

Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1360 FEB 15TH '20 כ' שבט תש"פ

פרשת יתרו

PARSHAT YITRO

40
Years
תש"פ



SPECIAL DVAR
TORAH FOR
THE READING
OF ASERET
HADIBROT
By Rabbi Dovid
Miller
page 24



OU KASHRUT
PAGE
By Rabbi Ezra
Friedman
page 46

"וּפְלֵ-הָעַם רְאִים
אֶת-הַקּוֹלֹת
וְאֶת-הַלַּפִּידִם"

YERUSHALAYIM IN/OUT TIMES FOR SHABBAT PARSHAT YITRO

Candles 4:49PM • Havdala 6:03PM • Rabbeinu Tam 6:42PM

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



CANDLES	YITRO	HAVDALA	MISHPATIM
4:49	Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	6:03	4:55 6:08
5:07	Aza area (Netivot, S'derot et al)	6:05	5:13 6:11
5:05	Beit Shemesh / RBS	6:04	5:11 6:09
5:04	Gush Etzion	6:03	5:10 6:08
5:05	Raanana/ Tel Mond/ Herzliya/ K. Saba	6:04	5:11 6:09
5:04	Modi'in / Chashmona'im	6:03	5:10 6:09
5:05	Netanya	6:04	5:11 6:09
5:04	Be'er Sheva	6:05	5:10 6:10
5:05	Rehovot	6:04	5:11 6:10
4:49	Petach Tikva	6:04	4:55 6:09
5:04	Ginot Shomron	6:03	5:10 6:08
4:53	Haifa / Zichron	6:03	5:00 6:08
5:03	Gush Shiloh	6:02	5:09 6:08
5:03	Tel Aviv / Giv'at Shmuel	6:04	5:09 6:10
5:04	Giv'at Ze'ev	6:03	5:10 6:08
5:05	Chevron / Kiryat Arba	6:03	5:10 6:09
5:07	Ashkelon	6:05	5:12 6:11
5:05	Yad Binyamin	6:04	5:11 6:10
4:51	Tzfat / Bik'at HaYarden	6:00	4:57 6:06
5:00	Golan	5:59	5:06 6:05

Rabbeinu Tam (J'lem) - 6:42pm • next week - 6:48pm

OTHER Z'MANIM

JERUSALEM



RANGES ARE 11 DAYS, WED-SHABBAT
17-27 SH'VAT (FEB 12-22, '20)

Earliest Talit & T'filin	5:25-5:34am
Sunrise	6:15-6:24½am
Sof Z'man K' Sh'm'a (Magen Avraham: 8:27-8:32am)	9:03-9:09am
Sof Z'man T'fila (Magen Avraham: 9:30-9:33am)	10:00-10:03am
Chatzot (Halachic noon)	11:52½-11:53¼am
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	12:23-12:24pm
Plag Mincha	4:14-4:20½pm
Sunset (counting elevation) (based on sea level: 5:22½-5:31pm)	5:27½-5:34¼pm

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WEEKLY INSPIRATION

"When a person truly looks at the good side of others, he comes to love them deeply, without needing to rely on even a trace of flattery. For, concentrating on people's good aspects, which one always encounters, truly conceals all of the bad aspects. 'A clever man conceals disgrace.' " (Mishlei 12:16)

Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaKohen Kook zt"l, An Angel Among Men, p.503

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YITRO



STATS

17th of 54 sedras; 5th of 11 in Sh'mot

Written on 138 lines in a Torah, (46th)

15 Parshiyot; 4 open, 11 closed

75* p'sukim - ranks 47th (only 7 sedras have fewer p'sukim)

1105 words, 4022 letters - ranks 46th

Yitro is the smallest sedra in Sh'mot

*Tradition is that Yitro has 72 p'sukim, not 75. If we count DIBROT rather than p'sukim for the Aseret HaDibrot, then the number drops to 72 (from 75) and that probably explains the difference.

HOWEVER... when we read the Aseret haDibrot with TAAMEI HA'ELYON (as Dibrot), there are only 9 p'sukim/dibrot, since the first two are definitely combined. Total: 71. Go figure.



MITZVOT

Yitro contains 17 of the 613 mitzvot;

3 positive and 14 prohibitions



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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the Parsha's beginning;

(Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI; L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek & pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

KOHEN FIRST ALIYA

12 P'SUKIM - 18:1-18

[P> 18:1 (27)] Yitro, Moshe's father-in-law, hears "all that has happened" to the Children of Israel and comes to Moshe with Tzipora and Moshe's (actually, Tzipora's - that's how the Torah describes them!) two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. Moshe, Aharon, and the Elders welcome Yitro with great honor. Yitro praises G-d for all that He has done for the People.

LEVI SECOND ALIYA

11 P'SUKIM - 18:13-23

On the "following day", Yitro observes Moshe judging the People from morning until night. He offers suggestions for a more efficient system. Moshe should teach the People what G-d requires of them, and he should also handle the most difficult questions and disputes.

But the bulk of the daily judging should be assigned to qualified individuals who will be in charge of groups of ten, fifty, a hundred, and a thousand people. Yitro explains that this new system will not only make things easier for Moshe, but the people too will be benefited.

(This portion of the sedra definitely seems to have occurred after Matan Torah, even if you want to say that Yitro's original arrival was before.)

SDT In the big picture, we see that Parshat Yitro with the main description of Matan Torah precedes Mishpatim with its mundane, everyday, down-to-earth laws. Yet at the beginning of Yitro, we find this out-of-sequence portion of the Mishpatim-related concept. And at the end of Mishpatim, we have the rest of the story of Maamad Har Sinai. So which really comes first - the lofty, spiritual dimensions of Judaism, or everyday life? We can (and should) look at it as a package deal.

SHLISHI THIRD ALIYA
4 P'SUKIM - 18:24-27

Moshe accepts Yitro's suggestions and selects the judges. Commentaries point out that the actual qualifications of the judges that Moshe selected were more "modest" than Yitro had recommended. In theory, the very highest caliber person should be sought after as judge. In reality, we often have to settle for the best we can find in our society.



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Moshe sends Yitro off on his journey to Midyan (to convert his family, says Rashi).

Notice that the first three Aliyot are all part of a single parsha, the parsha of Yitro (not to be confused with weekly sedra of Yitro). Pull that parsha out of the Torah for a moment (don't worry, we'll put it right back), and the next thing we read about is Israel traveling from Refidim towards Sinai. This follows smoothly from the battle with Amalek which took place in Refidim. Sequentially, the removed parsha of the Yitro episode is not missed at all. Therefore, it seems obvious that the Yitro portion is there for its lesson value alone. Which is fine, and is how we understand the EIN SEDER MUKDAM U'M'UCHAR BATORAH phenomenon. The Torah is not just going to put things out of chronological order for no good reason.

R'VI' FOURTH ALIYA

6 P'SUKIM - 19:1-6

Here begins the Torah reading for Shavuot morning

[P> 19:1 (25)] The Torah now returns to the sequence of Y'tzi'at Mitzrayim to Matan Torah. On Rosh Chodesh Sivan (six weeks after leaving Egypt) the Children of Israel arrive at Sinai.



Worth reviewing...

In the third month following the Exodus, on THIS day, they (the Children of Israel) arrived at the Sinai Wilderness. Why THIS day; THAT day is how you tell a story. The answer is that Torah isn't a once-upon-a-time, a-long-time-ago story book. The Torah is a living guide for us, to be constantly rediscovered. Every day, each Jew should imagine him- or herself at Sinai receiving the Torah anew. Today we have come out of Egyptian bondage; today we stand at the foot of Mt. Sinai eagerly awaiting Divine Revelation, and today we commit ourselves to G-d and what He asks of us. Today is the first day of the rest of our lives - as the saying goes. The words of Torah which we learn and live should never become stale. They should be in our eyes as if TODAY we have received them. We should learn Torah and do mitzvot with the freshness and enthusiasm of a first-time experience. This too fits well with the "Yitro model". The challenge: Be a true Torah Jew all your life, for as many years as G-d gives you, but have an enthusiasm that is more common to converts and Baalei T'shuva.

After settling in at the foot of Mount Sinai, Moshe ascends to G-d (whatever that really means) and G-d tells him what he is to say to the women and men (sequence is intentional and based on the analysis of the terms Beit Yaakov and then Bnei Yisrael). A clear connection is made between G-d's having taken us out of Egypt and His taking us to Him as His Chosen People - with the condition that we follow Him and His Torah. It is

true that a Jew is a Jew regardless of his keeping the Torah or not, but it is clear that G-d has always demanded of us that we be committed to Torah and Mitzvot in order for our relationship with Him to be mutual and actively positive from both sides.

CHAMISHI 5TH ALIYA
13 P'SUKIM - 19:7-19

Moshe presents G-d's words to the Elders (and the People), who answer with a resounding "All that G-d says we will do". (Not yet with the famous Naaseh V'Nishma - that comes next week.) Moshe then tells the people to prepare for three days to receive the Torah. During this time, the Mountain was off-limits (to people and to animals). On the morning of the third day, the People gather at the foot of the mountain to the accompaniment of the supernatural sounds and sights of the Shofar, thunder, lightning, and smoke. G-d will speak to Moshe in such a manner that the People will be witness to this direct communication. When Moshe will speak, G-d will answer with a "voice" (and not just via a vision or spiritual telepathy - so that the people could be part of the experience).

SDT G-d tells Moshe that the People should "sanctify themselves today AND tomorrow". It is relatively easy to sanctify oneself on the day of the great miraculous events of Matan Torah. The challenge to each of us is to sanctify ourselves on the many tomorrows that follow. The days

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after the wondrous events... The days when our lives return to "normal". This is what being Jewish is about. Yom Kippur is special and holy. Our additional challenge is to sanctify the day after Yom Kippur. We sanctify the mundane. Therefore, there really is nothing that is actually mundane for us.

SHISHI SIXTH ALIYA

20 P'SUKIM - 19:20-20:14

G-d descends onto Har Sinai (so to speak) and calls to Moshe to join Him. G-d tells Moshe to repeat the warning against approaching the mountain. Moshe then goes down to the people to tell them G-d's words.

[S> 20:1 (1)] G-d (Elokim) speaks all the following things, saying...

What follows is/are Aseret HaDibrot, the Ten Commandments. They are comprised of 13 p'sukim which contain 14 mitzvot of the Torah's 613.

[S> 20:2 (5)] What we call the first two commandments (or sayings or statements) are combined in a single

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parsha of 5 p'sukim. They can be seen as two sides of the same coin. You must believe in G-d; you may not believe in other gods... Some Chumashim consider the ANOCHI pasuk and LO YIHYEH... to be a single pasuk. In Taamei HaElyon they are definitely joined into a single pasuk.

MITZVAWATCH

The first commandment sounds like a statement by G-d - an introductory remark, perhaps, to what follows, but is viewed by Rambam, the Chinuch, and others as a mitzva to believe in G-d [25, A1 20:2]. (And others do view it as an introductory statement.)

The second commandment contains several prohibitions related to idolatry. Specifically, not to believe in other gods [26, L1 20:3] (this mitzva includes the prohibition of having no belief at all - atheism), not making idols [27, L2 20:4], nor bowing to them (even without believing in them) [28, L5 20:5], nor worshiping idols in any manner [29, L6 20:5]. Note that this commandment deals with both the thought and actions of Avoda Zara (idolatry).

[S> 20:7 (1)] The third commandment prohibits swearing in vain [30, L62 20:7].

This is defined as (1) swearing to the truth of something that is obviously true and well-known - e.g. that the Sun is hot; (2) to swear in denial of an obvious truth - that the Moon is made of cheese. Interestingly, this is not considered a

lie or a false oath, since - hopefully - everyone knows that the Moon is not made of cheese. Only when the truth of a matter is unknown do we use the term lie and false oath. A vain oath is just as serious as a false one, so this distinction is largely academic, but it emphasizes the seriousness of being flippant in regard to swearing; (3) to swear to violate the Torah - e.g. that one will eat pork. Such an oath is immediately void since we are considered to have taken a prior oath (at Sinai) to not eat pork. Hence, the oath is in vain and is a disrespectful use of G-d's name; (4) to swear to do something that is impossible - e.g. to stay awake for a full week. The common denominator of these types of vain oaths is that they all "cheapen" the use of G-d's name and threaten the smooth functioning of society which often must rely on the seriousness of a real oath.

