

*Yad Avraham Institute*  
**Weekly Torah Commentaries Series**  
**Portion of Ki Seitzei**

August 15, 2013

**Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita***

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**About the Yad Avraham Institute**

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Yad Avraham Institute  
New York  
August 15, 2013

B"H

## Ki Seitzei

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

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### 1. The Effect of One's Behavior

The Torah states, **"If a man will have a wayward and rebellious son, who does not hearken to the voice of his father and the voice of his mother..., and they discipline him, but he does not hearken to them, then his father and mother shall grasp him and take him out to the elders of his city and the gate of his place. They shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is wayward and rebellious; he does not hearken to our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' All the men of his city shall pelt him with stones and he shall die."** The Mishna in Tractate Sanhedrin states that this child assumes the status of the "rebellious" son only when he steals from his parents to buy a certain measure of meat and wine to satisfy his desire. In order for the child to be considered to be liable for the death penalty for his behavior must be between the age of thirteen and thirteen and three months. When his parents become aware of his errant behavior, they take him to the Court and he is given lashes. If he should repeat this behavior, and his parents again take him again to the court, he is judged as a "rebellious" son and is put to death by stoning.

The Gemara explains that although this child had only stolen a small amount of money to purchase the meat and wine (although it may be inconsequential) to satisfy his desire, he is put to death because as the Gemara explains "It is better that he should die in an innocent state than in a more liable state." If this behavior should continue to satisfy his addiction, he will consume the assets of his father and ultimately even resort to murder to support his addiction.

The Torah states in the Portion of Shoftim, **"But if there will be a man who hates his fellow, and ambushes him and rises up against him, and strikes him mortally and he dies..."** Rashi cites Chazal, "Because of the initial hate that he had for his fellow, he waited in ambush for him to commit murder. From here, we see that if one

transgresses a less severe mitzvah, it will cause him to transgress a more severe mitzvah. Since he was in violation of the negative commandment which forbids one to hate one's fellow Jew, it ultimately caused him to shed blood.' This is the reason the verse predicates the act of murder with the mention of **'a man who hates his fellow.'**"

The Torah is teaching us that it is not the hate itself that festers within the person that ultimately causes him to commit murder, but rather, when one transgresses the negative commandment of harboring hatred against one's fellow it creates an intense negative spiritual energy that leads one to ultimately commit murder based on the principle of *"aveira goreres aveira (one sin brings to another)."* Similarly, the rebellious child who initially violates the commandment of "Thou shall not steal..." is drawn to gluttonous behavior that will ultimately lead him to commit murder. We see once again the actualization of the principle of *"aveira goreres aveira (one sin brings to another)."*

The Torah states in the Portion of Kedoshim, **"You shall be holy...(Kedoshim t'hue)"** The Midrash explains that since the essence of "holiness" is something that is removed from the physical, the Jew should remove himself from the those things that are permitted to him. One should therefore only partake in what is necessary to maintain his existence and refrain from excess. Ramban explains that a person can behave in the most detestable manner within the context of everything that is permitted. A person can live as a hedonist and be fully indulgent in everything that is permitted and have no relevance to holiness. If one should live in this manner he will be in violation of the positive commandment of "You shall be holy..." Ramban explains that the child who steals from his parents to indulge in the meat and wine assumes the status of the "rebellious child" because he violated the positive commandment of "You shall be holy..." Thus, the rebellious child not only violated the negative

commandment of stealing which precipitated the cycle of “*aveira goreres aveira*” but he also violated the positive commandment of “You shall be holy...”

The Torah specifically states the laws of the rebellious child pertain only to a child that is between the age of thirteen and thirteen and three months. If he were to behave in this manner after this age, he is not put to death. Based on the principle that he should die in a more innocent state rather than a more culpable state, why should he not be put to death at any age? His behavior at any age should indicate that he has developed an addiction that will lead to murder. At the age of thirteen, when the male enters adulthood he is free of sin because prior to that time, he was not liable as a minor. However, at the beginning of his adulthood when he is meant to advance and secure his spirituality, if he should the laws that pertain to a “rebellious child,” it will have an irreversible and destructive effect on his spirituality. It is only because his spirituality was not initially secured that the principle of “*aveira goreres aveira*” would have the most serious tragic effect.

## 2. G'd's Unlimited Beneficence to the Jew

In the portion of Ki Seitzei the Torah delineates a number of commandments that are presented in succession. The Midrash explains that the reason the Torah presents these mitzvos in succession is to teach us the principle of “the performance of one mitzvah draws one to perform another mitzvah (*mitzvah goreres mitzvah*).”

