

***Yad Avraham Institute***  
**Weekly Torah Commentaries Series**

**Portion of Vayakhel-Pikudei**

March 12, 2015

**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 12, 2015**

**B"H**

## Vayakhel-Pikudei

*Presented by*

**Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita**  
**Dean**

### ***1. Yaakov's Choice of Exile***

After the sin of the Golden Calf, G'd said to Moshe, **"And now, desist from Me. Let My anger flare up against them and I shall annihilate them; and I shall make you a great nation."** The Torah states that Moshe began to supplicate G'd on behalf of the Jewish people, saying **"Remember for the sake of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Israel Your servants, to whom You swore Yourself..."** Rashi cites Chazal, "If the Jewish people deserve to be burned (one of the four death penalties) then remember Avraham who gave his life (for Your sake) to be burned in the fiery kiln of Kasdim. If they deserve to be killed by the sword, then remember Yitzchak who extended his neck at the Akeidah in order to allow his father to slaughter him (as an offering for Your sake). If they deserve to be exiled, then remember Yaakov who was exiled to Charan. If the merit of the three Patriarchs is not sufficient to save the Jewish people, how then could You make a great nation from me alone? If a chair that is secure with three legs cannot withstand Your anger, how much more so could a chair with only one leg not be able to withstand Your Wrath." It is interesting to note, when the Torah usually refers to the three Patriarchs they are always referred to as, "Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov" whereas in this context the Torah refers to Yaakov as "Israel."

In addition, the incident of the fiery kiln in which Avraham refused to bow down to the idol, but rather to be thrown into the fire, or that of Yitzchak who had allowed himself to be bound and taken to be slaughtered as a sacrifice for the sake of G'd are two instances in which both Patriarchs made a choice to give their lives for the sake of G'd. Thus, their choice to sacrifice themselves brought about a great merit to the Jewish people. It is thus understandable why Moshe would summon the merit of Avraham and Yitzchak in his supplication to G'd. However, regarding Yaakov's fleeing to exile in Charan, it was due to his personal circumstance that he needed to flee for his life. He had no choice. Yaakov's mother Rivka, though her prophetic vision, shared with him that Esav his

brother had vowed to kill him. He therefore needed to flee to Charan to avoid being killed. Why should Yaakov's fleeing to Charan bring special merit to the Jewish people to save them from the Wrath of G'd?

Before Yaakov fled to Charan, he was told by his father Yitzchak that he should seek out a wife from the daughters of his uncle Lavan. Just as Avraham had given his trusted and dedicated servant Eliezer great wealth to negotiate the hand of the future matriarch on behalf of Yitzchak, so too did Yitzchak give great wealth to Yaakov so that he should negotiate the hand of his future wife from Lavan. Yaakov had spent twenty years in Charan because he needed to work for the hands of Rachel and Leah for fourteen years. He worked an additional six years to acquire wealth. He then spent two years to return to his father's household.

Chazal tell us that Esav sent his son Elifaz to kill Yaakov. The Midrash tells us that when Elifaz came upon Yaakov, he said to him, "If I do not fulfill my father's dictate to kill you, I will be in violation of the obligation to honor my father Yaakov said to him, 'Did you not learn from your grandfather Yitzchak that a poor person is the equivalent of a dead person? Take all of my possessions and you would have fulfilled the command of your father.'" Why did Yaakov not kill Elifaz when it was clear that he sought to kill him? Because Elifaz assumed the status of a pursuer (*rodeif*), Yaakov was permitted to rise and kill him and consequently preserve his wealth. One may say that perhaps Yaakov did not kill Elifaz because he did not have the strength to overpower and kill and thus had no choice but to relinquish his wealth. However, the Torah alludes to the fact that Yaakov had exceptional strength. As it states, **"Yaakov pulled the stone from the mouth of the well."** Rashi explains that although the stone was massive and heavy, Yaakov was able to remove it as one removes a stopper from a bottle. Chazal tell us that from here we learn that Yaakov had great strength. The value of this information that the Torah reveals is to address the question, why did Yaakov not kill Elifaz if in fact he was

able to do so? If he had killed Elifaz, he would have been able to retain his wealth to negotiate the hand of Rachel and not remain in the house of Lavan in exile for twenty years. He would have been able to honor the request of his mother to return “after a number of days.”