In addition to actual vain oaths, this prohibition is considered by some authorities to include the saying of a BRACHA L'VATALA, and its partner, a BRACHA SHE-EINO TZ'RICHA. Saying G-d's name in vain is forbidden but is not considered part of this Commandment #3. It falls under one or more other isurim.

[P> 20:8 (4)] Commandment #4 deals with Shabbat and contains the positive mitzva to remember the Shabbat with Kiddush [31, A155 20:8], and the prohibition of all manner of Melacha, specific categories of creative activities [32, L320 20:10].

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The mitzva of ZACHOR includes saying Kiddush as Shabbat enters, and Havdala as Shabbat leaves. (Officially, K&H are said in davening as a fulfillment of the Torah command, and again with wine, in fulfillment of a Rabbinic command. It's a bit more complicated than that, but this is the basic idea.) Prohibitions of Melacha are divided into 39 categories, each of which contains other related activities, usually with the same goal.

[S> 20:12 (1)] The fifth commandment is to honor one's parents [33, A210 20:12].

Grandparents, in-laws, older (or possibly oldest) brother (maybe sister too), and teachers are included in this mitzva, but with different parameters. Honor of parents is usually considered to refer to that which one does for one's parents, in contrast to reverence (fear) of parents which includes that which should not be done because it would be disrespectful.

[S> 20:13 (2/11 of the pasuk)] #6 is the prohibition of MURDER [34, L289 20:13], which is considered the antithesis of Belief in G-d, since murder directly negates creation of human being in His image.

[S> 20:13 (2/11)] Commandment #7 against ADULTERY [35, L347 20:13] is the prohibition of having relations with a married woman, but as a "chapter heading" it also points to the other forbidden relations.

[S> 20:13 (2/11)] LO TIGNOV, #8 [36,L243 20:13], which is specifically defined as kidnapping, but is also the category header of many mitzvot in the

Torah in the category of THEFT.

[S> 20:13 (5/11 of a pasuk)] #9 is the prohibition of "bearing false witness" [37, L285 20:13].

We can see in this mitzva, as well as many others, how important it is to G-d, so to speak, that we be able to function as a society. Both oaths and testimony are necessary for the establishment of TRUTH, in the absence of having direct first-hand knowledge. So much of the dealings between people involves the trust we place in each other's word, especially when backed by an oath, and in the confidence we place in the testimony of witnesses. Without these elements of our inter-personal relations, we would be incapable of functioning as a society and each of us might as well look for a cave somewhere to live as a hermit.

[S> 20:14 (4/15 of a pasuk)] #10 is the prohibition of COVETING [38, L265 20:14] sums things up in that it focuses on thoughts that can lead to all types of sins. Being part of The Big 10 points to the significance of thought, in addition to deeds. The second part of this commandment is in its own parsha...

[S> 20:14 (11/15)] specifies the prohibition of coveting one's fellow's wife, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that is his.

SH'VII SEVENTH ALIYA

9 P'SUKIM - 20:15-23

[S> 20:15 (4)] The People are awestruck

by the supernatural phenomena of the Sinai experience and they keep their distance. They ask Moshe to tell them what G-d wants rather than hearing His Voice directly.

After the second statement, the People panicked and asked Moshe to tell them what G-d wants, so that they would not hear "G-d's voice" directly. G-d agreed, on the condition that we listen to the word of the true prophet who speaks in G-d's name. (There are variant opinions)

[S> 20:19 (5)] G-d tells Moshe to remind the People that they heard G-d speak; that they shall make no graven human images (even for art) [39, L4 20:20]; they shall make an altar and offer sacrifices upon it; if the altar be of stone, its stone shall not be cut with metal tools [40,L79 20:22]. The Altar may not be approached with immodest steps [41,L80 20:23] but rather via its ramp. Maftir is last 5 p'sukim.

HAFTARA 21 P'SUKIM

YESHAYAHU 6:1-7:6, 9:5-6

Parallel to the Torah's account of the awesome experience at Sinai, this passage from Yeshayahu describes his first awe-inspiring vision of angels proclaiming Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh. Both sedra and haftara present us with "visions" of G-d's awe, majesty, and holiness. Also, in the sedra, G-d tells us that we will be to Him a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation. In the haftara we see a model of K'dusha (the angels), and also a glimpse of a potential Moshiach. ■

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THE PERSON

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB

OU Executive Vice President, Emeritus

IN THE PARSHA

Redemption

She was the daughter of Holocaust survivors, but she was not Jewish. Her parents were Polish citizens who, heroically, and at the risk of their own lives, rescued Jews from certain death. Her parents are no longer alive, but their memories are enshrined in Yad VaShem, the Holocaust memorial museum in Israel, in the pavilion reserved for righteous Gentiles.

She was a psychotherapy patient of mine about thirty years ago. I learned many things from her, including an answer to a question which arises in this week's Torah portion, *Parshat Yitro* (*Exodus* 18:1-20:23).

The question appears in the commentary of Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra on the very first verse of the Ten Commandments. The verse begins, "I am the Lord thy God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage: you shall have no other gods besides Me."

In his commentary, Ibn Ezra cites as

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המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

the source of this question his famous predecessor, Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, perhaps the greatest poet in all of Hebrew literature and the author of one of the most indispensable works of philosophy in our tradition, the *Kuzari*.

The question is simply this: "Why would God, about to reveal the very basis of the Torah, introduce Himself to those assembled at the foot of Mount Sinai as the one who 'brought you out of the land of Egypt?' Wouldn't it be more appropriate and more awe inspiring for Him to proclaim, 'I am the Lord thy God who created heaven and earth?'" "Does not the creation of the entire universe precede the Exodus from Egypt chronologically, and does it not supersede the Exodus as a wondrous and marvelous event? Would not people be more moved to obey the commandments of a God who created the entire world than they would be motivated to obey the commandments of He who merely freed a group of slaves?"

There have been several attempts to answer this question. Traditional Jewish commentators have struggled with it, and Christian students of the Bible have been hard put to justify the relevance of the Ten Commandments to all humanity, when it was addressed by God only to those whom He delivered from the land of Egypt.

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Whatever forms these many answers take, one thing is undeniable. Two aspects of God pervade the first two books of the Bible. One is the aspect of God as Creator, and the other is the aspect of God as Redeemer. *Genesis* emphasizes that God is the Lord over Nature, while *Exodus* stresses His role as the Lord of History.

This column is not the place to discuss the central dynamic of the world of nature. But it is the place to identify the central dynamic of human history: the concept of redemption, or in Hebrew, *geulah*.

But what is “redemption?” It is a common word in the religious lexicon not just of Judaism, but of its so-called daughter religions, Christianity and Islam. But what does it mean?

It was from my psychotherapy patient; let’s call her Catherine, that I first fully understood the significance of the word “redemption,” and why it was in His role as Redeemer that God chose to begin the Ten Commandments, and not in His role as Creator.

It was during a particularly emotionally charged psychotherapy session. Catherine was recounting the tragedy of her father’s life. He had been a prominent attorney in pre-war Poland. He had been interned in Auschwitz as a political prisoner because of his participation in the Polish resistance against the Nazis. After the war, he returned to his hometown, but instead of being given a hero’s welcome, he was shunned as a traitor for saving Jews. He was unable to return to his former prestigious position and chose instead to emigrate to the United States. But here he found himself unable to master a new language and was compelled to earn his livelihood as a janitor. He lived the rest of his life vicariously through his children, whom he helped obtain advanced professional educations.

As she recounted the story with great sadness, I expressed my empathy for her and spoke of individuals within my family who had had similar stories to tell after the Holocaust—to which she retorted sharply, “For you Jews, it was different. You have had a redemptive experience. You have rebuilt

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your culture, your religious communities, your educational institutions. My father had no such redemptive experience. He regained nothing of his glorious past. He died unredeemed.”

Ever since that conversation, the word “redemption” has been replete with meaning for me. It is a process by which a slave becomes free, individuals become a nation, and those who were condemned to lives of emptiness become enabled to live lives of immense significance. If God the Creator brought forth *yesh me'ayin*, something from nothing, then God the Redeemer brought forth a people from the depths of the 49th level of degradation to the exalted summit of freedom and faith.

Hence, my personal response to Yehuda Halevi's question. The Almighty prefaced the Ten Commandments with the assurance that personal redemption is a real possibility—a possibility, though, only for those who absorb the ethical and moral lessons He was about to teach in those Ten Commandments. He redeemed us once from the land of bondage, and He offered us the tools to redeem ourselves again and again throughout our lives. ■

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The Universal and the Particular

The quintessential Jewish expression of thanks, gratitude and acknowledgment is *Baruch Hashem*, meaning “Thank God,” or “Praise be to the Lord.”

Chassidim say of the Baal Shem Tov that he would travel around the little towns and villages of Eastern Europe, asking Jews how they were. However poor or troubled they were, invariably they would reply, *Baruch Hashem*. It was an instinctive expression of faith, and every Jew knew it. They might have lacked the learning of the great Talmudic scholar, or the wealth of the successful, but they believed they had much to thank God for, and they did so. When asked what he was doing and why, the Baal Shem Tov would reply by quoting the verse: “You are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel” (Psalm 22:4). So every

time a Jew says *Baruch Hashem*, he or she is helping to make a throne for the Shechinah, the Divine Presence.

The words *Baruch Hashem* appear in this week’s parsha. But they are not spoken by a Jew. The person who says them is Yitro, Moshe’ father-in-law. Rejoining Moshe after the Exodus, bringing with him Moshe’s wife and children, and hearing from his son-in-law all that had happened in Egypt, he says, “Praise be to the Lord [*Baruch Hashem*], who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians” (Ex. 18:10).

Three people in the Torah use this expression – and all of them are non-Jews, people outside the Abrahamic covenant. The first is Noach: “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Shem” (Gen. 9:26). The second is Avraham’s servant, presumed to be Eliezer, whom he sends to find a wife for Yitzchak: “Praise be to the Lord, the God of my master Avraham, who has not abandoned His kindness and faithfulness to my master” (Gen. 24:27). The third is Yitro in this week’s parsha.

Is this significant? Why is it that this praise of God is attributed to Noach, Eliezer and Yitro, whereas from the Israelites, with the marked exception of the Song at the Sea, we seem to hear constant complaints?

It may be simply that this is human nature: we see more clearly than others what is lacking in our lives, while others see more clearly than we do the blessings we have. We complain, while others wonder what we are complaining about when we have so much to be thankful for. That is one explanation.

It is, though, possible that a more fundamental point is being made. The Torah is signalling its most subtle and least understood idea: that the God of Israel is the God of all humankind, even though the religion of Israel is not the religion of all humankind. As Rabbi Akiva put it: “Beloved is humanity, for it was created in the image of God. Beloved is Israel, for they are called children of God.”

We believe that God is universal. He created the universe. He set in motion the processes that led to stars, planets, life, and humanity. His concern is not limited to Israel. As we say in the prayer of *Ashrei*, “His tender mercies are on all His works.” You do not need to be Jewish to have a sense of reverence for the Creator or recognise, as Yitro did, His hand in miraculous events. It would be hard to find another religious literature that confers such dignity on figures who stand outside its borders.

This is true not only of the three figures who said *Baruch Hashem*. The Torah calls Avraham’s contemporary, Malkizedek, king of Shalem, a “Priest to God Most High.” He, too, blessed God: “Blessed be Avram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High who

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delivered your enemies into your hand” (Gen. 14:19-20).

