

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

March 11, 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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Yad Avraham Institute
New York
March 11, 2010

B"H

Vayakhel-Pekudei

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

Dean

1. The Double Edged Sword

The Torah states after the sin of the golden calf, **“G’d said to Moshe, ‘I have seen this people, and behold! It is a stiff-necked people...Let My anger flare up against them and I shall annihilate them...’** Why was it necessary for G’d to characterize the Jewish people as being “stiff-necked” to Moshe? Although the Jewish people had transgressed in the most serious manner with the golden calf and were thus culpable to be destroyed, why was it necessary for G’d to interject that they are “stiff-necked.”

Sforno explains, “The characteristic of being ‘stiff-necked’ indicates that the Jewish people are the equivalent of having necks made of iron that cannot bend to hear words of righteous direction. Because they possess this characteristic, they do not have the capacity to repent. Since they could not repent, the Jewish people needed to be destroyed.” Factually, the Jewish people did repent. After they realized the seriousness of their transgression, they had remorse for what they had done. If so, how do we reconcile the characteristic of being “stiff-necked” according to the interpretation of Sforno with the ability to repent? In addition, why was it necessary for G’d to ask Moshe to **“allow My anger to flare up...?”** It seems that G’d was asking Moshe for his permission to allow Him to destroy the Jewish people.

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos explains that Moshe had deduced from G’d’s words of “Let Me...” that it was in his hands to intervene with prayer to prevent the Jewish people from being destroyed. Moshe thus immediately began to supplicate G’d to avert the Attribute of Justice from coming upon the Jewish people.

Chazal tell us that Avraham, our Patriarch, is referred to by the Torah as **“Avraham Ha’Ivri** – (literally, from the other side.)” This is to identify Avraham as the individual who assumed a position of belief that was unique and individualized, where only he had come upon truth. The rest of the world was on the other side. Meaning, his position of monotheism was opposed by the

entire world. Because of his conviction and belief, he was motivated to single-handedly confront the world and change the belief of mankind to monotheism. He selflessly dedicated his life to the espousal of monotheism, despite the fact that all of the great thinkers of his time and theologians of his generation were opposed to him. His conviction and inner strength was such, that he was willing to die for his belief rather than accepting falsehood. This was a demonstration of his characteristic of being “stiff-necked,” which was expressed and applied in a positive context.

The Gemara in Tractate Yevamos tells us there are three characteristics that are innate in every Jew: compassion, conscience, and the propensity to perform acts of kindness (*rachmanim, baishanim, gomlei chassadim*). These characteristics are transmitted to the Jewish people by their Patriarch Avraham because they are his spiritual heirs. Similarly, the Jewish people had inherited the characteristic of being “stiff-necked.” Although within the context of Avraham, it was expressed in the most appropriate and positive manner, if it were to be misdirected it could bring about defiance and destruction. For example, although the Jew has the innate characteristic to be charitable, if it expresses itself to support a cause that is antithetical to Torah, then that characteristic is being misapplied. This was the reason that G’d initially wanted to destroy the Jewish people. They engaged in the sin of the golden calf because they believed that it was the right thing to do, despite the fact that it was contrary to the first two commandments that they had heard from G’d.

When G’d informed Moshe that He was going to destroy the Jewish people, Moshe understood that he was being given the opportunity to intercede on their behalf through prayer. Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh cites the Midrash that explains that the term *“atah* (now) allow Me” is an expression of repentance. Meaning, G’d said to Moshe that before he is qualified to pray on their behalf, he needed to repent for his own failing, that he had allowed the

Egyptian rabble to leave Egypt together with the Jewish people.

It is important to note that the rabble had instigated and introduced the notion that the Jewish people needed to turn to a deity in their time of crisis. When Moshe was in heaven receiving the Torah, G'd said to him, **"Go down! Your people have become corrupted."** When G'd had said **"your people,"** He was referring to the rabble who Moshe had taken out of Egypt solely on his own initiative. Since he did not consult with G'd on this matter, they are referred to as **"Your (Moshe's) people."** Although Moshe had justified allowing the rabble to leave Egypt along with the Jewish people, it was not considered a proper decision because it introduced a negative influence within their midst. It was because of this singular decision made by Moshe that an entire chain of events evolved with irreversible consequences. The sin of the golden calf, that was introduced by the rabble, caused the Jewish people to become spiritually tainted and thus deficient until the end of time. Therefore, in order to enable his supplication to be effective, Moshe needed to repent before praying G'd.

