

Yad Avraham Institute
WEEKLY TORAH COMMENTARIES SERIES
Portion of Tzav

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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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Tzav

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

Dean

1. The Consequence of Toil and Sacrifice

The Torah states, **“Hashem spoke to Moshe saying: Command (tzav) Aaron and his sons saying: This is the law of the elevation-offering...”** The Midrash explains, “The expression ‘tzav’ is one of urgency. G’d said to Moshe to urge them (the Kohanim) presently and for future generations. Reb Shimon says, ‘One must urge another even to a greater degree when it is a situation of loss of money.’” What is the loss to which the verse is referring? Regarding the elevation offering, the limbs and the fats are burnt on the Altar throughout the night, which requires the involvement of the Kohen. Because it is burnt offering, the Kohen receives no portion or any other physical benefit for his toil. It is unlike other offerings where the Kohen receives a certain portion of the sacrifice for his personal consumption. Since the Kohen is not compensated for his efforts, he will not be motivated to engage in this service. Thus, the Kohen needs to be motivated and encouraged to perform this mitzvah.

The Mishna in Tractate Bava Metzia discusses a case in which one is a custodian for produce to safeguard it for its owner. While the produce was under the supervision of the custodian, it began to spoil. What does the custodian do with the produce? Does he sell it to minimize the loss to the seller? Or does he hold it to a certain point before it spoils completely? There is one opinion that states that the custodian is not permitted to sell the produce although the owner would benefit from the sale. The Gemara explains that the rationale for this is “one would prefer a measure of his own than nine measures of another.” Meaning, as Rashi explains, because one had invested his effort and toil in bringing about the produce, it is endeared to the person. Although financially he would gain from the sale of the produce by his custodian, he nevertheless prefers the fruits of his own labor. Therefore, the custodian is not permitted to sell the produce, despite the loss.

The Gemara in Tractate Taanis tells us that one is not permitted to test G’d with the exception of the tithing

of one’s produce in the Land of Israel. This is based upon the verse regarding the tithe that is given to the Levy. The Torah states *“aseir t’aseir.”* Regarding the portion that is given to the Levy, the word for the tithing it is reiterated to indicate that one is permitted to tithe with the intent to become wealthy. Although one is usually not permitted to test G’d, in this context one is permitted. Why regarding the tithing of produce is one permitted to test G’d? It is because the produce that is tithed is the fruit of one’s labor. It is one’s toil and effort that one invested in bringing his produce about that causes him to be attached to it. Thus, he has difficulty giving it away. This is based on the principle that whatever one toils for, becomes endeared to him. G’d therefore allows one to test Him regarding the degree of compensation for what he has given up. G’d will compensate him in multiples for what he has done.

The Gemara in Tractate Megillah states, “One who says ‘I have toiled (in Torah) and have come upon it’ – should be believed. One who says, ‘I have not toiled and I did come upon it’ –is not to be believed.” G’d only allows one to come upon the truth of Torah if he toils for it. Why is this so? If one toils for the acquisition of Torah it is an indication that he truly values its truth. Because this individual has demonstrated his initiative for the sake of the Torah, he will esteem it. Thus, he merits Divine Assistance to acquire it. However, if one does not toil sufficiently for it, it is an indication that it is not considered to be worthy of sacrifice and thus he will not revere it. Therefore, he will not merit the Divine Assistance that is needed. Another explanation, based on the principle that what one toils for will be endeared to him, G’d will therefore give him the Divine Assistance to come upon its truth because it will be considered special to him.

However, regarding the burnt offering, G’d told Moshe to urge the Kohanim to be motivated for its service because the Kohen does not see the fruits of his accomplishment. There is not tangible result for his efforts.