In Genesis 18, Avraham challenged God on the justice of His proposed punishment of Sodom: “Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?” But a mere two chapters later, Avimelech king of Gerar, is told by God to stay away from Sarah because she was Avraham’s wife, even though Avraham had said she was his sister. In terms very reminiscent of Avraham, Avimelech challenged God, “Lord, will You destroy an innocent nation?”

Or consider the fact that the title of our own parsha this week, which contains the Ten Commandments as well as the most significant event in all of Jewish history, the covenant at Sinai, carries the name of a non-Jew. What is more, immediately prior to the revelation at Sinai, the Torah tells us how it was Yitro the Midianite Priest who taught Moses how to organise the leadership of the people.

These are remarkable expressions of spiritual generosity to those outside the covenant.

Or consider Tishri, the holiest month of the Jewish year. On the first day of Rosh Hashanah, as well as reading about the birth of Yitzchak, we read of how an angel came to the aid of Hagar and Yishmael. “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid. God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation” (Gen. 21:17-18). Yishmael

was not destined to be a carrier of the covenant, yet he was rescued and blessed.

On Yom Kippur, in the afternoon, after we have spent most of the day fasting and making confession, we read the book of Yonah, in which we discover that the Prophet uttered a mere five Hebrew words (“In forty days Nineveh will be destroyed”) and then the entire population – Assyrians, Israel’s enemies – repented. Tradition takes this as the model of collective repentance.

On Succot we read Zechariah’s prophecy that in days to come all the nations will come to Jerusalem to celebrate the festival of rain (Zech. 14:16-19).

These are three stunning examples of universalism. They do not imply that in the fullness of time everyone will convert to Judaism. Rather, that in the fullness of time everyone will recognise the one God, Creator and Sovereign of the universe. That is quite a different thing.

This idea that you can stand outside the faith and still be acknowledged by people within the faith as someone who recognises God, is very rare indeed. Far more common is the approach of one God, one truth, one way. Whoever stands outside that way is Godless, unsaved, the infidel, unredeemed, a lower class of humanity.

Why then does Judaism distinguish between the universality of God and the particularity of our relationship with Him? Answer: because this helps us solve the single greatest problem humanity has faced since earliest times. *How can*

Happy GVUROT birthday, Lauren Lewis

I recognise the dignity and integrity of the ‘other’? History and biology have written into the human mind a capacity for altruism toward the people like us, and aggression toward the people not like us. We are good, they are bad. We are innocent, they are guilty. We have truth, they have lies. We have God on our side, they do not. Many crimes of nation against nation are due to this propensity.

Which is why Tanach teaches otherwise. Noach, Eliezer and Yitro were people of God without being members of Israel. Even the people of Nineveh became an example of how to heed a Prophet and repent. God blessed Yishmael as well as Yitzchak. These are powerful lessons.

It is hard to think of a more compelling principle for the 21st century. The great problems humanity faces – climate change, economic inequality, cyberwarfare, artificial intelligence – are global, but our most effective political agencies are at most national. There is a mismatch between our problems and the available solutions. We need to find a way of combining our universal humanity with our cultural and religious particularity.

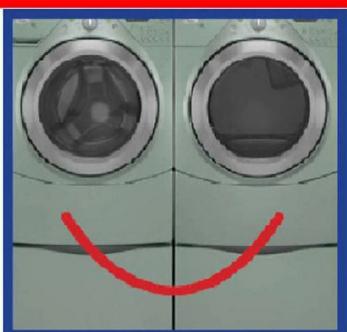
That is what the Torah is doing when it tells us that Noach, Eliezer and Yitro said *Baruch Hashem*. They thanked God, just as we, today, thank God. God is universal. Therefore humanity, created in His image, is universal. But the revelation and covenant at Mount Sinai were particular. They belong to our story, *not* the universal story of humankind.

I believe this ability to be both particular in our identity and universal in our commitment to the human future is one of the most important messages we, as Jews, have to deliver in the 21st century. We are different, but we are human. Therefore let us work together to solve the problems that can only be solved together.

Shabbat shalom ■

Covenant and Conversation 5780 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z”l.

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RABBI DOVID MILLER

Director and Rosh Kollel, RIETS,
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Torah Tidbits is proud to share a guest dvar Torah from the distinguished YU Rosh Kollel, Rav Dovid Miller shli"ta. We thank Rav Miller for this original insight in honor of this week's reading of the Aseret Hadibrot.

Who Knows Ten?

In the piyut Echad Mi Yode'a found in Nirtza at the end of the Pesach Seder, the question "Who knows ten?" is answered עשרה דבריא the Ten Commandments. Both the Maharal and the Sfat Emet repeatedly point out that there are many parallelisms between the עשרת הדברות and the עשרת המאמרות the Ten Statements with which the world was created- namely between the process of creation of God's world and of God's word.

One parallelism which they do not mention, but which is quite striking, was dealt with at length by Rav Moshe Shapiro on a number of occasions in his shiurim. In both tens, we have the same anomaly- they are actually not ten, but one plus nine.

The Mishna in Rosh HaShana (32a) posits that we do not recite less than ten verses in the Malchuyot section of Musaf

on Rosh haShana. In the gemara, Rav Yochanan says that the number ten is derived from 'the ten divine statements' with which the world was created. The gemara asks- isn't the phrase "and God said" only found nine times in the story of creation? The answer given is that the word בראשית is also a statement, with the proof text בדבר ה' שמים נעשו. Thus we have a format of one plus nine.

Similarly, in the Ten Commandments we have the same structure of one plus nine: we have nine classic Commandments, mitzvot, preceded by אנכי ! The commentators (Ibn Ezra, Ramban, etc) ask- where is the commandment? Where is the mitzvah? It's a statement of fact!

The parallel structures explain one another. Let's return to the ten divine Statements. A statement, a מאמר, is a form of verbal communication. One communicates to someone, to something. How can בראשית be a communication- nothing yet exists! The answer is that there is a more basic meaning to מאמר - מאמר is creating the listener- it's the בדבר ה' שמים נעשו- the ex nihilo- the point of departure - the בראשית that allows for continuity and necessitates continuity.

So also in the Ten Commandments- God has to first establish the fact that there is a Commander, קצווה, a

That is the point of departure- אנוכי ה' אלוקיך - that allows for the Commandments, that creates the context for the דברות, just as בראשית created the context for the תאמרות.

המניד מראשית אחרית (Isaiah 46:10)- When one has a meaningful, true ראשית, that brings about a meaningful and true אחרית. These- בראשית ברא אלוקים of creation, and אנוכי ה' אלוקיך of Torah, are the genuine beginning axioms that allow for an eternal continuity.

Those who deny these beginning axioms are denied continuity. Mitzrayim represents those who deny the beginning axiom of creation, and Amalek represents those who deny the beginning axiom of Torah.

Mitzrayim, personified by Pharaoh, denies the בראשית of creation: "Mine is the river and I have made myself" (Ezekiel 29:3), and therefore lost their ראשית - "And I shall go through the land of Egypt on this night, and I shall strike every firstborn in the land of Egypt..."

Amalek denied the אנוכי, the divine

providence that created the context of commandments. All is chance, מקרה, and everything is relative and subjective. Without a true ראשית, there is no true אחרית." Amalek is the first among nations, but its end will be eternal destruction" (במדבר כד:כ)

We, who can correctly answer the question "Who knows ten?", who accept the true ראשית, the points of departure, the one plus nine of the creation of the world, and the one plus nine of the commandments, are guaranteed an אחרית.

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Rabbi Dovid Miller serves as the director of the YU Caroline and Joseph S. Gruss Institute in Jerusalem and is the Rosh Kollel of the RIETS Israel Kollel. He has been teaching in and administering these programs since 1976, and is the inaugural occupant of the Benjamin and Charlotte Gottesfeld Chair in Talmud and Codes.

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THE PROPHETS

This week's parasha describes for us the great "theophany," the revelation of G-d, at Har Sinai, an event witnessed by the entire nation, experienced by millions of people. This morning's *haftarah* relates to us the personal "theophany" of the *navi* Yishayahu who alone sees the vision of Hashem's throne and His glory and is charged to bring the vision and divine message to the entire nation. Although the prophet's vision and message is found in the sixth perek of Yishayahu, most commentaries agree that it is the earliest of all the prophecies delivered by this great *navi*; indeed, it is his formal "induction" to the service of Hashem. Much in the same way, B'nai Yisra'el are "inaugurated" into the service of G-d at Har Sinai, with Hashem declaring "V'atem tihyu li mamlechet kohanim", "And you will be a kingdom of priests (better: attendants) for me." And just as the people trembled and stood afar in fear of witnessing G-d's revelation, so too, Yishayahu feared that he would die for having "seen" Hashem.

It is interesting to note that the Ramban,

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המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

in his commentary on the *Aseret Hadibrot*, points out that the pronouncements of G-d heard by the nation were understood by each and every person according to his or her own abilities. It was not simply a communal experience but an intensely personal one as well and, perhaps, the choice of this perek as the *haftarah* was meant to teach that Yish'ayahu's individual encounter with G-d described therein was, ultimately, not that different from the one experienced by all of Israel at Har Sinai.

In essence, however, it is the contrast between the two events that cries out to us, for the glory revealed to *B'nai Yisra'el* at Sinai was meant to impress upon them the power and majesty of Hashem and, accordingly, the absolute necessity of accepting and keeping His mitzvot. The vision seen by the *navi*, on the other hand, was part of his inauguration into G-d's service to accept the mission of admonishing the nation who failed to perform the *mitzvot* and to warn them that G-d's punishment would not cease "until the cities become desolate....and the land become...wasted and Hashem will drive the people away...."

Interestingly, the reason that Yishayahu feared the he was doomed after seeing the holy vision of the glory of Hashem was that he believed himself unfit to witness

such vision. Additionally, he gave another reason for his feeling of inadequacy, saying that he dwelled amongst a people of “impure lips”. Chazal in the G’mara (Yevamot 49b) criticize the prophet for these words and point to the words of G-d’s ‘saraph’ who, when touching a hot coal upon Yishayahu’s lips told the navi that his act now has removed his “iniquity”. That “iniquity”, Chazal explain, was the fact that Yishayahu had spoken ill of Israel.

We are rightfully puzzled by this approach of our Rabbis, for, when sharing His prophecy with Yishayahu, Hashem describes Israel as a nation hears but does not comprehend, who sees-but does not know. The prophecy handed to the navi includes the prediction that, if Israel refuses to repent her cities will be desolate, her houses-empty and her land will be wasted. After such a harsh description of Israel and prediction of what would befall the nation-why would G-d have taken offense at Yishayahu’s depiction of the sinful people?

I have often seen the reaction of Hashem (as Chazal described it) to be like

that of the parent who reprimands his wayward child and harshly describes to him how unacceptable his behavior was. But when a neighbor would criticize the child with those same words, the parent would rush to protect and defend him. “It is acceptable for me to speak to my child that way,” he would tell the neighbor, “he is my child, after all, and he knows how much I love him. But you have no right to speak to him that way!”

We are G-d’s children. And He loves us. And He can-and does- speak to us harshly. But no one else-not even a G-d-chosen prophet-may speak ill of Hashem’s children!

Today, we look back upon the thousands of years during which those harsh words came true but now we are blessed and see a reversal of this vision as the people have returned and the cities are heavily populated and the land gives forth fruit.

And we know that the miracle will continue as long as we, His children, continue to heed the words pronounced so long ago at Har Sinai. ■



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Spiritual Sacrifices

In *Parshas Yisro*, we encounter the momentous event of Matan Torah. In preparation for the presentation of the *Luchos*, Hashem requests that Moshe ascend the mountain and instructs Moshe to warn the people to keep their distance from *Har Sinai*. Upon Moshe's descent, the Torah states: "רד משה מן ההר אל העם" - "Moshe descended from the mountain to the people" (Shemos 19:14).

