

***Yad Avraham Institute***  
**Weekly Torah Commentary Series**  
***Parshas Beha'aloscha***

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

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**Yad Avraham Institute**  
**New York**  
**June 1, 2007**

**B"H**

## *Parshas Beha'aloscha*

*Presented by*

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

### ***1. The Universal Ramification of the Kindling of the Menorah***

The Torah states, **“Speak to Aaron and say to him: When you kindle the lamps, toward the face of the Menorah shall the seven lamps cast light.”** The Midrash states, “G'd said to Moshe, ‘It is not because I need the light of mortal man that I command you to kindle the Menorah, rather it is to give you merit.’ G'd said, ‘You should be careful that when you kindle the lights it should be for Me. If you do it for My sake you will merit that at the end of time I will illuminate for you a great light. The nations of the world will walk in the light that radiates from you...’”

The Torah states regarding the kindling of the Menorah, **“Aaron did so...”** The Midrash explains, “The Torah tells us this to inform us the praiseworthiness of Aaron – that he did not deviate regarding the kindling of the Menorah.” The kindling of the Menorah was a relatively simple mitzvah to fulfill. Why would one have even considered that Aaron would have deviated from fulfilling it correctly?

King Solomon writes in Proverbs, “Acquire truth and do not sell it.” The Gemara in Tractate Avodah Zorah explains that this verse is referring to Torah. Rambam rules in The Laws of the Study of Torah that although one may have incurred financial costs to gain a Torah education, he should not charge others for imparting to them the Torah knowledge that he had acquired. Torah is quantified as “unadulterated Truth.” The Talmud tells us that “the Signet of G'd is Truth.” If this is so, it is understandable to say that G'd's Wisdom reflects that Signet, which is Truth. If one engages in Torah study not for its own sake (shelo l'shma), the mitzvah that was performed is considered deficient. Since the mitzvah of studying Torah is to engage in the ultimate Truth, it would be considered incongruous for one to engage in it with an ulterior motive, which is not commensurate with the

essence of what is being studied. In truth, there should be no spiritual value of studying Torah without the proper intent. However, this is not the case because of the principle that is stated in the Gemara in Tractate Pesachim – “Through one's engaging in a mitzvah not for its own sake, one can achieve a level of pure intent to perform the mitzvah for its own sake.”

The Gemara in Tractate Bava Basra tells us that the illumination of the Menorah symbolizes the Oral Law, which is the elucidation of the Written Law. The Talmud tells us that if one wishes to gain wisdom when he prays, he should pray in a southerly direction because the Menorah in the Temple was situated on the southern wall. All the Divine Assistance that is needed to understand the truth of Torah emanates from the kindling of the Menorah. Therefore when Aaron kindled the Menorah, which was the mechanism that provides one with the ability to comprehend truth, he needed to do so with the purest intent. If Aaron's intent was lacking, even as much as an iota, the level of Divine Assistance that would be provided would be deficient.

Rashi in the beginning of the Portion cites the Midrash, “Why does the Torah juxtapose the portion of the celebration of the Princes (at the time of the inauguration of the Mishkan) to the kindling of the Menorah?” The Midrash explains that when Aaron had seen all of the Princes participating in the celebration of the completion of the Mishkan, he was taken aback and offended (he and his tribe felt that their exclusion was due to their unworthiness). G'd said to him, “Your participation is greater than theirs.” Aaron was given the mitzvah of the kindling the Menorah.

Ramban asks, “Why did G'd need to console Aaron by giving him the mitzvah of kindling the Menorah? He was qualified to officiate in all aspects of Mishkan/Bais HaMikdash, which were exclusive to him and his children. In addition, no other person was qualified

to officiate on Yom Kippur other than the High Priest. If so why was Aaron offended for not being included?"

The Torah tells us that the twelve Princes, representing each of the Tribes of Israel contributed the identical offering and gifts to the inauguration of the Mishkan. In relating this, the Torah repeats itself almost verbatim (with the exception of the day and name of the Prince) for the twelve-day period that the Princes brought their gifts. If every letter of the Torah has to have a specific intent and there is nothing contained within it that is superfluous, then why does the Torah repeat each of the gifts of the Princes, which were identical?