When one performs a mitzvah it creates a dynamic that draws the individual to perform another mitzvah, which G'd will present to him. The Midrash tells us that in addition to the spiritual dynamic caused by “*mitzvah goreres mitzvah*,” it is also the mechanism through which G'd provides the individual with the material context to perform the next mitzvah. Most mitzvos that a Jew performs requires a physical setting in order to actualize them. The Torah states, “**If a bird's nest happens to be before you on the road...You shall surely send away the mother...and you will prolong your days. If you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof...You shall not sow your field with a mixture, ...You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey...**”

The Midrash explains that if one performs the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird to take its young (or its eggs) one will merit prolonged days. The

juxtaposition of the next mitzvah that is mentioned teaches us that the previous mitzvah that was performed will cause another mitzvah to come about, namely, the mitzvah of building of a parapet on one's roof. How is one to fulfill this mitzvah if one does not have the means to build a new house? G'd will provide him with the means to build a house so that he may fulfill the mitzvah of building a parapet. We see that the performance of a mitzvah not only presents the opportunity for one to perform another mitzvah, but G'd also provides the material setting to perform that mitzvah.

There is a negative commandment of not planting grains adjacent to a vineyard. If one does not own a vineyard or a wheat field, how can one perform this mitzvah? G'd will provide him with the field and vineyard, to allow him to fulfill this mitzvah. There is another negative commandment that one is not permitted to plow a field by working two species of animals together such as a donkey and an ox. If one does not have a donkey or an ox, G'd will provide him with the ox and donkey to fulfill the mitzvah. We see from the juxtapositions of the various mitzvos the principle of “The performance of one mitzvah draws one to the performance of another.” At each juncture of this process, G'd will provide the material means to facilitate the fulfillment of that particular mitzvah.

The Midrash at the beginning of the Portion of Vaeschanan tells us that whenever the devoutly righteous (tzaddikim) supplicate G'd, they ask that G'd should grant their request gratis (*matnas chinam*). Tzaddikim understand that in essence they cannot ascribe their achievements to their own efforts because G'd is the One who provides everyone with the ability, context, and means to do anything. Thus, when one performs a mitzvah, G'd says that He owes nothing to anyone and He is not obligated to reward a person for his achievement. If one circumcises his son, it is only because G'd provided him with the son to be able to perform the mitzvah of circumcision. Therefore, when Moshe beseeched G'd to allow him to enter into the Land, he asked that G'd should allow him to do so gratis, since he understood that all his merits and achievements cannot not be credited to himself. Despite the fact that Moshe was the greatest Jew to ever live, he understood that G'd did not owe anyone anything.

It is evident based on the Midrash that G'd provides the context as well as the means to fulfill a mitzvah based on the principle of “*mitzvah goreres mitzvah*.” The Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that

everything is predestined, except for the fear of heaven. One only has choice to do the Will of G'd or not, anything outside of this is predestined. One's innate capabilities, financial status, and physical setting are all areas that are unaffected by one's choice since they are predestined. However, as we see from the Midrash, one's choice precipitates physical settings to be able to perform the mitzvah. If this is so, seemingly the house that needs a parapet, or the child that needs to be circumcised are a direct consequence of one's actions and initiative. If this is so, then seemingly G'd does owe the individual reward.

This is similar to an employee and employer relationship in which the employer agrees to pay the worker an outstanding wage for a simple task. Although the employer is bound by the agreement; nevertheless, entering into this contract is clearly a confirmation of the generosity of the employer. One's reward for the performance of a mitzvah is so overwhelmingly great and surpasses anything that the individual provides for the mitzvah. Thus, G'd owes nothing to anyone because the actual framework of the agreement is provided for by G'd.

### ***3. Prioritizing One's Life***

The Torah states, **“If a man will have a wayward and rebellious son, who does not hearken to the voice of his father and the voice of his mother..., and they discipline him, but he does not hearken to them, then his father and mother shall grasp him and take him out to the elders of his city and the gate of his place. They shall say to the elders of his city...”** The Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin explains that the child assumes the status of the “rebellious” son only after he steals from his parents to buy a measure of meat and wine to satisfy his desire. When his parents become aware of his errant behavior, they take him to the Court and he is given lashes. If he should repeat this behavior, and his parents take him again to the court, he is judged as a “rebellious” son and is put to death by stoning.

The Mishna in Tractate Sanhedrin tells us that the incident of the “rebellious son” never actually happened and will never come to be. It is because it is not possible to meet all the criteria that are set forth by the Torah to establish the child as a “rebellious son.” The Mishna asks, “If this is so, why is the portion of the rebellious son stated in the Torah?” The Mishna answers, “It is for the purpose to delve into it and to receive reward for its study.”