Rashi derives from this language – *melamed shelo haya Moshe pone l'asakav, ella min hahar el ha'am* - we learn that Moshe did not turn to his own business, rather he went from the mountain directly to the people. Why does Rashi find it necessary to stress that Moshe was not diverted? To what business would Moshe have attended? Would he have checked his investments? Any mail or bills he may have received while he was gone? In the desert, Moshe was not exposed to these

distractions. If Hashem instructed Moshe to relay a message to *Am Yisrael* upon his descent from the mountain, it is no surprise that he went directly to the people to fulfill his duty. If so, why is it necessary for the Torah to state the obvious- that Moshe descended from the mountain directly to the people?

The *Likute Yehoshua* (Rav Yehoshua Scheinfeld) cites a story by Rav Yehezkiel M'Kozmir that provides us with a deeper understanding of this *pasuk*. The Rebbe was travelling through various Polish towns on Rosh Chodesh Sivan. Although the town he was visiting asked that he remain for Shavuos, the Rebbe insisted that he had to return home. He explained his reasoning based on our *pasuk*. What "business" could Moshe have attended? Not a material pursuit, rather a spiritual pursuit. Moshe just returned from a meeting with Hashem. He could have selected to be by himself for a few moments to internalize the conversation, perhaps meditate and enhance his spirituality. Yet, Moshe chose to advance the spirituality of the nation at the expense of strengthening his own spirituality. Based on this, the Rebbe explained, although personally he would benefit from remaining in the town for Shavuos, he felt that it would be important for his *kehilla's* (congregation's) spirituality to be with them for the *chag*.

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The gemara (Succa 49b) questions the meaning of the term *Toras Chesed*. Isn't all of the Torah Chesed? The gemara distinguishes as follows: one who learns Torah in order to teach – that is *Toras Chesed*. One who learns not necessarily to teach – that is Torah (absent chesed). Moshe Rabbeinu, the Rebbe par excellence always placed the interests of *Klal Yisrael* before his personal interest, including their spiritual growth.

Rav Nosson Adler was fond of using this idea to explain the mitzvah of Hakhel. We are to bring the entire family to the Mikdash to listen to the reading of the Torah by the Melech. Wouldn't it be more spiritually sound and intense if we'd leave the babies, with the strollers, diaper bags,

car loads of snacks and treats, at home, and ascend to Yerushalayim ourselves? Yes, he answers, but that's not the goal of life. The goal of life is not just about my own spirituality, but about by children's, even if that comes at a price. It's the price of bringing nachas to our Father Above.

At times we are faced with a similar dilemma. Do I sacrifice my own advancement in spirituality in order to enhance the spirituality of my children and those around me? Do I spend an hour at night learning by myself or with a chavrusa and gaining knowledge or do I give a shiur so I can transmit Torah to others? May we find the proper balance of strengthening ourselves and those around us in *Torah* and *Yiras Shamayim*. ■



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Seeking Hashem

Ma'amad Har Sinai; the long-awaited moment of ultimate revelation. The *pesukim* (*Shemos 19:2-15*), introducing this pivotal occasion shed light on nature of the Torah experience. The Torah tells us, "And they travelled from *Refidim*, and they came to *midbar Sinai*..." If their departure point is recorded, it is clearly a significant detail that teaches us a lesson regarding the receiving of Torah.

Rashi explains that just as they left *Refidim* in a state of *teshuva*, they approached Sinai in a state of *teshuva*. To receive the Torah, one's frame of mind must be that of seeking connection to Hashem and to divest oneself of all barriers that in-

hibit this connection. Indeed, in *Shemoneh Esrei* we ask Hashem, "*Hashiveinu avinu letoratecha*"; the *teshuva* process involves connection to Hashem through Torah.

The *Netziv* of Volozhin understands this on an even deeper level. The very act of leaving *Refidim* had to be with a consciousness of preparation for receiving the Torah. When undertaking an element of holiness, one must ensure to approach every facet with the appropriate attitude. A classic example is seen with the *tanna* Rav Chiya who undertook the task of safeguarding the teaching of Torah with the greatest purity so it should not be forgotten. The *Gemara* records how he planted flax and made nets from its fibers to catch deer. He then processed the deerskin upon which he wrote the Torah to teach children. Why did Rav Chiya expend all this effort? He understood the importance of investing the purest intentions at each juncture from beginning

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to end. The Gaon of Vilna assures any congregation who invests the proper *kavanot* into every aspect of building their shul, that all the *tefillot* said in the shul will be with proper *kavanah*. The *Gra* further comments that this explains why many *Tanaim* and *Amoraim* learned outdoors under trees to ensure the purity of their learning environment, as opposed to learning inside a building whose level of purity may be unknown.

These *pesukim* serve as a practical guide to us as well in our performance of *mitzvot*. So often we focus on the act itself and devote less intention to preparing for the *mitzvah*. Rav Reiss in *Meirosh Tzurim* notes that one of the first communal *mitzvot* was the *korban Pesach* in Egypt. It is a fascinating fact that the Jews had to keep the lamb for four days prior to participating in the *mitzvah* as a *mishmeret*, to guard it. No other *mitzvot* were given to them during this time, they focused completely on looking after the lamb. The message is a powerful one. The preparation for any *mitzvah* is an integral part of that *mitzvah* itself; we learn here the importance of not just ‘falling’ into a *mitzvah* at the last minute without the proper mindset. ■

May the Torah learned from this issue of Torah Tidbits be
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A Yidishe Kup

Each year, Reb Feivel would expend great effort and resources to visit his Rebbe, the Tzadik Reb Yisrael of Rhizhin zy'a, and honor the Rebbe with a special gift and a sizeable *pidyon*, monetary contribution. Though not a very wealthy man, one year, Feivel spent well beyond his means to commission a unique and beautiful gift for the Rebbe: an exquisite, ornate silver Kidush cup. Although it was an especially arduous trip in the depth of winter, the loyal chasid set off on the long journey across Russia.

While traversing a frozen river, the ice cracked and his horse-drawn wagon sank into the icy waters. Miraculously, Reb Feivel managed quickly to climb out of the wagon and survive. However, the powerful undercurrent swept away the horse, the wagon and all of Feivel's

belongings, including the special gift he'd prepared for the Rebbe. When Feivel finally made it to the Rebbe's beis medrash, he was frozen, exhausted and shaken up from the near death episode. His shock was compounded when the Rebbe immediately called him over, and demanded, "So nu, Feivel, what gift did you bring for me? Have you brought a *pidyon*?"

"Rebbe!" Feivel burst into tears, "If you only knew what I've just been through. I lost everything, my Tefillin, my carriage, and even the *Kiddush becher* I was bringing for you. Everything is gone!"

"Feivel," grumbled the Rebbe, "you really don't have anything for me? You always bring something!"

The Rhizhner paused a moment, observing his chasid's reaction, and then dropped the artifice completely, pulled him close, and embraced him. "My dear Feiveleh! My sweetest friend," he smiled, "Do you really think the warm welcome that you receive here is because of the gifts you bring, or because of the *pidyonim*?"

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~

Vayishma Yisro — "And Yisro heard..."(18:1)

It is noteworthy that our Sedra, the portion in which we receive the Torah on Mount Sinai, is named after Yisro, the idolatrous high priest of Midyan. Yisro is certainly worthy of praise for his contributions to Klal Yisrael, such as suggesting to his son-in-law, Moshe Rabbeinu, that it would be helpful to delegate to others some of the legal services for the community. But was there no management consultant within Klal Yisrael that could have advised a restructuring our Judicial system? Could we not find a *heimishe* company with the ability to help Moshe Rabbeinu reorganize and implement change?

The *Ohr haChaim haKadosh* explains that the Torah highlights Yisro's prominence and wisdom to drive home an essential point immediately following Matan Torah. That is, to emphasize that there is *chochmah ba'goyim*, "wisdom among the nations of the world", and there are even many who are *gedolim b'havana*, "great in understanding". We are not chosen simply because of our superior intellect.

Hashem gave us the Torah as an expression of His love for us, and in His limitless Kindness chose us simply for who we are. Matan Torah expresses the

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promise Hashem made to our beloved Avos and Imahos: *Atah b'chartanu mikol ha-amim...* "You chose us from among all the nations," *Ahavta Osanu, v'Ratzisa Banu...* "You loved us and took pleasure in us."

Recently, Bret Stephens, opinion columnist at the New York Times sparked conversation and controversy with an article on "The Secrets of Jewish Genius" (NYT Dec. 27, '19), highlighting our intelligence, creativity and originality, all rooted in high-minded purpose. Of course, there are a range of cultural, historical, sociological factors that have contributed to this image of the proverbial *Yidische Kup*, "Jewish smarts", and the undeniable reality that Jews tend to be intelligent.

And of course, we make up just .2% — less than one third of one percent — of the global population, and yet more than a third of Nobel Prize winners have been members of our People. The Jewish intellectual contribution and to humanity is indeed staggering and disproportionate, whether in science, technology, finance, medicine or the humanities. We have made a global impact in every discipline and area of human accomplishment.

It is true, the statistics are impressive and our collective dedication to learning and emphasis on education is undeniable. However, at the same time, as the Ohr HaChayim explains, our focus on matters of Jewish intellectual prowess completely miss the point. Who we are, not merely what we accomplish, defines us. In fact, more essential to our identity than any feat of *Yidische Kup*, is the *Yidische heart*.

This week, as we read about receiving the Torah and becoming "the People of the Book", let us remember what truly makes us special: that we are chosen and beloved for who we are, regardless of our accomplishments, our IQ, our abilities or whatever 'gifts' we may think the *Ribbono Shel Olam* needs from us. Hashem wants our hearts. Hashem wants us. ■

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Modern Masters with
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Followed by Mincha

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SCHEDULE NOTES

יִטְרוֹ YITRO

Feb 15th - 3:45pm

Rabbi Chanoch Yeres



In the Ganchrow Beit Midrash...

Sun, Tue, Thu - 10:00am

Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld **KETUVOT**

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Monday, Feb 17th VIDEO

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demonstration of strength and
courage was remarkable and
her fortitude serves as a role
model for all. May her memory
be for a blessing.*

SUNDAY • יום א'

Feb 16th - כ"א שבט

9:00am

Rabbi David Walk - T'HILIM

10:00am - L'AYLA

Mrs. Sylvie Schatz

Tomer Devorah

Applied to Modern Times

10:15am

Rabbi Aharon Adler

Haftara of the Week

11:15pm

Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

Wisdom for Life - Mishlei

12:00pm Rabbi Chaim Eisen

KUZARI

2:00pm

Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher

Should we celebrate a birthday?

7:45pm see flyer/ad

Rabbi Doron Perez

8:00pm

Rabbi Mordechai Machlis

The Book of Shmuel

VIDEO - Monday, Feb 17th

2:00pm - 2½ hrs

Hanna's War (1988) Dramatization
of life of Hannah Senesh HY"D. At 18
she left Hungary for Israel. At 22 she
joined British Army and volunteered
to be parachuted behind Nazi lines -
captured, endured months of
merciless torture. She divulged no
secrets and was executed. Her
remains brought to Har Herzl. Her
memory lives on as does her poetry
which continues to move people.
Symbol of idealism and self-sacrifice.

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*Film donated to the Center
by a generous supporter
who wishes to remain anonymous*

MONDAY • יום ב'

Feb 17th - כ"ב בשבט

resumes in March 9:15am

Mrs. Pearl Borow

9:30am & 10:30

Mommy & Me with Jackie

10:30am

Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider
Chassidut & Spirituality in the Parsha

11:30am

Rabbi Shmuel Herschler
Halacha & Reason

11:30am • 050-415-3239

Get Fit While You Sit
Exercise with Sura Faecher

1:45pm resumes in March

Mrs. Pearl Borow

Women in Tanach

2:00pm VIDEO see Sun col.

