

ב"ה *Torah* **Tidbits**

ISSUE 1647

FEB. 7TH 2026
כ' שבט תשפ"ו

פרשת יתרו
PARSHAT YITRO

OU
ישראל



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Rabbi Sam Shor
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Mrs. Leah Feinberg
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הנה אנכי בא אליך בעב הענן
שמות י"ט:ט'

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT YITRO ZMANIM:

CANDLES 4:42 PM • HAVDALA 5:57 PM • RABBEINU TAM 6:36 PM



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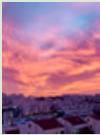


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To read this week's articles by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**
please see: www.TorahTidbits.com > Individual Articles



COVER PHOTO Submitted by Tzippy Leichter

We moved to Israel in 2016 to Ramat Beit Shemesh. My son took this photo from our balcony, where we often see beautiful sunsets. This photo reminds us of the beauty of the day to day moments of life in Eretz Yisrael.



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Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:38-5:30
Sunrise	6:30-6:22
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:11-9:07
Magen Avraham	8:34-8:31
Sof Zman Tefila	10:05-10:03
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	11:53
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	12:23
Plag Mincha	4:08-4:15
Sunset (Including Elevation)	5:20-5:29



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	Yitro		Mishpatim	
	Candles	Havdala	Candles	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	4:42	5:57	4:48	6:02
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	5:00	5:59	5:06	6:05
Beit Shemesh/RBS	5:01	5:58	5:07	6:03
Gush Etzion	4:58	5:57	5:04	6:03
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	4:58	5:58	5:04	6:03
Modiin/Chashmonaim	4:58	5:57	5:04	6:03
Netanya	4:58	5:57	5:04	6:03
Be'er Sheva	5:00	5:59	5:06	6:04
Rehovot	4:59	5:58	5:05	6:04
Petach Tikva	4:42	5:58	4:48	6:03
Ginot Shomron	4:57	5:57	5:03	6:02
Haifa / Zichron	4:47	5:56	4:53	6:02
Gush Shiloh	4:57	5:56	5:03	6:02
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	4:59	5:58	5:05	6:04
Givat Ze'ev	5:01	5:57	5:08	6:02
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	4:58	5:57	5:04	6:03
Ashkelon	5:00	5:59	5:06	6:05
Yad Binyamin	4:59	5:58	5:05	6:04
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	4:48	5:54	4:55	6:00
Golan	4:54	5:54	5:01	6:00
Nahariya/Maalot	4:55	5:56	5:02	6:02
Afula	4:56	5:55	5:02	6:01

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Yitro - 6:36 PM • Mishpatim - 6:42 PM

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

Daf Yomi: Menachos 27



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
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Sometimes, when siblings grow up and build their own homes, they choose different paths – different communities, different *rabbanim*, different schools for their children. And yet, when they all sit around the same table, something beautiful can happen: that despite these differences, they can recognize that they are one family, with shared values and shared love.

I experienced this, once again, last week when I went out for an evening together with my brother, my brothers-in-law, and my father. We realized that time passes and we don't always get the chance to sit down together, just the men, and really talk. Each one of us comes from a different world. I have one brother-in-law who is Chareidi Litvish, another who is a *shtreimel*-wearing Chasid, a brother-in-law who wears a big white *yarmulke* with long *peyes*, another brother-in-law who is a Kurdish Jew with a big white *yarmulke* but no *peyes*, a brother who wears a black knitted *yarmulke*, and myself who wears a *kippa sruga*. I am clearly

aware of the differences of the *hashcafik* and political differences between us, but the true beauty is that we are all able to get together and have the best time.

I think it's rare when you get to see this type of connection, this array of different types of individuals, in one family. But I think the beauty in which my parents brought us up was a deep understanding that we love every single type of Jew. No matter where we come from or where we're going, we respect those who love and teach Torah, we respect what they have to say, and we can fundamentally disagree without losing that respect.

