

Yad Avraham Institute
WEEKLY TORAH COMMENTARY SERIES

Parshas Vayikra

March 22, 2007

Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

<i>Inside This Week's Edition</i>	<u>Page</u>
1. <i>The Torah Sage's Commonality with an Angel</i>	2
2. <i>Converting the Finite into the Infinite</i>	3
3. <i>The Cause of Entitlement</i>	3
4. <i>The Value of Self-Negation</i>	4
5. <i>What Seems to be Ordinary Could Truly Be Special</i>	5

Previous Topics:

Torah, the Purifying Factor for the Jew
 Moshe's Association with the Golden Calf
 The Manner in which One Creates Advocates
 The Basis for the Sin is the Basis for the Correction
 The All-Encompassing Characteristic of the Jew
 The Evolution of Holiness

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.

If you would like to receive this Weekly Torah Commentary Series by email

Please call 212-371-9555 or email:

info@yadavraham.org

TUNE IN TO OUR LIVE VIDEO BROADCAST OF CLASSES

www.yadavraham.org

Parshas Vayikra

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

Dean

1. The Torah Sage's Commonality with an Angel

The Torah states, **“He (G'd) called to Moshe...”** The Midrash cites a verse from Psalms, “Bless G'd His angels mighty in strength (*geborei koach*) that do His bidding to obey the voice of His word.” The Midrash explains, “Who are the angels that bless G'd? They are Moshe and Aaron who are identified as ‘angels.’ As the verse states regarding Moshe, ‘G'd sent an angel to take them out of Egypt...’ As it also states in Divrei HaYomim (Chronicles), ‘They disgraced the angels of G'd...’”

The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos tells us that one of the reasons that the First Temple was destroyed was because the people of the generation disgraced the Torah sages. To prove this point the Gemara cites the verse in Chronicles- ‘They disgraced the ‘angels of G'd...’- referring to the Torah sages. From these verses, we see that Moshe, Aaron and Torah sages are identified as “angels of G'd.” An angel is an agent who carries out the bidding of G'd. When G'd Will an agent/spiritual force to carry out His Word, he is referred to as “an angel.” However when a mortal appoints an agent he is not referred to as an angel, but rather as “an agent (*shliach*)”. Moshe and Aaron are identified as the angels of G'd because in every moment of their existence they functioned as G'd's agents. They were appointed by G'd to do His bidding. It is interesting to note that although Torah sages are not directly appointed by G'd, as Moshe and Aaron were, they are also referred to as “angels” – as the verse states, “They disgraced the ‘angels of G'd.” Evidently, if one is considered a true Torah sage, one who is genuine and lives his life in conformity with the Torah, then he is quantified as an angel.

Rambam writes in the Laws of the Fundamentals of Torah that an angel does not deviate from the Word of G'd, not because he has no choice, but rather because of his profound level of clarity. This clarity causes him to have an appreciation of G'd that compels him to do His Will. He is not a “spiritual robot.” Similarly, the Torah sage does not deviate from His Will because of his clarity that he gains through his intense Torah study. As the

Gemara states, ‘I (G'd) have created an evil inclination and the Torah as its antidote.’”

The evil inclination is the basis of confusion and lack of clarity. It is enmeshed in every individual and creates conflicts of interest, which obscure truth and subsequently, cause the individual to deviate from the path of Torah. The only way to dispel and incapacitate this force is through Torah study. Thus, the one who is immersed in Torah will be able to gain a level of clarity to do the Will of G'd without distraction. This is the Torah sage who is identified by the verse as “the angel of G'd.” He is one who is continuously engaged seeing the Hand of G'd in all that exists.

Moshe and Aaron only merited to be considered “angels of G'd” because they had a special dimension of holiness and clarity. When Yaakov, our Patriach, appointed agents to engage with his brother Esav, the Torah identifies his agents as “angels.” There is a question in the Midrash whether the agents that Yaakov had sent were actual angels or mortals. According to the opinion that they were actually spiritual angels, it is a reflection of the dimension of Yaakov's spirituality. Yaakov is quantified by the Torah as the person who personifies Torah – as it states **“Yaakov, the perfect man who dwells in the tent (of Torah).”** Because Yaakov was fully invested in doing the Will of G'd, he was in a position to utilize G'd's angels. However according to the opinion that his agents were mortals, why then does the Torah use the term “angels” rather than “agents.” As we had explained, the term “angel” is utilized when the agent is a representative of G'd. Although the agents of Yaakov were mere mortals, since they represented Yaakov, who was imbued with spirituality, they are referred to as “angels” as if they were the agents of G'd.