2:45pm Rabbi Zev Leff

resumes in March

2:45pm Phil Chernofsky

Mishna, Mitzvot & more

2:45 until Rabbi Leff's return

3:00pm

Music for Children with Jackie

5:20pm Pri Chadash

Writing Workshop for Women

Judy Caspi 054-569-0410

Ruth Fogelman (02) 628-7359

6:30pm

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TUESDAY · יום ג'**Feb 18th · כ"ג שבט**

9:00am

Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz
Minchat Chinuch

9:15am

Mrs. Shira Smiles
Torah Tapestries

10:30am

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin
Parshat HaShavua

11:30am

Rabbi Aharon Ziegler
Contemporary Halacha Topics

11:30am

Shprintzee Rappaport

11:30pm - Women's T'hilim

12:15pm

Rabbi Neil Winkler
history is HIS STORY1:45pm Dr. Deborah Polster
**DA MA L'HASHIV -
The Anglo-Zionist Alliance**

3:00pm Verna's Knitting Club

7:30pm Parshat HaShavua
Dr. Avivah Gottlieb-Zornberg**Tue Feb 18th - 8:00pm
Surging Anti-Semitism
Is the Party Over?
Dr. David Luchins****VIDEO - Tuesday, Feb 18th
2:00pm - 2½ hrs w/intermission****The Pianist** (2002) - True story of one of finest pianists in pre-World War II Europe. Confined with family in Warsaw Ghetto. Family deported to death camp, he escaped. Remained in hiding, lived in refuges... provided by Gentile friends. Numerous encounters with Nazis... Barely alive, he ultimately survived through acts of kindness from a most unlikely source. *cont. THU column***WEDNESDAY · יום ד'****Feb 12th & 19th
YOM IYUN in Jewish Thought**

9:15am

Rabbi Shimshon Nadel
Medina & Halacha

10:15am

Rabbi Anthony Manning
Contemporary Issues
in Halacha & Hashkafa11:30am Rabbi Alan Kimche
Derech HaShem

12:40pm until Mincha

Rabbi Sam Shor
Modern Masters

Resumes Feb 26th - 2:00pm

Mrs. Pearl Borow

2:00pm VIDEO see below

7:00pm Rabbi Yonatan Kolatch

Topics in Parshanut

7:00pm Rabbi Chaim Eisen
Meaning & Mission of
the Chosen People

Feb 12th - 7:45pm

Judge Dan Butler

**VIDEO - Wednesday, Feb 18
2:00pm - 2 hrs** Eng / Eng subs**Snow Falling On Cedars** (1995)

First time showing - After World War II, on the west coast, a Japanese-American fisherman is accused of killing his neighbor.

Racism and anger from Pearl Harbor and the war make a fair trial much less acquittal hopeless. Deeply moving story; superb cast; brilliant acting. Post-screening talk/discussion by renowned lecturer on Jewish topics, psychologist and author, Dr. Lisa Aiken on how Judaism addresses the moral dilemmas and other challenges presented in the film

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L'ILUI NISHMOT her parents,
Sara Chaya bat R' Shneur Isaac HaCohen a"n
and R' Refoel ben HaRav Yehuda Braver z"l***THURSDAY · יום ה'****Feb 13th & 20th**

resumes Feb 27

9:00am

Rabbi Ari Kahn
Parshat HaShavua

9:00am

Dr. Avivah Gottlieb-Zornberg
Parshat HaShavua

10:10am

Rabbi Baruch Taub -Thursday
the Rabbi Gave His Drasha

11:30am

Rabbi Shai Finkelstein
Unlocking the Messages of Chazal

12:00pm

Rabbi Shmuel Herschler
Book of Melachim

2:00pm

Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher
Current Events in the Sedra & Haftara
*Thank you Yehuda Lave for your support*8:00pm Rabbi Avrum Kowalsky
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Divrei HaYamim****Tuesday, Feb 18th VIDEO
cont. from TUE column**

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FROM DINOSAURS TO NUCLEAR ENERGY

With Eitan Morell

The banks of the Sorek stream have seen thousands of years of history flow past them. In this tour we will explore the past, present and future of Israel by following the stream from its source at Kever Shmuel HaNavi down to the Beit Zayit Dinosaur site, through Tel Bet Shemesh near the Sorek Nuclear Reactor, and Nahal Sorek Estuary National Park.

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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1-2:30PM

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PHOTO: MAOMI GEVA OFFER

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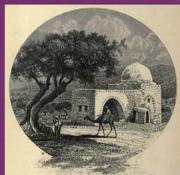
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Torah Tidbits This 'n That

Phil's page



ZACHOR (and SHAMOR)...

It's time to take ourselves off automatic pilot, to stop doing things by rote, to not take things for granted.

ZACHOR ET YOM HASHABBAT L'KAD'SHO.

L'KAD'SHO - to sanctify it (common translation). to keep it holy (Living Torah). G-d created the world and everything in it and He created Shabbat and sanctified it. This is the message of VAYCHULU HASHAMAYIM V'HAARETZ which we say three times on Leil Shabbat. This is the message we hear this Shabbat when the Aseret HaDibrot are read. HaShem made Shabbat and sanctified it.

AND - He commanded us to sanctify the Shabbat and to keep its kedusha.

ZACHOR is the mitzva to say Kiddush (in davening and with wine at our dining table) at the beginning of Shabbat, and to say Havdala as Shabbat leaves (in davening and with wine, b'samim, and candle).

But it isn't enough to just daven Maariv on Friday night and then say or hear Kiddush at the table. We need to think about what we are doing, and to feel gratitude to G-d for the world into

which He put us and for His taking us out of Egypt and giving us the Torah. All this is expressed in Kiddush and davening, but it requires our kavana to make it real.

Thirteen brachot of request in the Amida are replaced on this special day by one bracha of Kedushat Shabbat. We need to pause for a few seconds before we begin the Amida and say in our minds that we are about to fulfill the mitzva of Zachor. And the same goes for Kiddush. Then we can actually say something to help us and those at our table focus on the mitzva of Zachor and the challenge to do our part in our partnership with HKB"H in making Shabbat holy.

AND - ZACHOR is much more. When we light Shabbat candles, when we dress for Shabbat, when we clean and shop for Shabbat, when we refer to Friday as Erev Shabbat, when we refer to the days of the week by their numbers - all that is (or should be) in honor of Shabbat and to sanctify it.

Our challenge is to sanctify, honor, and enjoy Shabbat - every single week, but each time we should try to make it fresh in our eyes and hearts.

Don't do this on your own. Bring your families and friends into the active and real ZACHOR mode.

When we do ZACHOR well, we will merit

ברוכים אתם לה' עשה שמים וארץ: תהלים 115:15
(א בכור את יום השבת לקדשו (a Gimatriya Twin of



Tevilat Kelim for a Restaurant, Hotel or Catering Service

Regarding kosher establishments in Israel, the various supervision issues include *Bishul Akum*, *Ma'asrot* and bug-free leafy vegetables. An additional question to address is whether the hotel, restaurant or catering service *Toveled* (immersed) their pots, dishes and other utensils.

Halacha states that only utensils used for eating require immersion. If someone were to purchase a pair of chicken shears for the sole purpose of cutting twigs in their garden, the shears would not require immersion (*Gemara Avodah Zara* 75B, *Beit Yosef* YD 120).

The *Hagahot Oshri* (*Avodah Zara* 5:35) discusses a scenario in which a Jew purchases a utensil for business reasons. A modern day example would be a distributor buying dishes to be sold to commercial enterprises. He states that if

a Jew were to borrow a utensil purchased by the distributor, he is not required to immerse the dish. This is regardless of the *halacha* which states that a Jew who borrows a utensil from another Jew is required to immerse the utensils. The *Hagahot Oshri* explains that since the first purchase of the utensil exempted it from immersion (since it was not meant to be used for eating purposes, rather for profit) the exemption passes on to the borrower. The *Hagahot Oshri* adds that if the man who borrowed the utensil were to purchase the utensil to eat with, immersion would be required. The *Shulchan Aruch* (YD 120:8) quotes the *Hagahot Oshri's* ruling.

Certain *Poskim* used the logic of the *Hagahot Oshri* to exempt food establishments from immersing their dishes (*Responsa Tuv Tam V'dat* 2:22). Other authorities felt that even if the restaurant owner is required to immerse

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his utensils, a customer is permitted to eat from the dishes that were not immersed (*Yechvei Daat* 4:44; *Minchat Yitzchak* 1:44).

Many authorities disagree with this approach. First, the *Issur V'heter* (58:89) (a contemporary of the *Hagahot Oshri*) disagrees with the logic of the *Hagahot Oshri*. The *Taz* (YD 120:10) and *Shach* (YD 120:15) felt the *Issur V'heter's* rebuttal was correct. In addition, one cannot compare the *Hagahot Oshri's* ruling to a restaurant or catering service. The *Hagahot Oshri* was discussing a case where the purchase of the utensil was used for business purposes only (such as a distributor). However, a restaurant purchases the utensils to serve as eating utensils. Perhaps the *Hagahot Oshri* and *Beit Yosef* would agree that under those circumstances immersion is required.

Many contemporary *poskim* ruled that restaurants must immerse their utensils

(*Igrot Moshe* YD 3:22; *Minchat Shlomo* 68).

OU Policy in both Israel and around the world is that any food establishment owned by Jews must immerse their utensils. In addition, it would seem that it is prohibited for Jewish customers to eat in establishments that do not immerse their utensils (See *Sefer Hakashrut* 4:4 note 7). Since OU *poskim* feel that this *psak* was clear-cut, a restaurant owner should not be concerned with the disputing opinions and may certainly say a *Bracha* when immersing such utensils. ■

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

In the verse that immediately follows the Aseret HaDibrot, we find a powerful yet confusing depiction of this seminal moment in world history. The Torah states:

“V’chol ha’am roim et hakolot v’et halapidim, v’et kol hashofar, v’et hahar ashein, Vayar haAm vayanuu, vayaamdu merachok.”

“And the entire people saw the thunder and lightning, and the sound of the shofar, and the smoking mountain, and when they saw all this they retreated and stood from afar...”

The obvious question to be asked is what does it mean that the Jewish people saw thunder, that they saw the sound of the shofar?

Many commentators have interpreted this verse to mean that they simply witnessed the entire experience, but the verse specifically uses the language “roim”-they saw. What does it mean that they saw the thunder, that they saw the sound of the shofar? What is the implication of this challenging use of language? What is the message for eternity, after all, we believe that the Torah is a Torat Chaim, a living eternal document? What does it really mean to see?

The Sefat Emet, the Rebbe, Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter of Ger, explains our verse:

“And the entire people saw the thunder. The meaning of ‘the entire people’ is each person in their entirety. Each member of the Jewish people sensed the revelation of Torah with every limb and every organ, with their entire body and soul ...”

What lesson can we learn, what practical message are we to learn from this interesting clarification of the concept of sight?

There is a fascinating halacha (law) in the Mishneh Torah, most specifically in the opening chapter of the laws of Yesodei HaTorah-literally the foundations of Torah, the laws governing the fundamentals of Jewish thought. In the second law of the second chapter, the Rambam writes:

“V’haeich hi haderech l’ahavato v’yirato? B’shaa sheyitbonein HaAdam b’maasav hanifla'im hagedolim, veyeraeh mehein chachmato she’ein la eirech, v’lo keitz, meyad hu ohaiv umshavach, umefoar, umetaaveh taaveh gedola l’eda Hashem hagadol.”

“And what is the way for us to fully realize our love and awe for G-d? During those moments when a person contemplates G-d’s creations and wondrous acts, and sees within these creations the Divine wisdom which is endless and has no bounds, immediately he is moved to love

G-d, to praise G-d's glory, and longs with all his desire to know G-d's great name."

