mishkan. Now you appoint Bezalel, who is the grandson of your sister Miriam to be the one to oversee the building of the Mishkan. It seems that you are taking all of the positions of honor for yourself. (Moshe was accused of nepotism)." Moshe responded, "This is what G'd has commanded me." Meaning, Moshe was not the one who chose Bezalel to be the overseer, but rather it was G'd Himself Who had chosen him. Upon hearing this, the Jewish people were satisfied and no longer had a question regarding Bezalel's appointment. Why were they placated so easily when initially they had suspected Moshe of nepotism?

The Torah tells us that the process of the purification of the Red Heifer is the ultimate statute. It is something that is a contradiction within itself. The sprinkling of the ashes of the Red Heifer purifies the one who is contaminated and contaminates the one who is pure. It is something of an enigma. King Solomon, who was the wisest man to ever live said that this particular law of the Red Heifer was "far from my grasp." He understood all the Statues of the Torah with the exception of the Red Heifer.

The Torah states regarding this mitzvah, **"This is the Statute (Chukas) of the Torah, which Hashem has commanded, saying: Speak to the Children of Israel, and they shall take to you a completely red cow..."** Rashi cites Chazal who explain that the nations of the world and satan will come to ridicule the Jewish people for following a law that is a self-contradictory edict. A Statute (Chok) is a law that cannot be comprehended on a rational basis. Examples of this category of law is the Red Heifer and dietary laws, etc. On the other hand, an Ordinance (Mishpat) is a law which one can understand on a rational basis, thus appreciating its necessity and importance. Examples of this are the laws forbidding stealing and murder. G'd said to the Jewish people regarding the Red Heifer, "This is the Statute of the Torah. You are not

permitted to reflect upon it in order to try to understand it. It is beyond the human capacity to comprehend its wisdom." As a result of G'd identifying the Red Heifer as the ultimate "Statute" the Jewish people accepted it without question. They were no longer susceptible to the ridicule of the nations of the world or satan because they understood that it is a commandment that must be followed solely because it is the Will of G'd. It is within their capacity to understand it.

When one believes that he is capable of understanding something and coming upon a certain truth, he will delve and analyze it, attempting to fathom its meaning. However, when the Jewish people understood that the law of the Red Heifer is beyond the human intellect, they did not question its veracity. They understood that it can only be comprehended by the Divine Mind. This approach and perspective is the essence of the Jew's understanding of Torah concepts. The human mind is limited; however, the wisdom of the Torah is unlimited because it is G'd's Wisdom. When Moshe told the Jewish people that it was G'd's dictate that Bezalel be the one to oversee the building of the Mishkan, they were satisfied. They had initially believed that the appointment was Moshe's, thus allowing them to pose the question. However, once they were informed that it was G'd's choice, which emanates from His Divinity, there is no basis for question. At Sinai, the Jewish people were given thirteen methodologies through which the Written Law can be deciphered and understood. One is able to cull the Oral interpretation through these methodologies. G'd has made it clear what is within the capacity of the human intellect and what is beyond its limitation.

We find that whenever the Torah mentions Statues and Ordinances the Statute is always mentioned first. One would think that G'd would present the more rational and logical laws before presenting the esoteric and unfathomable dictates. Nevertheless, Statues precede Ordinances in order to communicate that in essence, all laws, including the Ordinances are in fact Statues. The Ordinances are laws that one is able to relate to their value, although it is not the basis for G'd's dictate. G'd never revealed the innate value of the Ordinances regarding the spirituality of the Jew. Just as one observes dietary laws, which cannot be understood within a rational context, identically when one observes Ordinances such as giving charity, the basis for its value cannot be come upon. The basis for one observing the Ordinances is purely to do the Will of G'd and not for the sake of one's benefit. Thus, the Jew refrains from stealing not because the action is inappropriate because it does not adhere to the norms of

societal behavior, but rather because it is the dictate of G'd as stated in the Torah.

3. The Profound Outgrowth of the Fear of G'd

The Torah states, **“Moshe said to the Children of Israel, ‘See Hashem has proclaimed by name, Bezalel son of Uri, son of Chur, of the tribe of Yehudah. He filled him with G'dly spirit, with wisdom, insight, and knowledge, and with every craft...’** Why did Bezalel merit such a profound level of wisdom? The Midrash explains, “All of the praiseworthiness and capability that came upon Bezalel emanated from the tribe of Yehudah. As the verse states in Eyov, ‘... behold fear of G'd, that is wisdom...’ And it also states in the Torah regarding the Jewish midwives in Egypt, **‘But the midwives feared G'd and they did not do as the king of Egypt spoke to them...’** Pharaoh had commanded the Jewish midwives, Yocheved and Miriam, to kill the Jewish male children during the birthing process. They defied his order because ‘They feared G'd.’ As a reward Yocheved and Miriam merited that **‘Hashem made for them houses.’** Yocheved received the houses of Priesthood and Kingship. This reward was realized through Moshe, who was the king of the Jewish people and Aaron, who was the Priest. And what did Miriam receive? Miriam's reward was wisdom. As it states, ‘Fear of G'd is wisdom.’ Thus, Bezalel, a descendent of Miriam, was endowed with the most advanced level of wisdom because Miriam feared G'd.”