Each of the twelve Tribes represented another element and component of the spiritual infrastructure of the Jewish people. Although the physical gifts and offerings were identical, each Prince needed to infuse his offering and gift with the intent that reflected his Tribe. The Tribe of Levy was not represented in this process because Aaron was not asked to participate. Seemingly the Tribe of Levy had no relevance to the spiritual infrastructure of the Jewish people- indicating that neither Aaron or his Tribe were worthy of a representation among the other Tribes.

The essence and heartbeat of the Jewish people is the Torah. Aaron was commanded to kindle the Menorah which represents the unadulterated Truth of G'd's Wisdom, namely the Oral Law. Aaron's contribution addressed the essence of the spiritual infrastructure that was created by the Princes. Without the Divine Assistance to merit the truth of Torah, the Jewish people have no value. This is the reason G'd had said to him, "Your contribution is greater than theirs."

Aaron, understanding his profound contribution to the Jewish people, could have prided himself. If this would have been so, Aaron would have diminished the value of kindling the Menorah. This would have been a compromise of the unadulterated Truth of Torah. Despite the dimension of Aaron's accomplishment, he was not affected as much as an iota. Consequently his kindling of the Menorah was able to activate the most profound influence to bring about the most advanced level of truth. This is communicated by the Torah stating, "**Aaron did so.**"

## ***2. The Innate Qualification of the Levy and His Role as Representative of the Jewish People***

The Torah states regarding the installation of the Levites, "**Thereafter the Levites shall come to serve the Tent of the Meeting; you shall purify them and you shall wave them as a wave-service. For given, given (*nisunim. nisunim*) are they to Me from among the Children of Israel...**" What is the significance of the reiteration the expression, "given, given (*nisunim, nisunim*)?"

Sforno explains, "The Torah reiterates the expression 'nisunim, nisunim' to communicate to us the two ways in which the Levites were given to G'd. Firstly, the Levites gave of themselves to serve G'd. After the sin of the Golden Calf Moshe wanted to purge the camp of idolaters. He declared, 'Whoever is for G'd come with me!' The Levites were the only ones who responded to Moshe's calling. This is how they gave of themselves to G'd. Secondly, the Levites were given from the midst of the Children of Israel because the Jewish people must give to the Levy from their tithes in order to support them in place of their service to G'd. Since the Levites serve G'd on behalf of the Jewish people, every Jew is considered as if he participated in the service of G'd." G'd wants every Jew to have a level of participation in His service.

The Torah tells us that Yaakov, our Patriarch established a partnership between Yissachar and Zevulon. The Tribe of Zevulon was responsible to provide for all of Yissachar's needs in order to allow them to engage in Torah study without distraction. Sforno explains that this is similar to the concept of the giving of tithes to the Kohen (Priest) and Levy. The Tribe of Levy was chosen by G'd to be the ones to be completely immersed in Torah study. Therefore by providing sustenance for Kohen and Levy through tithes, every Jew becomes a partner in their Torah study. Regardless of one's own degree of dedication to Torah study, he will have a share in Torah.

The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos tells us that the majority of "amei haaretz – a sect of Jews who were not meticulous and sensitive to many areas of Jewish Law" gave the proper tithes to the Levy which is 10% of the produce grown in Israel. However, there was a minority of them who did not. Because of this minority, the Rabbis legislated that if one purchased produce from the "aam haaretz" one must tithe 10%. The commentators ask if under normal circumstances when a questionable situation arises regarding an event, one has a right to follow the

principle of majority. One does not need to be concerned that he is violating the Law because it is purely based on probability. If this is so then why was it necessary for the Rabbis to legislate a law to address the minority. Since the minority was significant, the Rabbis felt that it was necessary to promulgate this law of tithing. Seemingly, the question is still difficult. Based on our understanding of the significance of the tithe to the Levy, we are able to appreciate the Rabbinic Law on a more profound level.

