

Yad Avraham Institute
Weekly Torah Commentaries Series
Acharei-Kedoshim

April 22, 2010

Sponsored by:

Roberta and Robert Hadi

In Loving Memory of Robert's Father

Yehekel Ben Daniel

May his neshama have an aliyah

Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

<i>Inside This Week's Edition</i>	<u>Page</u>
<i>1. Meriting G'd's Assistance</i>	2
<i>2. Rooting Oneself in G'd</i>	2
<i>3. Israel, Through You I Will Be Glorified</i>	3
<i>4. G'd's Vindication of the Jewish People</i>	4
<i>5. Circumcision, the all Encompassing Mitzvah</i>	4
<i>6. The Mechanism That Is Needed to Restore Existence</i>	5

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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Yad Avraham Institute
New York
April 22, 2010

B"H

Acharei-Kedoshim

Presented by
Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*
Dean

1. Meriting G'd's Assistance

The Torah states, "**You shall be holy...**" The Midrash cites a verse from Psalms, " 'May He dispatch your help from holiness and from Zion shall you be supported.' What is the meaning of 'May He dispatch your help from holiness?' As a result of the sanctity of one's actions one will merit Divine Assistance. What is the meaning of 'and from Zion shall you be supported?' Based on how meticulously and perfectly one fulfills the mitzvos, one will merit that degree of Support. Thus, Divine Assistance is determined by the degree of sanctity of one's deed as well as the meticulousness of one's action. "

We see from the Midrash that mitzvah performance alone is not sufficient to merit Divine Assistance. It is the manner in which the mitzvah is performed that will determine its value. Every Shabbos and Yom Tov we supplicate G'd to "Sanctify us through His mitzvos." Although one does fulfill the mitzvos, which are innately holy, one does not necessarily become sanctified through them.

The Torah states, "**Hashem spoke to Moshe saying – Speak to the entire assembly of the Children of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for holy am I, Hashem your G'd.**" The basis and source for the holiness of the Jew is his association with G'd. As we see from the verse, G'd wants the Jew to act in a context of holiness because He is holy. One's holiness is rooted in his relationship with G'd. Although one may perform a mitzvah in a meticulous manner, if the individual is not sufficiently worthy, the mitzvah will not sanctify him. On Shabbos and Yom Tov, which are days of Mercy, we supplicate G'd that despite our unworthiness, He should allow us, through His Attribute of Mercy, to become sanctified and thus allow us to merit our portion in Torah. As the Torah states, "**But you who cleave to Hashem, your G'd, - you are alive today.**" One's existence and

vibrancy is determined by one's degree of being rooted in G'd, which is based upon his relationship with the Divine. However, during the week we do not make this special request in our Amidah (Silent Prayer) because the weekday period is not necessarily a time of Mercy.

Rambam writes in the Laws of Repentance that before one repents, one is abominable, detestable, and despised by G'd. Therefore, when the sinner performs the mitzvos, G'd rejects them and throws them back at him because he is not desirable. However, after the sinner repents he becomes beloved, precious, and special to G'd. This is when G'd will embrace one's mitzvos, thus allowing his mitzvah performance to sanctify him. This is the meaning of the words of King David in Psalms, "May He dispatch your help from holiness and from Zion shall you be supported."

2. Rooting Oneself in G'd

The Midrash states, "G'd said to the Jewish people, 'As long as the Temple stands, when you bring sacrifices within it, they will give you atonement.' How is one atoned if the Temple no longer stands? One needs to engage in Torah study, because its words are the equivalent of the sacrifices. The words of Torah will bring about atonement. As the Prophet states, 'Take to you the words (of the Torah) and you will return to G'd.' The Torah is the equivalent of every classification of sacrifice. During the time of the Temple, they had poured wine libations on the altar, so too is the Torah compared to wine. As it states in Proverbs, 'You shall drink the wine which I poured.' They had brought bread on the altar, so too is the Torah compared to bread. As it states, 'What is the bread of the Jew? It is the Torah.' As they brought oil to the altar, so too is the Torah compared to oil. As it states, 'Your garments should always be white and oil should not be lacking from your head.' (Meaning one should always be engaged in Torah study)." Presently, that we no longer have the Temple, the only way one can

achieve atonement is by engaging in Torah study, which is the equivalent of all the sacrifices.