The Midrash continues, “Not only did Bezalel, the descendant of Miriam merit wisdom, but also all of her children. The entire Jewish people were endowed with wisdom to build the Mishkan.” Although the descendant of Miriam, who was endowed with special wisdom, was Bezalel and not any of her other descendants; nevertheless, the Midrash states that there were other children who were endowed. Who were they? Seemingly, the Midrash is referring to the entire Jewish people who were the beneficiaries of Miriam's fear of G'd, which is wisdom. Because Bezalel was endowed with an advanced level of wisdom, a special conduit was opened to endow the entire Jewish people with wisdom. All of the wisdom that came upon them regarding the building of the Mishkan emanated from Miriam's fear of G'd.

The Torah tells us something similar regarding Sarah, our Matriarch. She gave birth to Yitzchak at the age of 90 years. Prior to that moment, a woman who was not fertile was not able to conceive, especially at such an advanced age as Sarah. However, after G'd performed a

miracle to allow her to conceive and give birth, a conduit was opened to all existence that made it possible for women who were not able to conceive to be able to do so.

We can cull from this something profound. If one, through his own initiative activates a certain spiritual influence and subsequently others are beneficiaries of that influence, the outgrowth of that will accrue to the one who initially caused them to come about. As we see that not only Bezalel was the beneficiary of Miriam's fear of G'd, but also the entire Jewish people.

King David writes in Psalms, “The beginning of wisdom is the fear of G'd.” Meaning, the prerequisite to wisdom is to fear G'd. Only when one has fear of G'd can one maximize on his knowledge to process it and advance it properly. It is only when one appreciates the source of everything, which is G'd Himself, can he truly be wise.

4. G'd's Debt of Gratitude

The Torah tells us that the copper that was used to make the laver (*kiyor*) came from the copper mirrors that were used by the Jewish women in Egypt. The Torah refers to these mirrors as *“maaros ha'tzovos”* (the mirrors of the legions).

Rashi cites the Midrash which states, “The daughters of Israel had in their possession copper mirrors, which they would look into when they would beautify themselves. Even these mirrors (that were necessary for their beautification) were not withheld from the building of the Mishkan. Moshe was repulsed by them because they are the tools of the Evil Inclination. (The mirrors are used by the woman to entice the man.) G'd said to Moshe, ‘Accept them because they are the most beloved to Me of all.’ Why was this so? It is through the use of these mirrors that the women established many legions of offspring in Egypt. When their husbands would be fatigued from the back-breaking work that was imposed upon them by the Egyptians, the women would go and bring their husbands food and drink, and feed them. Then they would take the copper mirrors and view themselves together with their husband in the mirror, and entice him by saying, ‘I am more attractive than you.’ By this means, they would bring their husbands to desire, and consequently they would cohabit with them and conceive.”

Moshe initially had thought that since the Laver was a fundamental and essential element to qualify the Priest for the holy service, it should not be in any way associated with anything that has relevance to the evil

inclination. He therefore wanted to reject their contribution of the mirrors. G'd explained to him that had it not been for these mirrors, there would not be a Jewish people. The legions of Jews who left Egypt as G'd's people came about as a result of these mirrors. Therefore, it would be appropriate and correct that they be used to qualify the Priest (Kohen) for the service, through the ritualization of his hands and feet.

Rashi concludes that the Laver, was used to contain the water that was taken by the Priest to establish "peace/harmony between husband and wife" in the context of the suspected adulteress. The Torah tells us that if a husband forewarned his wife not to sequester herself with another man and she defied his warning, she is thus established as a suspected adulteress. She is not permitted to her husband until it is verified that she did not commit adultery. The process to establish her innocence or guilt came about through the ritual of the sotah. The writ of the suspected adulteress contained the Name of G'd and was obliterated into the water that was taken from the Laver. The woman was then made to drink this water. Under normal circumstances, it is forbidden to obliterate the Name of G'd; however, in this case G'd says, "Let My Name be obliterated to bring peace between husband and wife." Why did the water that was used for the sotah ritual need to come from the Laver?

