

ב"ה Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1551

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פרשת יתרו
PARSHAT YITRO

SHABBAT MEVARCHIM



United
We Stand



Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb
The Seeker
Page 14



Shoshana Judelman
Mikveh Am Yisrael
Page 56

הנה אנכי בא אליך בעב הענן
שמות י"ט:ט'

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT PARSHAT YITRO ZMANIM
CANDLES 4:38 PM • HAVDALA 5:53 PM • RABBEINU TAM 6:32 PM



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Allison Davidson // Gershy Schwartz

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for this weeks Divrei Torah by **Rabbi Moshe Hauer**,
Rabbi Daniel Mann and **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**.

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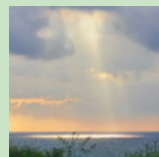


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Rosh Chodesh Adar Aleph is on Friday,
February 9 and Shabbat, February 10

THIS WEEK'S COVER PHOTO

I made aliyah from England. I live in Arnona Jerusalem and am a member of the OU choir. It was a rainy erev Shabbat and as I walked with my husband talking about the hostages soldiers and the darkness of war...we saw this bright circle of light coming through the cloud onto the sea... it felt like G-ds way of telling us there will be light again.



Photographed by
Naomi Halpern.

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



	YITRO		MISHPATIM	
	CANDLES	HAVDALA	CANDLES	HAVDALA
Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	4:38	5:53	4:44	5:59
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	4:56	5:56	5:02	6:01
Beit Shemesh / RBS	4:57	5:54	5:03	6:00
Alon Shvut	4:54	5:53	5:00	5:59
Raanana / Tel Mond / Herzliya / K. Saba	4:54	5:54	5:00	6:00
Modiin / Chashmonaim	4:54	5:54	5:00	5:59
Netanya	4:54	5:54	5:00	6:00
Be'er Sheva	4:56	5:55	5:02	6:01
Rehovot	4:55	5:54	5:01	6:00
Petach Tikva	4:38	5:54	4:44	6:00
Ginot Shomron	4:53	5:53	4:59	5:59
Haifa / Zichron	4:42	5:53	4:49	5:59
Gush Shiloh	4:52	5:52	4:59	5:58
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	4:54	5:54	5:01	6:00
Givat Zeev	4:57	5:53	5:04	5:59
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	4:54	5:54	5:00	5:59
Ashkelon	4:56	5:56	5:02	6:01
Yad Binyamin	4:55	5:54	5:01	6:00
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	4:44	5:50	4:51	5:56
Golan	4:50	5:50	4:57	5:56
Nahariya/Maalot	4:51	5:52	4:57	5:58
Afula	4:52	5:52	4:58	5:58

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem) - 6:32 PM • Next Week - 6:38 PM

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities;
40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat and Haifa)

Daf Yomi: Bava Kama 93

JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wed - Shabbat

Jan. 31 - Feb. 10 / 21 Shvat - 1 Adar Aleph

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin **5:40 - 5:34**

Sunrise **6:33 - 6:26**

Sof Zman Kriat Shema **9:13 - 9:09**

Magen Avraham **8:35 - 8:33**

Sof Zman Tefila **10:06 - 10:04**

(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)

Chatzot (Halachic Noon) **11:52 - 11:53**

Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha) **12:22 - 12:23**

Plag Mincha **4:05 - 4:12**

Sunset (Including Elevation) **5:16 - 5:25**



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
Executive Director, OU Israel

I've remarked in these pages about the incredible feeling of *achdut* and togetherness that *Klal Yisrael* is experiencing right now in Israel. Jews of all types are helping each other, supporting each other, loving each other. Our brothers and sisters have come by the planeload to Israel on mission after mission (many through the OU). Fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, rabbis and *shul* members, you name it, everyone wants to be here because they are experiencing this feeling as well. (Let me take a moment to give a shout-out to all my colleagues at the OU in North America who are working so hard to bring missions to Israel and showing support - from volunteering to donating to barbecuing for soldiers on army bases!)

There is one area of Israeli society that I feel has generally taken a different approach, and it is disheartening to see. I have avoided it for a long time, since it often seems to be so disconnected from the feeling of the nation. I'm talking about the Israeli media. I find that when I glance at a newspaper, turn on the radio, or pass by a TV on the news stations and talk shows, I walk away with the feeling that they live in a totally different universe than me and everyone around me. They live in a place where that unity is broken, disunity has been sown, and every possible point of criticism can and should be stated and reviewed.

I understand that journalists have their job to do. Sometimes, criticism is necessary, but there is a time and a place for

everything. I just can't shake the feeling that in times like these, when war rages on, this kind of journalism can serve our enemies much more than us. Our enemies want us splintered and broken, unable to hold each other's hands and help each other. I just want to tell the media (and I mean many of the people in the media, not everyone, of course), how can you turn your back on this incredible unity that is clear to me is necessary for us to win and to survive this war?

I saw a picture this week that really moved me to the core. A store owner put a sign up on his store window saying, "*Hachanut segurah, ani bemiluim*," "The store is closed, I am in the reserves." On that sign, people began

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to write notes. “*Kol hakavod*, thank you for your service!” “We love you.” “Come back home soon!” You see that and your heart swells. What an incredible nation we have.

In Torah Tidbits, I have written about many of the initiatives that people have taken upon themselves to express their feeling of unity and show how much we are there for each other. People who have

come en masse to funerals to pay their respects; *shiva* houses that are filled with hundreds of people in show of support; restaurant owners that tell the uniformed soldier that his money is no good there and to order whatever he wants.

It’s a special feeling. I carry it with me always, and that’s why I made a decision a long time ago to stay away from the media as much as possible. Many of my friends know that when they come across an article or read an interview that has to do with Jewish unity they should send it to me. There is no lack of articles and news stories like that, and I read them voraciously. But the negative ones? Keep them away from me.

I had a very painful experience this last *Motzei Shabbat*. A neighbor of mine is in the IDF. It was his second time out of Gaza since October 7, and he is currently fighting in Khan Yunis. He came home for *Shabbat* and on *Motzei Shabbat* he came over to my house to talk for a bit and get a hug. We spoke about what’s happening, how he’s doing, and how I could help him if at all possible. He said, “Avi, we have everything we need.” I said, “Are you sure? There’s nothing I can help with?”

He said, “Listen, I’m a single guy. My mother and father are worried at home, but there’s not much you can do about that.” I insisted, “There must be something I could do!”

He answered me, “If you have any ability to influence, any pull at all, get the TV stations to emphasize the positive more than the negative.” He explained that he was just at home

with his mother, when she turned on the TV to watch the news. He sat down with her for a few minutes, mother and son, and watched a news channel speak about the war. After two minutes, he stood up. “Mom, I just can’t

stand this. I can’t listen to it anymore.” And that’s when he came to me, for a bit of positivity, a bit of optimism and warmth that was so lacking from the news he was watching. He came because he needed *chizuk*. He asked me, “Is this how the nation is feeling?” I told him no. I don’t think that in any way, shape or form, what he is hearing on TV is what *Klal Yisrael* is feeling right now. We are embracing. We are together.

I don’t think I have that much influence on journalists. I know a few, and I’ve made sure to speak to them from my heart on this issue. I’ve tried to pass on this soldier’s message. I think it’s important we all do our part in this. Emphasize the good. The positive. We need to explain to our media people that while their job is to report the truth, it is how that news is reported and what is emphasized, and when it is published, that can make all the difference. We are at a



time of war. We need to maintain our unified feeling to win against our enemy. There are signs everywhere, “*Beyachad nenetzach*,” “together we will win.” The only way is if we emphasize the unity we all hold.

We have brothers and sisters in this country who have put their entire lives aside - their personal businesses, their jobs, their families, their children, their parents and their spouses for the sake of defeating Hamas and getting back our hostages. Many of us who aren't fighting have had to experience the “inconvenience” of our local repair guy or painter or store owner being out on *miluim*. I believe that if we can push off that repair or buying that item until they return, we should do that. This shows the support they need at this time.

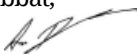
Let me give you an example from my own life. I have a gardener who comes once a month to fix up the yard and make it beautiful. He's on *miluim* now, and he told me he'll find me a replacement, and I can pay him instead. I said, “Absolutely not. My garden can wait. I'll wait until you come back from *miluim*.” I told him this October 8th. Since then, my boys and I have worked to keep the garden looking as nice as possible, but I did not hire a different gardener in his place. I want him to know that he won't have to worry about at least one client when he returns.

Our soldiers need to see this positivity and support. So if you can talk to any journalists you know about keeping positive, do it. And if you can show support for our soldiers, if you can show them that what they see on TV is not the feeling of the people on the ground, they will fight for us that much better and we will win. Our journalists, politicians, and other leaders should learn from our *chayalim*, and they

should see that *Am Yisrael* is one unified nation.

When we look at this week's parsha, we learn from Yitro that there is no such thing as one person doing it all. Moshe *Rabbeinu* was trying every case and judging every fight, but Yitro told him, “Look at what you're doing and how tired it is making you. You can't do it alone. Appoint lower judges and higher judges, and together you will be successful.” This is always true. We cannot and should not think that we'll do it alone. We all have our part to do to encourage this feeling. Together with our friends, families, and the entire *Am Yisrael*, we will win.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel

aberman@ouisrael.org

In Loving Memory



Jenny Weil

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Music for the Soul – OU Israel's Dorot Women's Choir

"The concert was beyond my expectations. The selection of songs so moving that it brought me to tears!"

– Ethel, benefit concert audience member

"OU Israel's Dorot choir has provided us with a home away from home where, as Olim, we are able to acclimate to Israel and to establish friendships with other Jewish women. We are able to use our musical abilities to develop our spirituality and to encourage others."

– Judy, choir member

OU Israel's Dorot choir, the OU's first ever intergenerational women's choir, has grown into a cohesive sisterhood, including 46 talented women who are committed to excellence in music, sharing the magic of Jewish music and connecting with other women. The repertoire includes original music composed, arranged and directed from the piano by choir director Hadassah Jacob. The songs, mainly composed to words from the Torah and Tefilah, are written in diverse styles and in exquisite harmonies, lending the choir its unique sound with music that reflects the poignancy and joy of the Jewish story.

Recognizing the unique power of music to connect and unify people, combined with the desire to help the Chayalim and refugees, the choir recently had two sold-out benefit concerts at OU Israel. The songs in these concerts underscored the indomitable faith, determination and resilience of Am Yisrael as the Dorot choir singers expressed feelings that words alone cannot convey and uplifted the audiences. All proceeds from these concerts went to OU Israel's vigorous programs and initiatives helping those severely impacted by the war.

Each week we share one of OU Israel's impactful programs helping English-speaking Olim with their Klita and impacting Israeli society.