In this week's *parsha*, Yitro, we receive the Torah at Mount Sinai. Our tradition tells us that the Torah was given with "*shivim panim*," seventy different faces. These seventy faces represent beautiful, diverse approaches to the same truth. As those who open up even one page of the Talmud know, many arguments exist in Judaism. Abaye and Rava, Rav and Shmuel (sages in the Talmud), they hardly ever agree with each other in their *halachic* opinions. But that does not stop them from sitting on the same page and learning together. Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai – their children married each other (Yevamot 14a). They fundamentally disagreed on how to decide the law, but that did not prevent them from seeing each other as friends and marrying off their children together.

In today's world, I often ask myself: are we losing that? Are we losing respect for each other's rabbinic leaders and thinkers? Are we losing respect for each other's *minhagim* and each other's *derech*? Is each person thinking

**In loving memory of
our beloved Father, Grandfather
& Great-Grandfather
Saba Sababa**

Irving Maisel ז"ל

ר' ישראל בן פסח ז"ל

on his 16th Yahrtzeit

**May the Torah learned from
this Torah Tidbits be in his merit**

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that only their way is the right way? Or are we able to appreciate the beauty of a *dvar Torah* that includes a quote from a *Chasidische* Rebbe alongside a Litvishe *Gadol*, a Rav Mordechai Eliyahu zt'l, a Zionist Rabbinic leader, a Rabbanit Nehama Leibowitz zt'l, a Rebbetzin Shira Smiles, and a Rabbanit Shani Taragin, all woven together?

I got to experience exactly this kind of *achdut* this past week when we celebrated eight years of Midreshet Zusha, which is part of OU Israel's Pearl and Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center. For those unfamiliar, the Zula operates two branches – one in Yerushalayim and one in Tzfat – serving 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, at times a girl who experiences drug abuse or physical abuse, providing them with guidance and support to overcome trauma and reach their unique potential. A day in Midreshet Zusha includes volunteering in *sherut leumi*, Torah learning, and individual growth with their mentor. All tailored for the girls to understand, connect, and be continuously inspired.

The *midrasha* was actually named by the young women in the program themselves. 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 own potential? These young women understood the need for a *midrasha* that would continue to provide the necessary support of the Zula, one that would not try to change them into something else, but help them be themselves and fulfill their true potential.



Hundreds of young women came to the celebration, all excited for a party that gave them the chance to come together, learn, sing, and dance in a truly beautiful way. What struck me most was the togetherness of girls coming from very different backgrounds – in fact, a spectrum even wider than my own family. Some came from secular backgrounds, others from Dati Leumi, Chareidi, or Chasidish backgrounds, all coming together in order to grow in Torah.

The connection they found together was remarkable. Some got up and spoke about Rav Kook. Others spoke about Rebbe Nachman of Breslov. Others about the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Others about Rav Chaim Kanievsky. Each one came from a totally different place, and yet they were able to see the beauty in each other's traditions. Alongside Harel Chetzroni, the founder of the program, and Oren Asulin, the director of the Zula, several members of our incredible female staff spoke, as well as the inspiring Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi.



**The OU Israel family
sends heartfelt condolences to
Shlomo Schwartz and family
(CFO Orthodox Union)
on the passing of his father z"l**

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

We were also graced with a performance by Yair Elitzur, whose song “*Tamid Ohev Oti*” has taken the Jewish world by storm and uplifted so many spirits during the war. I caught him at the entrance and asked him to record a video with our Director of Social Media, Nina Broder, about the event. He shared something that meant the world to me. He said, “I assure you that the equipment we’re using here is not what we’re used to on stage, and this is definitely not my first time coming to sing here, but there is something just special about the Zula – you feel at home here.”

Those words capture exactly the feeling we try to create at the Zula for the thousands of teenagers who have come through its doors. The goal is not that they feel like they’re walking into a school or an office, but that they feel at home. That’s why when you walk in, you see a comfortable kitchen, so generously gifted by my dear friends Dvora and Roy Spiewak in memory of their dear parents Barbara and Martin Spiewak z”l, with food on the counter, couches, music being played by dedicated staff in the center of the room, dim lights with candles shining in the middle,” a therapeutic drawing room, a creative writing room – an entire atmosphere designed to make every teenager feel welcome and safe.