The Levy is responsible for the spirituality of the Jewish people by engaging in Torah study and the service of G'd at an undistracted level. Since the Levy is totally dedicated to the spiritual matters of the Jewish people, they must provide for him and in so doing they assume a share in the Levy's service. However, if the Levy does not receive a sufficient amount of support because of a significant minority who do not participate in tithing their produce, then their service will be undermined. Ultimately, the spiritual stature of the Jewish people will be weakened.

### ***3. The Dual Value of Transferring the Status of the Firstborn to the Levites***

The Torah tells us that a consequence of the sin of the Golden Calf was that the firstborn, who were initially qualified to be the officiants of G'd (Priests), were tainted and thus disqualified. The Torah states, **“Moshe, Aaron, and the entire assembly of the Children of Israel (*kol adas Bnei Yisroel*) did to the Levites according to everything that Hashem had commanded Moshe about the Levites, so did the Children of Israel (*Bnei Yisroel*) do to them.”** The conclusion of the verse seems to be superfluous. The verse had already stated **“the entire assembly of the Children of Israel did...”** Why is it necessary to conclude, **“...so did the Children of Israel.”**

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that “the entire assembly of the Children of Israel (*kol adas Bnei Yisroel*)” represents one segment of the Jewish people while “Children of Israel (*Bnei Yisroel*)” represents another. The expression “Benei Yisroel” is referring to the segment of the people who possess special spiritual status, namely the firstborn. “Kol adas Bnei Yisroel” refers to the entire Jewish people. The reason the verse concludes with the “Benei Yisroel” (firstborn) is to communicate to us that although they had eternally forfeited their special status to the Levites, which would normally cause great anguish, in this particular situation the transfer of status was done wholeheartedly.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh continues, “When a mitzvah is difficult or painful one normally executes it haphazardly in a deficient manner. However regarding the firstborn, they had fulfilled the mitzvah meticulously and wholeheartedly.”

The Torah tells us regarding Moshe, that he and his progeny were meant to be the Kohanim (Priests). However, because he was obstinate and did not readily accept G'd's appointing him as the Redeemer of Israel at the burning bush, he forfeited the Priesthood to his brother Aaron the Levy. Until the end of time it is only the descendants of Aaron who are qualified to be the Priests because of Moshe's lack of reverence towards G'd. The loss of the Priesthood was considered an atonement for his failing. When Moshe was told by G'd to install Aaron and his sons as the Kohanim, the Torah goes to great length to delineate every aspect and detail of the process. This seems to be unnecessary. Much of the information seems to be superfluous because there is no reason to reiterate many of the details.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that although Moshe was atoned for his failing at the burning bush by forfeiting the Priesthood, nevertheless there was a trace of sin that remained that needed to be purged. Moshe, in order to be fully reinstated with G'd, had to install Aaron and his children with joy and wholeheartedness. This state of mind is only possible if one truly understands and internalizes the fact that punishment is ultimately for the good of the individual. The Torah attests that Moshe succeeded in this endeavor.

Just as G'd had provided Moshe with the opportunity to be fully reinstated by installing Aaron and his children as Priests, identically the firstborn were presented with the same opportunity to bring about full atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf. The Torah attests that the firstborn did so meticulously and wholeheartedly.

With our understanding of the value of Moshe's and the firstborn's level of participation in the initiation process of Aaron and the Levites, we are able to appreciate the profoundness of the Mishna in Tractate Berachos. It states, “Just as one blesses G'd for the good, so too must he bless G'd for the bad.” Even when one experiences tragedy one must acknowledge G'd in an identical manner as when one experiences good fortune.

The only reason one experiences difficulty, or G'd forbid tragedy, is because G'd is providing the individual with an opportunity to be atoned for a spiritual deficiency and thus be reinstated. If one accepts the tragedy with the

same level of value as the good fortune, although he is experiencing pain, simultaneously he will sense the value and benefit from that experience. Only then will he be fully reinstated. However, if one does not internalize the experience at this level, although he achieves atonement there will still remain a trace of impurity, which will interfere with full reinstatement.