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Our thoughts and prayers go out to anyone suffering during this difficult time.
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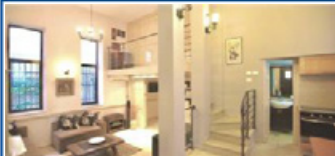
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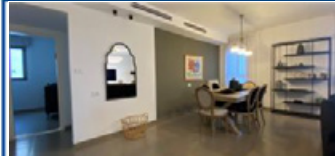
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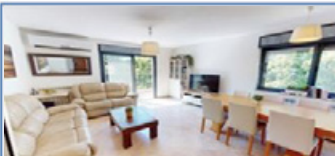
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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

RABBI REUVEN TRADBURKS
RCA ISRAEL REGION

PARSHAT YITRO

Yitro joins Moshe. He advises Moshe in delegating to judges. At Mt. Sinai, G-d offers the Jewish people to be a treasured people. The Ten Commandments are given at Sinai. The people quake in response.



1ST ALIYA (18:1-12)

Yitro, Moshe's father-in-law, moved by the exodus from Egypt, travels to meet Moshe, bringing Tzippora and the 2 sons. Moshe greets them and tells of all that has happened. Yitro blesses G-d, affirming that now he knows G-d is great, and offers offerings to Him.

Rashi claims that this story of Yitro occurs after the giving of the Torah – meaning, the Torah plucked it from its proper chronology and stuck it here. Presumably for a good reason. Why place this story here?

You could answer either by looking at what comes next or from what just happened. The story at the end of last week's parsha was the war with Amalek. This story of Yitro is placed here, juxtaposed to Amalek as a counterbalance. There are different types of non-Jews that we will encounter in history; there are Amaleks and there are Yitros. Amalek seeks our harm. Yitro seeks our G-d. Amalek sees our weakness. Yitro sees our greatness. Amalek fights us. Yitro partners with us.



2ND ALIYA (18:13-23)

Yitro observes the people standing and waiting all day for Moshe to adjudicate. Yitro questions this. Moshe

responds: the people come seeking G-d; seeking adjudication; and I teach them G-d's laws. Yitro criticizes Moshe. And suggests: You inquire of G-d on their behalf. And teach them G-d's laws. But in addition, choose Judges who can adjudicate in your stead. Judges who are substantive, G-d fearing, men of truth and abhorring inappropriate gain.

Yitro offers good advice to Moshe; delegate authority to judges. But while he proposes delegating authority in the court system, he does *not* suggest delegating authority in Moshe's other roles. Because in those Moshe is simply irreplaceable.

Moshe told Yitro that he has 3 functions: aiding those seeking G-d, adjudicating disputes, and teaching G-d's commands. Yitro tells him: others can settle disputes. But as for the inquiry of G-d and teaching G-d's commands, well for those, no one but you could possibly do them. For when it comes to communications from G-d, you are unique, irreplaceable, *sui generis*, one of a kind.

This exchange presents a fundamental principle of the Torah: that G-d speaks to Moshe in a way that He does not, nor will He in the future ever do again with anyone else. When Moshe says that people come to him seeking G-d, what he means is: I have access to G-d. He speaks to me. (Speaking to G-d isn't the trick; the trick is when He answers back.) Similarly, when Moshe says that he teaches G-d's law, what he means is that G-d communicates those laws to him and to no one else.

This could very well be the prime purpose of this Yitro story. For, in the very next story, the giving of the Torah, the very same theme of Moshe's uniqueness as the one to whom G-d speaks is central.



3RD ALIYA (18:24-27)

Moshe heard. He chose judges, with only the most difficult cases

brought to him. Moshe sent Yitro home.

It takes an honest leader to accept suggestions to improve. Moshe displays his honesty and humility – if the suggestion is good, embrace it. Just as Yitro accepted the news of the Exodus and affirmed One G-d, so too, Moshe admits he could improve his system. Two men of honesty and humility.



4TH ALIYA (19:1-6)

The people camped in the Sinai desert opposite the mountain. Moshe ascended the mountain. G-d told him: tell the people. If you will listen to Me, keep My covenant, then you will be a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation. Tell that to the Jewish people.

This short aliya screams of significance: it is the invitation to an intimate encounter. The entire Torah to this point has been G-d's reach for man. And here is the culmination of that reach. Akin to a Divine hug. G-d created the world, an act of desire for a world. He created man. He reached out to Avraham, promising, unsolicited, the Land of Israel. But He kept His distance. Until Egypt, when He reached again to pull the Jewish people out of slavery, calling them His first born. Now He tells Moshe that He is pulling the Jewish people close as His closest, kohanim, those who are in His inner sanctum.



5TH ALIYA (19:7-19)

Moshe presents G-d's words to the people. They respond: all that

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G-d says we will do. G-d says: I will come to you in a cloud, so the people shall hear that I speak with you. Prepare them for 3 days for on the 3rd day I will descend in the view of all the people. No one shall touch the mountain. Moshe prepared the people. On the third day there was lightning and thunder, a thick cloud and a powerful shofar sound. The people in the camp were afraid. Moshe brought them out to the mountain. It was all in smoke for G-d descended in fire. The mountain shook. The shofar increased in power. Moshe spoke; G-d's voice emanated.

The revelation of Sinai is a culmination of G-d's reach for man. He promises, He redeems us, and now He speaks, communicates.

And although this moment is a pinnacle moment in the history of man, what the people actually heard is not at all clear. The

narrative, without the midrashim, seems to relate that the people will overhear G-d speaking to Moshe. After all, Divine communication to man is overwhelming, inconsistent with our finite being. The people are afraid – Moshe needs to coax them out. Afterwards, in aliya 7, the people tell Moshe that they can't take hearing G-d's voice or they will die.

It is here that we really see Moshe's uniqueness: as the only one to be able to hear G-d's word and survive. The Torah will describe him as such later – no one else could tolerate “panim el panim”, direct communication from G-d. Moshe's uniqueness is not as a leader, a legislator, a King, a warrior, or a motivational speaker. His uniqueness is as the one who hears G-d's words, His commands, His mitzvot, and is able to withstand that and survive.

The purpose of the revelation at Sinai is to expose the people to the experience, up close, of the communication from G-d to Moshe. This experience will reinforce for them that G-d speaks to Moshe so that they accept Moshe's teachings later as being from G-d. And it will overwhelm them and bring them to believe in G-d.



6TH ALIYA (19:20-20:14)

G-d descended onto the mountain and called Moshe up the mountain. He warned him to again instruct the people to not touch the mountain for they would die. The Ten Commandments: I am G-d, no idols before Me, don't use G-d's name in vain, Shabbat, honor parents, don't murder, adultery, theft, false testimony, covet.

The Midrash points out that the first 2 commands are in the 1st person, G-d speaking directly to the people: I am G-d. And the

rest in the 3rd person, seemingly Moshe speaking in G-d's name about Him: do not take *His* name in vain. That is contrary to what I said above – that the people did not hear the content of what G-d said but only overheard Him speaking with Moshe. The Midrash reconciles this by stating that after hearing the first 2 commandments directly from G-d, the people did in fact die on the spot from the overwhelming experience of revelation. Then, they came back to life. From then on Moshe spoke in G-d's name, as they were simply unable to withstand the power of the direct experience of G-d.



7TH ALIYA (20:15-23)

The people recoiled from seeing the thunder and lightning, the shofar sound and the smoking mountain. They said to Moshe: let G-d speak with you, but not to us, for we do not want to die. Moshe assured them that G-d came so they would fear Him. G-d commanded: You saw that I spoke with you from heaven. Therefore, have no other gods; rather make an earthen altar.

2 symbols linger from the Sinai experience: the shofar and the cloud. The shofar is our way of recalling His Presence; the cloud is His way of indicating His Presence. From now on, when the cloud hovers over the Ohel Moed, it is to indicate that G-d's Presence is there, speaking to Moshe. Like the cloud and smoke of Mt. Sinai.

And the shofar is our way of recalling His Presence at Mt. Sinai. On Rosh Hashana, when we are to feel especially close with G-d, the shofar of Sinai is recalled. The ultimate redemption too is heralded by the Shofar Gadol. The shofar endures as a symbol of the intimate Presence of G-d, as it did at Mt. Sinai. ■



STATS

17th of 54 sedras; 5th of 11 in Shemot.
Written on 138 lines in a Torah (46th).
15 Parshiyot; 4 open, 11 closed.
75* pesukim - ranks 47th (only 7 sedras have fewer pesukim).
1105 words, 4022 letters - ranks 46th.
Yitro is the smallest sedra in Shemot.
*Tradition is that Yitro has 72 pesukim, not 75. If we count DIBROT rather than pesukim 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 pesukim/dibrot, since the first two are definitely combined. Total: 71.



MITZVOT

Yitro contains 17 of the 613 mitzvot; 3 positive and 14 prohibitions.

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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

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The Seeker

“This is the most shocking and astounding phrase in the entire Torah!” These were the words uttered, in Hebrew, by the aging and ailing rabbi who was visiting Baltimore for medical treatment, where I lived long ago. The rabbi was from Israel, where he was the revered and popular dean of a rather famous yeshiva. The treatment he needed was unavailable in Israel at the time, so he journeyed to the community where I was serving as a young pulpit rabbi.

I had long ago developed the habit of taking advantage of the opportunity to meet visitors of this sort. He was too frail to give a formal lecture, but he found it invigorating to sit with three or four of us and engage in conversation about various religious subjects, his favorite one being the weekly Torah portion. I felt especially privileged to be a part of that small group.

The Torah portion that week was *Parshat Yitro* (*Exodus* 18:1-20:23), which we ourselves will read in the synagogue this Shabbat.

Before identifying the shocking phrase which he wished to discuss, he asked us to participate in the following thought experiment:

“Imagine that you are asked to write a brief biographical sketch of some saintly rabbinic figure, such as Rabbi Yisrael Meyer HaKohen, known as the Chofetz Chaim, and you happened to know that

this man’s father-in-law was some rogue who had a disreputable past. Would you share the nature of the father-in-law’s past in a biography for all to see? Would it not be embarrassing for both the Chofetz Chaim and his father-in-law to publicize the latter’s past misdeeds, especially if he had long repented of them?”

He then launched into a very eloquent and forceful discourse about the ethical prohibitions against publicly disclosing a person’s past, or even reminding him of it in private. To bolster his argument, he quoted the following passage from Maimonides’ *Mishneh Torah*: “It is a serious sin to say to a penitent, ‘Remember what you once did,’ or even to mention those past actions in his presence, thus embarrassing him... We are admonished by the Torah not to abuse others verbally...” (Maimonides, *Hilchot Teshuvah* 7:8)

He then drew our attention to the opening verse in this week’s Torah portion: “And Yitro the High Priest of Midian and the father-in-law of Moses, heard about all that the Almighty had done for Moses and Israel his nation...” (*Exodus* 18:1)

“In the same breath,” he exclaimed, “he is referred to as a pagan priest and as the father-in-law of Moses! What a combination of titles! Yes, he was an idolater and the *zaide* of Moses’ children. This is as unlikely as the witch doctor of some primitive tribe who is also the very close personal advisor of the saintly Chofetz Chaim; or, the Archbishop of Canterbury as the mentor of some

Chassidic sage!! Are not those juxtapositions jarring, astonishing, irreconcilable?"