This is the essence of *Shivim Panim LaTorah* in practice. Because we are able to bring such a wide variety of backgrounds and *hashkafot* into one room and speak to these young women about so many different types of Jews, so many different *rabbanim* and *rebbetzins*, so many different *divrei Torah*, we reach them in a language they understand. They know that we come from a place of love, that we care about them, that we are doing everything in our ability to help them grow – to learn a profession, be active members of their communities, and wake up in the morning and want to accomplish more every single day. And *Baruch Hashem*, with great success.

So it is truly a breath of fresh air to experience this when we read about *Matan Torah*, in these pages of Torah Tidbits where we see so many rabbis and leaders write about this week’s *parsha*, each one with their own angle, each one with their own *hashkafa*, and yet together they bring *Klal Yisrael* together in such a beautiful way.

May we all learn to acknowledge, recognize, and embrace the fact that we are one family. Even if we have different ways of dressing, different garments, different head coverings – some of us wear pants and some of us wear skirts, some of us wear this *yarmulke* and some of us wear that *yarmulke*, and some of us don’t wear a *yarmulke* at all – we are one nation, one family, and we love each other. *B’ezerat Hashem*, we will continue to take from the rich diversity of Torah that our tradition provides, internalize it in our lives, and become better people.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman
Executive Director, OU Israel
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Taking Notice

How do we relate to what happens around us? Do we notice the subtle or even the obvious? Do we allow our observations to make us wiser and more thoughtful, or do we ignore inconvenient truths?

Last week's parsha ended with Amalek waging war against the Jewish people. While other nations reacted humbly and wisely to the miracles that Hashem performed for the Jewish People in Egypt, Amalek did not. Instead of accepting the clear divine message in the

miraculous exodus, they chose to push back against it and attack. By contrast, this week's parsha begins with Yitro, who hears the same miraculous stories and is drawn to join the Jewish people, understanding the divine destiny that those miracles implied (see Shemot Rabbah 27:6).

Two very different reactions to the same story. Both noticed; one was guided by the message, and one chose to ignore it.

This same contrast appears in the Jewish experience in Egypt. Our sages taught us to see patterns in the stories of the Torah, *ma'aseh avot siman l'banim*. Thus, we see the story of Avraham's early descent to Egypt due to famine as a forerunner of the future Egyptian exile (Bereishit Rabbah 40:6). Yet there is a great gap between the stories. The Pharaoh of Avraham's time was struck by a plague after taking Sarah. Not a word was shared with him as to why it happened; he did not even realize that Sarah was a married woman. Yet, when he experienced the plague, he immediately considered its message, realized where he went wrong, and let Sarah go back to Avraham (see Ramban to Bereishit 12:18). The Pharaoh of Moshe's time reacted quite differently. Plague upon plague was visited upon him and his nation, accompanied by a clear narrative as to why, but he did not learn or adjust. His hardened heart knew what was happening but pushed back against it. Why the striking contrast?

In each case, Pharaoh responded in the manner of his Jewish guests. Avraham was awake to the world around him. He learned and observed, discovering Hashem's existence

In Loving Memory



ע"ה Jenny Weill

חיה גיטל בת מרדכי ושרה

whose 7th yahrzeit falls on כ"ט שבט

She is very much missed by her children,
 grandchildren, great grandchildren,
 nieces, nephews, and friends

where his family and society had obscured His presence. When Avraham brought G-d to Pharaoh, he noticed.

The Jews of Pharaoh's time had become hardened and deadened by their bondage. They were not searching for and seeing G-d's messages in their lives. In fact, even when presented with redemption they struggled to hear its call *"due to their shrunken spirit and due to the difficult work."* (Shemot 6:9). Moshe was therefore hopeless about the prospects of Pharaoh's listening and learning; *"the Jewish People did not listen to me, and how will Pharaoh listen?"* (6:12). Even when Pharaoh would have no choice but to notice, he would choose not to learn from what he saw.

How did we break free from this willful ignorance? It would come about through the leadership of Moshe. Moshe emerged as the redeemer through his curiosity and concern, his observance of the world around him and his vigilance in reacting to it and learning from it. Whether in leaving the comfort of the palace to take in the suffering of his brethren (2:11), or his turning from the main road to notice the phenomenon of the burning bush (3:3-4), it was this quality of Moshe – this commitment to take notice of reality and to be guided by it – that would ultimately lead to the unlocking of the Jewish People's hearts and subsequently, Pharaoh's.