The Gemara in Tractate Zevachim tells us that if one brings an offering without making a verbal confession, his offering is considered as an “abomination.” In order for a sacrifice to bring about atonement it must be predicated on one recognizing his failing, which can only be appreciated when one reaches a level of humility before G’d. The sacrifice alone is not sufficient to atone on behalf of the individual. If Torah study is the equivalent of bringing sacrifices, it is logical to assume that the Torah study alone is not sufficient to bring about atonement. One must also engage in Torah with a sense of humility and negation in order for it to have the desired effect of atonement. What is innate in Torah study (with the proper mindset) that brings about atonement?

The Gemara in Tractate Kiddushin states, “Great is the study of Torah because it brings to actualization (of mitzvos).” Torah study has the innate ability to motivate a Jew regarding his spiritual development, when it is studied properly. Chazal tell us that Torah study is the equivalent of all the mitzvos combined. Contained within the spirituality of Torah study is the spirituality of every mitzvah. This is the reason that Torah study motivates the Jew to actualize mitzvos that he had not yet even come upon. Since the Torah contains within it all of the spirituality of the sacrifices, its study in a proper manner is the equivalent of bringing all of the sacrifices. Therefore, when one studies Torah as prescribed it brings about atonement.

The Zohar writes, “The Jewish people, the Torah, and G’d are one.” Meaning, the Jew’s relevance and capacity to acquire Torah and his relationship with G’d are intertwined. The degree to which one engages in Torah will determine the degree that one cleaves to G’d because it is His Wisdom. Reb Chaim of Volozhin explains that the concept of sin “chet” is “(spiritual) deficiency.” When one sins, he becomes distanced from G’d. This distance creates a spiritual vacuum. However, when one engages in Torah study, he is reconnecting to G’d. By doing so, he becomes part of the Omnipotent One. Thus, his study closes the schism that was caused by his sin. This is the result of atonement. Just as the bringing of sacrifices with the proper intent allows the individual to reattach to G’d so too does engaging in Torah study with the proper intent.

The Gemara in Tractate Succah states, “I (G’d) created the evil inclination, and the Torah as its antidote.” Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that Torah only functions as an antidote to the evil inclination when it is

studied with a pure intent (*l’shmah*). Since Torah study is a spiritual endeavor that counters and incapacitates evil, which permeates one’s physicality, one must negate his self-interest in order for the Torah to be effective. However, if one is lacking the element of purity, it will not have the effect of an antidote. Similarly, in order for Torah study to be the equivalent of all the sacrifices it must be studied with a pure intent.

3. Israel, Through You I Will Be Glorified

The Torah states, “**Hashem spoke to Moshe saying – Speak to the entire assembly of the Children of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for holy am I, Hashem your G’d.**” The Midrash states, “G’d said to the Jewish people, ‘Before I created the world, the angels would praise and sanctify Me through you. They would say, ‘Blessed is Hashem, the G’d of Israel...’ When Adam was created, the angels asked G’d, ‘Is this the one to whom we refer when we give You praise?’ G’d said to them, ‘No, he is a thief.’ As it states, **‘He ate of the tree...’** When Noah came into existence, the angels asked, ‘Is this the one?’ G’d responded, ‘No, he is a drunkard.’ As it states, **‘He drank of the wine and became intoxicated...’** When Avraham came into existence, the angels asked, ‘Is this the one?’ G’d replied, ‘No, he is the convert from which Yishmael comes.’ When Yitzchak came into being, the angels asked, ‘Is this the one?’ G’d replied, ‘No, he loves My enemy.’ As it states, **‘Yitzchak loved Esav...’** When Yaakov came into existence, they asked, ‘Is this the one?’ G’d replied, ‘Yes.’ As it states, **‘Your name shall not always be called Yaakov, Israel shall be your name.’** The Jewish people carry his name ‘Israel’ as they are called ‘The children of Israel.’ At that moment, G’d sanctified the Jewish people for His Name. G’d said to the Jewish people, Israel, through you I will be glorified.’ ‘You were sanctified by Me before the world was created, therefore you must be holy because I am holy.’” It is when the Jew emulates and reflects His profile, which is spiritual, G’d is glorified through the Jewish people. However, if the Jew does not choose to assume a spiritual posture, then G’d will not be glorified through His people.