In truth, the Jewish people because of the negative application of the characteristic of being "stiff-necked," needed the Attribute of Mercy to be evoked, through Moshe's prayer, in order to give them the ability to appreciate their failing.

2. Taking Sufficient Initiative

The Torah states, **"All of the work of the Tabernacle (Mishkan), the Tent of the Meeting, was completed...They brought the Tabernacle to Moshe, the Tent and all its utensils..."** Rashi cites the Midrash, "Why did the Jewish people bring the Tabernacle to Moshe to erect? It was because of the weight of the beams that they were not able to erect it. Moshe had not participated at all in the building (development) of the Mishkan. G'd, therefore, reserved the erecting of the Mishkan for him so that he should complete its building. It was humanly impossible to erect the Mishkan because of the weight of the beams. Even Moshe initially did not understand how he would be able to lift the beams. He asked G'd 'How is it possible for me to lift the beams? It is beyond my capacity.' G'd responded, 'You take the initiative to lift the beams so that it will appear that you are erecting the Mishkan and then they will erect themselves (through a miracle). This is the reason the verse states, 'the Tabernacle was completed...' indicating that it was completed on its own."

We find that regarding the tablets, Chazal tell us that it was humanly impossible to lift and transport the tablets because of their enormous weight. Nevertheless, Moshe was able to do so. In fact, the tablets transported him. If this is so, then why was Moshe confounded when he was told to complete the Mishkan? What was the basis for his concern if he had already understood that what relates to spirituality is not bound by the natural order?

The Mishkan was intended to be the location for the Divine Presence to dwell in the midst of the Jewish people. Physical existence itself was initially intended to be the location of the Divine Presence. It was only because of the sin of Adam that it became tainted and thus not qualified to be the location for G'd. Every aspect of the Mishkan alludes to and reflects the creation of existence. It was a microcosm of existence. Moshe understood that although the Jewish people were able to build the individual aspects and components of the Mishkan, its erection and completion needed to be done by G'd Himself. Just as He had created the world in six days and entered into it on the seventh (Shabbos), so too would He need to complete the Mishkan to accommodate His Presence. If the beams were humanly impossible to lift, it was an indication that G'd was the One to erect them. G'd said to Moshe, "You take the initiative and the beams will raise themselves."

The world was initially created through the Attribute of Kindness. As the verse states in Psalms, *"Olam chesed Yibaneh – Through kindness the world was created."* In order for man be a beneficiary of that kindness and opportunity, he needs to take initiative, as prescribed by G'd. In order for G'd to enter into the midst of the Jewish people, Moshe needed to take the initiative in order to be worthy of Divine Assistance to bring about the completion of the Mishkan, although it was beyond human capacity. We find, regarding the Menorah, which represents the Oral Law, which is G'd's elucidation of His Written Law, was cast by G'd Himself. Initially Moshe was not able to make the Menorah, which encompassed the spirituality of G'd's Infinite Wisdom. G'd told him to take the gold and put it into the kiln and the Menorah emerged fully formed. Moshe needed to take the initiative in order to activate Divine Assistance. It is only through the Jew's initiative and toiling that he is able to come upon the truth of Torah. As the Gemara in Tractate Megillah states that if a one says that he had toiled in his pursuit of Torah and had come upon it (its truth) he should be believed. However, if one claims that he did not toil and did come upon it, he should not be believed. Because he did not toil, he does not merit Divine Assistance.

The Gemara in Tractate Kiddushin tells us that one is not able to repent unless G'd assists him. However, if one takes the initiative to advance his spirituality, he will merit G'd's Assistance. As the Gemara in Tractate Shabbos states, "One who comes to purify himself will be assisted..."

3. *The Innateness of Every Jew*

The Midrash states, "G'd said to the Jewish people, 'Observe My mitzvos and My statutes...' The reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah and the result of a sin is a sin. Ben Azai says, 'The performance of a mitzvah brings about another mitzvah and one's transgression brings about another transgression.' 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 multiple mitzvos, he receives many angels to protect him. As it states, 'The angels were commanded to protect you...'"