Now that you have some sense of how graphic and dramatic this honored guest to our community could be, I will identify him by name. His name was Rabbi Simcha Zissel Broida, and he was the dean of the Chevron Yeshiva in Jerusalem.

Rabbi Broida went on to offer a suggestion as to why Yitro is introduced to us again in this week's Torah portion in terms of his old title, High Priest of Midian. After all, at this point in time he had renounced his idolatrous past, and indeed, according to rabbinic tradition, was about to convert to Judaism.

"You see," taught Rabbi Broida, "our tradition respects the seeker, the person who searches for the truth and never tires of that search, no matter how many blind alleys he encounters and no matter how much frustration he experiences. Yitro is described as an individual who worshiped every idol in the world in search of the truth. As he became disappointed with each faith that he explored and with each religion that he practiced, he rejected that path and renewed his search. He retains the title High Priest of Midian because that title represents the heights he could achieve in the religious hierarchy within which he sought truth. That title is symbolic of the degree to which Yitro was a seeker of truth."

The old man at this point began to show signs of fatigue, and we begged him to stop his discourse and rest. But he told us that he refused to rest until he was convinced that we had learned the lesson he was trying to teach. "That lesson," he whispered hoarsely, "is best conveyed in the words of Talmud in Tractate *Gittin* 43a: 'No man truly achieves Torah knowledge without first experiencing

error.' " When a person's errors in life culminate in his finally making proper choices and correct decisions, then those errors are to be publicized and respected, because they are indicators of the degree to which that person was a seeker.

As far as I can recall, Rabbi Broida did not share with us on that occasion the following *gematria*. As you may know, every Hebrew word has a numeric equivalent, also known as a *gematria*, and often very diverse terms have identical numerical equivalents, suggesting otherwise unpredictable connections. The proper name "Yitro" has the numeric equivalent of 416. Two contradictory Hebrew terms have the exact same numeric equivalent. Those terms are "he was an idolatrous priest (*komer haya lavodah zara*)" and "The Torah (*HaTorah*)", indicating that this one individual combined within himself two diametrically opposed tendencies. One of those tendencies, *HaTorah*, prevailed, but only because of the lessons learned from his experiences with idolatry. For those of you who are intrigued by *gematria*, I suggest you consult the commentary of *Ba'al HaTurim* to corroborate this one.

Every year since I was privileged to first learn Rabbi Broida's lesson, I look forward to the opening verse of the Torah portion which we will all have the opportunity to read this week. Not only must we learn from our mistakes, but it is only by virtue of making those mistakes that we ultimately learn. That is a powerful and practical lesson indeed. ■

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Deed & Creed

The parsha of Yitro records the revolutionary moment when God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, entered into a mutually binding agreement with a nation, the Children of Israel, an agreement we call a *brit*, a covenant.

Now, this is not the first Divine covenant in the Torah. God had already made one with Noah, and through him all of humanity, and He made another with Abraham, whose sign was circumcision. But those covenants were not fully reciprocal. God did not ask for Noah's agreement, nor did He wait for Abraham's assent.

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Sinai was a different matter. For the first time, He wanted the covenant to be fully mutual, to be freely accepted. So we find that - both before and after the Revelation at Sinai - God commands Moses to make sure the people do actually agree.

The point is fundamental. God wants to rule by right, not might. The God who brought an enslaved people to liberty seeks the free worship of free human beings.

God does not act toward His creatures like a tyrant. (Avodah Zarah 3a)

So at Sinai was born the principle that was, millennia later, described by Thomas Jefferson in the American Declaration of Independence, the idea that governors and governments derive "their just powers from the consent of the governed." That is why the Sinai Covenant was conditional on the people's agreement.

Admittedly, the Talmud questions how free the Israelites actually were, and it uses an astonishing image. It says that God suspended the mountain above their heads and said, "If you agree, well and good. If you don't, here will be your burial." That is another topic for another time. Suffice it to say there is no indication of this in the plain sense of the text itself.

What is interesting is the exact wording

in which the Israelites signal their consent. To repeat: they do so three times, first before the Revelation, and then twice afterwards, in the parsha of Mishpatim.

Listen to the three verses. Before the Revelation:

All the people answered as one and said, 'All that God has spoken, we will do [na'aseh].' (Ex. 19:8)

Then afterward:

Moses came and told the people all of God's words and all the laws. The people all responded with a single voice, 'We will do [na'aseh] every word that God has spoken.' (Ex. 24:3)

He took the Book of the Covenant and read it aloud to the people. They replied, 'We will do [na'aseh] and we will hear [ve-nishma] all that God has declared.' (Ex. 24:7)

Note the subtle difference. In two cases the people say: all that God says, we will do. In the third, the double verb is used: *na'aseh ve-nishma*. "We will do and we will hear, (or obey, or hearken, or understand)." The word *shema* means 'to understand', as we see in the story of the Tower of Babel:

"Come, let us descend and confuse their speech, so that one person will not *understand* another's speech." (Gen. 11:7)

May the Torah learned
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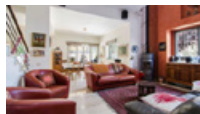
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Now note that there is another difference between the three verses. In the first two cases there is a clear emphasis on the unity of the people. Both phrases are very striking. The first says: *all the people answered as one*. The second says, *The people all responded with a single voice*. In a book that emphasises how fractious and fissiparous the people were, such declarations of unanimity are significant and rare. But the third verse, which mentions both doing *and listening* or understanding, contains no such statement. It simply says: *They replied*. There is no emphasis on unanimity or consensus.

What we have here is a biblical comment on one of the most striking features of all in Judaism: the difference between deed and creed, between *asiyah* and *shemiyah*, between doing and understanding.

Christians have theology. Jews have law. These are two very different approaches to religious life. Judaism is about a community of action. It is about the way people interact in their dealings with one another. It is about bringing God into the shared spaces of our collective life. Just as we know God through what He does, so God asks us to bring Him into what we do. In the beginning, as Goethe put it, was the deed. That is why Judaism is a religion of law, because law is the architecture of behaviour.

When it comes, however, to belief, creed, doctrine, all the things that depend on *shemiyah* rather than *asiyah*, understanding

rather than action: on this Judaism does not call for unanimity. Not because Judaism lacks beliefs. To the contrary, Judaism is what it is precisely *because* of our beliefs, most importantly the belief in monotheism, that there is, at least and at most, one God. The Torah tells us in Bereishit about creation, in Shemot about redemption, and in this week's parsha about revelation.

Judaism is a set of beliefs, but it is not a community based on unanimity about the way we understand and interpret those beliefs. It recognises that intellectually and temperamentally we are different. Judaism has had its rationalists and its mystics, its philosophers and its poets, its naturalists and its supernaturalists: Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi Akiva, Judah Halevi and Maimonides, the Vilna Gaon and the Baal Shem Tov. We seek unanimity in halachah, not in aggadah. *Na'aseh*, we act in the same way, but *nishma*, we understand each in our own way. That is the difference between the way we serve God, collectively, and the way we understand God, individually.

What is fascinating is that this well-known feature of Judaism is already signalled in the Torah: in the difference between the way it speaks about *na'aseh*, "as one," "with a single voice," and *nishma*, with no special collective consensus.

Our acts, our *na'aseh*, are public. Our thoughts, our *nishma*, are private. That is how we come to serve God together, yet relate to Him individually, in the uniqueness of our being. ■

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Departing or Arriving?

“Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh Hashem Tz’vakot...”

What a powerful declaration!

What a glorious revelation!!

And what a remarkable introduction to Yishayahu’s divine mission!!

Here, within the very first p’sukim of our haftarah, Hashem summons His prophet and shares with him the image of G-d’s divine throne, allowing the navi to hear the praises called out by the surrounding seraphim. Who could fail to feel overawed by such an experience?!

So how will Yishayahu respond?

How would he regard this overwhelming theophany he had just experienced? What WILL he say?

And herein lies our bewilderment, for his very first words are:

“Oy li - chi nidmeiti!” – “Woe is me – for I am doomed!”

Why does he react in such a way? Simply because he sees himself as being unworthy for such a revelation, explaining that he is of “impure lips” and not deserving of such a revelation. And, at first, we might imagine that the reaction is quite understandable. Until the navi adds a troubling – even “bewildering” – comment: **“and I dwell within a nation with impure lips.”**

Why, after all, would Yishayahu open his first conversation with G-d with words of censure against Israel? Why would he speak ill of his own people? G-d had not yet told him anything negative about Israel - so why did Yishayahu speak negatively? Indeed, Rashi shares our bewilderment, commenting that the need for the angel to “purify” Yishayahu’s mouth with a burning coal was because he had criticized his nation. Additionally, the text itself indicates that very point (v.7), telling the navi that upon the touch of the coal: “your sin will be atoned” - and it was Yishayahu’s criticism that was considered his sin!!

So, why did the navi start his conversation with HaKadosh Baruch Hu with a critique of Israel? Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch shares with us a salient point about the opening vision that, I believe, helps us understand the prophet’s behavior.

The prophecy shown to Yishayahu, depicted Hashem’s glory sitting upon His throne but with only the “corners of His cloak” [“shulav”] filling the Temple. Rav Hirsch comments that the vision is speaking of G-d’s glory *departing* the Holy Temple with only the edges of His cloak still found in the Heichal. Yishayahu saw G-d’s shechina being “forced out” of His holy sanctuary due to Israel’s sins.

It is THIS, therefore, that caused the navi to feel that he was “doomed” and why he expressed his negative thoughts about Am Yisrael.

And yet, if this were so, why did G-d consider Yishayahu’s words a “sin” for which the prophet had to atone? Why would Hashem

regard His prophet's disappointment with His people if that was exactly the purpose of G-d's vision - a message to the sinful nation to repent or else find Hashem's presence "departing" and distancing from them?

I would humbly suggest that perhaps the vision, as understood by the navi, was not considered fully. Clearly, much of the prophecy Yishayahu was to share was focused upon Israel's turpitude and faithlessness to G-d. Many of them were filled with warnings of the punishments, defeat and exile on the nation.

But these were not the totality of Hashem's mission for the navi. Not at all. Much of Yishayahu's future messages would be ones of comfort, consolation and hope; there would be depictions of remorse, repentance and return as well as promises of rebirth, restoration and redemption. But Yishayahu saw in that vision only how the Shechina **departed** ... and never considered that it might also have been **arriving**.

And **THAT** was his sin.

How do we see the difficult events that might befall us? What do we think about when we study the history of our people? Only oppression? Suffering? Golus?

