

# ב"ה Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1600

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פרשת יתרו  
PARSHAT YITRO



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ויחן-שם ישראל נגד ההר שמות ל"ט:ב'

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT YITRO ZMANIM

CANDLES 4:49 PM • HAVDALA 6:03 PM • RABBEINU TAM 6:43 PM



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Yaakov Greenberg // Yoav Glick

## COVER IMAGE Photographed by Ian Friedman



We made aliyah from Johannesburg, South Africa in 1994. Since 1997 we have been living in Kfar Adumim. Living on the edge of Wadi Kelt has meant that I am able to appreciate the wonders of Hashem's creation almost unchanged from the way it may have been in the beginning. This photo taken just before dawn overlooking the Jordan valley and Dead Sea makes me think both of beginnings and of journeys such as Yetziat Mitzrayim. As if this could have been what Bnei Yisrael may have seen from the foot of Har Sinai.

## IMPORTANT REMINDERS

 **KIDDUSH LEVANA:**  
Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana Until: 15 Shvat/Wed. night Feb. 12

# CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



	Yitro		Mishpatim	
	Candles	Havdala	Candles	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	4:49	6:03	4:55	6:09
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	5:07	6:06	5:13	6:11
Beit Shemesh/RBS	5:08	6:04	5:14	6:10
Alon Shvut	5:05	6:04	5:11	6:09
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	5:05	6:04	5:11	6:10
Modiin/Chashmonaim	5:05	6:04	5:11	6:09
Netanya	5:05	6:04	5:11	6:10
Be'er Sheva	5:07	6:05	5:12	6:11
Rehovot	5:06	6:05	5:12	6:10
Petach Tikva	4:49	6:04	4:55	6:10
Ginot Shomron	5:04	6:03	5:10	6:09
Haifa / Zichron	4:54	6:03	5:00	6:09
Gush Shiloh	5:04	6:03	5:10	6:08
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	5:06	6:05	5:12	6:10
Givat Ze'ev	5:09	6:03	5:14	6:09
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	5:05	6:04	5:11	6:09
Ashkelon	5:07	6:06	5:13	6:11
Yad Binyamin	5:06	6:05	5:12	6:10
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	4:56	6:01	5:02	6:07
Golan	5:02	6:01	5:08	6:07
Nahariya/Maalot	5:03	6:03	5:09	6:08
Afula	5:03	6:02	5:09	6:08

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Yitro - 6:43PM • Mishpatim - 6:48PM

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: Sanhedrin 60**



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## OTHER Z'MANIM



### JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat  
Feb. 12 - 22 / 14 - 24 Shvat

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:32-5:23
Sunrise	6:24-6:14
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:08-9:03
Magen Avraham	8:32-8:27
Sof Zman Tefila	10:03-9:59
<small>(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)</small>	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	11:53-11:52
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	12:23-12:22
Plag Mincha	4:14-4:20
Sunset (Including Elevation)	5:27-5:35



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## DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL  
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I am writing these words after spending a wonderful Shabbat at Congregation Ohr Torah in Edison, New Jersey, as their scholar-in-residence. It was wonderful to see Rabbi Yaakov Luban, Rabbi Emeritus of the shul and an esteemed OU employee and recently retired after nearly four decades, and other OU colleagues that daven in that shul. I was also joined by Mrs. Jaclyn Sova, who led the OU Women's Initiative as their scholar-in-residence. *Baruch Hashem*, the OU's growth has sometimes found us overlapping with different initiatives taking place at the same time and place.

The rabbi of the shul, Rabbi Sarel Malitzky, is doing an incredible job there, and he gave me the honor of speaking at the pulpit to his congregation. I felt it was my mission to bring a message from *Eretz Yisrael*. I explained how much their support in America means to us, and especially when they come to visit with

their families. I was impressed when Rabbi Malitzky told me how many people from his community have made *aliyah* or are planning to make *aliyah*.

This Shabbat I stayed with a lovely family, Gila and Ephraim Gerszberg, and it was uplifting to see their love and passion for the Land of Israel and how much they are helping Israel, including being in the process of getting a place in Israel. I first met the family on a mission to Israel with the OU, and I am blessed to have had the opportunity to spend time at their home in New Jersey. I also had Shabbat lunch with a wonderful family who told me with such tremendous pride that three out of five of their children are already living in Israel, and they told me of their own plans of a future move to Israel as well. Another family at the table told me that the majority of their family, too, is already living in Israel. It was truly inspiring to see these families *shep* such amazing *nachas* and express such pride that several of their children are living in Israel.

There was one thing that puzzled me. When people asked me when I was going back to Israel, I answered that I was attending the OU convention on Tuesday night and going straight from there on a flight to make it back to Israel for Tu B'Shvat. I got a lot of questions about this. Some asked me, "What's so important about Tu B'Shvat that you have to make it back for that?" I explained to them that Tu B'Shvat is something very real in Israel. Many families (including mine) sit and have a Tu B'Shvat *seder*, eating special fruits and thanking *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* for the Land of Israel and continued rain in

the rainy season. It's a special time in Israel for many Israelis. Apparently this does not have the same cultural-religious impact to many in America.

There is another reason I want to make sure to be home in Israel before Tu B'Shvat. After my family's Tu B'Shvat *seder* on Wednesday night, I will be attending the celebration of the seventh anniversary of Midreshet Zusha, which is part of OU Israel's Pearl and Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center. There are now two branches of the Zula, one in Yerushalayim and one in Tzfat, which see over 5,500 teens at risk every single year. Midreshet Zusha was created because of a real need in Israel to help young women experiencing hardship; providing them with guidance and support to overcome trauma and maximize their unique individual potentials.

Midreshet Zusha was actually named by the young women in the program. The name comes from the famous story of Reb Zusha of Anipoli, the Chasidic rabbi, who once said that he worries that after he passes away, he will not be asked why he wasn't Moshe or Avraham, but why he was not Zusha! Why didn't he live up to his potential? These young women understood the need for a Midrasha that would continue to provide the necessary support of the Zula, and would not try to change them to be something else, but to help them be themselves and fulfill their true potential. Thus, seven years ago, we heard their voices, and opened Midreshet Zusha, featuring a learning program of both Torah, art, spiritual *tiyulim* and more. Every young woman in the program has taken on the responsibility of a job or *sherut leumi*. They have such an incredible experience through the program every year.

Seven years is such an accomplishment. At the celebration, Harel Chetzroni, who started



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and wisdom were sought out  
by so many*

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the program, will be in attendance, as well as the inspiring speaker, Rabbanit Yemima Miz-rachi, with musical accompaniment by Yair Elitzur, whose song "Tamid Ohev Oti" has taken the Israeli world by storm and has uplifted so many people's spirits during the war.

I remember when we first opened Midreshet Zusha, we had just a few girls in the program. Now, we have a waiting list, and that is why we open the Midrasha every Wednesday. The girls flock to the Zula to learn Torah for hours. Participants come from up north, down south, really across the country, and they take such pride in dedicating themselves to an evening of Torah and being part of this great family, bonding with each other in such a meaningful way.

Seeing these young women mature, take more on themselves, and have such desire to grow and achieve their potential, is so fulfilling. We have an amazing staff of advisors and guidance counselors. I see the passion of the participants and know how crucial their will for change is, and I am inspired every time I see another successful year at Midreshet Zusha. Tu B'Shvat not only represents the blossoming of the fruits of Eretz Yisrael, but also a time celebrating these participants who are blossoming to become their best selves, future leaders,

professionals, community leaders and mothers of Klal Yisrael.

This Tu B'Shvat also comes out on the week that we read about *Matan Torah* in the parsha. I want to take the opportunity to thank all those who support both Midreshet Zusha and the Zula as a whole. Through these programs, young women have had the ability to receive the Torah once again, their own personal Torah, in a way that matches them and their unique circumstances.

The *nachat* we feel at seeing the growth of these young women into who they are meant to be is tremendous. I hope that anyone who sees the success of these programs will find it in their heart to give financial support so we can continue to expand and meet the needs of these teens in Israel. The Midreshet Zusha participants asked me to pass along a message of thanks to all those who have supported them, enabling them to be part of an amazing program that lets them reach their greatest selves.

Let this Tu B'Shvat be one of incredible growth, where we see the fruits of our labors, our families and those who rely on our support, to blossom and fulfill their potential.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

  
Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel



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## FROM THE DESK OF RABBI MOSHE HAUER

OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT



# Awareness of God and Man

There is absolutely nothing important enough to make us overlook the pain of others.

Our parsha presents the most important and transformative event in human history, the revelation at Sinai. It was there that we saw God and it was from there that through Moshe we received the laws, truths, and values that are to govern every aspect of our lives.

That, however, is not our parsha's top story. Instead, we are told about how Moshe's father-in-law, Yitro, introduced a change in how the Jewish people would access those laws, truth, and values. Yitro saw the long lines of people waiting for Moshe to seek out God's word from the person who had the most access to it. Worrying about the tiring effect of those long waiting lines on the people and on Moshe, Yitro

suggested a system of lower court judges and leaders who would be more available to the people to respond to their queries.

This was a very practical suggestion, but it was hardly idealistic. Moshe was the ultimate prophet! Here he was, a man of God, *ish ha'Elokim*, engaged in dispensing God's word in its purest form, and Yitro steps in to suggest a very human alternative because of his worry that Moshe would be overworked and the people worn out by waiting. Does this seem like the most fitting lead story to the Sinai experience?

Yitro was evidently adding a critical dimension to the successful integration of Torah into Klal Yisrael, specifically, the value of maintaining awareness of the human needs of others even while pursuing the divine Torah. The drive for the purest rendition of God's word should not obscure the immediate needs of the people around you. True Torah could not be conveyed as long as Moshe was dispensing God's word unmindful of the long line of people waiting and as long as the people continued waiting on Moshe without regard for the strain it was placing on him.

Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai was the most dedicated of Torah scholars, who "never engaged in idle conversation, never walked four cubits without engaging in Torah study and without donning phylacteries... no person ever found him sitting and silent, rather, he was always sitting and studying." The Sages said about Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai that he did not neglect "Bible; Mishna; Gemara; halakhot and aggadot; minutiae of the Torah and minutiae of the scribes," and many other

areas of study (Succah 28a). Yet, it was that same Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai who was the first to greet everyone, including the non-Jews he encountered in the street (Brachos 17a). That is the truest integration of Torah, such that it enhanced his awareness and sensitivity to all those around him.

Rav Yehuda Amital z"l, the founding Rosh Yeshiva of Har Etzion, would often repeat the Chasidic story about the Baal HaTanya, the first rebbe of Chabad, who was studying in the upper level of his home, while his son Rav Dov Ber, known as the Mitteler Rebbe, was studying downstairs, where he and his family resided. At some point, one of the Mitteler Rebbe's children fell from his cradle and began to cry. The father was so immersed in his study that he did not hear the baby crying, but the Baal HaTanya heard the baby and went down to comfort him and return him to his cradle. On his way back upstairs, he passed the room where the Mitteler Rebbe was studying and told him that no matter how immersed a person is in his Torah studies, when a Jewish child cries he must hear it and respond.

That was Yitro's gift to the Jewish people. Overwhelmed by the spirituality of Sinai, we may have become less sensitive to and respectful of the real and basic human needs of others. Yitro came from afar and reminded us that in the pursuit of God and Torah we must be even more aware of the discomfort, the needs, and certainly the suffering of others. ■

May the Torah learned  
from this issue of Torah Tidbits be  
אבי מורי, לעיני  
my father,

**Kalman (Kelly) Winkler z"l**  
קלמן שלמה בן יוסף ז"ל  
טז' שבט

*Rabbi Yehoshua and Yocheved Bienenfeld*

With great sorrow  
we announce the passing of  
**Shirley Zuckerman a"h**  
on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> of Shvat (4.2.25)  
peacefully at home  
two months before age 100

Shirley was a regular volunteer  
at the Torah Tidbits for many years  
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ת.ג.צ.ב.ה

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# OU... BEYOND KASHRUT

## Zula Tzfat

The Pearl and Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center (also known as הזולה של חצרוני) is a safe haven for at-risk teens, primarily from religious backgrounds. Often, these teens and young adults have become estranged from their families, teachers, and normative frameworks, and are often experiencing a crisis in faith. Many are involved in substance abuse or other antisocial behaviors.