If one is associated with a Torah sage and carries out his will, he in essence is carrying out the Will of G'd – similar to an angel. There is a positive commandment to revere G'd – *“es Hashem Elokecha teera.”* The word “es” although in the Hebrew language has no interpretation unto itself, when it associated with something it functions

as an adjunct to the subject matter being discussed. Who is the individual who G'd would want to be revered as Himself? Rebbe Akiva explains that it is the Torah sage. It is because the Torah sage is an embodiment of the Torah and lives his life in conformity with G'd's Will. In essence when one reveres the Torah sage, because of who he is, one is also revering G'd.

2. *Converting the Finite into the Infinite*

The Midrash cites a verse from Psalms, "Bless G'd His angels mighty in strength (*geborei koach*) that do His bidding to obey the voice of His word." The Midrash explains, "Who is considered to be mighty in strength (*geborei koach*)? It is Moshe. There was no one as mighty as he. When the Jewish people stood at Sinai, they were overwhelmed by the Voice of G'd. As the Torah states, **'If we continue to hear the Voice of G'd we will die....'** Moshe was able to hear the Voice of G'd and was not harmed. From this we learn that tzaddikim (devoutly righteous) are even greater than the most advanced angels. The greatest angel does not have the capacity to listen to the Voice of G'd – rather they stand and are overwhelmed. However, tzaddikim have the capacity to hear His Voice." Why is the tzaddik greater than the most advanced angel?

The Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin tells us that tzaddikim are greater than the angels. Reb Chaim of Volozhin z'tl explains in his work *Nefesh HaChaim* that an angel is what he is only because G'd deemed that it should be so. However a tzaddik is devoutly righteous only because he chose to be so. The Gemara in Tractate Niddah tells us that before the conception of a child an angel brings the droplet of semen before G'd. G'd pronounces upon it the destiny of that individual – poor or rich, strong or weak, wise or foolish. However, G'd does not pronounce upon it – righteous or evil. The Gemara states, "From here we see that everything is predestined by heaven, except one's fear of heaven." One's choice to become a tzaddik or evil is determined by his own initiative.

Ramchal writes in his work *Derech Hashem* (The Way of G'd) that the difference between G'd's essence and all that exists is that He is unlimited and infinite. Everything in creation, despite its dimension, is finite. If a Jew lives his life as prescribed by the Torah, he has the opportunity to become part of an infinite system, despite his limitation. There is a positive commandment of "Bo tidbuk – You shall cleave to Him..." If one is engaged in Torah study and the performance of mitzvos, he is able to cleave to G'd because he has spiritualized himself. He has

established a commonality with G'd. In addition, there is a mitzvah, "You shall walk in His ways" – meaning one should emulate G'd's characteristics. As the Gemara states, "Just as He is merciful you should be merciful; just as He is gracious you should be gracious etc." Ramchal explains that just as when one grafts a branch onto a tree, although initially it was a separate entity, if the branch becomes part of the tree, eventually it will produce its fruits. Similarly, the Jew has the capacity to attach himself to G'd and become part of His infinite system by following His prescription, which is Torah and mitzvos.

Moshe was able to cleave to G'd to a point that no other human being was able to achieve. Because Moshe was the most humble person who ever lived, he was able to fully attach himself to G'd. He had negated himself to a point of nonexistence. Every fiber of his being was fully dedicated to G'd. Therefore there was no hindrance of "self" to interfere to any degree with his integration into G'd's system. If there is even a trace of self-interest/ego, it would undermine and weaken one's attachment.

Since Moshe was fully spiritualized, and became fully integrated into the infinite - G'd Himself - he was able to withstand His Voice without difficulty. Every other human being who has ever existed or will exist, because he has a trace of "self" will not be able to cleave to G'd as Moshe. Therefore Moshe is the only one who can be quantified as the "geborei koach" – mighty in strength. He was able to hear the voice of G'd and not be overwhelmed. Every Jew has the potential to become part of the infinite to the degree that he chooses – which is through his dedication to spirituality/ Torah study and mitzvah performance.