There is so much happening in the world around us. We can ignore it and allow it to go unnoticed. When it stares us in the face, we may choose to push back against what we see and leave its lessons unlearned. Alternatively, we can follow the paths of Avraham and Moshe, stopping to look, to notice, to learn, to think, and to change course based on our observations.

That is the path to freedom, and it is a path we must take. ■

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OU... BEYOND KASHRUT

New Women's Division Partnership- Beit Shemesh Municipality!

Over the past few months, OU Israel Women's Division has partnered with the Beit Shemesh Municipality to expand meaningful women's programming in the city. For many years, OU Israel's activities were centered in Yerushalayim, but last year the organization began a strategic expansion into Anglo communities across Israel, supporting Olim through Torah learning and communal engagement. When news of this initiative spread, Deputy Mayor Rena Hollander reached out to bring the programs to Beit Shemesh. "The municipality's enthusiastic support has been essential in making this partnership a reality," said Esti Moskovitz-Kalman, Director of Anglo Engagement at the OU in Israel. "With one of the largest Anglo olim populations in Israel, Beit Shemesh was a natural choice for our first expansion outside Jerusalem". Deputy Mayor Hollander added that this new partnership "has been a major asset to Torah learning in Beit Shemesh."

"For years people have been asking me, 'When are you coming to Beit Shemesh?' Now, I can finally say-we're here!" said Zemira Ozarowski, Director of OU Israel Women's Division. Under the leadership of Beit Shemesh coordinator Basya Teitelbaum, the division's growing programming includes monthly Rosh Chodesh seminars, mother-daughter events, NextGen gatherings for women in their 20s–40s, Tanach tiyulim, and a Bat Mitzvah series. Though the initiative launched just three months ago, it has already hosted 14 events and engaged over 400 women and girls.

Each week, we share one OU Israel initiative empowering lives and communities in our homeland, supporting English-speaking *olim* in their klita and supporting Israel's most vulnerable teens to rebuild trust, confidence, and a future.



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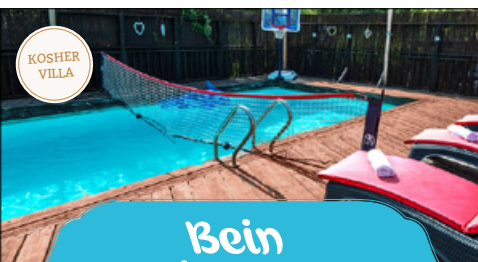
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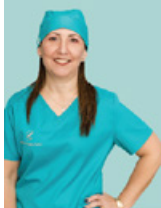
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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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PARSHAT YITRO

Yitro joins Moshe. He advises Moshe to delegate 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 Tzipora 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 story of court systems?

We can hear of it later in the Torah where it actually occurs.

A variety of answers can be offered. Perhaps this story of a non-Jew who is our friend is to contrast the last story we read of Amalek, a non-Jew who hated us.

There are different types of non-Jews that we will encounter in history; there are Amaleks. And 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. Acknowledge the reality of our enemies. But also recognize 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. Now, we know what

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on his 14th yahrzeit - י"ט שבט

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dealing with disputes means. But 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.

Yitro tells him: Moshe, you are telling me two things. You help the people communicate with G-d. No one else can do that. Keep that job.

But as for settling disputes, others can settle disputes. That's not G-d work, that is man work. People get into disagreements all the time. You have smart people of integrity who can help you settle those disagreements.



3RD ALIYA (18:24-27)

Moshe heard. He chose judges, with only the most difficult cases brought to him. Moshe sent Yitro home.

It could be that the insertion of this story of Yitro's suggestions concerning the court system is actually communicating a powerful comment on the nature of man. Because it finds its place in the series of events leading to Sinai.

It could be that the Torah is offering a statement concerning the development of man.

It is noticeable that following the splitting of the sea there is a series of very earthy stories. And they are, in order: no water, no food, manna and its rules, Amalek, Yitro and courts. Then, Mt. Sinai.

These are the stages in man's spiritual development.

First, we need the basics of food and water. But that is no different than animals.