Is the story of our existence only a story of Hashem departing?

Or can we also see – in so many ways – G-d's returning and arriving back to His nation?

I imagine that it all depends on **our** vision! ■

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Postscript to the Aseret HaDibrot

At the end of Parshat Yitro we encounter three imperatives: (Shemot 20-20, 22, 23), each loosely translated below:

לֹא תַעֲשֶׂן אֱתֵי אֱלֹהִי כֶסֶף וְזָהָב לֹא תַעֲשֶׂן
לָכֶם:

***Not to make images of celestial beings,
nor any graven images of silver and gold.***

וְאִם־מִזְבֵּחַ אֲבָנִים תַּעֲשֶׂה־לִּי לֹא־תִבְנֶה אֶתֶּרָן
גִּזְיֹת כִּי חֶרֶב הַנִּפְתָּ עָלֶיהָ וְתַחֲלָלָהּ

***Not to use a sword while fashioning the
stones for the Mizbeiach.***

וְלֹא־תַעֲלֶה בְּמַעֲלֹת עַל־מִזְבְּחִי אִשָּׁר לֹא־תִגָּלָה
עֲרוֹתְךָ עָלָיו

***Not to have steps leading up to the Miz-
beiach, but instead to have a ramp.***

Following the revelation at Har Sinai and the experience of Matan Torah, the Torah lists the three mitzvot cited above. One would expect a depiction of more glamorous mitzvot. Perhaps the mitzva of לרער ואהבת לרער? In what way do the three prohibitions

listed above serve as a fitting postscript to the epic event of the Ten Commandments?

The three prohibitions listed above are actually included in the Aseret HaDibrot! The first relates to idolatry, the second to murder and the third to adultery. In fact, these are known as the “Big Three” upon which it is incumbent to sacrifice one’s life to avoid transgressing one of these cardinal sins. They are also all included in the שבע מצוות בני נח - three of the seven Noachide mitzvot. What is the purpose of their repetition at the end of the Parsha?

BROAD APPLICATION OF MITZVOT

Rabbi Immanuel Bernstein in his sefer *Dimensions in Chumash*, offers the following insight. These three mitzvot appear at the end of Parshat Yitro, following Ma’amad Har Sinai to underscore that not only are the actual acts themselves forbidden, **but they cannot even exist in trace form.**

- Not only is worshiping idols prohibited, even creating images of other celestial beings is not permitted.
- Not only is murder prohibited but anything connected to bloodshed is not to be associated with the Mikdash and so even the Mizbeiach cannot be constructed with a knife, which is a tool that can be deadly.
- Not only are certain physical relations prohibited, even engaging in a religious ceremony like ascending stairs to offer a sacrifice, can be perceived as immodest behavior if one’s body may become revealed while doing so. To avoid it, a ramp must be used.

Dedicated L’iluy Nishmat

ר' דוד מאיר בן ר' נתן ז"ל
Meyer Rich z"l

whose 13th Yahrtzeit is on **שבת כ"ד שבט**

Essentially, we are to understand that although many nations may abide by the Noachide principles, the Torah expands the breadth and depth of these edicts.

This applies to other laws as well. Stealing is not just taking something that does not belong to someone. The Torah extends it to forcing another to hand over an object against their will or depriving someone of sleep (גזל שינה). We are held to a higher moral standard.

ETHICS FROM SINAI

Pirkei Avot opens with a statement משה"ר "מסיני" קבל תורה מסיני" to teach us that even the moral and ethical behavior discussed in Pirkei Avot was not "man-made", concocted by a group of Rabbis. Our moral compass is dictated by the Torah. As seen above, even what appears in the Torah may be more broadly applied. During the war in Gaza, we seek to distinguish between civilians and terrorists, risking the lives of our own soldiers, because we have a higher moral standard, set by a Higher Authority. When ethics are interpreted by man, they can become flawed. When dictated by God, they remain pure and authentic with wide reaching applications.

The repetition of the three mitzvot at the end of the parsha highlights the broader application of mitzvot. Each command should be viewed in a wider context. Rav Hai Gaon derived all 613 mitzvot from the 10 commandments. We should appreciate the unique nature of the Torah, see beyond its literal interpretation and fulfill the extensive application of all mitzvot. ■

**Condolences to Akiva Andrews
and family on the passing of his**

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Thirst for Torah

*“Bachodesh hashelishi letzeit Benei Yisrael mei-eretz Mitzrayim, **bayom hazeh** ba’u mid-bar Sinai – In the third month after the Jewish people left Egypt, **on this day**, they came to the desert of Sinai.” (Shemot 19:1)* Rashi is bothered by the Torah’s use of the word *“hazeh,”* to describe which day they arrived at the Sinai desert. It seems that *“bayom hahu – on that day,”* would have been a sufficient expression. Thus, Rashi concludes that the text is conveying a present tense, i.e. that the words of Torah should always have the quality of something new, *“ke’ilu hayom hazeh nitnu – as if they were given this very day.”* How can we achieve this lofty level? After all, we received the Torah thousands of years ago, moreover, we have learned and reviewed parts of the Torah so many times. Is it even possible to encounter a Torah thought we are familiar with as if it is new?

Condolences to the family of Rabbi Raymond Apple z”l on his passing

Rabbi Apple was the senior
Rabbi of the Great Synagogue
of Sydney from 1972 to 2005 and
a former writer for Torah Tidbits

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

The students of Slabodka offer an interesting comparison. Consider food. It is true that one wouldn’t be able to tolerate eating the same meal repeatedly every day, or even day after day. However, if one is very hungry, he will eat the same meal again and again with no qualms. If he is starving, he will feel the pleasure of having his appetite filled even if he just ate the same meal earlier. We can approach Torah with a ‘big appetite,’ devouring each lesson or verse as if it were the first time we came upon it.

Rav Gifter zt”l offers a fascinating insight into a famous passage in the Talmud that deepens this idea. *“Al mah avdah ha’aretz? ... shelo bar-chu baTorah.”* Why was the land destroyed? Since they did not say the blessing on the Torah before learning it. (*Bava Metzia 85b*) Our sages teach that Torah is compared to water, “all who thirst, go to water...” (*Yeshaya 55:1*) Just as one only says a brachah on water if he is thirsty and the water will quench that thirst, so too, since the Jews at that time did not have a ‘thirst’ for Torah, they could never say the *birkat haTorah* with genuine feeling!

Indeed, *Chovot Halevavot* teaches that one must always approach Torah learning with fresh eyes. This is particularly imperative when learning the stories from Tanach that we learned as children. As we grow and learn more, we need to look at events and phenomena with new perspectives and depth. Rav Pincus zt”l recommended trying to have the attitude of one who is learning a story for the first time, with curiosity and

wonder. Because we have learned the story of creation so many times, for example, we take it for granted that the world was created. Yet, we ought to look at every aspect of creation with freshness and amazement. Rav Pincus quotes the Chofetz Chayim zt"l who would remark that there are no less than 15 descriptions of Hashem in the last brachah of *birkat hamazon*, do we even take notice?

Birkat HaTorah begins in the past tense, "Asher **bachar** banu mikol ha'amim **ve'natan** lanu et torato - [Hashem] who **chose** us from all nations and **gave** us His Torah." However, it concludes in the present tense, "**Noten** haTorah – Who **gives** the Torah." When we say this brachah, let us pause to appreciate the gift of the present and the newness. May this lead us to approach our Torah learning and mitzvah observance with a hunger and thirst that can't be satiated. ■

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RABBI JUDAH MISCHEL

Executive Director, Camp HASC
Author of *Baderech: Along the Path of Teshuva* (Mosaica 2021)

One People

Reb Chaim Elazar Spira, the Munkatcher Rebbe, was a *tzadik* and *gaon* of unusual piety known after his multi-volume *Minchas Elazar*. An expression of his uncompromising zealotry was his fierce, outspoken opposition to political Zionism and the Agudat Yisrael.

Rav Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg, zt”l, was one of the great *roshei yeshivah* and Jewish intellectuals of our century, heading the Hildesheimer Rabbinic Seminary in Berlin. An influential posek, he authored the collection of classic responsa entitled *Seridei Eish*. He was also well-versed in secular academic knowledge and had earned a PhD, uniting his great *yiras Shamayim* with cultural and intellectual openness.

These two pillars of Eastern European Jewry maintained a close and ‘unlikely’ friendship. At the wedding of the daughter of the Munkacher Rebbe, at which many of the *gedolim* and great *rabbanim* of the generation were present, the Rebbe stood up and proclaimed that Rav Weinberg would be honored with leading the *Bircas haMazon*.

Surprised murmurs rippled through the crowd. Could it really be that the leader of the most extreme *kanayim* is, at his daughter’s wedding, being *mechabeid* the modern *rabbiner*, with his trimmed beard and a doctoral degree?

Sensing the surprise of his guests, Rebbe was taken aback. “Everyone here who has

joined us as an honored guest at our simcha is like family! For the *kavod* of leading us in bentching, I would indeed like to honor Rav Weinberg, who is not only *mishpacha*, but also my dear friend...”

וַיִּחַנוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר וַיְחַן־שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל נֹגֵד הָהָר:

“...They encamped (plural) in the wilderness; Israel encamped (singular) there, in front of the mountain.” (*Shemos*, 19:2)

כָּאִישׁ אֶחָד בְּלֵב אֶחָד...

“Like one person, with one heart.”

(Rashi on the *pasuk*)

The *tzadik* Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz was known for his sharp wit and pithy observations. ‘Why,’ he asked, ‘do we learn that *Vayichan*, they encamped like one person with one heart *before* Matan Torah? Because as soon as we received the Torah, everyone began to argue about whose way of understanding was more correct.’ This irony is, of course, not just a joke. When we are inspired by a compelling insight or perspective in Torah, a spiritual *yetzer* can arise, tempting us to assume that our teachers, lineage, favorite sefarim, or even ideas of our own mind, have a monopoly on truth. We may narrow our allegiance and interest to the path in Torah that we have deemed ‘more true’, and even begin to dismiss other paths and teachings.

The great builder of Torah institutions and Judaism in America, Reb Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, was also a builder of people. He defied definition and categorization, untethered to

any specific one of the *shivim panim laTorah* — instead, he embodied the infinite expansiveness and oneness of *Yiddishkeit*. Reb Shraga Feivel's way of learning Torah revealed its awesome unity. He used to tell his students: "We are now studying the Torah that was given to us in the Desert, as expounded in the Oral Torah by scholars who lived in Babylonia. The Ramban, who wrote commentaries on both the Written and Oral Torah, lived in Spain, and Rashi in France. The Maharsha (who explains difficulties in Tosafos) lived in Poland. We, who drink from the water of all of them, living here in Williamsburg, are studying the very same Torah that was given at Sinai."