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 (at birth), one that others call him, and one that he acquires for himself. The ultimate name that one carries, is the one that he creates for himself. Where do we find this? Bezalel, because he acquired for himself a 'good name,' merited to be the one to oversee the building of the Mishkan. As it is written in Proverbs, 'A good name is better than silver and gold...'"

Rambam writes in The Fundamentals of Torah that there were three crowns given to the Jewish people: the Crown of Torah, the Crown of Priesthood (*Kahuna*), and the Crown of Kingship (*Malchus*). The Crown of Priesthood was given to Aaron and his progeny. The Crown of Kingship was given to King David and his descendants. The Crown of Torah, which is "lying in there for all to partake of..." was given to the entire Jewish people. Meaning, the Crown of Torah is available and relevant to every Jew who desires it, as it states in the verse, "...**The Torah is the heritage of the Congregation of Yaakov.**"

If a commoner were to wear a crown it will not transform him into a king. If one is not a descendent of Aaron, although he may wear the Priestly vestments, he is not considered to be a Kohen. This is because the Crown of Priesthood and the Crown of Kingship only identify the particular classification of person. One must be the

descendent of Aaron to be a Kohen or the descendent of King David to be a King. Seemingly, the same is true regarding the Crown of Torah. If a crown is only an ornament that identifies the qualification of the person who wears it, then the one who initially is devoid of Torah knowledge and subsequently becomes a repository of Torah knowledge how is the essence of the person changed? Seemingly, he is the same individual who merely possesses Torah knowledge. It is because when one studies Torah with the proper intent and dedicates his life to its studies and values, it causes a transformation and metamorphosis of his essence to the point that he becomes an embodiment of Torah. Thus, this individual truly carries the Crown of Torah.

Chazal are teaching us that every Jew has a potential to bring about a profound transformation of his essence by becoming spiritualized through the study of Torah and its mitzvos. A "good name" that one acquires for himself is referring to the spiritual effect and change that one brings about to himself. Every Jew has a spiritual purpose and objective in existence that can be actualized if the individual meets the criteria that are set forth in the Torah. When one actualizes his potential his essence is elevated and fulfilled, thus he acquires a "good name" for himself. The name is synonymous with his essence. Chofetz Chaim writes that every Jewish soul that was present at Sinai received his portion of Torah. It is incumbent on each individual to actualize his portion of Torah that was endowed to him at Sinai.

The Torah states, "**Moshe said to the Children of Israel, 'See, G'd 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, , and knowledge and with every craft...'**" The verse states, "**G'd proclaimed by name, Bezalel...**" to indicate that Bezalel had made for himself his "good name" through his spiritual initiative and endeavors. Chazal tell us that at the age of thirteen, Bezalel, whose name means "in the shadow of G'd" understood the inner workings of existence. Just as Bezalel was able to acquire a good name for himself, so too does every Jew have the potential to actualize his potential through the study of Torah and performance of its mitzvos.

4. *Beyond One's Capacity*

The Midrash cites a verse from Ecclesiastes, " 'Greater is a good name then the most precious oil and the day of one's death is greater than the day of his birth.' They asked King Solomon, 'What is the meaning of this?'"

He explains, 'When a child is born one does not know his destiny. (How will his life evolve? Will he succeed or fail?) However, when one passes away, if he leaves with a good name, it is as a result of all of the good deeds that he had done in his lifetime. At the time of his passing, his fellows will tend to his burial needs. Many will come to eulogize him and make known his righteousness. They will discuss how much charity he had given, how much Torah he had studied, and how many mitzvos he had performed. His resting place shall be among the righteous. Bezalel merited to oversee the building of the Mishkan because he acquired for himself a good name'

The Midrash continues, "Where do we find that a good name supersedes even the best quality oil? The Torah tells us that G'd said to Avraham, **'I will make you into a great nation and I will make your name great...'**" Chazal tell us that Avraham, our Patriarch, was one of the most humble people who ever lived. Avraham had said, **"I am only dust and ash."** This was his expression of humility to G'd. If this is so, then what is the value of G'd's blessing to make his name great and have renown throughout the world? Avraham was one who fled from honor and glory.