Then the manna, with rules. Don't leave until tomorrow, gather double on Friday. Man, you have choice and it is that choice that distinguishes you from animals. You are an ethical being, a being of choice. A higher being.

Then conflict. We can settle our interpersonal conflicts in two ways. War. Or Courts. Power and aggression. Or submission to authority. That is the story of Amalek. Power. And Yitro, man expressing submission to authority.

This is the story of the stages of human development. We take care of our physical needs, exercise ethical choice, protect our security, and govern man to live in peace, with laws.

But. That does not suffice for the majesty of man. For man seeks meaning higher than his needs, his security and living in peace. He seeks a taste of the beyond, the spiritual, the ultimate, communication with the Infinite.

And that is Sinai. All of these stories were to teach us the necessary. But not the sufficient. Our needs, our security and our peaceful existence in society are all necessary. But they fall short of the Torah's definition of man. They are insufficient. Man needs a connection with the Divine, with ultimate meaning, with hyper-significance.

And that is Mt. Sinai, the touch of the Divine to man.



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

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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. Mitzvot 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 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 the 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.

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 to not touch the mountain for they would die. The Ten Commandments: I am G-d, no idols before Me, don't use G-d's name in vain, Shabbat, honor parents, don't murder, adultery, theft, false testimony, covet.

The 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.

The descent of G-d onto the mountain is jarring. Dramatic. Unprecedented.

This is the culmination of G-d's reach for man.

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There was Creation, then reaching for Avraham, 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. Because man can't tolerate it. ■

May the Torah learned
from this issue
be in loving memory of and לע"נ

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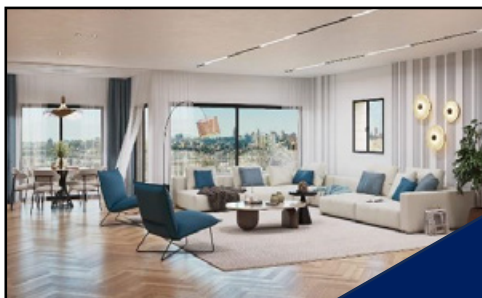
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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB
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“Fathers-in-Law”

Very much has been written about most family relationships. There are books about fathers and sons, fathers and daughters, and mothers and sons and daughters. Many volumes have been written about relationships, typically rivalrous, between siblings.

But comparatively, little has been written about the relationship between father-in-law and son-in-law. Often, admittedly, there is little or no relationship between them. But just as often the relationship is an important and rewarding one.

I know that I personally have benefited immeasurably from my relationship with my father-in-law, of blessed memory. As is most often the case, I did not know him at all until my young adulthood, when I began to date his daughter. Unlike the father-son relationship, the relationship between father-in-law and son-in-law usually begins in maturity and is, therefore, more of a relationship between equals, more man to man.

My father-in-law modeled his relationship to me after the precious relationship he had with his father-in-law. He would often joke that whereas a father couldn't choose his son, he could choose a son-in-law, to which I would usually respond, “Yes, true, and a son cannot choose his father, but a son-in-law can choose his father-in-law.”

In this week's Torah portion, *Yitro*, we read of a very rich relationship between a son-in-law, Moses, and his father-in-law, Yitro. Of course, we first read of their connection much earlier on in the book of *Exodus*. But in this week's portion, the relationship begins to sound much more familiar to those of us who have “been there”.

Yitro travels to meet Moses and is the one who reunites Moses with his wife and children. They converse with animation and in great detail, each one narrating his story to the other. Moses narrates the story of the Exodus, of the splitting of the sea, and of the war with Amalek.

Yitro too tells a story, but it is a very different one. He tells of his religious quest, of his search for a God he can believe in. He informs Moses that he has dabbled in every conceivable type of idol worship. He has seen it all. And “now he knows” who the true God is.

Every son-in-law tells his father-in-law his story, although I suspect that often some of that story is suppressed. And every father-in-law, that is every father-in-law worth his salt, shares



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his narrative with the young man who requests his daughter's hand.

I remember telling my father-in-law some of my story. I remember some of the questions he asked me, and his disappointment when he discovered that I did not share his fascination with the game of chess.

But I can never forget the story he told me; not once, but throughout the more than forty years that we knew each other. His was a story of pre-Holocaust Eastern Europe, of a culture that is no more, a culture that he never ceased to mourn.