This was also one of the compelling elements stressed by the Lubliner Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Meir Shapiro in launching his revolutionary Daf Yomi campaign. This ongoing program unites Jews all over the world in studies that reflect our collective experience of Torah revelation.

We must study Torah with an awareness of its context, *how* it was delivered: *k'ish echad b'lev echad*. In this way, recognizing every Jew as *mishpacha*, as connected to the truth in their own way and as worthy in their own right, is a prerequisite for the receiving of the Torah. Before the notion of sharing a common set of beliefs was cast upon us at Sinai, we developed together as a people, sharing the suffering of slavery in Mitzrayim, and emerging with a sense of nationhood that lies at the core of our identity. Our indivisible peoplehood is in fact the foundation upon which we study Torah at all.

This perhaps is the reason that Gemara attributes the *churban* to *sinas chinam*, 'causeless hatred' and also *shelo beirchu baTorah techilah*, 'that they did not make a blessing on Torah

before learning'. Clearly, when one's Torah becomes a political affiliation or ideology that excludes others, or that tempts one to preach to others and win their agreement, it is an expression of ego. Torah comes from the Ribbono Shel Olam, not from us, and this is why we must make a blessing on Torah before learning: *Blessed are You, Hashem Elokeinu....* When we recognize the root and purpose of Torah it both draws us closer to Hashem and to each other.

We developed from an extended *mishpacha* into a group of related tribes, yet we remained identified by our common ancestry and familial relationship. Following the Exodus, when we accepted the Torah 'as one person with one heart', we expressed our collective aspiration to accept every individual Jew, regardless of their different personal beliefs and choices. Since then, anyone who is born a Jew or converts and joins Klal Yisrael is considered an irreplaceable part of that original *mishpacha*. As such, we are more 'a people' than a religion.

.....

In *Sefer Hayom Yom* (24 Teves), the Lubavitcher Rebbe quotes an essential statement of the Alter Rebbe: "The intention and goal in developing the "ways of Chassidus" is that one should recognize that we are כמו משפחה אחת על פי התורה באהבה, "like one family, with affection, as Torah teaches."

May our reading of Parshas Yisro and the revelation at Sinai serve as a reminder that regardless of our opinions and level of observance — we are, indeed, one family! ■

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Bishul Akum and Intermarried Jews

Our Sages decreed that one may not eat even kosher food cooked by a non-Jew, a prohibition called *bishul akum*. This decree is intended to maintain distance between Jews and non-Jews in order to prevent intermarriage. In previous articles, we discussed cases in which this concern might be largely irrelevant, such as a Catholic priest (who has no children.) The halachic conclusion is that the decree still stands, regardless of whether the underlying reason applies to the individual case. This article will examine the unique case of *bishul akum* with regard to intermarried Jews.

Intermarriage is unfortunately a very common phenomenon, especially outside of Israel. We have previously shown that non-religious Jews are not part of the decree of *bishul akum*, since it applies only to non-Jews. However, perhaps Jews who have intermarried are considered completely out of the fold, similar to a *mumar*. Additionally, the children of these marriages are often non-Jews, which might add to the decree.

THE STATUS OF INTERMARRIED COUPLES

It is strictly forbidden for both men and women to have intimate relations with non-Jews. This transgression is Biblical in nature (see *Devarim* 7:3). Marriage to a non-Jew and subsequent relations is a grave sin. Authorities debate

the halachic status of such Jews in relation to other *halachot*. Many *poskim* rule that Jews, both men and women, who intermarry lose their status as halachic Jews (see *Responsa Chacham Tzvi* 38; *Responsa Chatam Sofer*; CM 195), including being counted in a minyan and the ability to testify in a Jewish court. Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein emphasizes that this status relates to both male and female intermarriage, despite the fact that the children of a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish father are halachically Jewish (see *Shulchan Melachim* p.895).

Regarding *bishul akum*, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv is quoted as being quite stringent, prohibiting food cooked by intermarried Jews (*Shulchan Melachim* 14:3). He argues that there is no question that even today, Jews (especially in Israel) are aware of the severity of the transgression of intermarriage. This would prevent the halachic claim of *tinok shenishba* (a halachic term for a Jew who was raised without sufficient knowledge and understanding of Judaism and therefore is not completely at fault for his actions.)

While we are discussing Rav Elyashiv's rulings about intermarriage, it is worth noting that he was also asked about the children of a non-Jewish father and Jewish mother. He is quoted as saying that if the children grow up following the religion of their father, they are

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then considered non-Jews. This opinion is not accepted by all rabbinic authorities (ibid).

JEWISH AND NON-JEWISH FATHER

In addition to the intermarried Jews' loss of halachic status as mentioned earlier, we can also consider their children as a potential factor for stringency or leniency. As we have seen, the underlying reason for the decree is to prevent intermarriage. If a Jewish man has children from his non-Jewish wife, perhaps the decree of *bishul akum* should apply to his cooking, lest other Jews come to marry his non-Jewish children. The answer is no, since the original decree was only enacted towards non-Jews, despite the severity of this Jew's transgression. A further proof for this conclusion would be the case of a convert whose biological children did not convert. Although eating and mingling with a convert might theoretically cause intermarriage to his non-Jewish children, it is clear that *poskim* considered the decree irrelevant to him (see *Bein Yisrael La'amim* 5:9). Similarly, the cooking of a non-Jewish man married to a Jewish woman is prohibited because of *bishul akum*, despite the fact that there would be no transgression in marrying his children. In both of the above cases, we see that the decree applies uniformly according to its original formulation of prohibiting the food of non-Jews, even if the underlying reason does not pertain to the individual situation.

RULING

Although many later authorities rule that any intermarried Jew is included in the decree of *bishul akum*, the subject is quite

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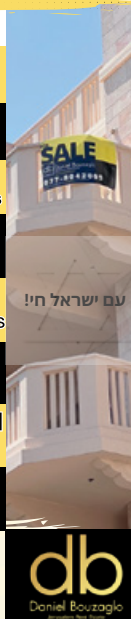
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sensitive and might involve other factors. It is essential to consult with a competent Orthodox rabbi in each individual case.

IN SUMMARY:

- There is room to conclude that a Jewish father with non-Jewish children is not included in the decree of *bishul akum*.
- A non-Jewish father with Jewish children (from a Jewish wife) is included in the decree of *bishul akum*.
- According to many *poskim*, Jews (both men and women) who intermarry are included in the decree of *bishul akum*. A rabbi should be consulted regarding individual cases. ■

This Week's Inspirational Torah Learning with

SUNDAY FEB. 4

2:00PM

Men's Gemara Chabura
Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

MONDAY FEB. 5

All classes are
@ **OU Israel Center**

9:15 AM

**The Different Shades
and Colors of Prayer**

Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler

10:15 AM

Am Yisrael At War

Rabbi Anthony Manning

10:20 AM

**Yechezkeil's Vision of
Hope Through Despair**

Rabbi Avi Herzog

11:25 AM

**Deepening our Eternal
Relationship with Eretz
Yisrael: Timely teachings
from the Wisdom of**

Rav Kook **Rabbi Aaron
Goldscheider**

12:15 PM

**Israel's Continuing
Struggle for Survival**

Dr. Deborah Polster

8:30 PM

The Bais-
Semichat Chaver Program
Rabbi Elyada Goldwicht

TUESDAY FEB. 6

**Torah Tuesdays in
Bakka-All Classes
@ Kehilat Nitzanim,
3 Asher Street**

9:15 AM

Torah Tapestries
Rebbetzin Shira Smiles
(Women only)

10:15 AM

Minchat Chinuch-
Meaning in Mitzvot
**Rabbi Yitzchak
Breitowitz**

11:15 AM

Sefer Breisheet-
Chumash B'lyun
Rabbi Yossi Goldin

12:15 PM

Unlocking the Eternal
Wisdom of Chazal
**Rabbi Shai
Finkelstein**

SPECIAL EVENT

7:00PM

**Bat Mitzva
Program Kickoff**

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WEDNESDAY FEB. 7

Evening Classes @OU Israel Center

7:30 PM
The Bais (For Men)-
Safrut-Mezuzot Course
(For graduates of
Megila Course)
Rabbi Tzvi Mauner-pre-
registration required

8:30 PM
The Bais (For Men)
War Time Halachic
Dilemmas
Rabbi Aschi Dick

THURSDAY FEB. 8

All classes are @ OU Israel Center

9:30 AM
Parshat HaShavua
Rabbi Ari Kahn

10:45 AM
Iron Sword-Perspective
for Today from Parshat
HaShavua
Rabbi Baruch Taub

12:00 PM
Lunch and Learn with
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2:00 PM
Men's Gemara
Chabura
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Rabbi Taub
Parsha, 7:00pm Mon
Halacha, 7:00pm Wed
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88363420460>
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Rebbetzin Shatz
(L'Ayla)-Insights of
Chazal- Tues, 5:00pm
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85177782268>
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Rabbi Goldwicht
Parshat HaShavua
Wed. 8:30pm
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2244321902>
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9:20AM Double Adar
Mrs. Shira Smiles

10:20AM Leap Year in Halacha
Rabbi Yaakov Haber

11:10AM Inspirational Brunch
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12:10PM The Dance of the Moon and the Sun:
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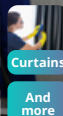
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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

In the *pesukim* preceding the *Aseret HaDibrot*, we read of the incredible sound and light show that unfolded at that awesome moment when *Klal Yisrael* stood at *Sinai*.

וַיֵּצֵא מֹשֶׁה אֶת־הָעָם לִקְרַאת הָאֱלֹקִים מִן־הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיִּתְּצֻבוּ בְּתַחֲתֵית הָהָר׃ וְהָרַסְנִי עֵשֶׂן כָּל־מִפְנֵי אֶשֶׁר יֵרֵד עָלָיו ה' בָּאֵשׁ וַיַּעַל עֲשָׁנוֹ כְּעֹשֶׁן הַכִּבְשָׁן וַיַּחֲדָד כָּל־הָהָר מֵאֵד׃ וַיְהִי קוֹל הַשּׁוֹפָר הוֹלֵךְ וַחֲזֹק מְאֹד מֹשֶׁה יְדַבֵּר וְהָאֱלֹקִים יַעֲנֶנּוּ בְּקוֹל׃

Moshe led the people out of the camp toward G-d, and they took their places at the foot of the mountain. Now Har Sinai was entirely full of smoke, for Hashem had come down upon it in fire; the smoke rose like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled violently. The blare of the shofar grew louder and louder. As Moshe spoke, G-d answered him bakol...

The *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh* suggests that the word *bakol* is to be understood as follows:

The קול with which G-d answered may have been the sound of the shofar mentioned in the verse...

Based on this interpretation, Hashem miraculously spoke or answered Moshe through the sounds of the *shofar*.