#### 4. *It is Not in Heaven*

The Torah tells us that if an earthenware vessel becomes contaminated it cannot become purified. However, if it is broken it assumes a pure status because it is no longer classified as a vessel. The Gemara in Tractate *Bava Metzia* tells us that Rebbe Eliezer and the Chachamim (rabbis) argued about the status of an earthenware oven that had become contaminated and was subsequently severed into parts and reconstructed. The basis for the argument was concerning the purity of the oven. If it were to be reconstructed we would see it as the original vessel/oven, therefore, it reverts to its original contaminated state; or do we consider it a new vessel/oven and it is thus not contaminated. The newly constructed oven has no relevance to the original oven.

Rebbe Eliezer's position was that the reconstructed oven was considered pure and thus all food items that were prepared in it would be considered spiritually pure. However, the majority position was contrary to that of Rebbe Eliezer and therefore, the oven was considered contaminated. During the lengthy exchange between Rebbe Eliezer and the Chachamim, many miracles were performed to prove Rebbe Eliezer's position as being correct. The Chachamim were not influenced by these events. Finally Rebbe Eliezer declared that if his position was correct a *Bas Kol* (Heavenly Voice) should emanate from heaven stating, "The law is according to Rebbe Eliezer." In fact, this occurred. Rebbe Yehoshua in response to the *Bas Kol* stood up and said, "*Lo bashamayim he* – Torah is not in heaven!" Meaning, the definitive legal rulings of Torah are not determined by G'd, but rather were given to man to decide. Thus, the *Bas Kol* was irrelevant.

When G'd gave the Torah at Sinai to the Jewish people, it was meant to be processed by the human mind within the parameters of the thirteen methodologies of interpretation given by G'd at Sinai. By employing the methodologies ordained at Sinai, man is able to interpret the Torah and arrive at the true intention of G'd. This is the basis for Rebbe Yehoshua's statement, "*Lo bashamayim he* – Torah is not in heaven!" Regardless of the genius of an individual or the cogency of his position,

if the majority assumes another position contrary to the minority, the Torah dictates that one must follow the majority rule.

The Gemara tells us, based on a verse from Psalms, that when one assumes the status of a Torah sage, which of course came about through his own initiative and application in Torah, he is permitted to waive his honor. This is because the Torah that he possesses is considered "his Torah" that he achieved through his toil. Thus, the Torah that one possesses, since it came about through his own processing and application of himself, no longer resides in heaven, but rather is integrated into the realm of man.

King David had two serious antagonists – Achitofel who advised Avshalom to kill his own father, King David, and Doieg H'Adomi. Doieg was the greatest Torah genius of his generation, yet he despised King David. He enraged King Saul against David and because of his incitement, the entire community of Nove was killed. The Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin tells us that G'd consulted with King David regarding the Torah of Doieg H'Adomi. G'd had asked King David, "After Doieg Adomi passes away should the Torah that he expounded upon be quoted in his name?" King David responded, "There should be no memory of him." G'd then asked King David, "Should he have children that are Torah scholars?" King David replied, "He should be uprooted from the tree of life (so that he has no share in the world to come.)" Does G'd need to consult with King David regarding the predicament of Doieg? One would think that if Doieg Adomi was worthy, his Torah would be cited in his name and his children would merit to be Torah sages – and if not it would be to the contrary.

We see from this Gemara that anything that relates to the transmission or processing of Torah is to be determined by man and not G'd- based on the principle of "*Lo bashamayim he*." G'd consulted with King David because it is the Torah sage who determines how Torah will evolve and be disseminated. As a result of the Sinai event, G'd gave the Jewish people the responsibility to process His Torah within the parameters that He prescribed. The principle of "*Lo bashamayim he*" does not only apply to determining normative Jewish law but also applies to issues of proper conduct and what is to be valued regarding Torah.

Rambam writes in his introduction to *Yad Chazakah* that the Oral Law is determined by the rulings of the Torah sages of each generation. At Sinai, G'd communicated to Moshe His interpretation (Oral Law) of the Written Law. However, when the Torah sage utilizes

the methodologies and interpretations that were given to Moshe, to be applied in another setting, these rulings become part of the Oral Law. At the time of the giving of the Torah, the angels in heaven protested – “Let Your Glory remain in Heaven.” However, G’d’s intent of Creation was for man, with all of his limitations, to receive and process the Torah with his human intellect - making it “his Torah.”