3. *The Cause of Entitlement*

The Midrash cites the words of King Solomon (Proverbs), "The arrogance of a person lowers him. The one with a lowly spirit (humility) will bring about honor. The one who pursues honor (prestige), honor will flee from him. The one who flees from honor, honor will pursue him." King Shaul fled from honor. He had said to them, 'I am not worthy/qualified to be the king. Consult the Urim v'Tumim (Breastplate worn by the High Priest). If G'd says that I am qualified, then I will be agreeable to assume the position of king. Otherwise I feel that I am unworthy.' G'd was consulted and it was deemed that Shaul was the most qualified person to be King of Israel." The Midrash continues to explain that Moshe was another example of one who fled from honor, yet honor pursued him. He attempted to extricate himself from assuming the

position of Redeemer of Israel. He had entered into a seven-day dialogue with G'd in which he repeatedly claimed that he was not the one suited for the position. G'd, nevertheless, appointed him as the Redeemer because he was the most worthy. Why does the arrogant/unqualified person believe that he is the most qualified and the most qualified/humble person believe that he is not qualified?

King Solomon, the wisest person who ever lived, explains that the basis for the unworthy person believing that he is qualified is rooted in arrogance. Conversely the one who is truly qualified is the humble person who does not believe that he is worthy. The arrogant person has an overwhelming sense of entitlement, which makes him feel qualified/deserving. Whenever the arrogant person sins, he justifies it by rationalizing the action- thus minimizing its severity. Therefore the arrogant person, although he may have a seriously flawed spiritual record, he does not see it as problematic. In contrast, the humble person, who does not have a sense of entitlement, if he should sin he appreciates the failing to its fullest. To him, there is no basis to justify the wrong that he had perpetrated. Therefore his spiritual failings, as minute as they may be, render him unworthy. Thus, the arrogant person who believes he is qualified is in fact unworthy, while the humble person who is the most qualified, believes he is not worthy. In order to give the arrogant person a sense of his reality, G'd causes that the more he pursues honor, it flees from him.

One can only develop an appreciation for one's own spiritual failings through Torah study. The Gemara in Tractate Taanis tells us that if one sees an astute young Torah sage in a state of anger due to witnessing a transgression of the law, one should give him the benefit of the doubt (see him in a positive light). The verse states, "The words of Torah are like fire." The Gemara explains that the young Torah sage is only angered because "the fire of Torah is burning within him." The young Torah sage truly appreciates the severity of the wrong more than the average person. Rashi explains that Torah study gives one a depth and breadth of heart which broadens and deepens his understanding of reality. The Torah sage perceives the true value of doing a mitzvah and the severity of transgression. It is not only an abstract concept. As fire illuminates, so too when one engages sufficiently in Torah it will illuminate. It is only through Torah study that one can appreciate one's own spiritual failings.

4. The Value of Self-Negation

The Portion of Vayikra outlines the sacrifices that were brought by the Jewish people in the Mishkan and ultimately in the Bais Ha'Mikdash (Temple). The Portion discusses a "*korban nedavah* – voluntary offering." The Torah states, "**the man who brings an offering from himself...**" What is the meaning of the term "from himself"? It is evident that the offering that one brings is from himself.

Sforno explains the term "from himself" to mean that one gives of himself through verbal confession and total submission. As the verse in Prophets states, "We will pay the oxen with our lips" and as Dovid HaMelech states in Psalms, "The offerings of *Elokeem* (G'd) is a broken spirit. " The Gemara in Tractate *Menochos* states that when one verbalizes the portion of the sin offering in the Torah, or any other offering it is valued as if he had brought that particular offering. However, there is a prerequisite that the person must state it with submission and remorse for the wrong that he had done.

Rabbeinu Yonah in his work *Shaarei Teshuvah* (the Gates of Repentance) explains the words of Dovid, "The offering of *Elokeem* (G'd) is a broken spirit." The appellation of "*Elokeem*" is a reference to G'd when He is relating to the individual in the context of Justice. Within the context of the Attribute of Justice, there is no room for *teshuvah* (repentance). *Teshuvah* emanates from the Attribute of Mercy. However, Dovid reveals to us that if one's level of remorse is to the point that it causes him to have "a broken spirit," even the Attribute of Justice is willing to accept that offering. One is only able to achieve this level of repentance if one truly recognizes the dimension of his failing. This only comes about through humility.