However our *Chazal* offer a particularly interesting interpretation in the *gemara* in *Brachot* (45a):

וּמָה תִּלְמָד לומר "בְּקוֹל" – בְּקוֹלוֹ שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה.

What is the meaning of the verse: BaKol?

In Moshe's voice...

The masters of Jewish thought offer profound interpretations of this *maamar chazal*.

The *Yismach Moshe zy'a*, learns our *gemara* as follows:

*The Torah tells us that when Moshe was born, his mother saw that he was **tovgood**. The Torah Hakedosha is also called tov - good, therefore the Torah could only be transmitted at the hands or through the voice of Moshe who is also called tov...*

Similarly, **Reb Tzadok HaKohein MiLublin zy'a**, explains that this is why the written Torah is referred to as *Torat Moshe*, as Hashem transmitted the Torah with Moshe's voice.

Beyond the supernatural phenomena that each of these teachings suggest occurred, that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* miraculously spoke with or through Moshe's voice, perhaps there is a lesson for each of us as we prepare to read once again this Shabbat of that incredible moment of *Kabbalat HaTorah*.

Rav Kook zy'a explained that Moshe Rabbeinu had reached such a heightened state of spiritual consciousness, that he merited to hear Hashem speak to him, and for *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* to be heard with Moshe's own voice.

Perhaps the message for each of us as we recall that transcendent moment in Jewish history when the Jewish People stood at Sinai, is to work to lift our spiritual awareness, to be more "plugged in" to see, feel, and hear Hashem's proverbial voice all around us each and every day. ■

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Yoni thanks Hashem for having
the opportunity of having Tziporah in
his life, to learn of her caring, patience and
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Tziporah's Neshama be a light onto the world,
in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama
shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with
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crown jewel, now he returns her to Hashem.

With thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

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GEULAS YISRAEL

BY RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN
Ram, Yeshivat Har Etzion

Dark Clouds Above, *Yirat Shamayim* Below

At the Yam Suf we saw too much. At Har Sinai we saw nothing. Each time *Yirat Shamayim* surged.

Our relationship with Hashem is riveted upon two emotions- *ahava* and *yirah*, love and fear. Human relationships are defined by love or fear but never *both side-by side*. Our relationship with Hashem, however, is a blend of these *two* dichotomous emotions.

Ahava is a byproduct of understanding Hashem, His mitzvot and His role in history. We love Him most when we are able to identify the synchronicity between His will and human welfare. Realizing that His will enhances human experience, we appreciate Him and love him because adhering to His will improves our lives.

As the Rambam summarizes, (Hilchot Teshuvah perek 10) *ahava* is the ability to embrace Hashem's will, not for reward or not because we fear punishment, but because of Torah's inner logic שהוא אמת מפני שהוא אמת.

By uncovering the intersection between Torah and human welfare, we love Hashem. Similarly, when we are capable of deciphering history and discerning Hashem's hidden hand, we understand and love Him. *Ahava* emerges when religion is logical, history is intelligible, and faith makes sense.

TWO ROUTES TO YIRAT SHAMAYIM

By contrast, *yirat shamayim* materializes

when we are unable to understand Him. Standing in awe of the divine mystery and baffled by Hashem's incomprehensibility, we submit to His higher authority. Ideal *yirat shamayim* isn't fear, but awe and submission. Not trembling, or shuddering, but submission and surrender. Bowing to the divine mystery.

There are two different paths to *yirat shamayim*. Along the first route, we encounter Hashem's power and majesty which exceeds human capacity and surpasses the human imagination. We feel so incapable of processing the immeasurable divine grandeur that we surrender.

We traversed this route to *yirat shamayim* at the Yam Suf:

וירא ישראל את ה' הגדולה אשר עשה ה' במצרים וייראו העם את ה' ויאמינו בה' ובמשה עבדו

Watching the riotous oceans stilled by the voice of Hashem, and spotting our cruel Egyptian oppressors drowning to death was overwhelming. Overpowered by the power and the glory, we surrendered and achieved our first collective moment of *yirat shamayim*.

ויראו העם את ה' ויאמינו בה' ובמשה עבדו

In perek 8 of Tehillim, Dovid Hamelech maps this first route to *yirat shamayim*:

כי אראה שמך מעשה אצבעותיך ירח וכוכבים אשר כוננתה מה אנוש כי תזכרנו וכן אדם כי תפקדנו ותחסרהו מעט מאלקים

By pondering creation and scanning the

heavens, Dovid Hamelech is awed by its splendor and force, recognizes the frailty of the human condition, and concedes: "What is Man that I should even mention him!". His encounter with the vastness and beauty of the divinely-created cosmos provokes human surrender.

SEEING NOTHING

At Har Sinai we took a completely different route to *yirat shamayim*. We didn't see too much but saw too little. We stood, terrified, at the base of a quivering mountain, ablaze in infernal fire. We were petrified. A thick cloud cloaked the mountain from which we were barred passage. The mystery of Hashem was impenetrable. Chazal portray our souls as departing this world, immediately upon hearing the reverberating voice of Hashem. At the Yam Suf we "saw" the mighty hand of Hashem, but at Har Sinai there were no visuals, only sounds.

קול דברים אתם שומעים ותמונה אינכם רואים
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Frightened and confused, we begged Moshe to intervene and mediate the word of Hashem, so that we could survive this overwhelming encounter. As Moshe summarizes after Har Sinai, this event was carefully choreographed to incite maximal *yirat shamayim*:

כי לבעבור נסות אתכם בא האלקים ובעבור תהיה
יראתו על פניכם לבלתי תחטאו

Unable to see anything, and terrified by the darkness, the fire, and the smoke, we succumbed.

Whereas Dovid Hamelech provided a roadmap for the first form of *yirat shamayim*, Iyov models the second variety of *yirat shamayim*. Though righteous and pious, he suffers miserably, and cannot reconcile what he perceives as divine injustice. He struggles to decode the divine mystery and, one by one, his friends descend upon



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his sick bed, postulating different philosophies to justify the ways of G-d to men. Finally, (perek 37) Hashem appears to Iyov in a storm, amidst the mystery and confusion of a hurricane, and reminds him that humans cannot fully grasp Hashem כי לא מחשבותי מחשבותיכם ולא דרכיכם דרכי נאם ה'

Yirat shamayim is accessed through two very different routes. Sometimes we see "too much" and are smothered by the overwhelming majesty of Hashem. Other times we look straight into the teeth of the divine mystery, are perplexed, and submit. At Yam Suf we saw too much of Hashem. At Har Sinai we saw too little. Each generated lasting *yirat shamayim*.

THE MIRAGE OF CONFIDENCE

The first form of *yirat shamayim*, where we encounter divine miracles, can be disorienting. When His logic and His hand in history are each on display, we often forget that we

are only witnessing a small glimpse of Him. Often, under conditions of historical clarity, we become too comfortable and too confident in assuming that we know Him and can predict the historical trajectory. Sometimes it takes the dark clouds of divine mystery to remind us of how little we know and to help us recalibrate our *yirat shamayim* properly.

Over the past 75 years we lived through a *kriyas Yam Suf*-like experience. We saw Hashem's presence descend into our world with clarity and radiance. The stunning resurgence of our nation after the Holocaust was a divine operation. We recovered our national wealth, built robust Jewish communities, achieved influence and affluence, and reconstructed a flourishing Torah world just a few decades after it had been eviscerated. To cap it all off, we returned to our Homeland and enjoyed a stunning succession of victories and triumphs. With exhilaration, we watched our tiny nascent country morph into a regional military, economic and political superpower. It all made sense. Our world was painted in bright redemptive colors. Hashem's miraculous presence suffused our world, and everything made sense. Until it didn't.

Oct 7th changed everything. The past three months we have been covered by dark clouds, and we feel lost in a world without logic or clarity. Why is this happening to our people? What happened to the *Brit Avot*? Wasn't the Holocaust the last and final nightmare of Jewish exile? Shouldn't it be different back home in Israel? So many questions, so many mysteries.

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So much pain and so much frustration.

We must recalibrate. Perhaps we over-shot. Perhaps we saw too much and forgot to surrender to the Unknowable. The war has made it patently clear that we don't know, and we can't fully know. We have to moderate over-confidence while bolstering faith. We must learn to speak with more modesty and more meekness rather than with blustering confidence implying that we know where and how history is turning.

אֶל־תִּבְהַל עַל־פִּיךָ וְלִבְךָ אֶל־יְמִינֶהָ לְהוֹצִיא דָּבָר
 לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹקִים כִּי הָאֱלֹקִים בְּשִׁמְיָם וְאַתָּה עַל־הָאָרֶץ
 עַל־כֵּן יִהְיֶה דְבָרֶיךָ מְעֻטִּים

Don't rush to speak, and don't hurry to announce ideas. G-d is in Heaven, and you are grounded on Earth. Therefore, your words should be few.

Faith yes, overconfidence no. We all need to speak with more *tzniyut* about the future. ■



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Stepping Up

אֶת־מִי אֶשְׁלַח וּמִי יֵלֶךְ־לִנּוּ וְאִמָּר הִנְנִי שְׁלָחִנִי

Then I heard the voice of my Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me.

Who shall I send and who will go for us? Hashem, in conversation with Yeshayahu, raises these questions. Why the double wording? What is the difference between being sent and going on behalf of others?

Combining the interpretations of the Abarbanel and the Malbim, we see two concerns in choosing an emissary to fulfill the sacred role of prophet of Hashem’s nation. The person being selected needs to be qualified to fulfill the job description or role. He must be righteous enough that Hashem would desire His Divine Presence to rest upon this person. But beyond that, the person himself must feel a strong sense of purpose and commitment toward the mission. He must be prepared to endure suffering. Ultimately

Yeshayahu takes up this mantle of leadership. Yeshayahu assumes the leadership role, despite the cautionary tales of his colleagues, Micha and Amos, who faced adversity from the people. Nevertheless, Yeshayahu’s success lies in his patient and passionate advocacy for Klal Yisrael, demonstrating his commitment to both the mission and the people.

Returning to the original text, Hashem’s questions encompass these qualifications. *אֶת־מִי אֶשְׁלַח*, “Whom shall I send?” signifies the capability to fulfill the Divine mission, while *וּמִי יֵלֶךְ לִנּוּ*, “Who will go for us?” underscores the commitment required for the mission.