Had it not been for the Jewish women of Egypt, their would not have been a Jewish people. The men had despaired and abandoned hope of redemption; however, the women did not. They had faith that G'd would redeem them and take them out of Egypt. It was because of that faith, that they believed that there would be a future, they took the initiative to use the mirrors to entice their husbands to procreate. Chazal tell us, "It was in the merit of the righteous women that the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt." The Jewish women not only had the belief and faith that they would be redeemed, they actualized it through establishing families to guarantee the future. It was only because of them that the Jewish people continued on and were able to receive the Torah at Sinai. Had it not been for their use of the mirrors, G'd would not be represented in existence because His people would have become extinct. G'd had a debt of gratitude to the women who, through their mirrors made it possible for His Name to be glorified. Thus, the Laver, which was made from those mirrors (of the women) was the only vessel through which the Name of G'd was obliterated to establish the innocence of the suspected adulterous. Because the woman was the one to be responsible for G'd's Name to be glorified and extolled by the Jewish people, G'd said, "I

will allow My name to be obliterated on her behalf to establish her innocence.

5. G'd, the Provider (from the Portion of Ki Sisa)

The Torah states, **"When you take a census of the Children of Israel according to their numbers, every man shall give Hashem an atonement for his soul when counting them, so that there will not be a plague among them when counting them."** The Torah tells us that the only way a census can be taken of the Jewish people is through the counting of the half-silver coin (*Machtzis HaShekel*), which was given by every male from the age of twenty and above to be used for the purchase communal offerings. By counting the coins and not the individuals, the Jewish people would be protected from plague. If a Jew is identified as an individual and is then counted as a result of that singularity, it will cause him to be evaluated based on his individuality. This notice will cause his spiritual record to be scrutinized. This is the basis for prosecution. There is no record that is perfect. In order to counter the potential prosecution upon the Jewish people, each individual contributed a *Machtzis HaShekel*, which was used for the sake of atonement for the purchase of communal offerings.

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that if one supplicates G'd through the recitation of the Amidah (silent prayer) and feels that he is deserving and worthy of G'd's response, this will cause prosecution to come upon him. Since his claim is rooted in his sense of accomplishment, this will cause his spiritual record to be evaluated. Therefore, when one beseeches G'd it should be purely to call upon His Kindness and Mercy. When one prays he should beseech G'd with a feeling of unworthiness.

Ramban cites the verse in Prophets that states that King David had taken a census of the Jewish people that resulted in plague. Yoav his general was opposed to this census because of the potential of a catastrophic outcome. Nevertheless, King David prevailed. Ramban asks, "It is difficult to understand why King David did not heed what is stated in the Torah. It is something that even a child knows." Ramban concludes that in fact Yoav did conduct the census through the medium of Shekalim. However, the plague was a result of an unjustified counting.

Ramban explains that the Torah permits the counting of the Jewish people through the medium of the coin, if it is for the sake of going to war. This is to establish an understanding of the military capability of the

Jewish people. However, regarding the counting of King David, it was to establish the extent of his reign. He wanted to know over how many subjects he ruled.

According to Ramban's explanation, King David's failing was that he had conducted a census that was not necessary. It was motivated for the sake of his own glory to know the extent of his reign. (This pride was justified by King David to be permitted for him to appreciate the good fortune that G'd had bestowed upon him.) King David was mistaken. His good fortune was that he reigned over G'd's Chosen people. The extent of their number is irrelevant. In order to communicate this point clearly, the result of his counting caused plague, which minimized those numbers.

When the Jewish people must be counted - such as to determine the extent of the army in preparation for war, the focus of the counting is not to quantify the essence of the Jew; but rather, it is to know how many people are available to be conscripted into the army. This is based on the principle that one should not rely upon miracles. Rather, one must take the necessary initiative to the best of his ability and the outcome will be determined by G'd. The Jewish people are not quantified by their number, but rather by who they are. They are G'd's Chosen People.

The Gemara in Tractate Pesachim tells us that a quorum of ten Jewish males constitutes a public setting. If one were to sanctify G'd's Name within this context it would be considered a sanctification of G'd's Name in public. This also is true in the negative, to be considered a public desecration of G'd's Name. The number of people has no relevance to the public setting, regarding the non-Jew. If one were to desecrate G'd's Name before an unlimited number of non-Jews it would not be considered a public desecration. The innate value of the Jewish people is not determined or based upon their number. The only value and strength a Jew has is his relationship with G'd as His Nation.

The Torah states in the Portion of Bechukosai, **"If you will follow My Statutes and observe My Commandments and perform them, the rains will come in their time and you will have bounty...You will pursue your enemies; and they will fall before you by the sword. Five of you will pursue a hundred, and a hundred of you will pursue ten thousand..."** The Torah is communicating to us that if the Jewish people value their spiritual worth and this adhere to the dictate of G'd by dedicating their lives to His Will, then the material bounty will be provided and they will vanquish their enemies with no difficulty. However, if the Jew should choose to abandon that perspective and pursue the

material, G'd will teach him that the material has no innate value. The security of the Jew and his welfare is rooted in his relationship with 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 – 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 (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)