Our Zula Tzfat branch is a supportive environment helping teens who are grappling with the challenges of the war in northern Israel. Zula Tzfat provides teens in northern Israel with a healthy social and emotional atmosphere. Zula Tzfat recently released a beautiful song "Kol HaOlam". The meaning of the song reflects what these teens are going through living up north and dealing with regular sirens and war. The world around them is filled with chaos, but they chose to focus on the positive.

Each week we will share one of OU Israel's impactful programs helping English speaking olim with their klita and impacting Israeli society.



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### 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 Tziphora 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.

That is striking. We are in the midst of a dramatic narrative of the journey from Egypt into the desert. Mt. Sinai is the destination. Yet this story has nothing to do with that journey. Yitro, a non-Jewish leader of Midian comes to identify with the story of the Jewish people and to offer Moshe advice on how to manage his multiple responsibilities. An interesting story to be sure, but why interrupt the drama of the journey to Sinai with this rather pedestrian story? We can hear of it later in the Torah where it actually occurs.

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. Amalek attacks the Jewish people. Another enemy. First Egypt. Now Amalek. I guess it is us Jews against the world. All non-Jews are out to get us.

No, no. Not all non-Jews are out to get us. The 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 Egyptians and 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.

This was a powerful lesson then and a powerful lesson now. We have enemies amongst the non-Jews, to be sure. And we have friends. Be discerning. In both acknowledging the reality of our enemies. But also, in recognizing our true friends.



#### 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 is transformative. Up until now we know we have a covenant with G-d. He has drawn us to Him as His people. But here He introduces the consequence of this covenant: you will be transformed as people. You will become something that you are not yet. You will become holy. Kohanim. Your loyalty to the mitzvot that I am about to give you will transform you into holy people.

That is exactly what we say in every bracha before we do any mitzvah – asher kidshanu b’mitzvotav – G-d made us holy through mitzvot. Mitzvot change us, alter us, elevate us, transform us into holy people.

This is an introduction to not only the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai but the entire rest of the Torah, the hundreds of mitzvot. They are holy-ers. They will make you holy.



#### 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 look at the unity. Are these the same Jewish people who complained 4 times in Parshat Beshalach? And who have so many disputes in the beginning of our parsha that Moshe adjudicates all day long? They are a cantankerous lot; yet here they all answer in unison. We are all in with this covenant.

That is our people. Just like when they got the mitzvah of Pesach in Egypt, the Torah said the people did everything Moshe commanded. So too here, they all accepted the covenant.

Because there is a difference between our aspirations and our human foibles. We are at the same time great people, holy people, reacting with zeal to the offer of a covenant with God. We all want that. And yet, people we remain, with all our complaints, pettiness and disagreements. The complaints don't define us; our zeal for the covenant does.



#### 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 not to 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 profound significance of the Ten Commandments is not the particular commands; the commands are important but so are others. Rather, it is the notion that G-d descended onto the mountain to speak to mankind.

This is the culmination of G-d's reach for man. After Creation, then reaching for our people, then redeeming us from Egypt. He now descends to communicate with mankind. The story of the Torah is not the Jewish people discovering G-d. It is G-d reaching for man. That is powerfully empowering. He wants us? We must be worthy partners, holy, elevated, worthy of His reach.



#### 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.

The people wanted to hear G-d's voice. Now, they change their mind. It is too much.

Modern skeptics would reject the notion of Divine communication with man. After all, we moderns have never seen it. But that is exactly what the Torah says here. Of course, you haven't seen it. Because man cannot tolerate it. It was done once in history. No more. And it is for us to learn its lesson. Once. That G-d desires man. Speaks to man. Instructs man. But it will never occur again. ■



#### STATS

17<sup>th</sup> of 54 sedras; 5<sup>th</sup> of 11 in Sh'mot.  
Written on 138 lines in a Torah, (46<sup>th</sup>).  
15 Parshiyot; 4 open, 11 closed.  
75\* p'sukim - ranks 47<sup>th</sup> (only 7 sedras have fewer p'sukim).  
1105 words, 4022 letters - ranks 46<sup>th</sup>.  
Yitro is the smallest sedra in Sh'mot.  
\*Tradition is that Yitro has 72 p'sukim, not 75. If we count DIBROT rather than p'sukim for the Aseret HaDibrot, then the number drops to 72 (from 75) and that probably explains the difference.  
HOWEVER... when we read the Aseret haDibrot with TAAMEI HA'ELYON (as Dibrot), there are only 9 p'sukim/dibrot, since the first two are definitely combined.  
Total: 71.



#### MITZVOT

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

#### A SHORT VORT

BY RABBI CHANOCH YERES  
RAV, BEIT KNESSET BEIT YISRAEL,  
YEMIN MOSHE

"On **this day** they came to the wilderness of Sinai" (19:1) - ביום הזה באו מדבר סיני (יט:א) -  
Why is the language on **this day** and not on **that day**?  
Why is "day" needed at all?  
Rashi (1040-1105) points out that the day they came was Rosh Chodesh. Another answer quoting Talmud Berachot Daf 63b, is that to teach the lesson that the words of the Torah should be new to you as though **today** He gave them to you.  
The Ozneyim LaTorah (Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin 1881-1966) points out that the Torah does not stipulate the date of the receiving of the Torah. Even though Rashi quoted the Talmud Shabbat 86b that they arrived at Sinai on the first of Sivan, there remains a dispute if the giving of the Torah was on the 6th or 7th of Sivan. Since the timing of this event is not exactly mentioned, we can learn a lesson that this event of receiving the Torah transcends all aspects of time. This experience of Divine revelation is a renewed, daily encounter which we are to relive and sustain continuously.  
Shabbat Shalom

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# THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB  
OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, EMERITUS

## The Power of Commitment

Back in the days when I was a pulpit rabbi in Baltimore, Maryland, I made it my business to meet with every bar mitzvah boy and girl several weeks before their big day.

It was my way of becoming familiar with these youngsters. We would discuss their interests, hobbies, favorite books, and what they were studying in school.

Over the years, I developed the practice

which came to be known as “the rabbi’s gift, assignment, and blessing.” On the Shabbat of the bar or bat mitzvah ceremony, I presented each child with a gift from the synagogue. Usually it was a sacred book, most often a *siddur* with an English translation and commentary. I would also charge each child with an assignment to be completed within the coming year. And I would close with a personal blessing appropriate to each one’s background and interests.

It was during the pre-bar mitzvah interview that we would together begin to formulate what would ultimately become both the assignment and the blessing.

During those interview sessions, I would frequently share the teaching of our sages that all of us had two distinct sets of impulses, *yetzer tov* and *yetzer hara*, an evil inclination and an inclination to do good. Furthermore, the evil inclination, the *yetzer hara*, was with us from birth or perhaps even from conception. “It has been your old friend,” I would say. “Your companion for the past twelve or thirteen years.”

“But,” I would continue, “in several weeks, you will gain a new companion, a better self. At your bar or bat mitzvah, you will attain the *yetzer tov*, the so-called ‘good angel.’”

Almost invariably, especially from the girls, I was greeted by the following response: “That’s not fair! For all these years, I’ve only had an evil spirit and no means to combat it. Now, finally, I have an ally! Where has he been when I’ve needed him the most? Shouldn’t I have been granted both angels at the same time to even the playing field? No fair!”

An excellent question with no easy answer! For years, I’ve searched for a convincing response to this question. Few commentaries even raise the question, despite it being one that weighed heavily upon my group of Baltimore pre-teens.

I have found a useful, albeit very subtle, approach in the writings of a representative of the Mussar Movement whom I’ve occasionally cited in these weekly columns. His name is Rabbi Chaim Zaitchik, of blessed memory, a student of the Nevardok school of Mussar, who spent the years of the Holocaust in a Soviet labor camp in Siberia, and who emerged from his torturous experiences to become an extremely creative and influential spiritual guide.

Included in his collection of essays known as *Ohr Chadash* is a most profound reflection on the power of verbal commitments. It can be found among his contributions to this week’s Torah portion, *Parshat Yitro* (Exodus 18:1-20:23). It is entitled *Amirah v’Kabbalah v’HaBriah Kayemet*, translated to the best of my ability as, “Commitments and Resolutions Allow Creation to Endure.”

His opening paragraphs review the numerous passages in Talmud and Midrash that underscore the significance of the fact that the Jewish people accepted the Torah willingly, whereas the other nations of the world did not. WE expressed our willingness verbally, insufficiently aware of what our commitment entailed. *Naaseh v’nishma!* We will observe and perform all the Lord’s commandments even before we hear what they are!

We are told that had the Israelites not committed themselves to accept the Torah, the Lord would have destroyed heaven and earth and nullified His creation. Verbal commitment, resolute acceptance, was sufficient to allow

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the universe to endure.

He goes on to provide quite an array of less cosmic examples of the power of verbal commitments. One interesting example has to do with the restrictions which are demanded of a *nazir*, an individual who verbally commits to accept the role of the Nazirite. He must refrain from wine and from all fruits of the vine. He must let his hair and beard grow. And he (or she) must keep away from dead bodies and even avoid contact with the dead bodies of his own mother and father.

In this respect, he is like a *kohen*, who also

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must avoid contact with the dead. But the ordinary *kohen*, unless he is the High Priest or *Kohen Gadol*, need not refrain from contact with the dead bodies of his own parents.

Why? Ask Rabbi Zaitchik. Is the *nazir* somehow holier than a *kohen*? He answers in the affirmative. The *kohen* did not attain his sanctity by virtue of his personal commitment. He was born a *kohen* but never personally committed to that position. The *nazir* made a voluntary verbal commitment, a statement that he accepted upon himself the restrictions incumbent upon a *nazir*. That personal voluntary commitment is sufficient to bestow upon him, to some degree, a status of sanctity superior to that of the *kohen*. The *nazir* may not compromise his self-attained level of sanctity by coming near the dead bodies of his own parents. The power of commitment!

Let us return to the question that my synagogues' teenagers (who are, at this point in time, parents of their own teenagers!) asked of me so forcefully.

Rabbi Zaitchik intensifies their question by stressing the imbalance caused to a growing child by being assigned an evil inclination without assistance from a benevolent force adequate to the challenge. Is the Creator not concerned that twelve or thirteen years of exposure to only evil powers might render the child incapable of ever incorporating the belated coaxing or coaching of the *yetzer tov*, of the good spirit?

Here, Rabbi Zeitchik reminds us of those passages in Talmud and Midrash which suggest that, as one source has it, the Almighty Himself is occupied with teaching Torah to yet unborn children and that, as another source suggests, an angel tutors us all, as embryos in our mother's womb, in the ways and words of the Torah.

At that early stage in the celestial "classroom" we attended before our birth, we made a verbal commitment to adhere to the Torah. We have no recall whatsoever of that commitment, but our unborn souls made that commitment, and it is with that sincere resolution to do good and be good that we are equipped to do battle with the *yetzer hara*. That supernatural commitment is merely reinforced when we reach the age of religious maturity to take on the *yetzer hara* competently and indeed to overcome him entirely as we march forward into adulthood.

This week's Torah portion is all about the verbal commitment made by our ancestors at Sinai. But the souls of all of us were present at Mount Sinai, and in a mysterious but real sense, we are still bound by the commitment we made so long ago.