It is no wonder that the Torah characterizes the dialogue between Moses and Yitro by the word “*vayesaper*”, which means to tell a story. Most relationships consist of stories told by one party to the other. In the case of the father-in-law and son-in-law relationship, these stories become essential and, at least in my case, were lifelong narratives.

Yitro models another essential aspect of this unique relationship: He offers counsel, he gives advice. Not that Moses asked for Yitro's opinion as to how he should conduct the judiciary system for his people. But Yitro assumed that it was his prerogative as a father-in-law to gently and constructively find fault in his son-in-law's approach to things and offer reasonable alternatives.

I number myself among those fortunate sons-in-law whose father-in-law did not hesitate to occasionally criticize him, but who did so lovingly. He offered wise and practical suggestions which indeed were often drawn from his own past and sad, personal experiences.

It has been pointed out that the Hebrew word for a son-in-law is *chatan*, a bridegroom. I am convinced that this is because in the relationship between son-in-law and father-in-law, the former always remains the young bridegroom

and the latter, the sage elder.

In the end, Moses asks Yitro to remain with him, the ultimate tribute that a son-in-law can pay to his father-in-law.

I would like to close with an original thought, and if it is theologically daring, or in some other way off the mark, I beg the reader to forgive me.

It is a truism that God is our Father, and we are his sons and daughters. It strikes me that, in a certain way, God is also our Father-in-Law.

God as Father is the God with whom we began a relationship in our infancy. God as Father-in-Law is the God whom we freely choose, sometimes repeatedly, at later stages of our lives.

God is also our Father-in-Law because we have taken, so to speak, His daughter as our bride. The Torah has been described, by prophets and rabbis, as God's daughter. And we, who have accepted the Torah, are betrothed to the daughter of God Himself. He entrusted His beloved princess to our inadequate and unreliable care.

But we asked for her hand. We accepted the Torah and committed ourselves to “doing and listening” to her words. If we are faithful to the Torah, we are demonstrating to our “Father-in-Law” that we deserve his daughter.

Only then can we claim a close relationship to Him, closer even than the relationship I had with my father-in-law, may he rest in peace. ■

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פנחס בן יעקב אשר וגולדה בת ישראל דוד אייזע"ה ועזריאל בן אריה לייב ומעניה בת יצחק שרטר ע"ה

The Politics of Revelation

The revelation at Mount Sinai – the central episode not only of the parsha of Yitro, but of Judaism as a whole – was unique in the religious history of humankind. Other faiths (Christianity and Islam) have claimed to be religions of revelation, but in both cases the revelation of which they spoke was to an individual (“the son of God”, “the prophet of God”). Only in Judaism was God’s self-disclosure not to an individual (a prophet) or a group (the elders) but to an entire nation, young and old, men, women and children, the righteous and not yet righteous alike.

From the very outset, the people of Israel knew something unprecedented had happened at Sinai. As Moses put it, forty years later:

For ask now about earliest times, times long before your own, from the day God created humans on the earth; ask from one end of heaven to the other: Has anything as great as this ever happened before? Has anyone heard of anything like this? Has any people ever heard the voice of God speaking out of fire, as you have, and lived?.. To you this was shown – so that you may know that the Lord is God; besides Him,

there is no other. From heaven He let you hear His Voice... (*Deut. 4:32-35*)

For the great Jewish thinkers of the Middle Ages, the significance was primarily epistemological. It created certainty and removed doubt. The authenticity of a revelation experienced by one person could be questioned. One witnessed by millions could not. God disclosed His presence in public to remove any possible suspicion that the presence felt, and the voice heard, were not genuine.