The Torah tells us that the manifestation of making Avraham's name great was so, **"The families of existence will bless themselves through him..."** Rashi cites Chazal who explain, "People will bless their children by saying, 'You should be like Avraham.'" Why is this considered such a blessing for Avraham? If Avraham were seen by mankind as being a model of the most special human being, they would choose to emulate his beliefs and values. Avraham would become the world standard for what is considered to be accomplished. Consequently, he would reap the merit for their spiritual achievements. Thus, his belief and ability would go beyond his own limitation.

When one passes away after achieving his purpose and objective in existence through the performance of mitzvos and study of Torah, his name will become great because of what will be said about him after his death. By making known the spiritual accomplishments of the one who passed away, he becomes the role model to be emulated by others. He will thus receive the merit of all those who will be inspired by his life to emulate his ways. This merit will extend beyond his own existence.

If one wants to be inculcated with the reverence of G'd one should study the stories of the lives of the great torah sages of the Talmud who discussed and codified the Mishna and Talmud (*Tanaaim and Amoraim*). It is the

purpose of every Jew to spiritualize himself through the pursuit of actualizing his own spiritual potential. It is through this pursuit that one will acquire a good name and thus have merit accrue to him even after his passing.

5. The Symbolism of the Ark

The Torah states regarding the Holy Ark, **"It was cast in pure gold within and without..."** The Midrash explains, "To whom is the symbolism of the Ark referring? It is referring to the students (*talidim*) who are imbued with Torah (*benei Torah*). Just as the wood of the Ark is ornamented and esteemed because of the gold that is attached to it, even to a greater degree does the Torah scholar feel esteemed and privileged because of the Torah that he possesses. The gold that was used for the Ark was pure. The purity of this gold indicates that the Torah purifies the heart and kidneys (wisdom) of the Torah scholars..."

The Gemara in Tractate Kiddushin states, "I (G'd) have created the evil inclination and I have created the Torah as its antidote." The Torah purifies the heart of the Torah scholar, which is the source of one's emotion and desire. By engaging in Torah, his physical needs and desires are curbed and redirected to long for spiritual growth and closeness to G'd. In addition, the Torah purifies one's "kidneys" which is the source of wisdom. By purifying one's wisdom, the Torah gives the one who engages in it the capacity to come upon truth.

The Torah states regarding the creation of man, **"And Hashem, G'd formed the man, dust from the ground, and He blew into his nostrils the soul of life; and man became a living being (*nefesh chaya*)."** Targum Unkolus interprets the words "*nefesh chaya*" to mean "he (man) became a speaking species. It is with this unique soul that man attained the intellect to have the ability to comprehend and articulate it through speech." Unlike all other living species, man was endowed with a soul which is manifested by his ability of verbal expression. Since the power of speech emanates from the soul, it should be dedicated to the study of Torah, which is meant to be verbally expressed. The verbalization of Torah will purify the heart and wisdom of the Torah scholar so that he can fathom its truth.

The Torah states regarding the imminent redemption of the Jewish people from Egypt, **"G'd said to Moshe, 'Say to the Children of Israel: 'I am Hashem, and I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt; I shall rescue you from their service; I shall redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I shall be a G'd to you...So Moshe spoke**

accordingly to the Children of Israel, but they did not listen to Moshe because of shortness of wind (*kozteir ruach*) and hard work.” Despite the fact that Moshe had proven to the Jewish people that he was the Redeemer and the agent of G’d, who had the ability to take them out of Egypt they did not have the capacity to internalize what he had presented before them nor were they receptive to Moshe’s words because they were overwhelmed with their bondage. Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that the Jewish people in Egypt, because they did not yet have the Torah to study, were extremely limited and could not internalize the value of redemption. Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh writes, “The Torah broadens the heart,” meaning that Torah gives a person the breadth and depth of understanding as well as the capacity to deal effectively with issues despite their difficulty.

The Gemara in Tractate Kiddushin states, “Great is the study (of Torah). Study brings to actualization.” If one engages in Torah for the purpose of living a life in conformance with its dictates, then one will be purified by its wisdom to be able to see truth in the world.

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)