The call to step up and serve, even more evident since October 7th, demands our individual contributions. Similar to Yeshayahu’s demonstration of fortitude and patience in navigating challenges, we must muster the inner strength needed to persevere and persist in our respective missions. ■

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TOWARDS MEANINGFUL SHABBOS

BY REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI
Director of OU Israel L'Ayla Women's Initiative



Kiddush

We organized along both sides of the road, a long and continuous line of tanks. At 22:00 - when we hadn't received the order to enter the city - I reached out to the command to ask if there were changes to our orders. The response was for us to continue to wait and to be prepared for immediate entrance. Suddenly, two tank crewmen appear and, in their hands, two bottles of wine. This is, after all, Shabbat! And the most reasonable thing to do at this exact moment is to say the Kiddush over the wine and bless the Shabbat. The tension and fears from the anticipation are growing more intense by the minute, but those two bottles of wine start making their way from tank to tank. Each unit within its tank says the Kiddush, answers "amen", pours wine into the bottle's cap, swallows, and passes the bottle on to the next tank. Those were, I believe, the most moving moments of my life. At that moment, I thought of the miracle of the pitcher of oil from Chanukah and compared it to this bottle of wine which managed to suffice for this long line of tanks and the teams within them. In those moments of tension and excitement, Kiddush was the thing that managed to unite this random group of soldiers, a true cross-section of Israeli society really—city-dwellers and kibbutznikim, religious and secular, right wing and left wing. (Moshe Feller, from: From You to You- the Book of Shabbat]

While this account was written during the Second Lebanon War, it's a story which has recurred repeatedly over the course of the last few months in Azza. Friday night Kiddush has a certain power to it. No matter where one is and what circumstances one is in, as the Kiddush is recited, the Kedusha of Shabbos takes hold. What are we actually doing when we recite the Kiddush?

We begin by saying the words:
יּוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי. וַיְכַלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צָבָאָם: וַיְכַלּוּ
אֱלֹקִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה. וַיִּשְׁבֹּת
בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה:

The sixth day....The sky and the ground were finished being created. On the seventh day, Hashem had completed all the work which He had done and He rested on the seventh day from all the work that He had done.

These words of וַיְכַלּוּ are so important that we actually say them three times on Friday night - once in the Shemoneh Esrei of Maariv, once in the Chazan's brief repetition, and a third time, at home as we recite the Kiddush. The **Avudraham** explains that when we recite these words, we are actually giving עדות (testimony) to all of mankind that Hashem created the entire world. Because we are giving testimony, ideally one should stand while reciting these words and if possible, should do it in the company of at least one other person.

But to take it one step further, **Gemara Shabbat 119b** states –

אמר רב המנונא - כל המתפלל בערב שבת ואומר "ויכולו" מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו נעשה שותף להקב"ה במעשה בראשית!

Rabbi Hamnuna says – whoever davens on Friday night and says “ויכולי”, it’s considered as if he has become partners with Hashem in creation.

This is astounding! How do we become partners in creation by reciting ויכולי? The *Chofetz Chaim* explains that the whole purpose of the creation of the world was for man to appreciate what Hashem has done for Him. If no one recognizes the beauty and intricacy of the world, then there is no point in creation.

We actually find this idea in the story of creation. The Torah (בראשית ב:) tells us on Day 6 וכל שיח השדה טרם יהיה בארץ וכל עשב - השדה טרם יצמח כי לא המטיר ה' אלהים עליהאץ *The bushes and grass has not yet sprouted because Hashem had not caused it to rain since there was no man to work the land.* **Rashi** asks - How can this be? We know that all the vegetation was created on Day 3! He answers - פתח קרקע עמדו - it waited at the opening of the ground and only begin to really sprout on Day 6. Why? Because man was not created yet, and there was no one yet who could appreciate the importance of Hashem's creation of rain. From Hashem's perspective, only once man was created was there any reason to create rain and for the grass and plants to come up. And so we see that our testimony and appreciation of Hashem's creation, in actuality, transforms us into partners in the creation process.

After giving testimony to the creation of the world, we then make the Bracha over the cup of wine. But we don't end there. We then go on to talk about how Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim and chose us to be His people.

כי הוא יום תחלה למקראי קדש וזכר ליציאת מצרים. כי בנו בחרת ואותנו קדשת מכל העמים

ושבת קדשך באהבה וברצון הנחלתנו:

Shabbos is the first of the holidays which was instituted to remember the Exodus from Egypt. For You chose us and separated us from the other nations and gave us the holy Shabbat with love and good will.

This is based on **Gemara Pesachim 117b** where it says שזכיר יציאת מצרים בקידוש - that we are obligated to make mention of Mitzrayim in the Kiddush. But why is this? We're celebrating Shabbat, not Pesach. Why bring in the Exodus from Egypt? What does that have to do with Shabbat?

The **Kuzari** (1:11) explains that Yetziat Mitzrayim was in actuality a “modern-day” proof of Creation. The world was created a long time ago when none of us were around. So we don't have actual proof of what happened and even if we agree that Hashem created the world, it's possible to say that Hashem created the world and then left it. But when Hashem put into action all of the amazing miracles of the 10 plagues and the splitting of the sea, the entire nation and the entire world saw with their own eyes Hashem's ability to control nature and that Hashem is still actively involved in what happens in this world.

Additionally, we mention Yetziat Mitzrayim because it was at the time of the Exodus that Hashem selected us to be his chosen people. And He gave Shabbat as a special gift to us to remind us of this fact. מתנה טובה יש לי בבית גנזי ושבת שמה ואני מבקש ליתנה לישראל (Gemara Shabbat 10b) So while on a cosmic level Shabbat is celebrated to commemorate the creation of the world, on a national level we celebrate Shabbat to remind us that Hashem chose us to be His nation.

Finally, we close the Kiddush with the bracha אתה ה' מקדש השבת *Blessed is*

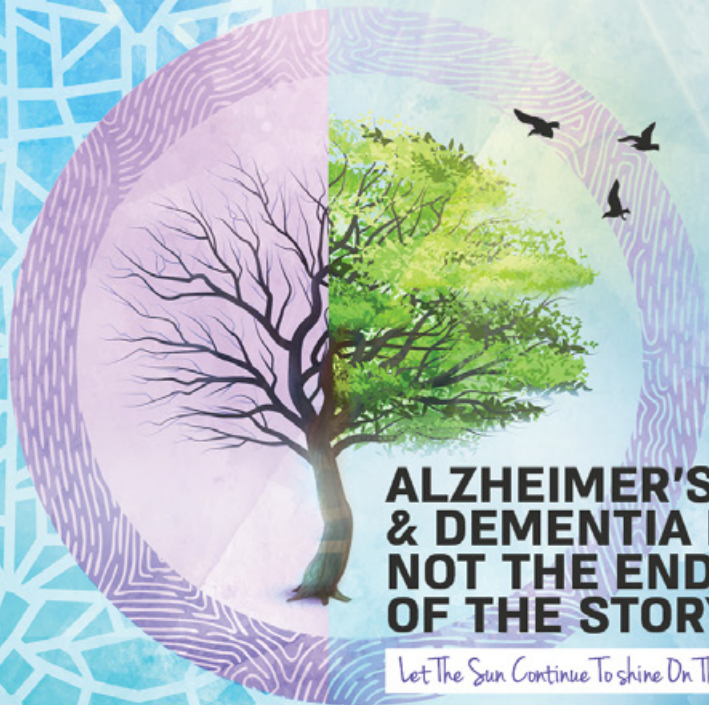
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RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

EDITOR, TORAH TIDBITS
RAV, THE JERUSALEM SHUL - BAKA, JERUSALEM

A Heart Bursting with Love

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house... or whatever belongs to your neighbor” (Exodus 20:14).¹ Of the Ten Commandments, this final one may be the hardest to fathom. How can God command man not to experience an emotion that overtakes us naturally, seemingly of its own accord?

The medieval commentator Ibn Ezra contended that we can in fact control it, because this emotion is grounded in logical perception. He offered the following parable. No peasant in his right mind ever thinks he will marry the princess. Since the commoner knows beyond a shadow of a doubt that he will never be admitted to the aristocracy, he does not even covet the princess. She is the very definition of out of his league. Ibn Ezra explained that this is the mindset mandated by the tenth commandment. Everything we acquire in life comes from God; whatever others might have has been apportioned to them by God and is not within the realm of possibility for us. One who has proper faith recognizes this and consequently is not beset by feelings of envy.²



Rabbi Pinchas Eliyahu Horowitz approached this problem differently. He pointed out that we are enjoined to love God with “all of our heart” (Deuteronomy 6:5). The “all” here instructs us that to fulfill this mitzvah, the only thing we must have in our heart is love for God. And “if one’s heart is overflowing with love of God,

then it is impossible to covet anything in this world... It is like a brimming cup to which not a drop can be added.”³

This is not some theoretical construct. These words were lived by Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook. In his poetic, mystical reflections, we discover a man in whom love for God, for his fellow man, and for the world, takes up so much space so as to leave not even a toe-hold for envy:

I love everything. I cannot but love every person, every nation. From the depths of my heart I desire the resplendence of everything, the rectification of everything... I have no need whatsoever to force this feeling of love—it wells directly from the holy depth of Wisdom of the divine soul.⁴

We can overcome feelings of jealousy or

1. In some texts the verse is 13, depending on how the verses of the Decalogue are parsed and numbered.

2. Ibn Ezra on Exodus 20:13 (long commentary).

3. *Sefer Berit ha-Shalem* quoted by *Ha-Ketav ve-ha-Kabalah* on Exodus 20:14.

4. *Arpilei Tohar*, §76.

begrudging others their good fortune by filling our hearts with boundless love. Then, we will naturally rejoice at their success without thoughts of comparison intruding. Covetousness will find no spot in our hearts to take root and produce its fetid flowers.

The final utterance of the Decalogue communicates the divine conviction that man can transcend his selfishness and pettiness that all too often begets conflict. Rav Kook taught that with the Jewish people in particular, this love can be more readily accessed. While the members of other nations share an external identity, the Jewish people share an internal, metaphysical identity, because every individual Jewish soul is a piece of one greater, universal soul.⁵ When we are mindful of this, we are more likely to desire only good and happiness for our fellow Jew.

Rav Kook's love for fellow Jews, his *ahavat Yisra'el*, was not confined to the private stirrings of his spirit recorded in his notebooks. His extraordinary love of other Jews was legendary. One of Rav Kook's closest colleagues and beloved friends was Rabbi Aryeh Levin, "the Tzaddik of Jerusalem." Living in Jerusalem at the same time was a man who was vocally critical of Rav Kook and Rabbi Levin. One day this man became very ill and was brought to the local hospital. On hearing the news, Rabbi Levin rushed, as was his practice, to the hospital to visit the new patient. The patient was astonished to see the good rabbi at his bedside. "Rabbi Aryeh, you must know how I have attacked you and your rabbi over your deeds and practices. I cannot help but ask: From where do you

draw the strength to visit this patient and be so forgiving?" The Tzaddik of Jerusalem responded, "From that very same rabbi whom you oppose and have attacked, have I learned unconditional love." He was referring, of course, to Rav Kook.⁶

The Chassidic master Rebbe Chanoch Henoch Levin of Aleksander once drew attention to the fact that in Ibn Ezra's parable the poor villager stands for the Jew who is supposed to be satisfied with his lot and accepting of his station. The Rebbe adamantly asked, "Why compare the Jew to the peasant; after all, is not every Jew a child of the King? We should envision ourselves as the princess!"⁷ To be part of the royalty requires regal comportment with dignity, grace, and generosity.