Yaakov understood that if he had chosen to kill Elifaz, although it would have been permitted, he would have diminished his spiritual state to some degree. If he were to kill Elifaz, the twelve tribes that he was to father would have assumed a spiritual dimension that would have been compromised. Yaakov was willing to sacrifice his wealth and remain in exile in Charan for twenty years so that the Jewish people should be able to evolve in the most advanced spiritual manner. Yaakov chose to be in exile and suffer at the hand of Lavan for the sake of the eternity of the Jewish people. Since, Yaakov's remaining in exile was due to his choice, Moshe drew upon his merit on behalf of the Jewish people, so that they should not be destroyed. Yaakov is referred to in this context of exile as “Israel.” It is because the appellation of “Israel” only came about when he went back to retrieve the small earthenware vessels that he had forgotten. It was then that he battled with the angel and was not defeated but rather was victorious. The angel named Yaakov “Israel” as he had said, “You gave lorded over G'd (angel) and men (Esav and Lavan)...” Thus, Moshe when he supplicated G'd on behalf of the Jewish people he referred to Yaakov as “Israel,” because he had received that name when he had chosen to go into exile for the sake of the Jewish people.

## ***2. Activating One's Spiritual Senses***

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, “Our Rabbis who are experts in homilies (aggadita) say, ‘There is no portion in the entire Torah that begins with the word ‘Vayakhel’ other than this portion.’ 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 and to rule on the laws that pertain to 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 merely for the sake of the study of Torah, but rather to ultimately bring glory to G'd's Name, that he should to be extolled by His children. What is the relevance between the study of laws that

pertain to what is forbidden and permitted to extolling G'd?

One could say that the gathering of large assemblies of Jews to study the laws of the Torah is in itself a praise of G'd's Name, because it reflects to what degree they value His Word and His Dictate. These large assemblies are a declaration that these individuals are dedicated to live by the dictates of the Torah. Thus, it is a praise of G'd's Name when they gather to study the law in a definitive context. However, this does not seem to be the profound message that the Midrash is coming to teach us. Rather, one must say that the Midrash is telling us that it is only through the study of Torah that one could come to truly appreciate G'd and thus be able to praise and extol Him. It is not sufficient to engage in the Torah on an intellectual level, but rather one must delve into the practical application of the laws of what is “forbidden” and what is “permitted.” It is only after one lives his life in all of its aspects in conformance with the Torah, will he have a sense of G'd. Thus, one will be able to extol Him. The reason for this is because the Jew becomes spiritualized through the study of Torah and by living a life that is in conformance with its dictates.

The human being is endowed with physical senses that allow him to experience, perceive, and appreciate the physical world around him. However, in order for one to have a capacity to appreciate spirituality, one must develop his spiritual senses, which can only come about through the study of Torah and the performance of mitzvos. By performing mitzvos, the Jew becomes sanctified as we say in the blessing that precedes the performance of a mitzvah, “....You have sanctified us through Your mitzvos.” Only after the Jew develops his spiritual senses through the study of Torah, can he extol and praise G'd.

According to Jewish law if a Torah scroll is missing a letter or a letter is added to it, the Torah scroll is invalid and one does not fulfill his obligation through its reading. One would think that this may be because each word must be read correctly and if it is missing a letter the word would be misread. This is not so. There are instances where a word may be written in a deleted form, such as without the letter “vav” and its pronunciation is as if the “vav” was present in the word. However, if one adds a letter “vav” to that deleted form of the word, the Torah scroll is invalidated, although the word will be read correctly as if it were in the deleted form. Ramban in his introduction to the Torah asks why. He explains that the entire Torah from the first letter to the last letter is

comprised of various unpronounceable Names of G'd. However, G'd conjugated the letters of His Name in such a manner that the narrative that is presented in the Torah could be read. It is because the Torah is comprised of G'd's Name that it has a unique and special level of sanctity. Therefore, although the pronunciation of a word in the Torah may remain the same if a letter is added or deleted, the Name of G'd would be altered. Thus, the sanctity of the Torah will be diminished. When a Jew studies Torah, although he is not pronouncing the Name of G'd in its initial form, he is engaging in His Holy Name. Thus, when one studies Torah, he attaches himself to the ultimate in sanctity, which is the Name of G'd. Through this, he will become spiritualized and thus have a sense of His Omnipotence and Unity. He will thus extol Him.

### 3. *Inspiration, the Catalyst for the Unlimited*

The Torah states regarding the bringing of the materials that were needed for the building of the Mishkan, **“Every man (ishe) whose heart inspired him (nisoah leibo) came; and everyone whose spirit motivated him (nadvah rucho) brought the portion of Hashem for the work of the Tent of the Meeting...”** Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh points out that we see that there were two categories of people who provided materials for the building of the Mishkan – those who gave with an “inspired heart”- *nisoah libo* and those who were “motivated by their spirit”- *nadvah rucho*. He explains that when the Torah mentions the one who was inspired by his heart “*nisoah leibo*” it predicates it with the word “*ishe* (man).” The Torah uses the term “*ishe*” to indicate an individual of special status, thus revealing that the one who gave with an “inspired heart” was at a more advanced level than the individual who gave with a motivated spirit “*nadvah rucho*.”