Looking however at the history of humankind since those days, it is clear that there was another significance also – one that had to do not with religious knowledge but with politics. At Sinai a new kind of nation was being formed and a new kind of society – one that would be an antithesis of Egypt in which the few had power and the many were enslaved. At Sinai, the children of Israel ceased to be a group of individuals and became, for the first time, a body politic: a nation of citizens under the sovereignty of God whose written constitution was the Torah and whose mission was to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

Even today, standard works on the history of political thought trace it back, through Marx, Rousseau, and Hobbes to Plato’s Republic, Aristotle’s Politics and the Greek city state (Athens in particular) of the fourth century BCE. This is

a serious error. To be sure, words like “democracy” (rule by the people) are Greek in origin. The Greeks were gifted at abstract nouns and systematic thought. However, if we look at the “birth of the modern” – at figures like Milton, Hobbes, and Locke in England, and the founding fathers of America – the book with which they were in dialogue was not Plato or Aristotle but the Hebrew Bible. Hobbes quotes it 657 times in *The Leviathan* alone. Long before the Greek philosophers, and far more profoundly, at Mount Sinai the concept of a free society was born.

Three things about that moment were to prove crucial. The first is that long before Israel entered the land and acquired their own system of government (first by judges, later by kings), they had entered into an overarching covenant with God. That covenant (*Brit Sinai*) set moral limits to the exercise of power. The code we call Torah established for the first time the primacy of right over might. Any king who behaved contrarily to Torah was acting *ultra vires*, and could be challenged. This is the single most important fact about biblical politics.

Democracy on the Greek model always had one fatal weakness. Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill called it “the tyranny of the majority”. J. L. Talmon called it “totalitarian democracy.” The rule of the majority contains no guarantee of the rights of minorities. As Lord Acton rightly noted, it was this that led to the downfall of Athens: “There was no law superior to that of the state. The lawgiver was above the law.” In Judaism, by contrast, prophets were mandated to challenge the authority of the king if he acted against the terms of the Torah. Individuals were empowered to disobey illegal or immoral orders. For this alone, the covenant at Sinai deserves to be seen as the single greatest step in the long road to a free society.

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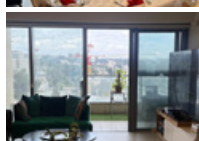
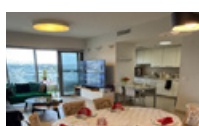
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to the covenant. God tells Moses:

“This is what you shall say to the House of Yaa-kov, what you shall tell the people of Israel: ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians: how I lifted you up on eagles’ wings and brought you to Me. Now, if you faithfully heed My voice and keep My covenant, you will be My treasure among all the peoples, although the whole earth is Mine. A kingdom of priests and a holy nation you shall be to Me.’ These are the words you must speak to the Israelites.” (Ex. 19:3-6)

Moses tells this to the people, who reply:

“We will do everything the Lord has said.” (Ex. 19:8)

What is the significance of this exchange? It means that until the people had signified their consent, the revelation could not proceed. There is no legitimate government without the consent of the governed, even if the governor is Creator of heaven and earth. I know of few more radical ideas anywhere. To be sure, there were Sages in the Talmudic period who questioned whether the acceptance of the covenant at Sinai was completely free. However, at the heart of Judaism is the idea – way ahead of its time, and not always fully realised – that the free God desires the free worship of free human beings. God, said the rabbis, does not act tyrannically with His creatures.

The third, equally ahead of its time, was that the partners to the covenant were to be “all the people” – men, women and children. This fact is emphasised later on in the Torah in the mitzva of Hakhel, the septennial covenant renewal

ceremony. The Torah states specifically that the entire people is to be gathered together for this ceremony, “men, women and children.” A thousand years later, when Athens experimented with democracy, only a limited section of society had political rights. Women, children, slaves, and foreigners were excluded. In Britain, women did not get the vote until the twentieth century. According to the sages, when God was about to give the Torah at Sinai, He told Moses to consult first with the women and only then with the men (“this is what you shall say to the House of Yacov” – this means, the women). The Torah, Israel’s “constitution of liberty”, includes everyone. It is the first moment, by thousands of years, that citizenship is conceived as being universal.

There is much else to be said about the political theory of the Torah (see my *The Politics of Hope, The Dignity of Difference*, and *The Chief Rabbi’s Haggadah* as well as the important works by Daniel Elazar and Michael Walzer). But one thing is clear: With the revelation at Sinai something unprecedented entered the human horizon. It would take centuries, millennia, before its full implications were understood. Abraham Lincoln said it best when he spoke of “a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” At Sinai, the politics of freedom was born. ■

These weekly teachings from **Rabbi Sacks** zt”l are part of his ‘Covenant & Conversation’ series on the weekly Torah teaching. With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel. Visit www.RabbiSacks.org for more.