The Gemara in Tractate *Zevachim* tells us that if one brings an offering without confession, his offering is considered as an "abomination" - "*zevach reshaaim toaivah*- the offering of a *rasha* (evil person) is considered an abomination." An offering without proper confession is considered an abomination because if the person did not confess his sin, it is only an indication that he does not truly recognize the wrong that he has done. The person however believes that he has discharged his obligation properly because he brought the offering (albeit in a perfunctory manner). This false sense of resolution emanates from his lack of humility.

The *Shulchan Aruch* (The Code of Jewish Law) rules that since we no longer have a Bais Ha'Mikdash

(Temple) to bring our offerings, *tefillah* (prayer) compensates for the offering. As one must have proper intent when bringing the offering in the Temple, one must be focused on what one is saying (in prayer) without any distraction or improper thought. Just as an improper thought invalidated the offering, so too does it render the *tefillah* (prayer) ineffective. The *Mechaber* (the author of the Code of Jewish Law – Rav Yosef Karo) states, “One must pray to G’d in a beseeching manner.” He explains that one must come before G’d as a poor man comes to seek out alms for his support. Unless one assumes this posture, his *tefillah* is ineffective. The same failing (lack of humility) which causes one to refrain from confession, renders the offering invalid and prevents one from beseeching G’d as a needy person. Therefore, the *tefillah* is rendered invalid. If one prays to G’d in an arrogant or demanding manner, it is considered unacceptable.

The most important characteristic, which one must possess in order to serve G’d, is humility. It is only when one assumes this posture that he will recognize who he is not. Only then, will he realize that without G’d there is nothing. Only then G’d will accept his prayers.

5. What Seems to be Ordinary Could Truly Be Special

The Midrash states regarding the Ark, “The Ark was comprised of three boxes – two of gold and one of wood. The wooden box was placed between the two golden boxes. Bezalel (the overseer of the building of the Mishkan) then coated the edge with gold so that the Ark should be cast in gold on the inside and on the outside. What do we learn from this? A Torah sage has to be the same on the inside as he is on the outside.” Although outwardly one may conduct himself as a Torah sage, his inner feelings, values, and beliefs must be consistent with his outer demeanor.

The Midrash continues, “Although the middle box was made of wood, which is not comparable in value to gold, nevertheless it must be treated with respect because the Torah is contained within it. Also, we find this regarding the Tablets. Although the first set of Tablets was broken, the Torah tells us that it was placed into the Ark along side the second set because it needed to be treated with equal respect. This is to teach us that although a Torah scholar may be poor and impoverished he must be treated in a special manner because of the Torah contained within him.”

The Ark was the repository for Torah. The person, who is the Torah sage, is not the one who has an encyclopedic grasp of Torah, but rather, he is the one who

is permeated with Torah (on the inside and outside). Despite his proficiency in Torah, if he is lacking in this level of consistency he is not considered a Torah sage. Wood, although its value and beauty cannot be compared to gold, since it is the repository for the Torah, must be treated with special respect. Similarly, the Torah scholar who is needy/impoverished must be treated with special respect because his true value is the Torah which is contained within him.

The Gemara in Tractate Beah states a principle, “It is not the location which gives honor to the person, but rather it is the person who gives honor to the location.” This is derived from the Sinai event. At the time that the Divine Presence descended upon the Mountain, the Jewish people were told by Moshe in the Name of G’d that they were not permitted to approach the mountain because of its holy status. However, after the Divine Presence ascended from it, the Mountain reverted back to its original ordinary status and they were permitted. Since a Torah sage contains the Torah which is intrinsically holy, it causes him to assume a holy spiritual status. In addition, anyone who is associated with him will also have relevance to that spirituality.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos states, “Do not gaze upon the cask, rather what is contained within it.” If an ornate cask contains vinegar, regardless of its beauty, the vinegar which is contained within it is still vinegar (valueless). However, if one possesses an ordinary earthen cask, which contains an aged and precious wine, although the receptacle does not reflect what it contains, the wine is still considered special. Similarly, one who may seem to be a Torah scholar, because of his demeanor, does not necessarily reflect his essence. An individual who seems to be ordinary and simple may be the truly special Torah sage, because he is the repository of Torah.