2. The Fruits of the Decree

The Gemara in Tractate Megillah tells us that the students of Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai asked him, “Why at the time of Purim did the Jewish people deserve to be annihilated?” There was a decree that throughout the Persian Empire (which was the entire world) every Jewish man, woman, and child should be annihilated. The students of Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai were of the opinion that “the Jewish people deserved annihilation because they had benefited from the feast of the evil one (the feast celebrating the coronation of Achashverosh).” Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai rejected their understanding, because if that were so, then only the Jews in Shushan (where the feast had taken place) should have been liable and not the entire Jewish people. He explained to his students that the reason the Jewish people were deserving of annihilation was because, they had bowed to the image of Nebuchadnezzar (Babylonian Emperor, who had destroyed the First Temple). Nebuchadnezzar had ordered all of his subjects to bow to his image or be put to death. The only Jews who did not obey his command and bow were Chananyia, Meshael, and Azarya. Because they refused to bow they were cast into a fiery kiln (they emerged miraculously unharmed). Since the Jewish people bowed to the image, they thus deserved annihilation.

The students of Reb Shimon Bar Yochai asked him, “If this was so, why were they not annihilated?” He answered, “Because their bowing was only an external act without intent. They did not believe that Nebuchadnezzar was a deity. Their bowing was only a façade. Thus, the decree against the Jewish people manifested itself in a similar vein. It presented itself as if it were going to take place, although G’d never intended it to come to fruiting? What was the correction that was needed to be made by the Jewish people for their transgression of bowing?”

At Sinai, G’d took the Jewish people to be His priestly, holy nation. They were His chosen people. Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian Emperor ruled the world supreme. Thus, when the edict was given to bow to his image, it was known throughout existence that the Jewish people had abandoned their G’d to bow to an idol. Thus, the behavior of the Jewish people was the ultimate desecration of G’d’s Name. The world did not know the true intent of the Jew, what was in their hearts when they bowed. They had perceived their behavior as accepting Nebuchadnezzar as a deity. However, G’d knowing what was truly in their heart, knew that their action were only external. G’d therefore created a context through which

the misperception would be corrected. The decree to annihilate every Jewish man, woman, and child was issued throughout the entire world.

When the decree to annihilate the Jewish people was issued, Mordechai galvanized them to repent and fast for the sake of salvation. One would think that at such a dire moment, the Jewish people would be overwhelmed with despair because they had nowhere to escape and their destruction was imminent. Rather than despairing, they “took hold of the craft of their forefathers, the holy Patriarchs.” They prayed to G’d and supplicated Him for His Mercy.

The entire world witnessed the behavior of the Jewish people regarding their fervent belief at that moment- their commitment to G’d and their state of penitence. If they had truly severed their relationship with G’d and did not believe that their existence was completely dependent on Him, why would they act in this manner? Thus, it was revealed to the world that the essence of the Jewish people is truly holy and they are His people that were taken by Him at Sinai. Their praying and fasting to G’d was the ultimate sanctification of G’d’s Name. It therefore was a correction for the initial desecration of G’d’s Name, which was based on a misperception. This revealed to the world that their initial bowing to the image was only a façade and not their true belief. An outgrowth of the victory over the Amalekites and the miracle of Purim caused the Jewish people to reaffirm their acceptance of the Torah out of love rather than under duress as it had been at Sinai. The reason the Jewish people merited this level of clarity to understand and appreciate G’d’s love for them is based on the principle of one mitzvah brings about another mitzvah. Because they had brought about a sanctification of G’d’s Name on a universal level, they merited the ultimate level of commitment to Torah, which was a reaffirmation out of love.

3. Mordechai’s Uniqueness

The Gemara in Tractate Megillah asks, “Where do we find Mordechai alluded to in the Torah?” The Gemara answers, “The first ingredient in the spices that was needed to produce the anointing oil was **“Mor dror – pure myrrh.”** Targum explains, *‘Mor dror’* as *‘mori dachya.’* Thus, the Torah alludes to Mordechai through one of the essential ingredients of the anointing oil. What commonality or relevance does Mordechai have to the anointing oil?

The Torah states regarding the anointing oil, **“You shall anoint the Elevation Altar and all its utensils, and it shall become holy.”** Despite the fact that the Mishkan was built to the specifications that were put forth by G’d and was infused with the proper spiritual intent to give it the potential to bring about its desired effect; nevertheless, every aspect of the Mishkan needed to be anointed with the anointing oil in order for it to become fully functional to accommodate G’d’s Presence. G’d had commanded Moshe to personally anoint the Mishkan and all its vessels with the special anointing oil because he was the only one who was qualified to do so. Without the anointing oil, the Mishkan would have been an extraordinary edifice without any effect.