Let's keep our commitment and make good use of our trusted ally, the *yetzer tov*! ■

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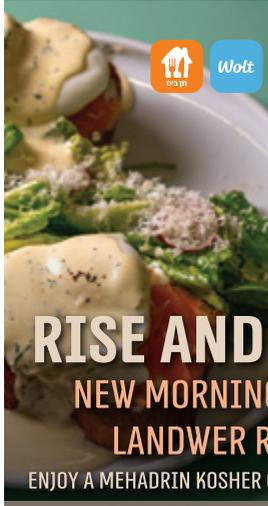
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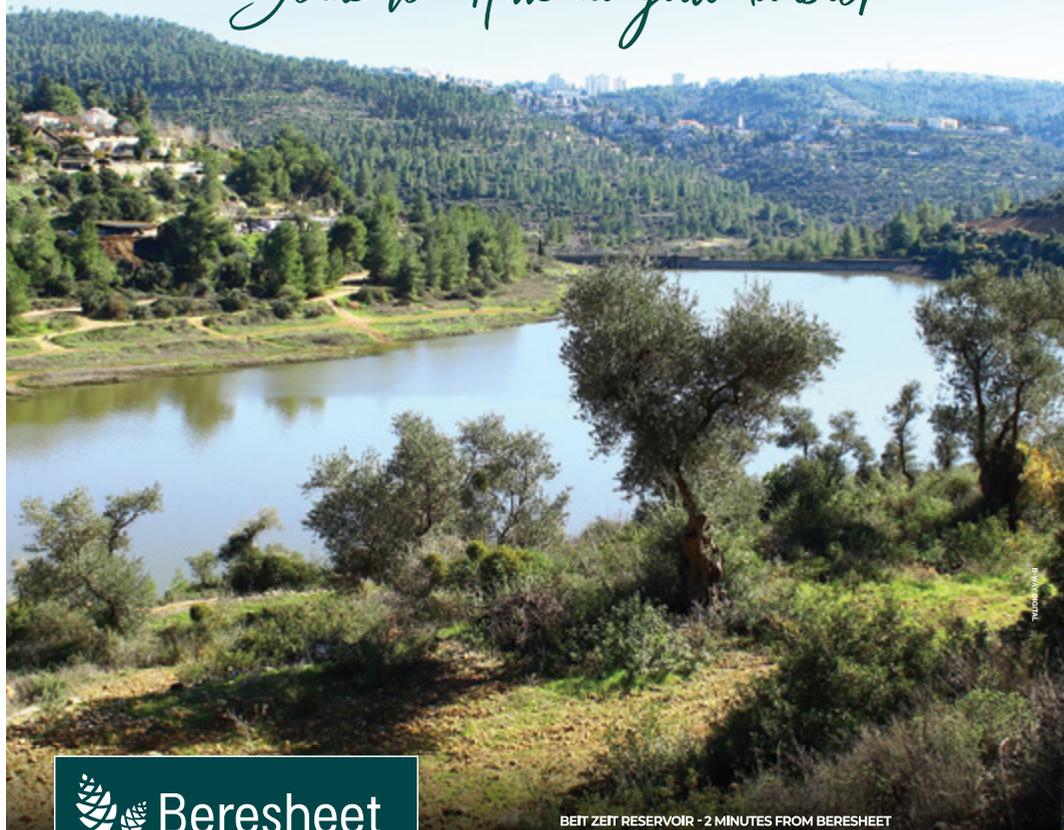


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# The Custom that Refused to Die

There's an enthralling story about the Ten Commandments and the role they played in Jewish worship and the synagogue.

It begins with a little-known fact. There was a time when there were not three paragraphs in the prayer we call the Shema, but four. The Mishnah in Tamid (5:1) tells us that in Temple times the officiating priests would first recite the Ten Commandments and then the three paragraphs of the Shema.

We have several pieces of independent evidence for this. The first consists of four papyrus fragments acquired in Egypt in 1898 by the then secretary of the Society of Biblical Archaeology, W.L. Nash. Pieced together and located today

in the Cambridge University Library, they are known as the Nash Papyrus. Dating from the second century BCE, they contain a version of the Ten Commandments, immediately followed by the Shema. Almost certainly the papyrus was used for prayer in a synagogue in Egypt before the birth of Christianity, at a time when the custom was to include all four paragraphs.

Tefillin from the Second Temple period, discovered in the Qumran caves along with the Dead Sea Scrolls, contained the Ten Commandments. Indeed a lengthy section of the halachic Midrash on Deuteronomy, the Sifri, is dedicated to proving that we should not include the Ten Commandments in the tefillin, which suggests that there were some Jews who did so, and the rabbis needed to be able to show that they were wrong.

We also have evidence from both the Babylonian Talmud (Bavli, Brachot 12a) and the Jerusalem Talmud (Yerushalmi Brachot 1:8) that there were communities in Israel and Babylon who sought to introduce the Ten Commandments into the prayers, and that the rabbis had to issue a ruling against doing so. There is even documentary evidence that the Jewish community in Fostat, near Cairo, kept a special scroll in the Ark called the Sefer al-Shir, which they took out after the conclusion of daily prayers and read from it the Ten Commandments.<sup>1</sup>

1. Jacob Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and in*

So the custom of including the Ten Commandments as part of the Shema was once widespread, but from a certain point in time it was systematically opposed by the Sages. Why did they object to it? Both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud say it was because of the "claim of the sectarians."

Jewish sectarians – some identify them as a group of early Christians but there is no compelling evidence for this – argued that only the Ten Commandments were binding, because only they were received by the Israelites directly from God at Mount Sinai. The others were received through Moses, and this sect, or perhaps several of them, held that they did not come from God. They were Moses' own invention, and therefore not binding.

There is a Midrash that gives us an idea of what the sectarians were saying. It places in the mouth of Korach and his followers, who rebelled against Moses, these words:

"The whole congregation are holy. Are you [Moses and Aaron] the only ones who are holy? All of us were sanctified at Sinai . . . and when the Ten Commandments were given, there was no mention of challah or *terumah* or tithes or tzitzit. You made this all up yourself." (*Yalkut Shimoni Korach 752*)

So the rabbis were opposed to any custom that would give special prominence to the Ten Commandments since the sectarians were pointing to such customs as proof that even orthodox Jews treated them differently from the other commands. By removing them from the prayer book, the rabbis hoped to silence such claims.

But the story does not end there. So special were the Ten Commandments to Jews that they found their way back. Rabbi Jacob ben Asher, author of the Tur (14th century) suggested that

*Palestine under the Fāṭimid caliphs*, 1920, volume I, p. 221.



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one should say them privately. Rabbi Joseph Karo argues that the ban only applies to reciting the Ten Commandments publicly during the service, so they could be said privately after the service. That is where you find them today in most siddurim – immediately after the morning service. Rabbi Shlomo Luria had the custom of reading the Ten Commandments at the beginning of prayer, before the start of *Pesukei de-Zimra*, the Verses of Praise.

That was not the end of the argument. Given that we do not say the Ten Commandments during public prayer, should we none the less give them special honour when we read them from the Torah, whether on Shavuot or in the weeks of Parshat Yitro and Vaetchanan? Should we stand when they are being read?

Maimonides found himself involved in a controversy over this question. Someone wrote him a letter telling the following story. He was a member of a synagogue where originally the custom was to stand during the reading of the Ten Commandments. Then a rabbi came and ruled otherwise, saying that it was wrong to stand for the same reason as it was forbidden to say the Ten Commandments during public prayer. It could be used by sectarians, heretics and others to claim that even the Jews

themselves held that the Ten Commandments were more important than the other 603. So the community stopped standing. Years later another rabbi came, this time from a community where the custom was to stand for the Ten Commandments. The new rabbi stood and told the congregation to do likewise. Some did. Some did not, since their previous rabbi had ruled against. Who was right?

Maimonides had no doubt. It was the previous rabbi, the one who had told them not to stand, who was in the right. His reasoning was correct also. Exactly the logic that barred it from the daily prayers should be applied to the reading of the Torah. It should be given no special prominence. The community should stay sitting. Thus ruled Maimonides, the greatest rabbi of the Middle Ages. However, sometimes even great rabbis have difficulty persuading communities to change. Then, as now, most communities – even those in Maimonides' Egypt – stood while the Ten Commandments were being read.

So despite strong attempts by the Sages, in the time of the Mishnah, Gemara, and later in the age of Maimonides, to ban any custom that gave special dignity to the Ten Commandments, whether as prayer or as biblical reading, Jews kept finding ways of doing so. They brought it back into daily prayer by saying it privately and outside the mandatory service, and they continued to stand while it was being read from the Torah despite Maimonides' ruling that they should not.

“Leave Israel alone,” said Hillel, “for even if they are not prophets, they are still the children of prophets.” Ordinary Jews had a passion for the Ten Commandments. They were the distilled essence of Judaism. They were heard directly by the people from the mouth of God himself. They were the basis of the covenant

they made with God at Mount Sinai, calling on them to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Twice in the Torah they are described as the covenant itself:

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.” Moses was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant—the Ten Commandments. (*Ex 34:27-28*)

Then the Lord spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice. He declared to you His covenant, the Ten Commandments, which He commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets. (*Deut. 4:12-13*)

That is why they were originally said immediately prior to the Shema, and why despite their removal from the prayers Jews continued to say them – because their recital constituted a daily renewal of the covenant with God. That too is why Jews insisted on standing when they were being read from the Torah, because when they were being given, the Israelites “stood at the foot of the mountain” (*Ex. 19:17*). The Midrash says about the reading of the Ten Commandments on Shavuot:

“The Holy One blessed be He said to the Israelites: My children, read this passage every year and I will account it to you as if you were standing before Mount Sinai and receiving the Torah.” (*Pesikta de-Rav Kahana 12, ed. Mandelbaum, p. 204*)

Jews kept searching for ways of recreating that scene, by standing when they listened to it from the Torah and by saying it privately after the end of the morning prayers. Despite the fact that they knew their acts could be misconstrued by heretics, they were too attached to that great

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epiphany – the only time in history God spoke to an entire people – to treat it like any other passage in the Torah. The honour given to the Ten Commandments was the custom that refused to die. ■

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# “M’lo Chol Ha’aretz” or “Mim’komo”?

This week’s parasha depicts the dramatic scene of G-d’s revelation to B’nai Yisra’el at Har Sinai, an event that, naturally, serves as the focal point of the Torah reading. At that time, the entire nation hears Hashem’s heavenly voice declaring “Anochi Hashem Elokecha” as well as the subsequent mitzvot commanded to Israel in the Aseret HaDibrot.

In similar fashion, our ancient scholars saw in Yishayahu’s vision of the divine throne and the heavenly voice declaring “Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh”, to be a powerful connection to the theophany depicted in the parasha. And, although G-d’s “personal” revelation of His divine throne to Yishayahu differed starkly from the magnificent national experience of “gilui Shechina” experienced by the entire nation, Chazal still found both of the two miraculous events similar enough to be read on the same Shabbat.

It is also true that Yishayahu was not the only navi who was granted such an encounter with G-d’s glory. The navi Yechezkel opens his sefer with the extraordinary nevu’ah (known in Talmudic literature as “Ma’aseh HaMerkava”- the “Work of the Chariot”) depicting the heavenly chariot as a bearer of Hashem’s Shechina. The portrayal of the chariot being the place of the Divine essence connects closely with Yishayahu’s vision of the Shechina in the Heichal. Likewise, the cry from heaven declaring: “Baruch K’vod Hashem Mim’komo”

(Yechezkel 3:12) brings us back to the call from above that was heard by Yishayahu.

Additionally, it is worthwhile to note that both visions were offered to both prophets before the approaching disasters, i.e. the exile of Ephrayim (the Northern tribes) and the exile of Yehuda (the Southern tribes). Is it not surprising, therefore, that the vision of Yechezkel is set as the haftarah for Shavuot, the only other time when the Torah’s same description of Ma’amad Har Sinai is read.

And yet, similar as the two visions might be, there are clear distinctions between the two divine revelations. In his book illuminating much of Sefer Yishayahu, HaRav Yigal Ariel shares a number of the differences between the two prophetic visions - and I include here three of them:

- Yishayahu saw the Shechina perched upon His throne, stable and secure in His sacred abode (“Heichal”), while Yechezkel perceived G-d traveling on His chariot (“Merkava”) in constant movement.
- Yishayahu relates his heavenly revelation by **first** detailing the vision of Hashem upon His divine throne and **later** recounting his view of the Seraphim that attended Hashem. In contrast, Yechezkel **begins** his vision by describing the divine chariot and detailing the image of the accompanying angels - even

how they moved about.... but it is only upon the **closing** of his report of the vision that the navi Yechezkel describes “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Hashem”.

- And, while the declaration heard by Yishayahu included that the sanctity and glory of Hashem **filled the entire world** (“m’lo chol ha’aretz k’vodo”), Yechezkel perceived a sound saying that G-d’s glory be blessed **from its place** (“Baruch k’vod Hashem mi’komo”).

In order to explain the differences between the visions of the two prophets, Rav Ariel quotes the statement of Rava in Masechet Chagiga [13b], explaining that Yechezkel saw all that Yishayahu did, but reacted differently, as would a villager at the rare sighting of the King, rather than the reaction of the city dweller for whom such a sighting was rather common. Simply, they both perceived the same thing - but were impacted by it differently.