It's important to note that this is the Rambam's legal code, and not an entry from his great philosophical work the Guide to the Perplexed. Maimonides is giving a legal ruling, that there is a requirement for one to set aside time and contemplate the wonders that exist naturally in the world around us, to take note of G-d's presence in the very things we often take for granted. When a person conditions himself to be more contemplative, says Maimonides, one can't help but be completely in awe of the divinity present in every person, in every creature, in each and every thing.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, zt'l, writes in his important work on morality, Midot HaRayah, that whenever we as human beings are attracted to another person, another object, another creature, whenever we are drawn to something or someone else in this world, it is not that we are drawn solely by their appearance as seen by just our eyes, rather that our soul recognizes and sees and is drawn to the divine sparks contained within each individual, within each place, within each of G-d's creations. Rav Kook explains that one who truly seeks to be an ethical, moral person will constantly work to recognize and see the divinity within every person, every creature, and every thing.

There is another verse in the Torah where this concept of reiyah- of sight is used in a strange manner. In fact an entire portion in Devarim begins with this verse:

"Re'ay anochi notein lifneichem Hayom



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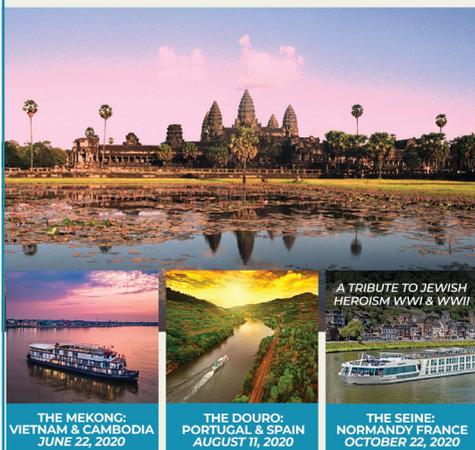
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bracha uklala.”

“See, I give before you today a blessing and a curse.”

Rabbi Kalonimos Kalman Shapira zt'l, the Rebbe of Piascezne, in his incredibly moving work on the Torah and Holidays-Aish Kodesh wrote the following words regarding this verse:

“When we suffer, we often feel that G-d is hiding his face from us. However when a person is able to recognize and perceive the hand of G-d even within his suffering and judgment, he pushes aside the concealment, he reveals G-d, even out of the hiddenness and pain. Then as the concealment begins to dissipate, it becomes loving kindness, which reveals the Divine Light that is the presence of G-d...

...This is the meaning of the verse, ‘See, I set before you today, a blessing and a curse.’ The blessing is the ability to see, that G-d has revealed himself, has given himself to us so to speak. The awareness that G-d has revealed himself to us, continues to reveal himself to us Hayom- today, each day-this is the blessing of the verse...”

The Rebbe, from the depths of the Warsaw Ghetto, where he ministered to so many amidst the devastation of the ghetto, is teaching us that the greatest gift we have is the ability to sense G-d’s presence in all aspects of our lives, even when we feel pain and suffering, we are not alone. However the curse described in the verse, is the possibility of going through life oblivious to the tell-tale signs of G-d’s presence, kindness and love. So, says the Aish Kodesh, what greater blessing could we ask for than to be able to see the divinity in our fellow human beings, in trying times, even in the sound of thunder. And what greater tragedy, what greater curse could there be, then to go through life alone, to feel that G-d has abandoned us, to ignore the Divine “DNA” evidence that becomes so clear when we take the time to step back and contemplate G-d’s wondrous works.

So, this Shabaat, as we recall the experience of standing together as one at Sinai, we have the opportunity to once again “see the thunder,” to begin again to condition ourselves to see G-d’s presence, to feel the power of revelation with every fiber of our being, and with each of our senses. ■

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RABBI AARON

Editor, Torah Tidbits

GOLDSCHIEDER

Baruch Hashem

Yitro taught the Jewish people to say the phrase ‘Baruch Hashem’ (‘Blessed be God’).

Yitro traveled to the desert to meet his son in law Moshe and exclaimed, “Baruch Hashem! Who has saved you from Egypt and from Pharaoh” (*Shemot* 18:10).

”ויאמר יתרו ברוך ה' אשר הציל אתכם מיד מצרים
ומיד פרעה” (שמות יח:י)

The Talmud praises Yitro and teaches that we are to follow his example and indeed express thanks in this way. The Talmud contrasts Yitro with Moshe and the Jewish people. Surprisingly, the Sages are critical of Moshe and the Israelites for failing to express the same sentiment: “It is a disgrace for Moses and the six hundred thousand adult men of the children of Israel whom he led out of Egypt that they did not say: Blessed, until Yitro came and said: ‘Blessed be the Lord.’” (*Sanhedrin* 94a)

Commentators struggle to understand this puzzling passage in the Talmud. After all, Moshe and the Jewish people undoubtedly expressed thanks. One

obvious example was ‘*Shirat Hayam*’, the ‘Song of the Sea’, which was perhaps the most soaring expression of thanks ever uttered. In what way did Yitro’s expression of ‘Baruch Hashem’ differ from the declaration of thanks uttered by Moshe and Israel?

The following are three compelling answers. The first two were offered by the illustrious *Ketav Sofer* and the third appears in the writings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe zt”l.

Rabbi Avraham Binyamin Sofer (1815-1871) also known as the *Ketav Sofer* was one of the leading rabbis of Hungarian Jewry in the second half of the 19th century. His father was the famed *Chatam Sofer*.

When the Jewish people joyously offered *shira* at the sea, it was offered as a reaction to unadulterated jubilation. Yitro, on the other hand, is somewhat torn. He feels the joy of the Jewish people’s salvation but simultaneously feels the pain of the loss of life and suffering experienced by the Egyptian people. Rashi interprets the phrase ‘*vayichad Yitro*’ (*Shemot* 18:9), to mean that “his flesh became full of goosebumps.” He could not help but feel a tinge of sadness. Although he was pained by their downfall, he is able to say Baruch Hashem and declare Hashem’s goodness.

Giving voice to ‘Shira’ is an expression of joy, however, an even higher level is ‘Bracha’, which is an expression of faith and acceptance of God’s will (Maharal of Prague also makes this distinction in his *Chiddushei Aggadot*).

What is the true meaning of ‘Baruch Hashem’?

It is a common misconception that to bless Hashem is just another form of thanks. In fact, when we say “Baruch Hashem”, as we do at the beginning of each *bracha* we make, we are not thanking Hashem, but rather recognizing and acknowledging that Hashem is the origin of all sustenance. The word *bracha* shares the same root as ‘*birkayim*’, knees, which suggests the notion of submitting and accepting all that emanates from the One Above; both good and bad.

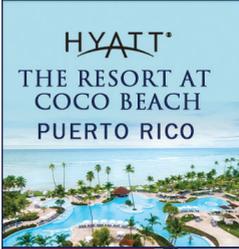
The *Ketav Sofer* offers a second approach. Insightfully, he posits that Moshe and the nation thank God for the miracles that they *themselves* experienced, in contrast to Yitro, who thanked God for the miracles enjoyed by *others*. In other words, the distinction of Yitro’s praise was not so much that he praised God, but that he was grateful to God for the blessings he bestowed on others. Yitro shared in the joy of the Jewish people. He felt happy because they were happy. Yitro felt personal joy for the fortunate circumstance of the Jews.

(ספר כתב סופר ד"ה ויאמר יתרו ברוך ה')

The mishnah in *Pirkei Avot* asks: “Who is rich? One who is happy with their lot”. The *Sfat Emet* is quoted as saying that this mishnah only identifies one who is ‘rich’,

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not one who is extremely wealthy. How does one become extremely wealthy or 'super rich'? The Rebbe answers, one who is able to be happy for the fortune of others. In a similar fashion, the famed mussar teacher, the Alter of Kelm, Rabbi Simcha Ziseel Ziv, taught that the trait of being 'nosei be'ol chaveiro,' to empathize with the pain which others are undergoing' is relatively simple compared to feeling sincere happiness over the successes and accomplishments of one's friend.

We Jews have a word in both Yiddish and Hebrew for this sentiment; a word not found in the English language. In Yiddish, we say: 'fargin' or in Hebrew 'lefargen'; to feel personal joy for someone's else's joy.

A third approach in understanding the significance of Yitro's declaration of 'Baruch Hashem' is taught by the Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l. He raises the well known question, "What is so significant about Yitro that the Torah portion containing the Ten Commandments is given his name?" The Sages teach that Yitro, who served as a high priest of idolatry and had explored multiple forms of worship and belief, had come to commit himself to Hashem. The Rebbe quotes the Zohar which states: 'The Torah could not be given to mankind until Yitro had rejected every false God and had publicly accepted God's sovereignty.'

דעד שלא בא יתרו והודה להקב"ה לא ניתנה התורה
לישראל (זוהר ח"ב סזג. סח,א)

Yitro had an epiphany. He recognized that all wisdom emanates from God. A person who had previously mastered the intellectual and spiritual worlds, and

was now declaring allegiance to Hashem brought an even greater manifestation of Godliness into the world. Interestingly, the word *Yitro* itself means to increase (like the word *yeter*), which alludes to the idea that Yitro added a further dimension to the veracity and authenticity of the Torah. (*Likutei Sichot, Parshat Yitro Sichot 5, Likutei Sichot 11*).

The Lubavitcher Rebbe is apparently alluding to the following idea: the mitzvot of the Torah were given to the Jewish people, but the message was meant to be heard by all people. When Yitro proclaimed "Baruch Hashem," he accomplished something that was simply beyond the range of Moshe, or any Jew, for that matter. As a world famous religious figure, who was now accepting upon himself the worship of the God of Israel, humanity took note.

The Zohar spells out what exactly occurred in the aftermath of Yitro's declaration of belief in God: "When Yitro, the high priest of paganism, was converted to the worship of the true God of Israel, the whole world hearing of the mighty works of the Holy One, and seeing that the great sage, Yitro, had been drawn to the worship of the God of Israel, gave up their idols, realizing their impotence, and in this way the glory of the Holy Name of God was **exalted on all sides**. For this reason the narrative concerning Yitro has been preserved in the Torah, with Yitro's name at the head." (*Zohar, Yitro, 68b-69a*).

This precise notion is expressed daily in the *Aleinu* prayer: "le'taken **olam bemaichut sha-dai**", that the **world** be made whole

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with the recognition of God's kingdom. The first paragraph of *Aleinu* acknowledges our distinctiveness and the second paragraph anticipates a time when all humanity will worship the One Universal God, not necessarily by converting to Judaism but by acknowledging His sovereignty.

Interestingly, on a related note, we find a unique responsa which stands out from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, where he writes that a Jew is obligated to teach and persuade a gentile to keep the Seven Commandments, '*Sheva Mitzvot Bnei Noach*': "It is obvious that this obligation [found in Maimonides, *Melachim* 8:10] is not limited only to a Jewish court...this obligation is in place in all eras, even the present...and it is obligatory on all individuals who can work toward this goal." (*HaPardes* 59:9 7-11 (5745)).

When one enters the prayer area of the Western Wall today there is a 'tefillin stand' which is manned by Chabad chassidim. As visitors pass by the stand, they are asked if they are Jewish. If the answer is in the affirmative they are offered to don tefillin. If they respond that they are not a Jew, the Chabad chassid hands them a pamphlet which promotes and outlines the Seven Noahide Laws. In it, the very first law states: "Do not profane God's Oneness in any way: Acknowledge that there is a single

God who cares about what we are doing and desires that we take care of his world." (a quote from the pamphlet distributed at the Western Wall).

Although not a requirement, there is an old Jewish custom to write ב"ה או ב"ט, at the beginning of a letter. ב"ה is an acronym of the Hebrew words Baruch Hashem or Be'ezrat Hashem (with the help of God). The Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l had the custom to start off his letters with ב"ה, as can be seen in thousands of his published letters. He encouraged others to start off their letters acknowledging God, in a similar fashion (*Likutei Sichot* vol. 6 p.190 and vol. 24, p 599).

Incorporating "Baruch Hashem" in our daily conversations and including these words in our writing and correspondences not only makes us more aware of God in our daily lives, but whoever we come in contact with also gains an awareness of God.