The Torah states in the Portion of Bereishis, “**Let us make Man in Our image, in our form.**” Since man was created by G’d to reflect His image, the angels asked G’d when Adam came into existence “is the one to whom we refer when we give Your Praise?” However, G’d told them that he was not the one, despite the fact that he reflected His image. Because he ate of the Tree his spirituality was deficient. Noah was initially considered

to be the one because he had found special favor in the eyes of G'd because of his dimension of spirituality. However, he was deficient. Avraham, despite the fact that he introduced monotheism into existence and dedicated himself selflessly to its espousal, he was not the one because of the deficiency of Yishmael. Yitzchak is referred to as the "unblemished offering" because he gave himself to be sacrificed at the Akeidah for the sake of G'd. Nevertheless, he was deficient because he loved his son Esav. However, Yaakov being the one who fully reflected G'd, because he did not possess any spiritual defect was the one through which G'd identified Himself. As it states, **"Yaakov was the perfect man who dwelt in the tent (of Torah)."**

The Torah states, **"Yaakov descended to Egypt with seventy souls (*shivim nefesh*)."** The word "souls" is written in the singular because although there were seventy individuals, they were the equivalent of one (people) in the spiritual sense. Rabbeinu Bachya writes that because of Yaakov's spiritual distinction that he and his family are reflected in the spiritual realm. Just as Yaakov had seventy children that descended from four of his wives so too are there are four groups of angels that encircle the Holy Throne of G'd. The four groups of angels are comprised of seventy angels. Just as these seventy angels emanate from G'd so too do the seventy souls emanate from Yaakov. G'd is therefore glorified through Israel because Yaakov reflects the spiritual infrastructure of G'd and His realm. Since the Jewish people assume the classification of "Israel" as the progeny of Yaakov, who is "Israel" so too they must emulate the spirituality of G'd to reflect that profile.

4. G'd's Vindication of the Jewish People

The Midrash cites a verse from Yishaya, " 'G'd is elevated with Justice...' When does G'd become exalted in this world? It is when he judges the nations of the world. As it states, 'G'd convenes and stands to judge the nations..' The verse states in Daniel, 'G'd cleanses Himself from the idolaters and gives them reward for the small good deeds that they had done.' Why does G'd give the idolaters reward? It is so that they will not have any claim to the world to come. They will have no basis for vindication and merit. As it states in Yishaya, 'After G'd will confirm that they received their just reward, He will judge them (for oblivion).' At that moment G'd will be exalted and 'the Holy G'd will be sanctified through charity (tzedakah)..' What is the meaning of this? G'd will be sanctified through His Benevolence to the Jewish people. When they will be judged, He will come to their defense. As it states, 'I will speak in righteous defense of

the Jewish people to bring about salvation.' It is through this that G'd is sanctified. It states, 'At the end of time I will sanctify Myself through you (the Jewish people).'" How is G'd sanctified through the Jewish people?