And there is a lesson to be learned from this. I submit that one’s “knowledge” of G-d – whether that comes through unexpected emotion or years of faith - leads us to the realization that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is a very real presence with us at all times. And whether a “villager” or a “city dweller”, whether we feel G-d’s glory unceasingly spreading throughout the world or sense it emanating from His divine place at special moments, our experiences are basically the same and their impact is equal.

Ultimately, both Yishayahu, who saw the Bet Mikdash in all its glory, and Yechezkel, who perceived it through G-d’s visions, taught the very same message to future generation:

Hashem’s Glory is always here. Our task is to perceive it, acknowledge it and glorify in it. ■

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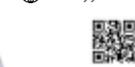
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# Asseret HaDibrot – Compared and Contrasted

The Asseret Hadibrot appears in Parshat Yitro. We have addressed the interpretation of the *Me'iri* in the past, as well as the Abarbanel. Let's briefly review the words of the *Me'iri* and then explore an idea expressed by Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch as both compare and contrast the first five and the last five commandments.

## ME'IRI

The *Me'iri* parallels the two halves of the *luchot*, i.e., pairing the commandments written on the right side of the *luchot* with those on the left side – one with six, two with seven, three with eight, etc.

The first set is **commandments one and six:** “*Anochi Hashem*” is congruent with “Don't kill.” Belief in HaKadosh Barukh Hu is the opposite of murder. Someone who denies God and pushes God out of the picture is, as it were, killing Him.



One can also suggest that the act of murder is equivalent to not recognizing the image of God in the victim.

The second parallel is between the **second and seventh** commandments: “Don't have another God” is congruent with “Don't commit adultery.” Idolatry may be equated with adultery. Throughout *Tanach*, whenever Klal Yisrael strayed from Hashem, their act was described by the Torah as promiscuity and adultery, acts of straying from one's designated partner.

The **fourth and ninth** commandments are paired: “Remembering the Shabbat” is congruent with “Don't be a false witness.” Observing Shabbat corresponds to not providing false testimony, because that is precisely what Shabbat is all about – a testimony that Hashem created the world.

The last set, the **fifth and tenth** commandments: “Honor your parents” is congruent with “Don't covet.” Honoring one's parents parallels coveting because coveting is a focus on oneself, it is self-centeredness, while honoring parents is a recognition that one is not the center of everything. It is the acknowledgment that there is someone to whom I owe appreciation for my very existence.

The most challenging one to explain is the parallel between the **third and eighth** commandments: “Don't use God's name in vain” is congruent with “Don't steal.” What exactly is the connection between not using Hashem's name in vain and stealing?

The *Me'iri* (intro to Talmud) suggests two ideas. The simple *peshat* is that stealing could easily lead to denying the act and swearing falsely in court about it. A deeper explanation, suggested by the *Me'iri* is to define the word *tisa* as “bear” or “carry.” *Lo tisa*, he explains, can be interpreted as “Don't wear/bear/carry God's name in vain,” i.e., don't dress and act on the outside like a righteous person, but then act in a manner that isn't appropriate for such a person. Don't wrap yourself in a *tallit* and go and steal; don't wrap yourself in *tefillin* and go and trick the masses, for that is carrying God's name in vain.

## RAV SHIMSHON RAPHAEL HIRSCH PROGRESSION OF LUCHOT

Rav Hirsch offers an insightful idea. The Asseret HaDibrot as we know are split between the first five which are *Bein Adam L'Makom* (between man and God) and the last five that are laws *Bein Adam L'Chavero* (between man and his fellow man).

The first five **spiritual** dibrot start with a focus on the mind (belief in God and prohibition of idolatry), then move to **speech** (*Lo Tisa* – not mentioning God's name in vain) and then to **action** (Shabbat and *kibud Av V'em*).

The last five **social** dibrot have the opposite progression. They start with **action** (don't kill, don't commit adultery, don't steal) then **speech** (don't bear false testimony), then **emotions** (don't covet).

Perhaps the message of the different progression, is that when it comes to belief in God, it is not worth anything unless it translates into

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action, obligations and limitations. An acceptance of a divine will that tells me what to do and what not to do. Emunah is step one but it has to translate into speech and action.

When it comes to social laws, it cannot be limited to actions, or avoidance of actions between two parties, but still allow hatred to exist between individuals. It has to start with taking care in the manner in which one acts towards another, but then also be reflected in one's speech which reflects what is in their heart and eventually to the heart and mind, which will help avoid adverse actions.

Honoring God in spirit is worthless, if we don't act properly. In addition, all social virtue is meaningless if the focus is limited to outward correctness, without inner consciousness. We need to understand the progression of both belief in God and social behavior and fuse the two sides of the dibrot into one inseparable whole. ■

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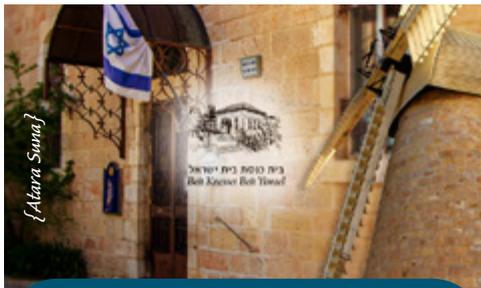


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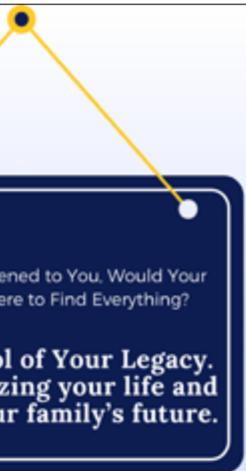
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## Wavering Worlds

“Lo tisa et shem Hashem Elokecha lashav – Do not take the name of Hashem in vain,” (Shemot 20:7). Chazal (Shavuot 39a) teach that when Hashem said the third of the *Aseret Hadibrot* the whole world trembled. What does this mean? And why did the world shake when these words were said?

In *Avodat Avodah*, the Tosher Rebbe *zt”l* explains that this reflects a key principle of this world. Truth, we know (*Shabbat 104a*) stands eternally, falsehood will not endure. Indeed, truth allows the world to maintain its stability, while falsehood brings destruction and devastation in its wake. Hashem’s seal is that of truth which animates and energizes our world. “*Ve’emet Hashem le’olam – the truth of Hashem is eternal,*” (*Tehillim 117:2*) this is the life force that gives permanence and immutability to all of creation.

Therefore, when the world heard the command, “Do not utter Hashem’s name in vain!” everything shuddered with reverence, recognizing that falsehood will lead to their ultimate disintegration. One can then appreciate that the next of the *Aseret Hadibrot* is to keep Shabbat. Shabbat is the time when the light of truth enters creation. Chazal teach (*Yerushalmi Demai 16b*) that even an ‘*am ha’aretz*,’ an unlearned person, won’t lie on Shabbat because “the fear of Shabbat is upon him.” When the world perceived the power of Shabbat and understood that its existence was assured, it was able to calm down. We allude to this serenity in the Shabbat Mincha davening when we say Shabbat is “*menuchat emet ve’emunah.*” The depth of rest on Shabbat, the feeling that the world feels ‘calm’ emanates from Shabbat’s power of truth.

The Tosher Rebbe further expounds that every time a person lies or flatters others, the world feels unsettled. Deception and fallacy weaken the foundations of the world and one’s inner core as well. Strengthening one’s commitment to Shabbat and allowing the light of Shabbat’s truth to permeate one’s essence can counter the forces of falsehood.

The Chafetz Chayim *zt”l* understands this commandment from a different perspective. Every Jew has an aspect of Hashem within. We all carry Hashem’s name within us as we are called ‘*Yisrael.*’ Thus, we are called upon not to carry Hashem’s name within ourselves in vain and live a life of G-dliness. Each of us is a mini world, when we don’t live up to the

G-dly vision to emulate Hashem, indeed our foundations will waver and our world begins to shake. Let us commit to the truth within ourselves to feel grounded and secure living with Divine direction. ■

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AUTHOR OF BADERECH: ALONG THE PATH OF TESHUVA (MOSAICA 2021)

# Yisro: The P'shat

My dear friend and teacher, Rav Dovid'l Weinberg of Yerushalayim, *Ir haKodesh* related a *ma'aseh* about Reb Shalom Rockeach, *Der Ershter Rov*, the 'First Rebbe' of Belz:

The Belzer Rebbe, also known also as the *Sar Shalom*, zy'a, enjoyed learning Gemara '*baderech pilpul*', an analytical study methodology designed to explain and reconcile any apparent or subtle contradictions presented by various ways of reading different sources. This intensive style of learning involves nuanced disputes and hairsplitting conceptual differences between halachic rulings, in an effort to reach a harmonious conclusion. In this way one can reveal that seemingly disparate arguments in the Gemara, and their corresponding sources, actually 'work together'.

Since, in general, Chasidic communities in that era eschewed the '*derech halimud*' of *pilpul*, one of the chasidim questioned the

Rebbe regarding his surprising affinity for this method of study.

The Sar Shalom leaned back in his chair and smiled, "You see, sometimes one comes across a difficult passage in the Gemara, a statement or citation that simply does not *shtim*, it just doesn't harmonize with any other proof text or observation made elsewhere. To reconcile this seemingly contradictory passage with the others, one must think creatively and labor to find an explanation...."

"And this is why *pilpul* is such an important practice," continued the Rebbe, "for sometimes you meet a Yid who doesn't seem to be a reflection of the pasuk, *V'ameich kulam tzaddikim*, 'And, as for Your nation, they are all righteous' (*Yeshayahu*, 60:21). However, if you are well practiced in the *derech* of *pilpul*, you will surely be able to dig deeper, labor in the *sugya* of that individual, and *darshen* on that Jew, until you arrive at the *maskana*, the harmonious conclusion: indeed, they are truly a *tzadik!*"

.....  
וַיִּחַן יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶגְדַּ הָהָר, "Israel encamped there, opposite the mountain." (19:2)

The word *vayichan*, "encamped," unexpectedly appears in the singular, as if to say, 'And "he", Am Yisrael, encamped there....' Rashi notes that it implies the whole nation was כאיש אחד, "...as one person with one heart".

Rebbe Leibele Eiger of Lublin teaches that the word *vayichan* is a term of *chein*, 'grace'. Gathered together at Mount Sinai, we all saw each other's good points and found grace in each other's eyes, and this is how we were unified as one person when we received the Torah.

Reb Nosson of Breslov once remarked with amazement that great Jews have been able to give '*peirushim*' on the entire Torah, explaining its revealed and hidden meanings — including the most complicated and brilliant Talmudic insights of the the Ashkenazic *gaon*, Maharam Schiff — "...but who can ever give the true *p'shat* on (the meaning of) a Yid?"

And yet, every individual from the 600,000 'root souls' of Am Yisrael is a letter in the Torah, as the letters of *Yisrael* stand for ישׂר, "There are 600,000 letters in the Torah." And the Torah is called *Toras Achas*, "a Torah of Oneness, an inseparable singularity". "Your nation, they are all righteous," because all Jews are ultimately one with the *Toras Achas*. And therefore, we are all ultimately unified and harmonized with one another.

The Torah of Oneness is founded upon a singular principle: ואהבת לרעך כמוך - זה כלל: "And you shall love your friend, 'the other', as you instinctively love and seek benefit for yourself — this Divine commandment is the *klal gadol baTorah*." Here, Rashi quotes a *midrash*, saying that to lovingly benefit others and be in harmony with them is not just one of the most important teachings of the Torah, but it is its singular *central* value, its one fundamental principle and goal.

The ability to truly love others is the highest

spiritual attainment, and the most God-like activity that we can engage in. While Chazal place our religious experience in the context of an exclusive, intimate, inseparable relationship with the One God, the litmus test to measure our closeness is our *avodah* of ואהבת, to truly love and unify with our fellow Jew. And ואהבת is arguably the most 'omnipresent' of all mitzvos, since in every encounter with another person we have an opportunity to uphold and fulfill this *yesod*, this foundational principle of *kol haTorah kulah*, the entire Torah of Hashem.