When our hearts overflow with warmth and affection for others, there is no room for small-mindedness or pettiness. What is more, we seek everyone's good fortune, and even cheer them on in their achievements. Let us observe the tenth commandment by not only being satisfied with our own God-given lot, but by being happy about what those around us have as well. ■

6. See Dadon, *Sichat Avot*, 102–103.

7. See *Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh ha-Chadash*, 1:76, s.v. לא תחמוד.

Rabbi Goldscheider is the author of the newly published book 'Torah United' (OU Press), featuring divrei Torah on the weekly parasha from Rav Kook, Rabbi Solovetichik, and the Chassidic Masters.

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5. *Orot Yisra'el*, 2:3.

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HOLY SITES IN ISRAEL

SHOSHANA JUDELMAN



Mikveh Am Yisrael

The other day I had an unexpected opening in my schedule, so I drove to a tzaddik's *kever* hoping to tap into the holiness of the place for some much-needed inspiration.

And the *kever* was beautiful and meaningful, but what really moved me were the holy women I was standing amongst: the girl in jeans reading the whole book of Tehillim; the lady in sweatpants swaying next to me in silent prayer, tears pouring down her face; the expectant mother gesturing with her hands while she silently spoke to Hashem; the old woman who pushed her walker as close as possible and then fell upon the *kever* with broken-hearted pleas- I couldn't understand the language that she was speaking, but I could understand her tears.

Chassidus teaches that every concept in Torah is embodied in three dimensions: space, time, and people.

Eretz Yisrael is the holiest of lands and is filled with places to tap into that sanctity.

Shabbos is the holiest of times and every week we are given the opportunity to recharge through its exalted energy.

And Am Yisrael are the holiest of people.

But we often forget or don't connect to that incredible force of strength.

When we open our hearts to the reality

of Am Yisrael as a source of inspiration, the places become secondary to the people. And every gathering has the potential to change the world.

At a shiva house last week, the courage and pride of the bereaved father speaking words in tribute to his fallen son empowered everyone in the room. His determination and sense of purpose galvanizes us to invest our own actions with greater intention.

At a concert, the emotion behind our collective singing turned each song into a tefillah that soared upwards to shake the Heavens with our shared pain and enormous hope.

Every video and picture shared in groups and online captures these holy moments, acts of courage, love and chessed: the fathers and sons returning home to the hugs of their families; the chayalim on base dancing, singing or just finding ways to look for the good in each other; the notes left by chayalim thanking the owners/proprietors of whatever apartment or public space they have lived in for the past 3 months, and the (seemingly) endless BBQ's.

And on the homefront: the army of cooks and bakers trying to fill in meals for families whose husband/father is serving; the efforts on behalf of evacuated families; the Tehillim groups and the hundreds of stories of people competing to pay for meals and groceries for chayalim.

A story is told that when the Rebbe of Kossov was dancing with his Chassidim, he would dip his head down into the circle. When the Chassidim asked why, he responded that he

was immersing in a mikvah. The pasuk says, "Mikveh Yisrael Hashem," (Yirmiyahu 17:13) and can be interpreted various ways, including that Am Yisrael are, themselves, like a mikvah. Being surrounded by holy Jewish souls can transform a person spiritually.

May we be blessed to open our eyes and see that the inspiration for moving forward is you.

Us.

Am Yisrael.

Shoshana teaches Chassidus for the Shirat David Community in Efrat as well as in Jerusalem for Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya. She is a guide in Poland with JRoots and co-leads inspirational trips to Ukraine and around Eretz Yisroel. Shoshana has also been a guide at Yad Vashem since 2014.

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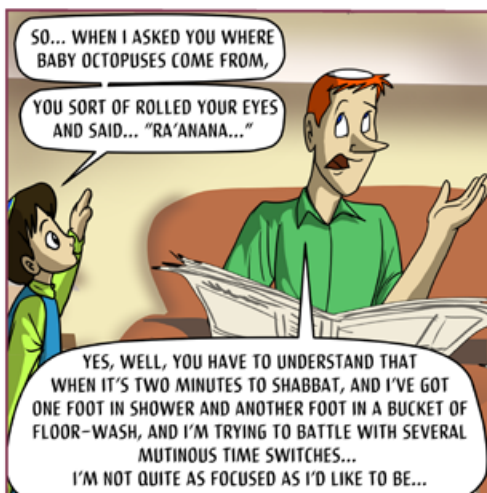
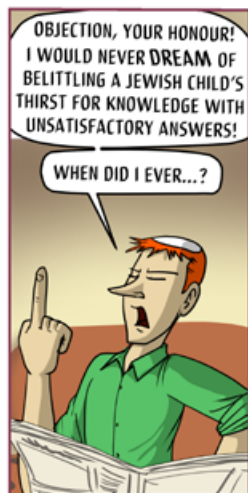
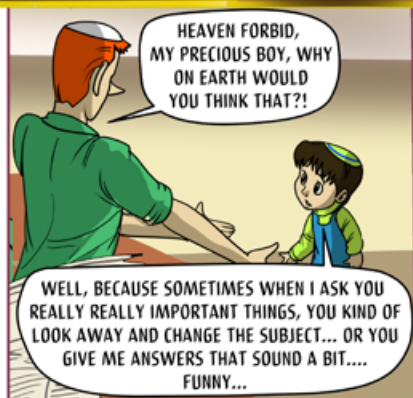
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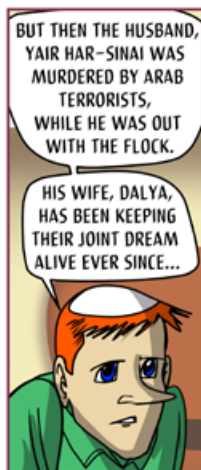
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Keeping Boundaries

יתרו פרק יט: יב- "וְהִגַּבְלָתָּ אֶת-הָעָם סָבִיב לְאֵמֹר
הִשְׁמְרוּ לָכֶם עֲלוֹת בְּהָר וּנְגַע בְּקִצְרוֹ כִּלְהִנְגַּע בְּהָר
מוֹת יוֹמָתוֹ"

"You shall set bounds for the people round about, saying, 'Beware of going up the mountain or touching the border of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death'"

This is a very interesting Pasuk, how come Hashem is setting physical boundaries for us around Har Sinai?

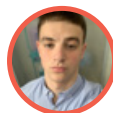
The Malbim brings in a משל to help us understand this. Four people went to an orchard. One climbed the mountain and got hurt, and one died because he could not handle the strong, bright light of the sun.

The משל uses an example of someone entering an orchid with intense light – suggesting that just as our eyes can't handle too much light, our minds have limits in understanding things that are too high or deep, especially complex things when it comes to Hashem.

Hashem sets physical boundaries around Har Sinai because, even though the people are about to receive the Torah and experience His presence, they cannot come too close. This boundary represents the need for a clear distinction between our physical and spiritual connection to Hashem. It teaches us that we may not always

comprehend His ways, and there are limits to our understanding. Trying to go beyond these limits, symbolized by touching the mountain, can have serious consequences, emphasizing the importance of humility and recognizing our human limitations.

The physical boundary established by Hashem serves as a lesson about the spiritual boundaries we must set for ourselves. The strong warning that "whoever touches the mountain shall surely die" underscores the potential confusion and negative outcomes that may arise from trying to exceed our limits in understanding God's ways. It emphasizes the necessity of respecting those boundaries to maintain a healthy and humble relationship with Hashem.



Gershy Schwartz
11th Grade
Rehovot

What We Learn From Yitro

In Parshat Yitro, we encounter the monumental moment when the Israelites receive the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. Yitro, Moses' father-in-law, plays a crucial role by advising Moses on how to delegate leadership responsibilities. This highlights the significance of collaboration and shared responsibility within a community.

The commandments themselves serve as a moral compass, guiding individuals toward righteous living. The principles conveyed, such as honoring one's parents and refraining from theft, transcend time

and cultural boundaries, offering universal ethical guidelines. Parshat Yitro teaches us that a just society is built on the foundation of ethical behavior and mutual respect.

Yitro's counsel to Moses underscores the importance of effective leadership and the delegation of tasks. This is a valuable lesson for us as teenagers preparing to assume greater responsibilities. Just as Moses couldn't bear the burden alone, we too must learn the art of collaboration and teamwork, recognizing that shared efforts lead to collective success.

Furthermore, the divine revelation at Sinai reminds us of the need for spiritual connection. In our fast-paced busy lives, it's crucial to carve out moments for connection with something greater than ourselves. Parshat Yitro encourages us to find balance, not only in our communal responsibilities but also in our personal and spiritual lives. ■

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Real Life Rescues



Cycle of Lifesaving: Rabbi Donates Defibrillator to Commemorate Anniversary of Double Rescue

A year ago, on a wintery Shabbos day, Rabbi B. suffered a cardiac arrest in his house in Beitar Ilit. His son urgently alerted emergency services and began to administer CPR.

United Hatzalah volunteer EMT Yaakov Wallach was davening at a shul across the street when he received a notification on his communications device. He quickly responded, ran across the street, and arrived at the scene in under 90 seconds.

Finding the patient not breathing and without a pulse, Wallach attached a defibrillator and administered an electric shock. Shortly afterward, United Hatzalah volunteer EMT Elkana Broyer arrived at the scene and assisted Wallach with resuscitation efforts until the patient regained a pulse. Rabbi B. was transported to the hospital for further care and released a few days later.

Two weeks later, on Friday night, Rabbi B. suffered a second cardiac arrest. This time, Broyer was the first to arrive at the scene. He attached a defibrillator and administered three electric shocks, after which Rabbi B. regained consciousness and was again transported to the hospital. Thankfully, despite suffering from multiple cardiac arrests within a short period, Rabbi B. made a full recovery. He is alive today due to the quick response of the United Hatzalah EMTs who revived him.

Last week, a ceremony was held at the Beitar Ilit United Hatzalah volunteer center. During the event, deputy branch head Yossi Reinitz unveiled a brand new defibrillator that was generously donated to the branch. The donor was none other than Rabbi B., who chose to commemorate the anniversary of his double miracle by donating this vital piece of equipment to help save additional lives.

"This defibrillator is donated on 13 Shevat, the anniversary of my first cardiac arrest", said Rabbi B. at the ceremony. "It is being donated in honor of the dear United Hatzalah volunteers who helped save my life and for the merit of continued health and success of my family members."



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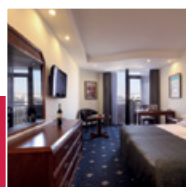
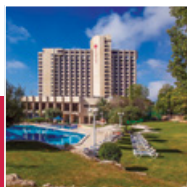
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