Rabbeinu Bachya asks, if the purpose of this portion is to provide the individual with the opportunity to study Torah, then why is this subject matter chosen regarding the mitzvah of studying Torah? The Mishna in Tractate Berachos states that if one recites the Shema after its proper time; although he is not accredited for the mitzvah of its recitation, it is considered as if he had engaged in Torah study. In fact, one could have studied any portion of the Torah and have been worthy of reward for its study. Rabbeinu Bachya cites Rashbah (Rabbeinu Shlomo Ben Aderes) who explains that there is a special lesson to be learned from the portion of the rebellious son. It is a lesson for one to learn to what degree one must be dedicated to G'd and demonstrate one's love for Him.

The Torah describes in detail a situation in which a mother and father take their son to the Rabbinic Court to be prosecuted and reprimanded for his glutinous and defiant behavior. They take their son to receive the punishment of lashes, despite the fact that it is severe and debilitating. They also understand the consequence of their decision - that he will be put to death if he repeats this behavior. As Chazal explain “It is better that he should die in an innocent state rather than in a more liable state.” Although their child's errant behavior could have been dismissed and attributed to immaturity or a phase in his life, they chose to heed the directive of the Torah. The parents understood that if their child's behavior should continue he will ultimately consume their assets and he will resort to murder to support his habit.

In the case of the rebellious child, the parents take their child to be put to death and thus suppress their natural love for their child because of their love for G'd. Their love for G'd supersedes everything else that they value and cherish. Rashbah explains that the parents' initiative regarding their child is the equivalent of Avraham's demonstration of his love for G'd through the Akeidah (The Binding of Yitzchak). Just as Avraham was willing to sacrifice his son as an offering for the sake of G'd, because of his overwhelming love, so too do these parents give up their son because of their love of G'd.

The Binding of Yitzchak was the most difficult of the ten tests that were presented to Avraham our Patriarch. The test was meant to see if Avraham's love for G'd would surpass his love for his most beloved child Yitzchak, who was born to him in his old age. As difficult as it was, Avraham was able to subordinate his own understanding and conflicts of interest to do the Will of G'd. Similarly, the lesson to be learned from the

“rebellious son” is that every Jew must be willing to sacrifice for the sake of G'd by submitting to His Will despite the personal consequences. Whenever the Torah dictates a certain course of action, then one must adhere to it. This is the meaning of the statement in the Mishna “to delve into it, to receive reward.”

Very often in life, one may be confronted with situations in which he must make a decision; however, because of one's own conflicts it is difficult to choose the proper direction. There is an expression, “Nothing stands in the way of one's will.” If one truly desires and values something, he will not have difficulty pursuing it to any length. No sacrifice is too great for the one who wishes to fulfill his desire. Thus, if one truly loves G'd and wants to do His Will, then nothing will interfere with that objective.

One of the negative commandments of the Ten Commandments is, “**You shall not covet your fellow's house; you shall not covet your fellow's wife, his manservant, his maidservant...**” Bais Halevi asks, “If the Torah prohibits one from taking an action such as stealing, one is able to control himself not to do so; however, regarding coveting something that is not his own, because it is an emotion that rests in one's heart, how can one control this feeling?” He explains it with an allegory. If one overwhelmingly desires something that he sees is on the other side of a river that is frozen, he will start to walk across the river to attain what he desires. However, if he senses that the ice under his feet suddenly begins to crack and there is a possibility of him falling though to his death, he will immediately lose all interest in what he desired. Why is this so? It is because at that moment the individual values his life more than anything else. Similarly, if one values his relationship with G'd and continuously desires to cleave to Him, one will not desire something that is forbidden to him because he understands that pursuing this desire will cause him to become distant from G'd, which is contrary to his primary desire.

The Mishna in Ethics of our Fathers states, “Consider three things and you will not come to sin: From where you came, to where are you going, and before who you will stand to give a judgment and reckoning...” If one prioritizes his life in this manner and establishes it as his principle, then anything regarding one's spirituality will not be considered to be too difficult.

#### ***4. Honesty and Truth, the Guarantors of Existence***

The Torah states regarding honest weights and measures, “**A perfect and honest weight shall you have...so that your days shall be lengthened on the Land that Hashem, your G'd gives you. For an abomination of Hashem...who do this**” The Torah juxtaposes to this the portion, the portion of Amalek. Rashi cites Chazal, “If you falsified your weights and measures you should be concerned that the enemy will come upon you. As it states, ‘The scales of deceit are considered an abomination to G'd...the deliberate ones will come and bring disgrace.’” Thus, we learn from the juxtaposition of the portion of Amalek that if one falsifies weights and measures he becomes vulnerable to the enemy.

The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos states, “The signet of G'd is truth.” The only way one could have relevance and a relationship to G'd is to emulate His signet of Truth. As it states, “He is the faithful G'd and He has no iniquity...” If one falsifies weights and measures he is behaving in a manner that is contrary to the G'd's signet. Thus his dishonest behavior is considered an abomination to G'd. Consequently, the individual's relationship with G'd is severed and thus becomes vulnerable to the archenemy of G'd, who is Amalek.