Just as *Uba'u kulam b'vriv yachad*, "All came together in the Covenant of the Torah," may we come together by seeing, loving and serving the *tzadik* in one another, and in ourselves. May we thus reveal the *maskana*, the '*poshiter pshat*' of our covenantal and essential oneness: אור"תא וקב"ה וישראל חד הוא, "*Torah, HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and *Klal Israel* are One!" ■

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**SUNDAY  
FEB 16**

**7:30 PM**  
Advanced Safrut (The Bais)  
@ **OU ISrael, 7 Hartum St.**  
**2nd Floor**



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\*The schedule is subject to change

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**MONDAY  
FEB 17**

**12:15 PM**  
Lunch and Learn **Rabbi Yissacher Dov Krakowski**, @ **OU Israel**,  
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**6:00PM**  
ATID Midrasha Evening

**7:00PM**  
Dorot Intergenerational Choir  
Rehearsal

**7:00PM**  
Torah Tapestries with  
Mrs. Shira Smiles

**8:15PM**  
Nach Yomi Siyum

**8:30 PM**  
**The Bais** (for Men) - **Semichat Chaver Program Rav Elyada Goldwicht**@ **Bet Knesset Ohel Yitzchak**, Keren Hayesod St.

**TUESDAY  
FEB 18**

**COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN BAKAA**  
Classes @ **Bet Knesset Nitzanim, 3 Asher Street, Bakaa**

**9:15 AM**  
Understanding Tefila  
**Rabbi Yossi Goldin**

**11:15 AM**  
Chumash B'lyun  
**Rabbi Shmuel Goldin**

**12:20 PM**  
Unpacking the  
Messages of Chazal  
**Rabbi Shai Finkelstein**

**10:15 AM**  
Meaning in Mitzvot  
**Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz**



**MODIIN-THE BAIS**  
Men's Programs in Modiin Yeshivat Hesder Meir Harel,  
Emek Beit Shean 53, Modiin

**10:00AM -2:00PM**  
Weekly Kollel Boker  
**Rabbi Avi Herzog**,  
**Rabbi David Fine**,  
**Rabbi Ian Shaffer**,  
**Rabbi Dovid Wolpe**

# This Week's Inspirational Torah Learning with OU Israel

**WEDNESDAY  
FEB 19**

**COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH  
IN RECHAVIA** @ Bet Kneset  
HaNassi, 24 Ussishkin St.,  
Rechavia

**9:15AM**  
Holy Poetry  
Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler

**10:15AM**  
From Revelation to Legislation-  
Rabbi Joel Kenigsberg  
(Rabbi Manning Resumes March 5)

**11:25AM**  
Wisdom of Rav Kook  
Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

**12:30PM**  
Medieval Jewish History  
Dr. Deborah Polster

**8:00 PM**  
Halachic Controversies. (The Bais)  
Rabbi Aschi Dick @ **Bet Kneset  
Ohel Yitzchak**, Keren Hayesod St.

**SPECIAL EVENT:**  
**7:00PM**  
Bat Mitzvah Chessed Trip

**THURSDAY  
FEB 20**

**COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH  
IN ARNONA**  
Classes @ **Bet Kneset Shai  
Agnon**, 11 Rechov Leib Yaffe,  
Arnona

**9:15 AM**  
Parshat HaShavua Rabbi Ari Kahn

**10:30 AM**  
Parshat Hashavua  
Rabbi Baruch Taub

**11:15AM**  
11:15 AM Trailblazing the Text of  
TaNach Rabbi Neil Winkler

**12:20 PM**  
Modern Masters  
Rabbi Sam Shor

**8:30 PM**  
The Bais- Men's Chabura  
in partnership with Kehilat  
Hashiveinu,  
Rabbi Noam Koenigsberg  
**RAMOT**

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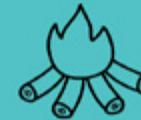
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The OU Israel Gustave & Carol Jacobs Center for Kashrut Education was created to raise awareness and educate the public in all areas of kashrut. Rabbi Ezra Friedman, Deputy Rabbinic Administrator for OU Kosher Israel is the Center's director.

# How to Take Terumot and Ma'asrot

The following is a practical summary of how to perform *terumot* and *ma'asrot* on any produce obligated in this mitzvah. This includes fruit, vegetables and grains grown in Israel. In a case of doubt or whether this process was done correctly one should advise with a competent halachic authority.

### PRELIMINARY PREPARATIONS

1. Make sure you have a coin that is worth enough *perutot* for several *chillulim* (redemptions). Today in the USA a *peruta* is no less than 5 cents and in Israel 10 Aguro
2. Set aside a little more than one percent (1%) of each type of fruit or vegetable you are taking *terumah* and *ma'aser* from, and proceed as follows:
3. The custom is to pour a small amount of water on the produce which will be *terumah*. This is done in order to make the *terumah* ritually impure and suitable to be burnt or thrown away.

### THE BERACHAH

If the produce is definitely *tevel* (you are certain no one separated *terumot* and *ma'aserot* from it previously),<sup>1</sup> say the following blessing before reciting the full text:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַפְרִישׁ תְּרוּמוֹת וּמַעֲשֵׂרוֹת

### THE FULL TEXT FOR SETTING ASIDE TERUMOT AND MA'ASROT

What I am about to say applies to each type of produce separately:

- The 1% that is on the lower side of the produce I have set aside remains *tevel* for the time being. The rest of what I have set aside is *terumah gedolah* for all of the produce.
- The 1% I mentioned and another 9% on the upper side of the produce is *ma'aser rishon*.
- The 1% that I previously set aside is *terumat ma'aser*.
- Another 9% on the lower part of the produce is *ma'aser sheni*, and if the year requires *ma'aser ani*, it is *ma'aser ani*.

1. This applies mainly when the produce is taken straight from the field or from one's own garden. Produce sold on the market has often been tithed at some point before it reaches the market.

### MA'ASER SHENI

If the produce is definitely subject to *ma'aser sheni* and is undoubtedly *tevel*, recite the following blessing before redeeming the produce on a coin:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְפַדְּוֹת מַעֲשֵׂר שְׁנִי

What I have designated as *ma'aser sheni*, plus a quarter of its value, is now redeemed by transferring its sanctity to a *perutah*-and-a-quarter's worth of my designated coin. This redemption applies to each type of produce in accordance to its level of obligation.

If I have fruit of *neta revay* (from a tree's fourth year), the fruit plus a quarter of its value is now redeemed by transferring its sanctity to a *perutah*-and-a-quarter's worth of my designated coin. This redemption applies to each type of produce in accordance to its level of obligation. To dispose of the *terumah*: Double bag the "1% plus" that you separated and place it respectfully in the trash. ■

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# SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR  
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The *Baal Shem Tov HaKadosh zy'a* taught that we subsist on the sustenance that Hashem provides us in his great kindness. And what does Hashem 'subsist' on?, the *Baal Shem Tov* asked. Upon the praises of Israel! When one Jew asks another how things are going and his fellow responds by praising and thanking the *Ribono Shel Olam*, through acknowledging Hashem, they are deepening *Hakadosh Baruch Hu's* involvement with all of creation.

In our *sedra* this week, we are introduced to a phrase that is a familiar refrain for so many of us.

The *Torah* tells us:

וַיֹּאמֶר יִתְרוֹ בְּרוּךְ ה' אֲשֶׁר הֲצִיל אֶתְכֶם מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם  
וּמִיַּד פְּרַעֲהַ אֲשֶׁר הֲצִיל אֶת־הָעָם מִתַּחַת יַד מִצְרַיִם  
"And *Yitro* said-**Baruch Hashem-Blessed is Hashem, who delivered you from the Egyptians and from Paroh, and who delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians...**"

**Rabbi Baruch HaLevi Epstein zt'l** in his commentary on the *Chumash, Torah Temima*, points to the *Gemara* in *Brachot (54a)* which teaches us:

נסמך - מכאן שחייבים לברך על הנס - From here (this statement of *Baruch Hashem*, made by *Yitro*) we learn that one is required to recite a blessing and acknowledge a miracle.

The *Gemara* in *Sanhedrin (94a)*, points out something interesting related to this verse as well:

"It was taught in the name of *Rebbi Papeyas*: It is an embarrassment for Moshe and the six hundred thousand adult men of the children of Israel whom he led out of Egypt that they did

not acknowledge or bless Hashem, until *Yitro* came and said: "Baruch Hashem."

The *Tiferet Shlomo, the Rebbe of Radomsk zy'a*, asks regarding these two *maamarei Chazal*:

How exactly are we to understand this? Surely *Klal Yisrael* uttered thousands of expressions of thanks to Hashem following their departure from *Egypt*, indeed they sang out with songs of praise as the sea split beneath them. However, *Yitro* praises and thanks Hashem for the miracles that were done on behalf of *Bnai Yisrael*, not miracles he himself experienced or witnessed. -*Baruch Hashem asher Hitzil etchem-Blessed is Hashem who delivered you!!!*

*Yitro* teaches us a very important principle, says the *Rebbe of Radomsk*. It is one thing to acknowledge and praise and thank *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, when we ourselves experience miracles, and receive divine *chesed* and compassion, but it is an entirely different and higher spiritual plain, to be able to express our praise and thanks to Hashem, when he bestows kindness upon others.

*Yehi Ratzon*, may we each merit to heed this beautiful teaching from the *Tiferet Shlomo zy'a*, and always find the capacity to not only empathize and feel connected to one another, but also merit to realize and acknowledge Hashem's *chesed* which is present all around us, in our own lives and in the lives of our neighbors. ■

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# Yitro: The Dilemma of Jewish Obstinacy

Why did Hashem choose us to receive His word at Sinai? Did we possess inherent national traits, or were we chosen and then shaped into the qualities necessary for our mission?

The Gemara in Beitzah asserts that our selection was based on an innate quality—our stubborn and unyielding nature:

שלושה עזין הן: ישראל באומות, כלב בחיות, תרנגול בעופות

Just as dogs and roosters possess inherent obstinacy within the animal kingdom, so too, among nations, the Jewish people are naturally strong-willed. The Midrash Rabbah echoes this idea:

ישראל עזין שבאומות, ומפני מה נתנה להם תורה? לפי שהן עזין

Evidently stubbornness and a strong will are essential traits in fulfilling our divine mission. Monotheism is a demanding faith, pushing the limits of human perception. We believe in a G-d

beyond all form, image, or human reference—an infinite presence that cannot be sculpted, envisioned, or fully grasped. Yet, we cleave to Him, love Him, and fear Him. Only a people of unshakable resolve could sustain such a belief, committing to a Higher Being who lies beyond human imagination.

## FACING ANTISEMITISM

We also need stubbornness and recalcitrance to fulfill our mission of calling the world to higher moral and religious ground. No one welcomes a whistleblower, and much of the hatred directed toward us stems from our relentless commitment to our national and historical mission. Chazal associate the name “Sinai” with the phonetically similar שנאה—hatred—teaching that enmity toward the Jewish people was born the moment we stood at Sinai and accepted Hashem’s Torah. To Chazal, antisemitism is a byproduct of our national mission—our relentless challenge to the world to strive for deeper spiritual and moral experience.

Our ability to withstand this enduring hostility and violence—woven into the very fabric of our national calling—is only possible for a people endowed with unyielding will and defiant resilience.

## HEARING THE VOICE

Though we naturally possess this

stubbornness, the experience at Sinai amplified our defiance and strengthened our spirit. To hear the voice of Hashem and accept His Torah endowed us with an even deeper sense of self-assurance and boldness:

כיון שקיבלו ישראל את התורה, נתגאה ליבם ואמרו: כל מה שציווה ה' נעשה ונשמע

We were initially chosen because of our innate tenacity, and, additionally, standing beneath the billowing mountain of Hashem infused us with an even greater sense of conviction. Sinai did not merely “select” us—it transformed us.

## DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

Of course, stubbornness is a double-edged sword. It is a quality that must be carefully governed and calibrated—both individually and collectively as a nation. Mere weeks after our selection at Sinai, this trait led us to worship a golden calf, provoking Hashem’s wrath. Time and again, Hashem laments that we are a stiff-necked and obstinate people, resistant to moral instruction.

Our fierce determination and deep sense of autonomy often render us deaf to those who seek to guide us toward a higher path. This deafness was particularly problematic during the era of the First Beit HaMikdash. Repeatedly, Hashem sent Nevi'im to redirect our errant behavior, yet we refused to heed their warnings, often responding with hostility and even threats of violence. We were so confident in our supernatural status and so fiercely autonomous in our thinking that we dismissed any external voice of moral instruction.