Ohr HaChaim HaKodesh explains that the one who gives due to his motivated spirit (*nadvah rucho*) is one who values the cause and wants to support it to the best of his ability. However, he will not allow his level of support to infringe on his own needs. In contrast, the one who was “inspired,” gives beyond his means without considering his own needs. To the one who is “inspired,” all that matters is the cause that needs to be supported and the objective that needs to be fulfilled. The one who is inspired, because of his level of inspiration does not even have a sense of himself because he is consumed by the objective that needs to be addressed. Although the individual who is *nisoah libo* “*inspired heart*” is at a more advanced level than the one who is only “motivated” by

his spirit; nevertheless, individuals who identify with both categories are considered to be special.

The Torah states regarding the Akeidah, **“Avraham arose in the morning and saddled his donkey...”** Despite the fact that Avraham was one hundred and thirty seven years old at the time of the Akeidah, and a person of renown and great wealth, who had an abundance of servants and slaves, and was proclaimed as the “prince of G'd”, he nevertheless arose early in the morning to saddle his own donkey to carry out the Will of G'd. This behavior was a demonstration of Avraham's all-consuming love for G'd. His only focus at that moment was to perform the Akeidah (binding of Yitzchak). Until the objective was fulfilled, nothing else existed for Avraham. Chazal tells us regarding Avraham saddling his own donkey to do the Will of G'd, “From here we learn the principle that love disrupts all protocol.” At that moment, Avraham did not reflect upon his own age or status to delegate the saddling of his donkey. It was the equivalent of not existing. The only thing that did exist, due to Avraham's focus, was the Word of G'd that needed to be fulfilled. Thus, Avraham is an example of one with an “inspired heart” (*nisoah libo*).

The Gemara in Tractate Chagigah tells us that G'd values the ascent of all the Jews when they visit the Temple Mount during the three festivals of the year. The Gemara cites a verse from Song of Songs which states, “How beautiful are your paces, the daughter of the benefactor (*bas nadvah*).” Who is the “the daughter of the benefactor (*bas nadvah*)?” It is the Jewish people who are the descendants of Avraham who selflessly gave his heart to G'd (*nadvah leibo*). Because of Avraham's selfless love for G'd, there was never anything that was too difficult for him to do the Will of G'd.

Rambam in *Hilchos Talmud Torah* (The Laws of studying Torah) explains the individual and the manner in which one acquires the “Crown of Torah” (*Kesser Torah*). Rambam states, “The Crown of Torah is lying in the corner. It is available to every Jew who wishes to partake of it,” and to “The one who is inspired by his heart to acquire the Crown of Torah...” Rambam cites the Mishnah in Ethics of our Fathers, which outlines how one must live his life to acquire Torah. “This is the way of Torah - bread with salt you shall eat, water in measured amounts you shall drink, on the floor you shall sleep, and a life of deprivation you shall live.” Rambam chooses the term, “the one who is inspired” by his heart regarding the one who has relevance to acquiring the Crown of Torah. It is only the one who is singularly focused due to the

inspiration of his heart who can acquire Torah at this advanced level. This individual, because of his unique level of inspiration, does not focus on his physical needs. His physical amenities are only incidental to bring about his objective. With this understanding, the Mishnah that prescribes the manner in which one must live his life to acquire the Crown of Torah, only has relevance to the one who is “inspired” by his heart. Only this person can minimize and negate himself, thus making everything other than his objective of acquiring Torah irrelevant. The only one who can function in a context without limitations is the one who has an “inspired heart.”

#### ***4. Abundant Blessing an Outgrowth of Faithfulness***

The Torah tells us that Moshe gave an accounting of all the gold, silver, and copper that had gone into the building of the Mishkan. The Torah states, **“These are the reckonings of the Tabernacle...”** The Midrash states, “This is the meaning of the verse in Proverbs, ‘A man who is faithful has great blessings (*ish emunos rav berachos*). Whoever is trustworthy (*ne’eman*), G’d will bestow upon him many blessings. The verse continues, ‘The one who is not trustworthy and aggressively pursues wealth, he will not be vindicated.’ Who is the man who is trustworthy (*ne’eman*)? It is Moshe. In whatever pursuit he oversaw or was involved, his handiwork was blessed. Why was it blessed? Because he was *ne’eman*. (Since Moshe oversaw the building of the Mishkan, it was considered to be his handiwork. Therefore, all blessing emanates from it.) Although Moshe did not need to answer to anyone regarding the building of the Mishkan, he summoned others so that he could demonstrate to them his level of integrity by giving an accounting of all the materials that he had overseen.” King Solomon tells us that if one possesses the characteristic of faithfulness, he is the conduit for blessing. Why does the characteristic of “*ne’eman*” (faithful/trustworthy) bring about great blessing?