The Torah states, “**Amalek came and battled Israel in Rephidim.**” The Midrash explains that the reason the Torah identifies the location (Rephidim) of the battle with Amalek is to allude to the cause of the vulnerability of the Jewish people to Amalek. The word “Rephidim” alludes to the fact that the Jewish people's Torah study and mitzvah observance was done in a haphazard manner. As a result of not being fully engaged in the Torah, the Jewish people became vulnerable to attack. The Torah in its essence is identified as “truth.” As King Solomon writes in Proverbs regarding Torah, “Acquire truth, do not sell it...” Torah, which is G'd's wisdom is the absolute essence of truth. When one detaches from the Torah, he becomes vulnerable to Amalek because he has distanced himself from truth, which is the signet of G'd.

The Midrash Tanchuma tells us that mankind was given the obligation to render justice because G'd wants that there should be “justice below.” As it states, “If there is justice below (on the terrestrial level) there is no need for Justice from above (Divine Retribution).” However if mortal justice is not meted out properly and truthfully then G'd will introduce His Divine Justice, which is tragic and

devastating. No one is perfect enough to withstand Divine Justice because there is no mercy. Thus, a judge who is corrupt is culpable beyond the financial loss to the defendant, because he is the one who has precipitated Divine Justice upon existence. This principle of justice does not only pertain to the court system, but also within the life of every Jew. The Torah tells us that honest weight and measures is also considered to be justice. If one is dishonest in this area it will also activate Divine Justice. Consequently one becomes vulnerable to the attack Amalek.

The Torah tells us that there is a positive commandment to give one's fellow the benefit of the doubt. If one performs this mitzvah properly it is considered that he had rendered a proper judgment. However, if one does not give the benefit of the doubt to his fellow when he should, he will bring about Divine Justice.

### **5. Torah and Fear of Heaven, Inextricably Related (Portion of Shoftim)**

The Torah tells us that a king of Israel has laws that are unique to him. The Torah states, **"...It shall be that when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself two copies of his Torah in a book... It shall be with him, and he shall read from it all the days of his life, so that he will learn to fear Hashem, his G'd, to observe all the words of this Torah and these Statutes, to perform them..."** Every Jewish male has a Torah obligation to write a Torah Scroll for himself. However, the Torah obligates the king to write an additional sefer Torah so that it should accompany him wherever he may go. He must read from it continuously so that he should learn to fear G'd. Because the king of Israel is the monarch with absolute power (he may not waive his honor even if he chooses to do so), he is subject to being self-centered and arrogant. Therefore, it is an imperative for him to be accompanied with the Torah and read from it to maintain an ongoing cognizance of G'd's Presence, which will result in the fear of G'd.

The Torah states in the Portion of Re'eh, **"And you shall eat it before Hashem, your G'd, in the place that He will choose to rest His Name – the tithe of your grain, your wine, and your oil, and the firstborn of your cattle and your flocks, so that you will learn to fear Hashem, your G'd, all the days."** The Torah tells us that the reason one must eat his tithes and offerings within the walls of Jerusalem is to fear G'd. Sforno explains **"you**

**will learn to fear..."** to mean, "In the location that G'd had chosen to place the Sanctuary there is the Sanhedrin HaGadola (High Court of Israel), which will elucidate the laws for the Jewish people to understand and appreciate their obligation." The Sanhedrin was comprised of seventy one ordained judges with the greatest proficiency of Torah. Any question pertaining to Jewish law that needed to be resolved was presented to the court and they resolved it with absolute clarity. When one fully understands his obligation to G'd, it will allow him to fear G'd. If one has any way to justify his own behavior due to a gap in his understanding of the law, he will do so. However, if one comes to Jerusalem and hears court explaining one's obligation, it is not possible for one to justify his behavior. Thus, one will "learn" to fear G'd.

Similarly, the king needs to continuously read his sefer Torah so that he should be cognizant of G'd and his obligation to Him. If one is cognizant of his obligation on a continuous basis, he will fear G'd. This is the reason the Mishna in Tractate Sanhedrin tells us that the sefer Torah of the king must accompany him wherever he is.

King David writes in Psalms, "I have set G'd before me always..." G'd was continuously before his eyes. As a king of Israel, it is obvious that through the reading of the Torah, G'd will be continuously before his eyes. However, based on the spirituality of the king, the degree of internalization and level of fear will vary. Thus, King David stated that it is not that he fears G'd but that G'd was actually before his eyes.

Throughout history, the great Torah sages, in addition to being proficient in every aspect of Torah, they were the most devoutly righteous because of their exceptional grasp of Torah, which allowed them to understand and appreciate the extent of their obligation. They thus achieved exceptional levels of devoutness.