This stubbornness dilemma is woven into the fabric of Jewish identity, a trait that both empowers and challenges us in our divine mission.

We are strong-willed—a trait essential for standing at Sinai and accepting the fearsome yoke of mitzvot. Additionally, that moment



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in religious history empowered us with even greater inner strength, but the very resilience that allows us to endure can also make us defiant. As our sense of autonomy deepens and we feel increasingly empowered to navigate history, submitting to moral instruction—whether from others or from the divine will—becomes more challenging.

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nation in our ancient homeland demands unshakable resolve. We cannot withstand a hostile world without fierce determination and inner strength. After generations of persecution and discrimination, we have risen as a strong nation—one that refuses to cower before murderous enemies or bend to world opinion. Without our inner resolve and unwavering self-confidence, we would be unable to defend our land or restore Jewish pride and peoplehood.

As the Gemara foretells, the era of Moshiach will be marked by widespread **chutzpah**. Only a bold generation, suffused with **chutzpah** and unwilling to buckle under international pressure and violence, is capable of accomplishing the greatest anthropological feat in history—the miraculous return of a scattered nation to its ancient homeland.

#### LIVING UNDER G-D

Additionally, living in the Land of Hashem infuses us with supernatural resilience and powerful self-confidence. Just as speaking with Hashem at Sinai filled us with confidence and inner fortitude, so too, the very soil of our homeland emboldens the Jewish spirit.

Modern Israeli stubbornness manifests in many ways. At times, fierce confidence and deep self-esteem spill over into a lack of courtesy and disregard for politeness. Rudeness can never be excused, but it often stems from the profound sense of pride and self-assurance that Israelis possess.

Moreover, our fiercely independent Israeli mindset and deep commitment to self-autonomy often make religious submission and devotion particularly challenging. Balancing national strength with spiritual humility remains a profound test of our identity.

It is not easy to be both bold and self-assured while simultaneously surrendering to

Hashem's authority.

#### CONGRUENCE

Fundamentally, inner confidence and personal autonomy do not clash with **kabbalat malchut Shamayim**. Hashem instilled these traits within the human heart, expecting them to be nurtured and channeled toward a life of depth and meaning. He empowered His people to return to their homeland and defend it against all odds.

In a famed Mishnah in Avot, **Rabbi Yehuda ben Beteira** urges us to be “עז כנמר”—bold and courageous like a leopard. It takes immense bravery to commit to a life of religious devotion. It requires great daring to sublimate personal interests and comforts in deference to the higher will of Hashem. Our stubbornness is not inherently at odds with religious submission.

Yet, on a practical level, weaving these two qualities together remains a formidable challenge. It is often difficult for strong-willed autonomous Israelis to submit themselves to a Higher Will.

Jewish history is a project still under construction. It is unrealistic to expect every element of Jewish identity to seamlessly merge in an instant. The restoration and integration of all its facets will unfold over time, as our nation continues to refine and reclaim its full spiritual and national character. We struggle to blend autonomy, inner confidence, and redemptive **chutzpah** with submission to the divine will. Balancing bold self-determination with humility before Hashem remains one of the great challenges of our newfound Jewish state. ■



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# HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

BY REBBETZIN DR. ADINA SHMIDMAN  
DIRECTOR,  
OU WOMEN'S INITIATIVE



## The Kedushah of Our People: Bridging the Infinite Divide

The Haftarah from Yeshayahu (6:1-7) transports us to a celestial vision where the *Seraphim* declare: -מלא כל-קדוש, קדוש, קדוש ה' צבאות, מלא כל-הארץ כבודו, *Holy, Holy, Holy is Hashem, Master of Legions; the whole world is filled with His glory.* These words are deeply familiar to us—we recite them daily in Birchot Kriat Shema, in the Chazan's repetition of Shemoneh Esrei, and again in U'va L'Tzion. The repetition of קדוש three times emphasizes Hashem's absolute transcendence—He is beyond human comprehension, beyond limitation, and beyond time itself. As Rav Schwab in his book on prayer explains, the term קדוש does not simply mean “holy” but denotes separation—Hashem is utterly removed from the grasp of any being, including the *malachim* themselves.

And yet, despite Hashem's transcendence,

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we, Am Yisrael, have a unique ability to connect with Him. The Gemara (Yevamot 64a) states: הקב"ה מתאוה לתפילתן של צדיקים: *Hashem desires the prayers of the righteous.* Unlike the angels, whose praises are perfect and unwavering, human beings approach Hashem through prayer—through longing, yearning, and struggle. In Pirkei Heichalot (9), Hashem declares to Israel: *Lift your eyes to the heavens in prayer! There is no greater delight in My world than the moment when your eyes meet Mine as you declare 'Kadosh!'*

When the *malachim* declare קדושה, they do so as purely spiritual beings. But when we proclaim קדושה, we do something remarkable: we physically express our desire for holiness. As we say קדוש, קדוש, קדוש, we rise up on our toes three times. This simple yet powerful movement reflects our striving for something higher, our effort to reach for the best selves we can become. We acknowledge Hashem's exaltedness while demonstrating that we are not passive in our pursuit of holiness. We stretch, elevate, and yearn to ascend beyond our limitations.

This is the deeper meaning of קדושים תהיי כי - קדוש אני, *You shall be holy, for I, Hashem your God, am holy* (Vayikra 19:2). As Rav Schwab notes based on Rashi's commentary, holiness is not just about divine transcendence—it is

about *removal from immorality*, about elevating ourselves above our base instincts. Hashem has granted us alone the ability to choose holiness, to take deliberate steps toward Him through our tefillah, mitzvot, and moral refinement. Thus, while Hashem remains infinitely beyond us, we possess a power even the angels do not: the ability to transform separation into connection, to bridge the divide through our prayers, our struggles, and our yearning for holiness.

Each time we recite קדושה, we affirm this reality. Our voices join those of the *malachim*, but unlike them, we declare it as beings who strive toward holiness, elevating ourselves and our world. May we always reach upward—physically and spiritually—sanctifying Hashem's Name, creating a קדושה in both word and deed, drawing ever closer to the holiness that defines our people. ■

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## REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI

DIRECTOR OF OU ISRAEL WOMEN'S DIVISION

# Fruit for Thought: The Shivat HaMinim's Lessons on Tu B'Shvat

Growing up in America, Tu B'Shvat revolved around donating money to the JNF to plant trees in Israel, along with the tradition of receiving "bukser" (tough, chewy pieces of carob) in school. It was difficult to connect with the deeper significance of the day. However, Tu B'Shvat is actually a profoundly spiritual day filled with messages about growth, potential, and our bond with Eretz Yisrael. The **Magen Avraham** teaches that one meaningful way to appreciate the essence of Tu B'Shvat is by partaking in the Shivat HaMinim—the Seven Species that the Torah praises as the agricultural bounty of the Land of Israel. Each of these species is more than just a staple of our diet; they hold profound lessons for our character and spiritual development. As we celebrate Tu B'Shvat, let's explore some

Midrashic and Talmudic insights—many of which are traditionally recited at the Tu B'Shvat seder—that teach us what we can learn from each of these seven fruits and grains.

### 1. WHEAT –

#### TORAH IS OUR SPIRITUAL STAPLE

Chazal teach that wheat represents wisdom. **Gemara Berachot 40a** states אין התינוק יודע - a baby only begins to speak and to reach a level of דעת when he starts eating grain, signifying the development of intellect. Just as wheat is a staple of our physical diet, Torah is the staple of our spiritual nourishment. This teaches us that just as we cannot live without bread, we cannot live without learning and growing in our understanding of Hashem's world.

### 2. BARLEY –

#### ANIMALISTIC VS. HUMAN NATURE

**Gemara Berachot 57a** explains that barley symbolizes sin. Why? Barley was historically considered animal food, and it represents our physical drives and instincts. Unlike wheat, which symbolizes refined human intellect, barley reminds us that we also have basic desires that must be harnessed and elevated. Just as barley can be transformed into nourishing

food, we can refine our instincts and channel them towards Avodat Hashem.

### 3. GRAPES – RESILIENCE

The Midrash in **Vayikra Rabbah 16:3** presents a powerful analogy comparing the Jewish people to a vine: כַּגֶּפֶן הַזֹּאת, זֶה הַנֶּטֶע מִקוֹמָהּ, וְכֵן כָּל זְמַן שֶׁאֲתֵתָהּ מִנְעִנְעֵ אוֹתָהּ, הִיא מוֹצִיָּאָה פְּרוֹת, וְכֵן יִשְׂרָאֵל, כָּל זְמַן שֶׁהוּן מְטֻלְטְלִין הוּן פּוֹרְיִין. - *Just like a vine—when you uproot it from its place and replant it elsewhere, it grows stronger and produces even more fruit—so too, the Jewish people, whenever they are exiled and moved from place to place, they flourish and bear fruit.*

This Midrash teaches that just as a vine flourishes when it is uprooted and replanted, adversity and displacement ultimately strengthen the Jewish people, leading to greater spiritual and communal growth. It offers a profound lesson in resilience and the ability to thrive even in challenging circumstances. As Olim, we know from firsthand experience that making Aliyah can be difficult, but in the end, it strengthens us and helps us grow.

### 4. FIGS – PATIENCE AND PERSISTENCE

**Bamidbar Rabbah 12** compares Torah learning to a fig tree—כיוון שרוב האילנות כגון הזית והגפן והתמר נלקטים כאחד, והתאנה נלקטת מעט מעט. כך התורה, היום לומד מעט ולמחר הרבה, - Unlike other fruits that ripen all at once, figs ripen slowly, sometimes taking months before they are ready to be picked. Figs teach us the value of patience and persistence. In a world that seeks instant gratification, the fig reminds us that true growth takes time. In order to learn Torah properly, we must remain consistent and committed, knowing that every small effort we make adds up to something great.

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of seeds, and Chazal tell us that even the simplest Jew is “full of mitzvot like a pomegranate” (**Berachot 57a**). This powerful message reminds us that no matter where we are spiritually, we have infinite potential within us. On Tu B'Shvat, as we eat pomegranates, we should reflect on our own spiritual capacity. Are we maximizing our abilities? Are we taking advantage of opportunities to do mitzvot? The pomegranate inspires us to recognize the many ways we can grow and contribute to the world.

### 6. OLIVES – THE ETERNITY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

The Midrash in **Yalkut Shimoni** draws a powerful comparison between the Jewish people and the olive tree: “מה זית אין עליו נושרים - לא בימות החמה ולא בימות הגשמים - אף ישראל, אין להם בטלה עולמית לא בעולם הזה ולא בעולם הבא - *Just as the olive tree's leaves do not wither*

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or fall off, neither in the heat of summer nor in the rains of winter, so too, the Jewish people never cease to exist—neither in this world nor in the World to Come.” The olive symbolizes our eternal endurance—through exile and hardship, we remain strong and steadfast.

**7. DATES (HONEY) – SWEETNESS AND LEGACY**

**Bereishit Rabbah** explains that the Jewish people are compared to a date palm because, just as every part of the date palm is useful and has a purpose—its fruit for eating, its branches (lulav) for praising Hashem on Sukkot, its fronds for roofing, and its fibers for making ropes—so too, every Jew has a unique and meaningful role. Some excel in studying Tanach, others in Mishnah, Aggadah, mitzvot, or acts of kindness. The greatness of the Jewish people, despite their differences, lies in recognizing and valuing each other's strengths. The key message is to see the good in every Jew and appreciate the unique contribution each person brings to the community.