## 5. *The Untainted Light of the Menorah*

Rashi in the beginning of the Portion of Beha’aloscha cites Chazal, “Why does the Torah juxtapose the portion of the celebration of the Princes (at inauguration of the Mishkan/altar) to the kindling of the Menorah?” The Midrash explains that when Aaron had seen all of the Princes participating in the celebration of the completion of the Mishkan, he was taken aback (because he felt that his exclusion was because he was not worthy). G’d explained to him that his participation is greater than that of the Princes. Aaron was given the mitzvah of kindling the Menorah.

The Midrash Tanchuma explains the juxtaposition slightly differently. The Midrash states, “The exclusion of Aaron is analogous to a king who had prepared a banquet for all of his subjects to attend with the exception of his most beloved friend. The king’s friend was saddened and felt that perhaps the king bore a grudge against him and therefore was excluded from the special celebration. After all of the days of feasting were completed, the king summoned his beloved friend and explained, “Until now I celebrated with all of your fellow countrymen, however, because of my special intimate relationship with you I wanted our celebration to be in a private setting. I wanted it to be exclusively for you to indicate to what degree I value our relationship.”

It is interesting to note that over the seven days of Sukkos, seventy oxen were brought as sacrifices in the Bais HaMikdash (Temple) to correspond to the seventy root nations of the world. On Shemini Atzeres, which immediately follows Sukkos, a single ox was brought to correspond to the Jewish people. G’d wanted their offering to be brought exclusively to be separate from the others. This indicates the special relationship that G’d has with the Jewish people. Similarly, the relationship which G’d has with the Jewish people is not comparable to the relationship between Himself and the Levites/Aaron. The love that G’d has for Aaron and his tribe (Levyim) was valued at a special level because they were not tainted with the Golden Calf. They were the only tribe who did not participate in that sin.

The Midrash continues, “G’d said to Moshe to accept the gifts from the twelve tribes. The tribe of Levi did not participate. However, once the inauguration of the Mishkan was complete G’d said, “Until now all of the tribes were involved in the inauguration for themselves, now you (Aaron and the Levyim) should have your own exclusive celebration. This will be the kindling of the Menorah. Thus, G’d said, **“Speak to Aaron and say to him: When you kindle the lamps...”**

Ramban asks, “Why did G’d need to console Aaron by giving him the mitzvah of kindling the Menorah? He officiated in many other capacities in the Mishkan/Bais HaMikdash, which were exclusive to him. For example, no other person could have officiated in the Mishkan other than the Kohen. In addition, no other individual could have officiated on Yom Kippur other than the High Priest (Aaron). Furthermore, the participation/contribution of the Princes was a unique momentary event, while Aaron’s service in the Mishkan was ongoing. Why then was Aaron taken aback for not being included?”

We find that before passing away, Moshe blessed the Tribes of Israel. The blessing that he had given to his own tribe, the Tribe of Levi, was that they be the ones to transmit the laws to the Jewish people. Because the Tribe of Levi was untainted by the sin of the Golden Calf, they were considered the pure/unhindered conduit for the transmission of the Torah. Thus, the Kohanim/Levyim were the equivalent of the most beloved and intimate friend of the king. The purpose of Creation and the Jewish people was for the fulfillment of the Torah. In order to bring about this ultimate objective, The Torah can only be effective in its purest form. This was only possible through the Tribe of Levi. The Gemara in Tractate Bava Basra tells us that the Menorah represents the Oral Law. Its kindling draws all the spiritual influences of illumination that are necessary for the Torah to be processed accurately. This responsibility was given to Aaron, the High Priest. The value of the kindling of the Menorah, in terms of its function, is unrelated to the other areas in which the Kohen and the Levi officiated (such as the service of Yom Kippur/the Day of Atonement and the daily sacrifices that were brought in the Temple). The spiritual lifeline of the Jewish people lies in the hands of the Kohen through the kindling of the Menorah. Thus, Aaron was told, “your participation is greater than theirs. You will be responsible for the lighting of the Menorah which is the ultimate gift reserved for the most beloved of G’d.”