Mordechai, the leading Torah sage of his generation, orchestrated all of the elements, which ultimately brought about the miracle of Purim. At the final moment when the decree was meant to be carried out, it was miraculously annulled. Rather than the Jewish people being destroyed, they brought destruction upon their enemies. Mordechai had initially instructed Esther, the queen, to conceal her true identity as a Jewess until the appropriate time. He galvanized the Jewish people to repent and pray to G’d. Had it not been for Mordechai, the miracle of Purim would not have come about. He was the one who actualized the potential of the Jewish people to deal with their predicament. Rather than becoming overwhelmed with despair, they gained focus and understanding, which ultimately led to the realization that G’d truly loved them and had brought about their redemption. Mordechai was to the Jewish people as the anointing oil was to the Mishkan. They both were necessary to actualize potential, whether it be the Mishkan or the Jewish people.

At the time of Purim, the Jewish people had Mordechai to lead them, who was the equivalent of the anointing oil. In every generation, G’d provides the Jewish people with Torah leaders who act in a similar capacity as Mordechai. They are known as the *Gedolei Israel*, those individuals through their “daas Torah (Torah wisdom)” merit Divine Assistance to give direction to the Jewish people, to motivate and inspire them to actualize their potential.

4. Children Guaranteeing the Destiny of the Father

The Torah tells us that the Kohanim have a mitzvah to put wood on the Altar. As it states, **“They brought, the sons of Aaron the Kohen, fire on the Altar and arranged the wood.”** The Midrash states, “Every species of wood qualifies to be kindled upon the Altar except for the wood of the grape vine and the wood of an olive tree. Why is this so? It is because the fruits they produce are special. From this, we learn that in the merit of the children the fathers are honored.” Special honor is accorded to the parents because of the exceptional offspring.

The Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin states, “The son brings merit to a father, but a father does not bring merit to the son.” The Gemara tells us that Chizkiyahu the king of Judah was devoutly righteous and was qualified to be Moshiach. Although his father Achaz was evil, he was a beneficiary of his son’s great spiritual accomplishments. This was because Chizkiyahu was only in a context to choose to be devoutly righteous because his father brought him into existence. Therefore, all of his deeds accrue to his father. On the other hand, the accomplishments of the father do not bring merit to the son because the son does not contribute to the father’s good deeds.

The Midrash tells us that Avraham, our Patriarch was thrown into the fiery kiln of Kasdim and miraculously immersed. The Midrash cites a verse, “Yaakov redeemed Avraham.” Since Yaakov was destined to father the twelve tribes of Israel, he thus needed to come into existence in order to establish the Jewish people. Therefore, Avraham was saved from the fiery kiln by G’d. If the miracle of the kiln would not have occurred, there would not have been a Jewish people.

“In the merit of the children the parents are glorified.” Avraham coming out of the fiery kiln was a greater sanctification of G’d’s Name than if he had perished in the fire. This is because it demonstrated to the world that due to the fact that he was willing to give his life for the Omnipotent G’d, he was saved.

Rabbeinu Bachya explains that King Solomon in Proverbs communicates spiritual concepts through physical allegory in order for one appreciate the spiritual realm although it is not tangible and obvious. Similarly, the Torah does not validate the wood of the grape vine or olive tree to communicate that because of the quality of the

fruit, the wood is not burned even for the sake of a mitzvah. These trees assume a special value not to be burned so that they can continue to produce the most exceptional fruits, which are grapes and olive- as Avraham was spared from the fire to be able be the forefather of Yaakov. This is an example of, “In the merit of the children the parents are glorified.”

If a parent invests in his child’s Jewish upbringing and education, he not only is providing an opportunity for the child to develop into a Torah observant Jew, he is also setting in motion generations that will follow the spiritual path. Thus, their merit will accrue to him. The parent will receive merit from his child and all his descendants until the end of time because of his initial contribution. Thus, a parent can perpetuate the value of his initiative beyond his own existence.

Chofetz Chaim writes that if one provides what is needed to give a child a proper Jewish education, although it is not his child, and that child develops to be a Torah observant Jew who establishes a family, the one who initially contributed to his education will receive the merit of all the generations who will descend from the one who he had assisted until the end of time. Had it not been for the original initiative, what followed would not have come about. One does not necessarily need to be the biological parent in order to be the beneficiary of the merit that is generated from his input.