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we say in our prayers, "You should give honor to Your people." Are the Jewish people honor seekers? The Commentators explain that throughout the millennia the Jewish people have sacrificed their lives for the sake of the glory of G'd. Because they are His people, the Jewish people have been persecuted and killed throughout the generations by the nations of the world. We ask G'd to give His people honor by allowing the nations of the world at the end of time to understand that all of those who had suffered and sacrificed did so because G'd's Glory has the ultimate value. When the nations will come upon this realization at the moment of truth they will understand what the Jewish people had done. They will realize that the Jewish people were the victims of the perpetrators of evil. The Jewish people will be seen as the truly righteous. It is then that G'd will be sanctified through the Jewish people because their unlimited sacrifice throughout the ages.

The Jewish people, despite all of the suffering that they experience, if they continue to adhere to the dictate of the Torah and maintain their faith, it will ultimately bring about the greatest sanctification and glorification of G'd's Name. The Jew's behavior must demonstrate to the world that he is bound by the spiritual and is not an intellectual animal.

5. Circumcision, the all Encompassing Mitzvah

The Torah states, **"When a woman conceives and gives birth to a male...On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised."** The Midrash states, "The Torah does not allude in any way that one should incur any financial costs regarding circumcision. Let us understand to what degree the Jewish people esteem the mitzvos. They go to great extents to fulfill the mitzvos and rejoice through them. G'd said, 'Because you keep My mitzvos and rejoice through them, I will increase the joy in your lives.'" It seems from the Midrash that the rejoicing of the Jewish people regarding the mitzvos is not limited to circumcision. However, based on the Gemara in Tractate Menachos, it appears that the special joy of the Jew is unique to the mitzvah of circumcision. In addition, the Gemara in Tractate Shabbos tells us that the mitzvah of circumcision remains prevalent and intact among the Jewish people because it was always performed with Joy.

The Gemara in Tractate Menachos tells us that when King David was in the bathhouse, he became distraught because he realized that in that setting he was detached from mitzvos. However, when he saw his circumcision he rejoiced saying, "I rejoice over your statements/dictates as if I have come upon great spoils." From King David's words, it is clearly indicated that there is something unique and special about the mitzvah of circumcision that causes an exceptional sense of joy.

The verse states, **"When a woman conceives and gives birth to a male..."** Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh asks, "Why does the Torah need to mention the fact that the woman conceives and then gives birth to a male. Is it not evident that if she gave birth that she had conceived?" He explains that the soul enters into the child at the time of conception. Thus, the child's essence and potential is determined at the time of conception. The Torah is stating that when a woman conceives, it is as if she had given birth. It is only a question of time for the child to develop into what he is destined to be.

The male that is conceived and born after nine months is born with a foreskin. Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that when Adam was created by G'd it was without a foreskin. Only after he had eaten of the Tree of Knowledge that the foreskin developed and caused a covering of his male organ. Since the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge contained within it the element of "evil" it expressed itself in Adam through the foreskin. It is the representation of every form of impurity that came into existence. Thus, the foreskin is an impediment for the child to actualize his spiritual potential because it suppresses and denies the child his spirituality. The mitzvah of circumcision was given to the Jew in order to correct and restore him to a state that has a semblance of Adam before he had eaten of the Tree of Knowledge. This would thus allow the Jew to develop and advance in the spiritual realm as he was meant to.

When the circumcision is performed, what actually is occurring is giving the child relevance to every aspect of his spirituality, which is the equivalent of all the mitzvos combined. Thus, the joy associated with circumcision is the combined joy of all the mitzvos. This is the reason King David became ecstatic when he looked at his circumcision and said, "I rejoice over all of Your dictates as if I have come upon great spoils." At that moment, he had an understanding and appreciation that his entire spirituality was contingent upon his circumcised state. His relevance to G'd was due to his circumcision.