May this lead to the day when the entire world will recognize that "God is one and His name is one" (Zecharia 14:9). ■

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FROM THE VIRTUAL DESK OF THE OU VEBBE REBBE

RAV DANIEL MANN



Frozen *Challa* for *Lechem* *Mishneh*

Question: May we use a frozen *challa* for *lechem mishneh* on Shabbat?

Answer: We will start by removing the main suspense: the one-word answer is clearly, “Yes.” After seeing why, we will see why some prefer avoiding the situation and weigh certain factors and distinctions.

The *gemara* (Berachot 39b) says that on Shabbat, one needs to start the meals with two loaves of bread, based on the *pasuk* (Shemot 16:22) regarding the double portion of *manna* that fell in the desert. The *gemara* then says that Rav Kahana would hold two loaves [during the *beracha*] but only cut off bread from one of them. Rabbi Zeira, it continues, would cut into the “whole *sheiruta*.” Rashi (ad loc.) explains that this means that his first cut was enough *challa* for the whole meal. The Rashba (ad loc.) says that it means that R. Zeira would cut bread from each of the loaves.

It does not seem that the Rashba understood R. Zeira’s practice as being a halachic requisite, and in any case, the

accepted opinion is that of Rashi, that the preference is to cut a big piece but of only one loaf (Rambam 7:3; Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 274:1). Several *Acharonim* (see Yabia Omer, VIII, OC 32) understand that according to Rashi’s approach, only one loaf is there for eating, whereas the second one is just for a reminder of the miracle in the desert. Accordingly, the second one does not need to be fit to eat from a practical perspective.

There is a *machloket* whether we go as far as saying that it does not have to be ready to be eaten at all. For example, some say (see Tzitz Eliezer XIV:40) that one can even use *matza* for *lechem mishneh* on *Erev Pesach* even though one is not allowed to eat *matza* at that time. The Pri Megadim (MZ 274:2) suggests that even one who does not usually eat bread baked by a non-Jewish bakery could count it for the second loaf of *lechem mishneh*.

On the other hand, some *poskim* prefer not to use frozen *challa* for *lechem mishneh*. The Shevet Halevi (VI:31) opines that if there is an opinion that instructs to actually cut from both loaves then everyone agrees that it should at least to be fit to eat. The Shemirat Shabbat K’hilchata (55:(39)) cites Rav SZ Auerbach as saying that it is likely that it needs to be fit to eat at some type during the meal (the Shevet Halevi above seems to assume that the loaf

The Orthodox Union - via its website - fields questions of all types in areas of kashrut, Jewish law and values. Some of them are answered by Eretz Hemdah, the Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, headed by Rav Yosef Carmel and Rav Moshe Ehrenreich, founded by HaRav Shaul Yisraeli zt"l, to prepare rabbanim and dayanim to serve the National Religious community in Israel and abroad. Ask the Rabbi is a joint venture of the OU, Yerushalayim Network, Eretz Hemdah... and OU Israel's Torah Tidbits.



would not be defrosted by meal's end). Therefore, it seem that if one uses a pita or a roll, which will defrost within fifteen minutes or so, the consensus should be that it is totally fine.

One could ask that regarding a large loaf, as well, even if it takes more than an hour to defrost, the outer layer should defrost quicker, and the minimum size of a *challa* is only a *k'zayit*. The stringent leaning *poskim* probably assume that since people do not eat *challa* by peeling off the outside, the *challa* would have to be mainly defrosted (this distinction may be implicit in the Rambam, Shabbat 9:4).

Another distinction to consider is whether *seuda shlishit* is different from the other meals. In the direction of stringency, it is usually a shorter meal, therefore giving less time for defrosting, especially since for many it has a set finish time – before the standard time for *Ma'ariv*. It is even possible to argue that at that point of the day, if it does not count toward *lechem mishneh*, it is *muktzeh*. (The Tzitz Eliezer ibid. discusses this correlation, but says that it is fit for *lechem mishneh* and therefore not *muktzeh*; Mishneh Halachot XI:197 rejects the possibility of *muktzeh*). On the other hand, there is more room for leniency because it is unclear that *lechem mishneh* is needed at *seuda shlishit* (see Shulchan Aruch, OC 291:4-5).

In short, when there is a need, frozen *lechem mishneh* is valid, but there is some halachic logic to avoid it if it will not defrost during the meal. Yabia Omer (ibid.) said that it is preferable to borrow a *challa* from a neighbor and return it. Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata (55:(43)) has a slight reservation whether it is considered fit for him to eat if he lacks permission to eat and not return it. ■

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Elective Surgery

We have previously seen the different opinions of the Ramban and the Tosafot regarding the question as to why the doctor is not held responsible for damages caused during medical treatment. According to the former, the reason is that the doctor is given permission to heal and his license exempts him from having to pay for reasonable damages caused. The Tosafot holds that the reason for the exemption was that the Sages wanted to ensure that people would enter the medical profession and were concerned that if doctors knew they would have to pay for their damages they might not want to take up the profession. For the sake of Tikkun Olam the Rabbis encouraged people to save lives and exempted them from paying damages for this purpose.

Rabbi Zilberstein, in his Shiurim for Doctors, presented an interesting practical application of these two positions. In the case of a plastic surgeon who performs a surgery to improve aesthetics and causes damage, the Ramban would still claim that the surgeon is not liable to damages

since he is licensed and has permission to practice medicine. But the Tosafot would hold the doctor responsible for the damage caused the reason being that Tikkun Olam is relevant only to saving life or alleviating pain but not in the case of pure aesthetics. The concept of Tikkun Olam promotes practicing medicine for the good of society and therefore removes doctors' liability in cases where the Sages were concerned that people would prefer not to practice medicine. However, in the case of plastic surgery, the Rabbis would not apply the same concern since society could still function without them.

Can we extend this same distinction to fertility treatment as well? The assumption is that plastic surgery is elective and not a medical necessity. There are cases in which it is essential but in many cases it is the choice of the patient and not essential surgery.

The same can be said of fertility treatment as well; in most cases it is elective and not a medical requirement. As such we can suggest that according to the Tosafot a fertility specialist who caused damage is held responsible, since the notion of Tikkun Olam does not apply to such elective treatment. While the couple would suffer from the lack of doctors willing to work in fertility, society

as a whole would survive. Therefore there is no need to be lenient on doctors in the field of fertility treatment.

According to the Ramban the fertility doctor would be exempt from damages due to his license to practice medicine.

More on this next week. ■

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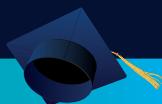
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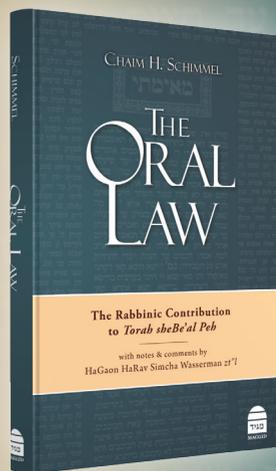
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RABBI BEREL

WEIN

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We once again we see in this week's Torah reading the Torah's penchant to use outsiders and their ideas to advance the welfare of the Jewish People. After the granting of the Torah on Sinai, Moshe attempts to institute a one-man – himself – system of justice for the Jewish people. In theory, this is the ideal system, for everyone would wish to be heard and judged by Moshe. There cannot be anyone better or wiser to hear disputes and render clarifications of Torah ordinances and values than Moshe Rabbeinu. Yet, like many if not even the greatest ideas in theory, it does not usually work out in practice in the messy world of everyday human behavior and life.

It is the complete outsider Yitro who immediately grasps the danger to Moshe and his leadership role and to the people, that is inherent in allowing Moshe to be the sole judge of the Jewish people. He cautions Moshe that under such a system Moshe and the people as a whole will wither away because of the impossible physical, emotional and organizational strain.

Yitro proposes an alternate system of justice, more bureaucratic and cumbersome, but infinitely more workable than the one Moses proposed. And Heaven agrees with the outsider, and

Yitro's proposal becomes the accepted norm for justice for that generation of the Jewish people. Moshe himself agrees with the wisdom of Yitro's words. The fact that Yitro is a complete outsider in Jewish society of that time in no way disqualifies his observations and suggestions.

Generally speaking, people ignore and even resent the comments and opinions of outsiders on what we consider to be internal or domestic matters. What can an outsider possibly know about how we should behave or how we should run our home, business or society? Yet, as the professional fields of counselling in all sectors and disciplines present in our society continue to grow and expand, we are witness to the value of outside guidance.

It is their outsidership that provides perspective that the person or society cannot by itself achieve. The rabbis of the Talmud phrased it succinctly and correctly: "A prison inmate cannot free himself by himself from his incarceration." As it was in the case of Yitro, it is the outsider – oftentimes the ultimate outsider – who may be the key to progress and offer a better perspective on the challenges facing us.

We should never deliberately close our ears to what is being said about us or to

advice given even if it was not requested. The great unmatched humility of Moshe allowed him not only to accept the words and advice of Yitro, but also to cherish them, and even openly credit Yitro for his insight and wisdom, Moshe will say to Yitro later in the Torah “that you have been to us our guide and eyes,”

Only outsiders can free us from the bonds of our own self-imposed subjectivity. This is one of the great subliminal teachings that fill the Torah and instruct us about life. This is also a lesson that should be well learned by all of us. ■

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TEEN TALK

WITH RABBI URI PILICHOWSKI

Southern NCSY, Director of Israel Advocacy

Isn't it Racist for Jews to Only Marry Jews?

God prohibited the Jewish people from marrying people who aren't Jewish. When teaching the prohibition of intermarriage God left no room for confusion, teaching the reason along with the mitzvah. God said that if a Jew married a non-Jew the Jew will stop performing the mitzvot in the Torah.

God's idea of marriage can be clearly understood by reading the Torah and our Rabbi's teachings about marriage. While love is an essential part of any Jewish marriage, a Jewish marriage includes so

much more! A Jewish marriage is also a unit of likeminded people who share Torah values and work together to raise a family based on those Torah values. When God commanded the Jewish people to marry, He wasn't just creating a healthy way to solidify love, God was giving the Jewish people a way to fulfill the mitzvot of the Torah.

This kind of marriage only works when both partners are committed to fulfilling the mitzvot of the Torah. It is when both people want to raise a Torah family that the marriage will grow stronger and stronger. When finding a spouse one of the most important factors to look for is a person who will share your values.

Some of the finest people in the world aren't Jewish and we consider them among the righteous people of the world. At the same time, Gentiles (Non-Jews) aren't commanded to fulfill the



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613 mitzvot. A Jew who prioritizes the mitzvot will share many values with their righteous Gentile friends, but they will not share all the Torah's values. A Gentile will not observe the Shabbat or light Chanukah candles. They will also eat non-Kosher food. A Gentile who isn't righteous will possibly worship a false god - and draw those around them to worship with them. Every marriage features spouses having an effect on each other. In a Jewish marriage, the effect each spouse should have on each other is a positive one that encourages Torah observance.

God understands human nature and the effect people have on each other. He knows that nowhere is this stronger than in marriage. God wanted to make sure that Jews would only use marriage - an act of sanctity called kedushin - to improve their Torah observance, not be drawn away from it.