**CONCLUSION – PLANTING SEEDS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

Each of the Shivat HaMinim carries a powerful lesson about growth, resilience, and self-improvement. Tu B'Shvat is more than just eating fruit; it's about internalizing these messages and applying them to our lives. Just as trees continue to grow year after year, we too must strive to keep growing—expanding our knowledge, refining our character, and strengthening our connection to Hashem. ■



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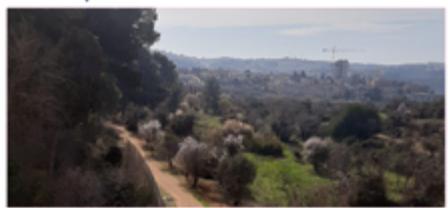


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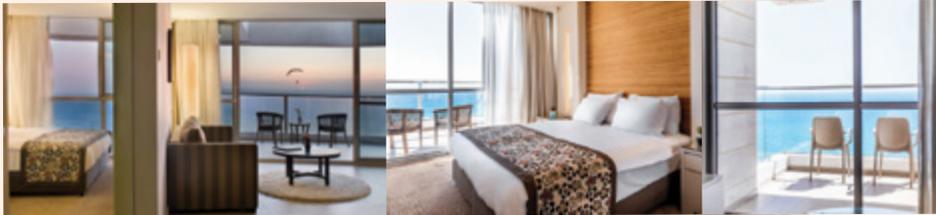
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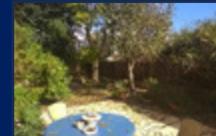
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## RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

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

# Rav Kook: Planting for the Future

Rav Kook was well known for the pithy aphorisms he penned for each month of the Jewish calendar. The following succinct sentence is what he presented for the month of *Shvat*:

“The *cheshek* (desire) to plant trees flows from the *chefetz* (yearning) to benefit the generations which is most expressed through the carob tree” (*Meged Yerachim, Shvat* 5674).

In these couple of phrases Rav Kook attempted to capture a significant theme concerning Tu B'Shvat which is observed in the month of *Shvat*. Firstly, his depiction of planting of a carob tree is an allusion to the well known Talmudic story of Choni Hama'agel (the circle maker).

Here is the story:

“Through all the days of that righteous man (Choni), he was troubled about the meaning of the verse, “A Song of Ascents. When the Lord brought back those that returned to Zion, we were as if in a dream” (Ps. 126:1). Is it possible for a man to doze off and dream continually for seventy years?”

One day, as he was walking on the road, he

saw a man planting a carob tree.

He asked him, “How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit?”

The man replied, “seventy years.”

He asked, “Are you quite sure that you will live another seventy years to eat its fruit?”

The man replied, “I myself found fully grown carob trees in the world; as my forebears planted for me, so I am planting for my children.”

Once, when Choni sat down for a meal, sleep overcame him and he dozed off...he continued sleeping for seventy years.

When he awoke, he saw a man gathering fruits off that same carob tree.

He asked, “Are you the man who planted the tree?”

The man replied, “That was my grandfather.”” (Taanit 23a)

Choni is a *tzaddik*. When the Jewish people are suffering from a dangerous drought, it is he who draws a circle around him and forces God's hand to immediately respond with rain.

Choni demands an instantaneous solution from God and he receives it. But solutions are not always immediate.

Perhaps this is the meaning of Choni's perplexity over the unending wait to return to Zion. Why must the dream of redemption last so many years? Choni cannot understand why the psalmist lauds the return from Babylon. Isn't seventy years of exile much too long to wait for redemption?



It could be that it is for this reason that Choni must encounter the anonymous planter of the carob tree. Choni finds it difficult to appreciate the planting of the carob tree when the payoff is so distant. Thus, he learned the vital lesson from the one planting, that ancestors plant with their grandchildren in mind.

Indeed, Choni is meant to apply this lesson to the larger context of the Jewish people's long awaited redemption. The slow return from the exile is often what is needed and is God's plan. The Jew patiently awaits for the unfolding of history as they focus their energies on seeing the goal of redemption fulfilled. (See *Fresh Fruit and Vintage Wine*, Blau, pp. 226-227)

### A CAROB TREE

The lesson of seventy years is brought home by a simple carob tree. A grandfather plants a tree because he has faith in the future. As Rav Kook writes, the symbol of planting trees is an expression of the desire to benefit future generations (*Meged Yerachim*, above). The tree is the quintessential symbol of longevity, of viewing time beyond the immediate. This is seemingly a lesson that needs to be implanted in Choni's worldview.

A carob tree is called a *charuv*. The word *charuv* also means destroyed or demolished. This term is commonly employed when the sages describe the destruction of the Temple - *churban habayit*. Choni learns that planting is possible even where there is *charuv*. The lesson in the planting of the *charuv* tree is that we are called on to plant and toil in order to ensure that generations to come will reap the fruit. ■



Rabbi Goldscheider's most recent OU Press Publication, “Torah United” on the weekly Parsha, can be ordered directly from Rabbi Goldscheider at Aarong@ouisrael.org at a special price for Torah Tidbits readers.

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## Amen on a Non-Beracha

**Question:** I was at an event on Chanuka at which someone lit candles and sang the “berachot” without pronouncing the Name of Hashem because it was no one’s halachic lighting. Most of the people answered *Amen*, and I did not know what to do. Was *Amen* called for?

**Answer:** We commence the discussion according to the assumption of the person who lit that a *beracha* was not called for in that situation and deal with *Hilchot Berachot* elements.

It is a great *mitzva* and an obligation to respond *Amen* to a correctly made *beracha* (Berachot 53b), even for one who is not “using” the *beracha* for himself (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 215:2). The basic meaning of *Amen* is that one agrees with the *beracha*’s content (i.e., the specific praise of Hashem).

When the *beracha* is improper, it is forbidden to answer *Amen* (ibid. 4). This can be because it is wrong to agree with something that was forbidden to say in that context. The Mishna Berura (215:21, based on Gra to OC 215:2) regarding a *beracha* that a child recites, not when it is called for but just as practice, says *Amen* is **forbidden**, because it relates to an invalid *beracha*, even though the child is allowed to practice (Shulchan Aruch ibid.

3). Some say that while there is no reason to respond *Amen* to a child’s practice *beracha*, it is **not forbidden** (Even Haezel, Berachot 1:15, based on the Rambam ad loc.).

What about *Amen* for non-*berachot*? The Magen Avraham (215:3; this opinion is widely accepted) cites a *midrash* that one should answer *Amen* to someone who prays for something or blesses his friend, even if he does not use Hashem’s Name. In this case, the meaning is slightly different – one joins the wish/prayer.

A less clear permutation is when one praises Hashem (like a classic *beracha*) but without invoking one of Hashem’s official Names. The Sha’arei Ephrayim (4:25, 33) provides a rule on this matter. When one makes a *beracha* with Hashem’s Name, people should answer *Amen*; if in the same situation the practice is to do it without Names (e.g., Baruch Shepetarani), people should not answer *Amen*. Some ask from the *gemara* (Berachot 45b) that prescribes, in one case, answering *Amen* to *zimun*, apparently even one without Hashem’s Name. B’tzel Hachochma (V:90) says that if a *beracha* was instituted in the classic way, with Hashem’s Name, if, for whatever reason, it was done without a Name, one should not answer *Amen*. (He reasons that it is not actually forbidden to say *Amen* in such a case (ibid. 89).) However, if it was instituted without His Name, then one does answer *Amen*. Some examples are a *Mi Sheberach* and *Oseh Shalom* ... (at the end of *Kaddish*).

In our case, based on what we have seen, there are a couple of reasons not to respond *Amen*. The *berachot* are to praise Hashem (as

opposed to the Magen Avraham’s prayer for a person), so that when they are not effective *berachot* but voluntary, “innocuously fake” *berachot*, one would not answer *Amen*. Additionally, they were instituted to have Hashem’s Name, and are being done without it.

If there was no *kiruv*/educational purpose in doing the lighting with Name-less *berachot*, but it just added a “nice touch,” it was probably halachically silly (although harmless) to do the *berachot*. If the setting gave importance to doing a ceremonious lighting, (e.g., a *kiruv* opportunity), for some, this justifies a real *beracha* (see Living the Halachic Process, VII, D-8). If one did not want to rely on that, one could see positive purpose in the fake *berachot*. It, then, has similarities to the halachically meaningless but still positive case of a child making a *beracha* as practice, in which case, the *Amen* is not called for and is likely forbidden (see above). Since saying the word *Amen* is not problematic in a totally *pareve* context (Notrei Amen 2:19; when many of us practiced for our *bar mitzva*, we started every *aliya* with *Amen*) and especially if the ceremonious *Amen* adds to the spirit that bolsters the

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educational purposes, it can be justified. If it is deemed worthwhile, one should have in mind that it is not a real *beracha*-type *Amen* (see B’tzel Hachochma ibid.). ■

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Michal Silverstein, MS

# Raising Resilient Children

The dictionary defines resilient as the ability to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions. As I write this article I am witnessing the extreme resilience of young women hostages who are coming home. They experienced unimaginable conditions and emerged as clear symbols of survival.

Aside from current events and extreme cases, parents aim to raise strong, confident children who are able to struggle, fail and recover, who can adapt, be flexible and weather criticisms and negative comments. These qualities are essential in helping children navigate their daily lives. It may come in the form of being teased by a bully, losing a soccer game or being criticized by a teacher. In light of these challenges, parents hope they equip their children with the tools to stand strong. A parent's job is to keep

their child safe and away from actual danger while allowing them to experience life. Confidence and strong self-esteem play a big part in resilience. There are some key ways parents can instill these qualities in their children.

First is to encourage them to take on responsibilities, even simple tasks. This will give them the opportunity to fail and learn and recover. It will also allow kids to experience their own successes and feel capable. It builds independence and self-esteem.

Another important element is connectedness and a feeling of belonging. When a child knows that he's an intrinsic part of a family, a community, a shul, a youth group, he becomes filled with purpose. The more healthy connections a child has, the better. He can have a role in his nuclear family and as a relative in an extended family. Each layer of connection adds a layer of confidence.

Another important piece of building confidence is giving. When a child can make a difference in a big way to those beyond his family it encourages him to grow further, push boundaries beyond his comfort zone. This ultimately leads to actualizing his potential and quieting self-doubt and insecurities.

Parents, though, should not assume that kids can navigate this process alone. They must be present in their child's life to guide them through the painful daily challenges. This means being a good listener and being available when your child wants to share. It means catching them doing something right and commenting on it. It means validating their feelings and emotional experience and teaching

problem solving skills.

In this week's *parasha* we see how the Jewish people emerge victorious following hundreds of years of slavery. This national resilience continues to show through in our current reality. It's the ability to struggle through hardship and continue on. It's not easy for a parent to step back and watch their child fall or fail, but when he is allowed to get up on his own and go through a process, it builds strength and resilience. ■

Feel free to send in any **parenting questions** you may have to [parenting@ouisrael.org](mailto:parenting@ouisrael.org) (Details will be changed to preserve anonymity).

**Michal Silverstein** has a MS in educational psychology and counseling. She facilitates parenting workshops in and around Jerusalem and maintains a private practice.



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# From Prophecy to Wisdom

The Talmud states that when the First Temple was destroyed, prophecy was taken from the prophets and given to the Sages, literally, the wise men.<sup>1</sup> While this seems to imply that prophets and wise men are mutually exclusive, the gemara also teaches that prophecy is only given to the wise.<sup>2</sup> How can we reconcile this apparent contradiction? The Chatam Sofer explains according to the Ramban, who teaches that a prophet is a wise man whose

1. Bava Batra 12a; Maharsha explains that the Gemara intends to exclude the Second Temple Era from the days of prophecy, although prophecy did persist throughout the seventy years of the Babylonian exile and the Temple was rebuilt according to prophetic instruction. Prophecy ceased with the death of Malachi, whom Hazal identify with Ezra.

2. Shabbat 92a

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efforts to attain wisdom bore fruit, but eventually reached the limit of human perception, a point past which Reason could no longer afford understanding. At that point, Hashem bestowed prophecy upon him, enabling him to achieve knowledge not generally accessible to man.

The ability to achieve such knowledge is what was removed at the time of the destruction of the Temple, but man is still able to achieve wisdom through human effort. Even when we acquire knowledge through human perception it is because G-d has enabled us to actualize the potential with which He gifted us.<sup>3</sup>

Concurrent with the end of prophecy, the Gemara records that the Sages prayed for the removal of the evil inclination to worship false gods, and Hashem agreed to their request.<sup>4</sup> Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev explains that Hashem's acquiescence was in the merit of the miracle of Purim, which was set in motion by the national unification effected by Esther HaMalkah, in response to her call "לך כנוס את" - *Go and gather all the Jews*". Subsequent to their miraculous salvation, the Jews reaffirmed their acceptance of the Torah.