6. The Mechanism That Is Needed to Restore Existence

The Midrash tells us that there was a dialogue between Rebbe Akiva and Tornistropis, the Roman governor of Jerusalem (who was the one who ultimately had Rebbe Akiva put to death); "Tornistropis had asked Rebbe Akiva, 'Whose accomplishments are more perfect – G'd's or man's?' Rebbe Akiva responded, 'Man's accomplishments are more perfect.' Tornistropis asked, 'Can man replicate the creation of heaven and earth?' Rebbe Akiva replied, 'We are not discussing something that is beyond the human capacity. Rather, regarding something that is relevant to man, it is man's accomplishments that are more perfect.' Tornistropis asked, 'Why do you Jews circumcise yourselves?' Rebbe Akiva replied, 'I understood from the very beginning that this was the intent of your question. It is because of this that I responded that man's accomplishments are more perfect than G'd's.' Rebbe Akiva then placed before him sheaves of wheat and fully baked loaves of bread. He said, 'The sheaves of wheat are the handiwork of G'd and the finished loaves of bread are the product of man's accomplishment. Which of the two is more perfect? The unprocessed sheaves of wheat or the finished loaves of bread?' Tornistropis replied, 'If G'd intended the Jew to be circumcised, why did He not create him to be born in a circumcised state?' Rebbe Akiva responded, 'G'd gave the Jewish people the mitzvos in order to perfect themselves and be purged from impurity. As it states in Psalms, 'The Word of G'd purges and perfects ...' G'd presented man with an imperfect world and gave the Torah to the Jewish people in order to facilitate its perfection.'"

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that Adam was initially created without a foreskin; however, as a result of partaking of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, which was evil, it developed. The foreskin was a direct outgrowth of the impurity that Adam had brought within himself. The foreskin, which is a covering of the male organ, represents impurity and spiritual blockage. G'd gave the Jewish people the mitzvah of circumcision to remove the foreskin, which is the impediment to their spirituality. Thus, the mitzvah of circumcision was given to the Jew to facilitate his perfection. It was only because of the failing of Adam that this mitzvah was necessary. G'd's initial Handiwork contained no impurity. It was Adam, who through transgressing His Will, assimilated impurity into existence. Consequently, G'd endowed the Jewish people with the mitzvos of the Torah in order to spiritually rehabilitate and perfect the world that had been spiritually putrefied with the evil of the Tree of Knowledge.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh continues, “The negative commandments are intended to remove the illness of the soul. The positive commandments are intended to enlighten and illuminate the soul. As a result of the sin of Adam, the illumination of the soul was darkened. By adhering to the negative commandments of the Torah, the blemish is rehabilitated; however, illumination does not return to the soul. By fulfilling the positive commandments, the soul is illuminated. As King Solomon states in Proverbs (Mishlei), ‘*Neir mitzvah v’Torah ohr* – the mitzvah is the fuel and the Torah is the light/illuminator.’” Since man was the one who brought darkness upon himself, it is therefore incumbent upon him, through the observance of the mitzvos to bring about illumination. However, one must first remove himself from evil before engaging in good. As King David writes, ‘Remove yourself from evil and do good...’

G’d had commanded Adam not to eat from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil because it contained within it every element of evil that exists. In order to counteract the impurity that was infused into existence, G’d gave the Jewish people 365 negative commandments. Every one of the negative commandments addresses another aspect of evil that was unleashed into the world by Adam. Maharal of Prague explains that 365 is the number that represents the order of existence. Just as the solar year is defined as 365 days, which is the amount of time the Earth needs to make a complete rotation around the sun, so too do the 365 negative commandments restore the order of man and existence- thus, giving existence a capacity to advance spiritually.

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 – Path of the Just
6:45 -7:25 am	Talmud—Tractate Makkos
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna - Rabbi Rovner
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi- Bava Basra
2:00pm	Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

11:30 – 12:30pm	Talmud: Chagigah Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 th 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: Chagigah Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 th FL.) Enter on 54 th Street
1:00—2:00 pm	Rambam Hilchos Talmud Torah Location: Yad Avraham

Thursday

11:00 –12:00pm	Duties of The Heart Location: Yad Avraham
12:30 – 1:30 pm	Talmud: Chagigah Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 th FL)