While the prohibition of intermarriage can seem discriminatory, after all we're not marrying Gentiles, the facts don't support such an accusation. The concept of marriage as a method of improving Torah performance doesn't speak poorly of Gentiles, it challenges Jews to make their marriage about more than love. It is about creating a sacred unit dedicated to serving HaShem. ■

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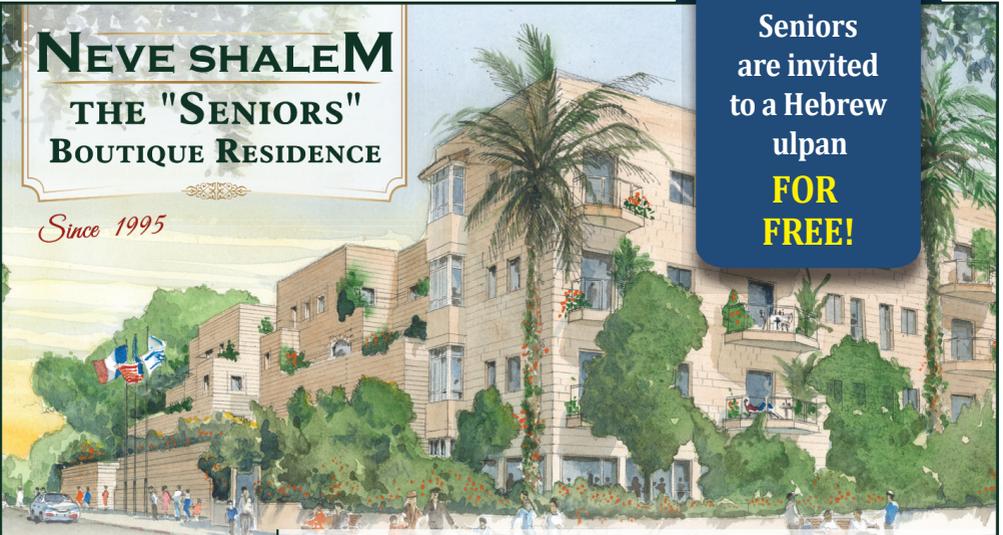
Hearing ear of VAYISHMA YITRO, and Yitro heard... • B"H was said by Yitro when he heard all the things that G-d had done for Israel. From that we are taught that one makes a bracha on miracles • The scales represent the justice system, Yitro's suggestions, Moshe's response, etc. • Yitro's advice included the assignment of "captains" of groups of 1000, 100, 50, and 10 - represented by the Roman numerals M,C,L,X • Bnei Yisrael's arrival at Har Sinai is described by the word VAYICHAN, as Rashi puts it, we were like one person with one heart. That's the graphic under the ear • The Shofar is one of the symbols of the Sinai experience, as we more than mention on Rosh HaShana • The washing machine is for the people to clean their clothes during the preparatory days for Matan Torah • Wine cup is for Kiddush (Zachor) • and the negation circle is for the prohibition of Melacha, including writing, watering plants, digging, sewing, building • Do not steal (the Xed out thief) • and do not go up to the Mizbei'ach with steps (the negated ladder) are two other prohibitions in the sedra • Volcano represents Har Sinai smoking from the fire of G-d's presence • An angel flew to the Heavenly Mizbei'ach and picked up a glowing coal in a pair of tongs. He then touched the coal to Yeshayahu's lips, representing a purifying process that would allow the prophet to speak on behalf of G-d • MEM SOFIT, which is better called a "Closed" MEM, appears in the haftara in the middle of a WORD, rather than at the end, where we are used to seeing that kind of MEM • Three dots and a short vertical line are the difference in the 4-commandment pasuk between the two sets of TROP-notes • Max Baer Jr. played Jethro (Yitro) for 9 years on the Beverly

Hillbillies • 1-18 is LOW on a roulette wheel, tea, saw as in LO TISA, Dibra #3 • Upper right: the dragonfly has four wings and the White House has two wings. Together they represent the six wings of the angels described by Yeshayahu in the haftara • Many hospitals are named Mt. Sinai, as the one pictured in Manhattan • Two different symbols for UV, ultra-violet light or radiation. In Hebrew, AL-SEGOLI. Feminine form for the color violet is SEGULA, as in G-d's promise that we will be for Him the AM SEGULA above all other nations - hence, ULTRA-SEGULA • Above Jethro and to the right is a montage of characters from Scholastic Press's Goosebumps series... When Yitro came to Moshe, having heard about the Splitting of the Sea and the battle against Amalek (and maybe about Matan Torah), Moshe detailed all that had happened to Bnei Yisrael. The Torah describes Yitro's reaction with the words VAYICHAD YITRO. Rashi says that the plain meaning of the word is that Yitro rejoiced because of all the things he heard. Rashi gives a second explanation of the word VAYICHAD. That Yitro's skin erupted in goosebumps. A nervous or frightened reaction, perhaps, to what happened to the Egyptians, to whom he had been allied and with whom he possibly identified. From here, our Sages tell us, we learn to be extremely sensitive to the convert, who has changed his life completely by becoming Jewish, but still has memories and feelings about his former life • The can of bug spray represents one specific brand, whose name is a word that occurs in the sedra twice and two other times in the Torah, besides 9 more times in the rest of Tanach - RAID! • The fat heart is a reference in the haftara • The words at the top and bottom of the left-hand side of the ParshaPix are the five tastes - Sweet, salty, sour, bitter, and umami are five tastes - T'AMIM. Two of them are TAAMEI HA-ELYON, the upper notes, and three are TAAMEI HATACTON, the lower notes • the flashlight is called a torch in British English; a torch is a LAPID, as in part of the description of the atmosphere of Har Sinai.

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THE NEW OLD PATH

BY RABBI BENJI LEVY
CEO Of Mosaic United

Life's Blessings

The giving of the Torah is one of the most far-reaching episodes known to humanity. Whilst God Himself utters the first two commandments (Tractate *Makkot* 24a), the magnitude of God's voice is so great that the Jewish people beg for Moses to speak in place of God, lest they die (*Ex.* 20:15-18). This is the first and only recorded time that God reveals Himself to an entire nation – a pinnacle of human history – and yet, rather than giving this episode a grandiose name or even referencing the Ten Commandments, it is named after a relatively minor character from the story, who happens to be a convert – Yitro. Why? What is so great about Yitro that he merits to have this extraordinary section named after him?

The whole world sees the amazing miracle of the splitting of the Reed Sea. The Midrash says that every other body of water in the world was also separated at that time (*Ex. Rabba* 21:6). The impact of witnessing this supernatural event, however, dulled, and eventually people began to forget. This unfortunate phenomenon occurs on a micro-level almost daily. We are con-

stantly surrounded by everyday miracles; from the birth of a baby to the blossoming of a flower. Yet we walk around as if everything is normal, carrying out day to day activities, blind to the miracles taking place all around us.

The key to living an enriched life can be found in the character of Yitro. In contrast to the generation around him, Yitro internalizes and appreciates the greatness of the miracles he has witnessed. His exposure to the spiritual fosters within him an increased sensitivity and awareness of similar experiences. So, when the Jewish people are victorious in their battle against Amalek, he immediately understands that this was not simply due to the might of the Jewish army and he acknowledges that this must be the work of God.

This unique section of the Torah is always read around the time of the festival of Tu Bishvat, the new year or 'birthday' for the trees (Tractate *Rosh Hashana* 1:1). Just as on a person's birthday, we celebrate their existence, reminisce about their younger years and share blessings for their future, similarly the Jewish calendar has identified an appropriate date for celebrating the existence of trees. On Tu Bishvat we celebrate the beauty of nature, we wonder at the new blossoms flowering after a dormant winter season and we marvel at the magic of a bee pollinating

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a flower. In acknowledging the way that a tiny seed can grow into a magnificent tree, we acknowledge the simple everyday natural miracles that underpin the world.

It is therefore no coincidence that the miraculous and supernatural story of the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai is read precisely around the time of Tu Bishvat. The wonder and inspiration felt in that moment of revelation should be the same wonder and inspiration we experience when witnessing the everyday miracles of life and the world around us. And perhaps it is for this very reason that this portion of the Torah is called Yitro.

Having witnessed the miracle of the splitting of the sea, and the Jewish people's miraculous victory over Amalek, Yitro begins to realize that his whole existence is one majestic miracle. It is relatively easy to marvel at supernatural phenomena, but to take that wonder and superimpose it into everyday life, to notice the miracles hidden beneath the surface of nature, and to appreciate God's role in our everyday world, brings gratitude to an altogether different level.

From this viewpoint of wonder, this moment of gratitude for all that is around him, Yitro converts to Judaism. He journeys forward with his family and joins the Jewish nation. His decision reflects the underlying tenet that a prerequisite for receiving the Torah and living a life of Judaism is to be grateful for everything one has, to acknowledge daily miracles and to integrate their meaning into the fabric of our lives. Yitro's attitude towards the

wonders of the world, and his subsequent conversion to Judaism, is a blueprint for the mindset required by the Jewish People as they stand and prepare to receive the Torah.

The sages encourage every Jew, every morning to begin the day with the *Mode ani* prayer: *Mode ani lefanecha melech hai vekayam*, which literally means 'grateful I am before you, living and Eternal King.' The order of the wording is strange as grammatically it should read *ani modeh lefanecha* i.e. 'I am grateful before you'. So why is the order reversed? The answer reveals a fundamental tenet in Judaism. How can one begin their entire day with the word *ani*, 'I', implying a focus on one's self? Even if grammatically inappropriate, it is a far greater value to begin our day with *mode* reflecting gratitude, in order to predicate the day on appreciation, rather than focusing on self-centredness.

The message of Yitro and perhaps the reason this portion is named after him, is that the grandiose morality and groundbreaking content of the Ten Commandments is predicated upon a basic level of appreciation. Practicing as a Jew involves allowing gratitude and appreciation to infuse every facet of our life. This finds expression in daily blessings over food, sights, smells and actions. In this way we affirm the ideal that acknowledging and making blessings over life is the greatest way to transform life into the ultimate blessing. ■

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Should we be waiting for Eagles?

What does it mean to be redeemed on the wings of eagles?

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“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and [how] I bore you on eagles' wings, and I brought you to Me.”

Rashi explains this pasuk as a metaphor; just as Eagles carry their young ones on their back to protect them from shooting arrows, so to Hashem protected us from the Egyptian arrows. The Gemara in Sanhedrin relates this concept to the final redemption.

I would like to explore how this idea applies to our redemption today. Are we really waiting for eagles to arrive at our door to take us to the holy land? Do we really anticipate this? What does all this mean?

As a child, I imagined the idea of redemption with Moshiach coming in a great commotion. I imagined that I would be waiting in my house in the Five Towns with the suitcase I had packed next to the door, so that I would be ready to go.

Moshiach would come on a donkey, and next to him would be an eagle ready to fly us to the Land of Israel. When we would arrive, we would go straight to the Temple and live in some kind of magical world. What I was not told was that the eagle was already waiting for me at Kennedy Airport.

Today we are being redeemed from Exile by planes that fly through the air which look similar to eagles wings. Perhaps we can see now that the thousands of Jews that have traveled to the land of Israel by planes from the four corners of the world is the true fulfillment of Hashem's redemptive promises and prophecies. ■



Yael Emmer
10th Grade,
Chashmonaim

Why did Yitro Convert?

In this week's Parsha, Yitro. Moshe's father in law, decided to visit the Jewish People. The parsha states that “Yitro heard” about three things. The leaving of Egypt, the splitting of the sea, and the success that Bnei Yisrael had in the war.

There was no technology, email, internet, radio or TV, yet everyone was somehow aware of these major events and miracles that happened. Yitro went to visit the Jewish people specifically to see Moshe and he could not believe the countless

people that were waiting to speak to him. Yitro was so impressed by the Jewish people that he decided to convert and become a Jew. He had a special urge deep down knowing that this is what he had to do. He was a high minister in his religion and had worshipped all idolatry possible, yet he saw that being a Jew was the right direction for him.

If all the nations had heard about the miracles then why did only Yitro "hear"?

Amalek also heard, however unlike Yitro, they chose the other extremes and decided to oppose the Jews. Amalek was so stubborn and narrow minded that they didn't "listen" in the same way. They responded to these powerful events by going against the Jewish people instead of realizing that they should really be honoring them.

This is an important lesson we can all learn from. When it says "And he heard"- וישמע in this situation, this presented two options how it was going to be heard. Yitro heard and went to join Israel and become a part of the nation, while Amalek chose to become enemies of the Jews.

We have the choice how we are going to

approach every situation. With a positive attitude and an open mind we can walk in the footsteps of Yitro and make good decisions in our lives and see the good in everything around us.

Shabbat Shalom ■

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