The Torah states, **“These are the offspring of Aaron and Moshe on the day Hashem spoke to Moshe at Sinai: These are the names of the sons of Aaron...”** Although the verse begins by saying **“These are the offspring of Aaron and Moshe”** it only enumerates and identifies the offspring of Aaron. Rashi cites the Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin, which explains that because Moshe had taught Torah to the sons of Aaron they are considered as his children. As it is stated in the Gemara, “If a person teaches Torah to his fellow’s child, it is as if he fathered him.”

5. Humility Being Reflected Through the Burnt Offering

The Torah states regarding the burnt offering, **“...Command Aaron and his sons saying: This is the law of the burnt offering....”** Regarding other offerings the Torah states, **“Speak to the children of Israel saying...”** The Midrash asks, “Why does the burnt

offering identify with Aaron? G’d says, ‘Whoever elevates himself (arrogant) deserves to be consumed by fire.’” Eitz Yosef (commentary on the Midrash) explains, “Since one is obligated to conduct himself as G’d’s servant, the service is not complete until he accepts every aspect of servitude. What are they? Submission, lowliness, one should not conduct himself in the context of mastership because it disgraces the honor of the master. This the reason the Torah chose to command Aaron, who was the most special Kohen. He was to lower himself and submit to G’d by removing the ash from the Altar that remains after the offering is consumed by fire. It is the most simple and least honorable of the services before G’d.” Aaron was most qualified to be the officiant of G’d because he submitted to His Will and was negated to his Master.

If one is haughty (elevated), he will be consumed by fire. Consumption by fire destroys the identity of the one who is arrogant and reduces him to ash. The Midrash provides several examples of those who were haughty and were thus consumed by fire. The generation of the great flood were consumed by the fiery hot water. The evil community of Sodom was destroyed through fire (fire and brimstone). The plague of hail was a combination of fire and ice that rained down upon the Egyptians people.

Ramban explains that when one sins inadvertently is able to bring a sin offering to atone for his spiritual failing. It is only because of the Attribute of Mercy that the sacrifice is brought instead of the sinner. Based on the Attribute of Justice, the individual who sins inadvertently deserves to be put to death. Thus, when one brings a sin offering he must humble himself before G’d and recognize that in actuality, he is the one that deserves to be slaughtered and burnt. It is in conjunction with repentance that the sacrifice atones for the individual. If one sins inadvertently, why should he be put to death?

It is only because of one’s sense of self that he does not take sufficient precautions against sin. It is his preoccupation with self that causes him to transgress against G’d. Thus, every inadvertent sin has a degree of arrogance associated with it. It is therefore through the burnt offering that the arrogance can be destroyed and the individual humbled before G’d.

The Gemara tells us that Hillel the elder was one of the most humble people. He was the Prince of Israel. Whenever he would consecrate an offering for the Temple he would consecrate it at the entrance of the Sanctuary.

Why would he do so? It was so that he would not put himself in a situation where due to his delay of bringing it in its proper time he would violate the negative commandment of “do not delay your obligation (for three festivals)” regarding the bringing of an offering. It was because of Hillel’s exceptional humility that was the basis for his devout piety that he took every precaution not to allow himself to even inadvertently violate the word of G’d. In contrast, one who does not have that degree of humility will not be sensitive to this degree because he has a right to chose to bring his offering at a later date.

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 – Duties of the Heart
6:45 -7:25 am	Talmud—Tractate Kiddushin
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna - Rabbi Rovner
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi
2:00pm	Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

11:30 – 12:30pm	Talmud: Beiah Location: Sunrise Capital 600 Lexington (23 rd 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: Beiah Location: Sunrise Capital 600 Lexington (23 rd FL.) Enter on 54 th Street
1:00—2:00 pm	Maharal Gevuras Hashem Location: Yad Avraham

Thursday

11:00 –12:00pm	Duties of The Heart Location: Yad Avraham
12:30 – 1:30 pm	Talmud: Beiah Sunrise Capital 600 Lexington (23 rd FL)