While at Mount Sinai the Torah had been accepted out of fear, in Shushan the Jews accepted the Torah out of love.<sup>5</sup> This love was the catalyst for the removal of the inclination to worship false gods. Now that the Jewish people had experienced the true pleasure afforded by deep and abiding love of Hashem, the temptation of fleeting pleasure associated

3. Chatam Sofer Bava Batra 12a; See also Maharal Chiddushei Aggadot 12a

4. Yoma 69b, Sanhedrin 64a

5. Shabbat 88a

with serving false gods could be removed. The Berditchever continues, explaining that the miracle of Purim was a response to Haman's mocking assumption that "the G-d of the Jews is asleep" following the destruction of the Temple, and thus the Jews are unable to overturn evil decrees against them.

Hashem demonstrated that we do have the power, through our prayers and our deeds, to overturn evil decrees, and this power remains with us throughout the turmoil of Jewish history, even in exile, until this very day.<sup>6</sup>

As our study of the books of the Neviim draws to a close and we transition to the books of Ketuvim, let us appreciate both the limitations and the reaches of human wisdom. While we long for the rebuilding of the Temple and the return of prophecy which will accompany it, we must exercise our own wisdom to infuse meaning into our prayers and our behaviors through the study and application of Torah.

We look forward to studying the books of divinely inspired wisdom to guide us in our daily life and enrich our knowledge and experience of Jewish teaching and practice. May our study continue to lead to greater unity within the Jewish people, and in that merit may we become worthy of Hashem's miraculous salvation. ■

6. Kedushat Levi Kedushot L'Purim Kedushah 3

Mrs. Leah Feinberg is a master educator who taught at the SKA High School for Girls in Hewlett for twenty-one years, also serving as Tanach Department chairperson and New Teacher Mentor. Leah is currently on the faculty of the OU Israel Center and has taught in all three cycles of the OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi program

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# When to Start Dating Again After A Breakup

**Yoni asks:** How do I know when my friend is actually ready to date and move on from an ex after a bad breakup?

**Aleeza answers:** When a friend goes through a painful breakup, it can be hard to tell if they're truly ready to start dating again. Healing takes time—jumping in too soon can cause heartache, while waiting too long can lead to unnecessary delays. Here are the key signs that your friend is emotionally and mentally prepared to move forward:

## 1. EMOTIONAL READINESS

- **They've processed the pain.** Instead of constantly talking about their ex, they've worked through their emotions and found peace.
- **Their mood has stabilized.** They no longer experience extreme emotional highs and lows tied to their past relationship.
- **They don't feel bitter.** If they can talk about their ex without anger or resentment, it's a good sign they've healed.
- **They take responsibility.** Instead of blaming their ex, they acknowledge what they've learned from the experience.

## 2. CLOSURE & LETTING GO

- **They don't compare every match to their ex.** If they're still measuring new people against their past relationship, they might not be ready.
- **They've stopped idealizing the relationship.** They recognize that it ended for a reason.
- **They have healthy boundaries.** If they're still in regular contact with their ex, they might not be fully detached yet.
- **They aren't waiting for reconciliation.** If they secretly hope to get back together, they're not truly available for someone new.

## 3. DESIRE FOR SOMETHING NEW

- **They're excited about dating.** It feels like an opportunity, not a distraction from loneliness.
- **They have clarity about what they want.** Instead of just wanting to "move on," they know what kind of relationship is right for them.
- **They're open-minded.** If they can meet new people without unrealistic expectations, they're in a good place.

## 4. PERSONAL GROWTH & SELF-WORK

- **They've taken time to heal** - whether through therapy, coaching, journaling, or prayer.
- **They're living a full life.** Their happiness isn't dependent on being in a relationship.
- **They feel whole on their own.** A partner should complement them, not complete them.

## 5. SUPPORT SYSTEM & ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Trusted people see they are ready.** If

friends and family say, "You seem like yourself again," it's a strong sign.

- **They're willing to take advice.** If they're open to guidance, they're in a healthy space.
- **They aren't dating just to fill a void.** Their motivation is genuine.

## FINAL THOUGHT

If your friend checks most of these boxes, they're likely ready to date again. If not, encourage them to take their time. The right person will come when they're truly ready. I created a dating detox for people who need more support so reach out if that's something you think can help them get into a healthier space.

♥ Wishing your friend clarity, strength, and the right mindset for love. ■

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SORRY, IT'S MY COMMANDER, IMPORTANT UPDATE ON OUR NEXT INCURSION INTO GAZA...

SURE, GO AHEAD...



SORRY ABOUT THAT... SO, ZROA, TELL ME... WHAT ARE YOUR...

BEEP-BEEP!



SORRY, IT'S MY DAD, ASKING ME IF I STILL NEED THE LAWNMOWER...

NO... DAD... NOT... MUCH... POINT... SINCE... YOU... PAVED... THE... GARDEN...

OH. OK...



SO... WHERE WERE...

BEEP-BEEP!



SORRY, IT'S MY ROOMMATE, HE SEEMS TO HAVE LOST THE FRONT DOOR KEY AGAIN... "FOR... THE... MILLIONTH... TIME... GARY... IT'S... UNDER... THE... GNOME... WITH... THE... DISTURBING... GRIN..."



BEEP-BEEP!

SORRY, IT'S MY BROTHER, HE'S JUST BEEN BITTEN BY A SPIDER...

NO... NACHUM... THERE... ARE... NO... RADIOACTIVE... ONES... IN REAL... LIFE... TELL... ME... YOU... DIDN'T... TRY... WALL... CRAWLING... UP... CENTER...!



BEEP-BEEP!

SORRY, IT'S MY DOG-SITTER...

WHAT... DO... YOU... MEAN... HE... FELL... INTO... A... LARGE... VAT... OF... INDUSTRIAL... MASHED... POTATOES...?



BEEP-BEEP!

WELL, MOSH, I CAME HERE TO GET TO KNOW YOU AND NOW I CAN GLADLY TELL ANYONE WHO ASKS WHAT AN ACCOMPLISHED TEXTER YOU ARE...



HEY, LESS OF THE JUDGMENTAL ATTITUDE, IF YOU DON'T MIND. THIS IS IMPORTANT STUFF!

WHAT AN INTERESTING INSIGHT INTO YOUR PRIORITIES AS A POTENTIAL HUSBAND...

HEY, DON'T BLAME ME! TAKE IT UP WITH MOSHE RABBEINU!

EXCUUUUSE ME?!



WHEN MOSHE WAS TOLD HIS WIFE AND SONS WERE ON THEIR WAY TO HIM, AFTER OVER A YEAR APART, ALL HE WANTED WAS TO HUG THEM, RIGHT?

BUT WHEN HE FINALLY SAW THEM, HE RACED STRAIGHT TO YITRO, THE POTENTIAL CONVERT, AND HOSTED HIM, WITHOUT A WORD TO THEM!



...BECAUSE HONOURING YITRO AT THAT MOMENT HAD HUGE ETERNAL REPRECUSIONS FOR G-D, FOR ISRAEL AND FOR THE ENTIRE ANCIENT WORLD AT THE TIME! MOSHE COULDN'T AFFORD TO LET THE OPPORTUNITY SLIP!

DID HE NOT WANT TO HUG HIS LOVED ONES? SURE HE DID! BUT HE OVERCAME THAT URGE BECAUSE A JEW ALWAYS ASKS HIMSELF WHAT'S THE RIGHT - I.E. THE GODLY - THING TO DO RIGHT NOW?



OH, SO YOU'RE SAYING YOU WANT TO GET TO KNOW ME BUT ANSWERING THOSE WHATSAPPS IS THE MORE RIGHT AND GODLY THING TO DO RIGHT NOW?!

WELL, IN A WAY...!

WELL, WHAT ABOUT MOSHE'S WIFE'S FEELINGS AT THAT MOMENT, HUH? YOU CAN'T TELL ME THE RIGHT THING TO DO WAS TO UPSET HER! WHAT ABOUT THE MITZVA OF HONOURING ONE'S WIFE MORE THAN HIMSELF?!



MOSHE RABBEINU WOULD NEVER UPSET HIS WIFE, OK? HE KNEW HER, THEY UNDERSTOOD EACH OTHER! HE KNEW THAT A GREAT WOMAN LIKE HER WOULD EXPECT HIM TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT AT THAT MOMENT, AND WOULDN'T TAKE OFFENCE! THEY PROBABLY EXCHANGED A WINK OVER YITRO'S SHOULDER WHEN MOSHE HUGGED HIM!

WELL, THAT'S LOVELY, MOSH, BUT, UNLIKE THEM, I DON'T KNOW YOU! GOODNESS KNOWS I'M TRYING TO, AND GUESS WHAT, I AM GETTING KIND OF OFFENDED HERE!



OK, LOOK, I'M SORRY. I'M SWITCHING THE PHONE TO SILENT, AND I WANT TO GIVE YOU MY FULLEST ATTENTION.

THANK YOU. BECAUSE IF I HEAR ONE MORE MESSAGE TONE...



OK, SO LET'S START OVER...

SO, MOSH, TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOURSELF...

WELL... UH... EVERY YEAR ON PURIM I DRESS UP AS A DIFFERENT LOONEY-TUNE!

REALLY?

THIS YEAR I'M THE ROADRUNNER...



MEEP-MEEP!

THAT DOES IT!



# TORAH 4 TEENS

## BY TEENS NCSY ISRAEL



**YAAKOV GREENBERG**  
GUSH CHAPTER DIRECTOR

### WILDERNESS? WHY NOT IN ERETZ YISROEL!

Why was the Torah given in the wilderness? One would expect that Hashem would have had the Torah given in the holiest place on earth, Eretz Yisroel. The Midrash in Bamidbar Rabba comments that the Torah was presented with water, fire and wilderness. It explains that these symbols send a message that just as all these items are free, so too Torah is free to those that seek it.

To focus on the wilderness, what makes it free is that it is not developed yet. But more than that, it is land where the potential has yet to be realized. Any developer that sees potential to build on top would easily settle it; but the wilderness remains barren because it is too difficult. Similarly, the Jews who came to settle Eretz Yisroel in the first and second Aliyah were challenged by converting deserts and swamps into something livable. If they weren't driven by the dream of a Jewish homeland, they would have lacked the potential that motivated them.

Torah is free, but it is also very demanding and challenging. Many times, we struggle to see the potential it has to affect our lives, our families and our communities. The comparison to a wilderness not only highlights that Torah is free for those that seek it, but also that it causes us to see the untapped potential in our lives.

Hashem chose for us to experience the giving of the Torah in a wilderness, outside of Eretz Yisroel, just so we can understand this point. If Hashem can greet us in a place devoid of all holiness and infrastructure; so too, we can use Torah to give meaning in every part of our lives.



**YOAV GLICK**  
10TH GRADE, EFRAT

### WHAT THE NATIONS CAN TEACH GOD'S PEOPLE

In this parsha, Parshat Yitro, we talk about a few important things. But I think we can split the parsha into two main parts.

The first part is about Yitro, Moshe's father-in-law, who comes to visit Moshe along with

Tzipora, Moshe's wife, and their two sons. Yitro sees that Moshe is struggling to lead the people all by himself, so he gives him advice. He suggests appointing leaders at four levels—leaders over tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands in order to help Moshe manage everything better.

The second part talks about how Moshe goes up Mount Sinai to receive the Torah from God.

I want to focus on the first part, where Moshe appoints leaders just as Yitro suggested. This is a big step in turning the people of Israel into an organized nation instead of just a group of former slaves wandering in the desert. It helps them grow as a society and shows the world who they really are.

By setting up leaders, it shows us and the world that we don't always need to rely on God to solve everything for us. Of course, God is always there, guiding us in the background, but we also must do our part to move forward. The system Yitro suggests helps us do that.

Now, here's something interesting. The person who gave Moshe this advice wasn't even part of the people of Israel, he was Yitro, the high priest of Midian! Why would Moshe listen to him? Why would the people of Israel take advice from someone outside their nation?

In Megillat Eicha, there's a saying: **הַחֲכָמָה בְּגוֹיִם תִּצְמָח**, which means "Believe that there is wisdom among the nations." This teaches us that wisdom exists everywhere, not just within our own people. When we find wisdom that makes sense and helps us, we should use it. That's exactly what Moshe did, he took Yitro's idea and combined it with Jewish law.

In the end, this parsha reminds us that even when we don't see clear signs of God in our lives, He is always there. As we grow and move forward, we should stay true to God's ways while also learning from the wisdom around us.

Shabbat Shalom! ■



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