

*Yad Avraham Institute*  
Weekly Torah Commentaries Series

**Portion of Tzav/Purim**

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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/Purim

New York  
March 22, 2016

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

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## 1. The Megillah of Esther, a Song of Praise

In order for one to fulfill his obligation of hearing the reading of the Megillah on Purim, one must hear the entire Megillah from the first word until the last word. If any word of the reading is not heard, one does not fulfill his obligation.

The Gemara in Tractate Megillah asks, “Where do we find an allusion to Esther in the Torah? The verse states in the Portion of Vayeilech, **‘(G’d said to the Jewish people) But I will surely have concealed (haster astir) My face on that day...’**” The only one of the scriptures that does not mention the Name of G’d is the Megillah of Esther. One of the reasons offered for this omission, is because G’d’s involvement was concealed in the miracle of Purim. The deliverance of the Jewish people from annihilation and destruction of evil evolved through a series of events that were cloaked in nature.

Maharal of Prague in his work on Purim explains, that if one were to see how the events unfolded on Purim from the beginning to the end, one would conclude that it is irrefutable proof that all the elements which ultimately brought about the destruction of the Amalekites and the survival of the Jewish people would not have come about without G’d’s intervention on their behalf. However, if one were to be aware of only some of the events that brought about the destruction of Haman, one could attribute them to happenstance. It is only when one hears the Megillah in entirety could one form a picture of all of the events that occurred, will one clearly understand that it was the Hand of G’d.

Although Hallel is recited on every holiday, including holidays that are rabbinical ones (such as Chanuka which is a commemoration of the victory of the Chashmanayim over the Greeks), the Gemara in Tractate Megillah tells us that one does not recite the Hallel on Purim. Why is this so? Reb Nachman answers that the reading of the Megillah itself is an expression of thanks and praise to G’d. Based on the understanding of the Maharal, because when one reads the narrative of the Megillah from the beginning to the end without omitting any detail, one will fully comprehend and realize that all that had transpired was the Hand of G’d. When one comes to this realization, it will evoke feelings of thanks and indebtedness to G’d Who saved the Jewish people from

certain annihilation and extinction. Since the reading of the Megillah itself brings about a sense of being beholden to G’d, Chazal did not enact the obligation to recite Hallel on Purim. Because of G’d’s overwhelming display of love for His people, the Jewish people confirmed their commitment to G’d through their acceptance of the Torah out of love, unlike the Sinai event when they had accepted the Torah due to coercion. All of this came about due to the events that unfolded and led to the annulment of the evil decree of Haman to annihilate every Jewish man, woman, and child.

## 2. What Precipitated the Decree of Annihilation?

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 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 to be annihilated 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, the capital city of the Persian Empire where the feast had taken place, should have been liable and not the entire Jewish people. He then 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. All the Jewish people bowed to his image with the exception of Chananyia, Meshael, and Azarya. Because they refused to bow, they were cast into a fiery kiln; however, they emerged miraculously unharmed. Since the Jewish people bowed to the image, they thus all deserving of 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 context. Meaning, it only appeared as a reality that

they were going to be annihilated; however, G'd never truly intended to bring about their destruction.

Regarding the opinion of the students of Reb Shimon Bar Yochai that the Jewish people deserved to be annihilated because they had benefited from the feast of the evil one, the commentators explain that the food and drink that was served conformed to Jewish dietary laws. Regardless of this, Mordechai, the Torah leader of the generation, urged the Jewish people not to participate in the feast. If in fact the feast was not considered to be a breach of dietary laws, why would the Jewish people deserve to be annihilated? Secondly, even if it were in violation of dietary laws, it is not sufficient for the Jewish people to be liable for death.

The Gemara in Tractate Avodah Zorah tells us that in ancient times when a non-Jew celebrated a birthday, the celebration had been an expression of thanks and praise to that individual's deity. The Torah tells us that one is not permitted to marry the daughter of a non-Jew because ultimately when her father will bring a sacrifice to idolatry he will invite the Jew to participate in the eating of that sacrifice. The Gemara explains that even if the Jew does not partake of an idolatrous sacrifice but partakes of a feast that is a celebration of something that is tangentially associated with idolatry, he is not permitted to eat. It is considered the equivalent of partaking of and benefiting from an idolatrous sacrifice. Thus, one could say that the Jewish people were deserving of annihilation because they had partaken of the feast of the evil one, which was tangentially related to idolatry.