The Torah states, **“But you who cling to Hashem, your G’d, you are all alive today (*Vatem HaDevakim Ba’Shem Elokeichem Chayim Kulchem HaYom*).”** Maharal of Prague explains that when one cleaves to G’d, Who is the source of all, he will have life and unlimited blessing. It is because he is connected to the One Who encompasses all and is the source of everything, he will have relevance to blessing. As it states, “In the location in which My Name is called, I will come upon you and bless you...” The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos tells us that the

“signet of G’d is Truth.” Therefore, when one assumes His characteristic of Truth, he will have relevance to cleaving to G’d and consequently will merit unlimited blessing.

We find throughout the Torah, G’d says, **“I am Hashem...”**, Rashi cites the Midrash which explains this to mean, “I am faithful to My Word.” G’d demonstrates His Characteristic of “*ne’eman*” (faithfulness) by meting out what one is deserving – such as reward or punishment. G’d level of integrity and faithfulness as being the True Judge, emanates from the fact that His Signet is Truth. Thus, one who is faithful and assumes the characteristic of G’d will merit unlimited blessing since he is cleaving to the source of all blessing.

The concept of “blessing” is of a spiritual nature. Just as the spiritual realm is unlimited and unquantifiable, so too is blessing unlimited and unquantifiable. On the other hand, the material realm is defined by limitation and quantification. Moshe, regarding the Mishkan demonstrated the characteristic of “*ne’eman*” because he gave a full accounting of everything that he oversaw. He was beyond reproach. It is because of this characteristic that Moshe was the conduit for abundant blessing.

#### ***5. Wisdom to the Wise***

The Torah states regarding the building of the Mishkan, **“G’d said to Moshe, ‘I will fill him with the Spirit of G’d with wisdom...’”** The Midrash states, “G’d filled Bezalel with wisdom because he already possessed wisdom. This is to teach us that G’d gives wisdom only to those who already possess wisdom.” Reb Chaim of Volozhin writes in his work Nefesh HaChaim, “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 heaven...” If one has the fear of heaven, he will have the ability to appreciate and esteem G’d’s Wisdom. He is therefore deserving of that endowment.

The Midrash continues, “A matronly woman asked Reb Yosi Bar Chalafta, ‘What is the meaning of the verse (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 poor, 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 lose the money that I lent him, he would be able to repay me because he is wealthy. However, if the poor 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 Gemara in Tractate Yomah states, "The storage location for one's Torah is one's fear of heaven." As it is stated in the verse, "**The fear of G'd is its storage location.**" If one does not have sufficient fear of G'd, then he will not merit the Divine Assistance that is necessary to retain it. Reb Chaim of Volozhin in his work Nefesh HaChaim explains the Gemara with an allegory. If one wished to give a large amount of wheat as a gift to his son and he did not have a location to store it, the father will withhold the gift because the wheat will be scattered and trampled upon and ultimately be destroyed. However, if the son would have a storage location to protect and store the wheat, the father would gladly give him a large amount of wheat to his son. Similarly, it is the one who fears G'd who will have the ability to esteem and revere the Torah sufficiently and thus preserving its holiness. This individual will be endowed by G'd with the ability to acquire Torah. Regardless of how intelligent one may be if he does not possess a sufficient level of fear of heaven, G'd will not give him the Divine Assistance needed to come upon the truth of Torah.

G'd will not endow the foolish with wisdom because He understands that it will be abused and desecrated. Rambam writes in the Laws of Torah Study, "One can only teach Torah to one who is a proper student. If one teaches Torah to such a student, who does not have the necessary qualities to process the Torah, Chazal tell us it is similar to throwing a stone at Marculos." The Gemara in Tractate Avodah Zorah explains that the pagan ritual of worshipping Marculos entailed placing a horizontal stone upon a vertical stone and then throwing stones at the structure. One would think that by stoning this idol, one is actually disgracing it; however, because it is its method of

worship, it is considered bona fide idol worship. Thus, one would be subject to the death penalty. One may think that regardless of one's innate characteristics or beliefs it would be beneficial to teach this individual Torah; however Chazal teach us differently. It is equated to the worship of Marculos, which indicates that one's intention is unrelated to what is the reality of the situation. Although one may think otherwise, it is a desecration of the holy Torah.

It is only the one who has sufficient fear of heaven will be able to appreciate and thus have the sensitivity in maintaining an processing the Torah. This individual is considered to be a qualified repository for the acquisition and storage of G'd's wisdom.