We read in the Megillah that Achashverosh only celebrated his coronation three years into his reign. The Gemara in Tractate Megillah asks, "Why did he wait three years to celebrate his coronation?" After the destruction of the First Temple, the Jewish people were exiled to Babylon to be there in exile for seventy years. The Prophet had said in the name of G'd that after seventy years they would return to the Land to rebuild the Second Temple. King Balshetzar, the predecessor of Achashverosh made a calculation that the seventy years had passed and the Jewish people did not return, indicating that the words of the Prophet would not come to pass. He thus took the consecrated vessels of the First Temple and used them for his own personal use. That night, he died. Achashverosh declared that the reason Balshetzar was killed was because his calculation of the seventy years was flawed. Achashverosh said that based on his own calculation, which was three years into his reign, the seventy years had definitely passed. Yet the Jewish people did not return to the Land to build the

Second Temple. As his predecessor had done, he took the consecrated vessels of the Temple to celebrate. That evening, Vashti his Queen was put to death.

Achashverosh's celebration of his coronation three years into his reign was a public declaration that G'd had reneged on His Promise to the Jewish people that they would return to the Land after seventy years. Thus, the feast of the celebration was a desecration of G'd's Name. Regardless of the fact that the feast was Kosher, or that the celebration did not have idolatrous overtones, benefitting from such a feast was an extreme level of desecration of G'd. Thus, the Jewish people deserved to be annihilated. Reb Shimon Bar Yochai said to his students that although they were correct, there must be something of a greater scope because according to their interpretation, the decree should have been limited to the Jews of Shushan where the feast had taken place.

### ***3. 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 Metziah 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 tithing 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.

#### ***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. Sacrifice, the Reinstatement of the Jew** (from *Vayikra*)

Rabbeinu Bachya in his commentary at the beginning of the Portion of Vayikra explains that when one brings a sacrifice to atone for his sins, it entails three levels of involvement. After the consecrated animal is brought to the Temple for the service, there is verbal confession (*vidui*) that the owner makes, when he verbalizes the sin for which he is atoning. The Gemara in Tractate Zevachim states, "If the sin offering was not predicated with repentance the sacrifice is considered

invalid and an abomination. As it states in the verse, 'The sacrifice of the evil is an abomination (*zevach reshaim toaivah*).' Therefore, one must predicate the sin offering with repentance and verbal confession. Then there is the leaning on the animal (*smicha*), when one places his full weight with both hands on the animal by leaning on it. After the leaning, there is the burning of the innards of the animal (including the kidneys).

Rabbeinu Bachya explains that these three elements of involvement with the sacrifice are intended to correct three aspects of one's sin. Before one's sins he contemplates the sinful act that he is about to commit, thus the thought process is involved in the preparation of the sin. Subsequently, it is inevitable when one concludes that he will sin, there will be an unintentional utterance relating to the sin that is about to be transgressed. This ultimately leads to the act of the sin itself. Rabbeinu Bachya explains that the bringing of the sacrifice and the leaning on the animal corresponds to the act of sin itself. The verbal confession corresponds to the verbal expression that one expressed before transgressing. The burning of the innards with the kidneys corresponds to the contemplation of the sin. As Chazal tell us that one's wisdom is associated with one's kidney. Therefore, the burning of the kidneys is a correction for the improper thought process.

Reb Chaim of Volozhin in his work *Ruach Chaim* explains that a human being is comprised of three parts: the life source (*Nefesh*), spirit (*Ruach*), and soul (*Neshama*). All physical movement emanates from the *Nefesh* that is contained within the physical being. This life source is shared by all living creatures alike. *The Ruach* (spirit - which means wind) is the spirit that gives man the power of speech. *The Neshama* is the essence of man that is spiritual, which is the basis for his intellect. When one sins, it affects his *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, and *Neshama*. The sin itself causes a deficiency in each of these parts that make up the human being.

Therefore, after one brings the sacrifice and leans upon it, he is correcting the deficiency that was in his *Nefesh* and allowed him to sin. The verbal confession is a correction for the *Ruach* (spirit), which corrects the verbal expression that preceded the sin. The burning of the innards and kidneys is a correction and rehabilitation of the *Neshama* (intellect) which was involved in the contemplation of the sin. Thus, the bringing of the sacrifice with all of the elements of the service will rehabilitate the individual to his original level of spirituality before he sinned, thus allowing his relationship with G'd to be secured.

L'Zeicher nishmas avi mori Reb Moshe Ben Yosef Kalatsky z'l u l'zeicher nishmas emee morasi Shaindel Bas Reb Chaim Tzvi z'l