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PROBING THE PROPHETS

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER
FACULTY, OU ISRAEL CENTER

“Lo BaShamayim He”

Our parasha this week is truly the climax of the Yetziat Mitzrayim story and of the entire Sefer Shmot. From Hashem's initial demand of Par'oh to release B'nai Yisrael until Moshe Rabbeinu's final insistence that the king free the people, there was repetition of the purpose of that liberation, i.e., to allow the Israelites to worship Hashem. Indeed, the fact that our holiday of freedom, Pesach, is connected to the celebration of Matan Torah of Shavuot through sefirat ha'omer, has been explained as being a lesson for us to know that the ultimate goal of the exodus was not freedom per se but freedom to be able to worship G-d as He desires. Hashem's revelation at Har Sinai that we read in the parasha, His pronouncement of the Aseret Hadibrot, the basis of our divinely commanded legal system, is, therefore, the culmination of the exodus. The rest of the entire Torah can be regarded simply as an expansion and clarification of that system.

But it is the first episodes in the parasha that are puzzling. The precise timing of the arrival

of Yitro and his advice in establishing a judicial system is a matter of disagreement between our Rabbis in the Talmud (Zevachim 116a). One view contends that the story takes place AFTER the Dibrot were given, for only then was there a need for judges to clarify ritual law to the people and adjudicate conflicts according to the Torah's legal standards. The other view however, argues that there is no reason to “cut and paste” the Yitro story for it did take place exactly as the Torah situated it- BEFORE Matan Torah. Moshe's father-in-law, they argue, joined B'nai Yisra'el having heard of the miracles wrought for them by Hashem, including the victory over Amalek, which immediately precedes the story of his arrival. But this view fails to resolve the question of what laws would they teach, what cases could they adjudicate, if the commandments were not yet given?

I would like to suggest an approach that would resolve this problem and would give us insight into the connection of this parasha to this week's haftarah.

The story of Yitro indeed took place before Matan Torah, for there was a need to form a judicial system even before the laws would be given. A legal system whose laws would not be understood or could not be enforced is no system at all. Even when given by G-d Himself, these laws would remain only in heaven and never become a practical system for humankind. Indeed, this very thought is expressed by

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Moshe at the end of his life: “Lo Bashamayim He” [D’varim 24:12] -the laws of the Torah are not to remain in heaven. The judicial system as explained by Yitro would be made up of men who would judge the people, teach the laws and enforce them. There would be a partnership of sorts: Hashem as the law-giver and Shofetim as those who would bring the laws down to earth and make them practical for mankind.

The haftarah this week tells of Hashem’s first revelation to Yishayahu through a vision of Hashem’s heavenly retinue and His throne, a vision that ties the haftarah to the vision seen by Bnai Yisrael at Har Sinai of which we read in the parasha. But the focus of the reading is the mission upon which the navi was sent, that is, to warn the nation of the consequences of their actions if they refuse to repent. As the selection details the corruption and sinfulness of the people, we may feel that it is not a fitting selection for a parasha that is positive and uplifting. But I submit that Yishayahu’s first vision of the heavenly throne and its glory was shown to him to underscore his prophetic mission. Yes, Hashem’s glory was in heaven, where no human being could tread. But the holiness of Hashem could not remain in heaven-as his laws could not. There was a need for an individual to inspire G-d’s sanctity and communicate His expectations to the nation on earth. This was the mission of the navi, Yishayahu. In effect, the prophet was to do what Yitro did: bring heaven down to earth, or, perhaps more correctly, to bring earth dwellers up to heavenly standards.

This has always been the mission of the holy prophets and the Holy Nation. We are charged with a mission to see that Hashem, His laws and His lessons, will never be left in heaven. ■

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Act Upon Inspiration

Parashat Yitro opens with the words “ישמע” (Yitro heard). Rashi famously asks: *What did Yitro hear?* The Torah itself seems explicit: he heard about the miracles in Egypt and the Exodus from Mitzrayim. These events were hardly private. In fact, *Az Yashir* tells us, “עמים ירגזון”—the nations heard and trembled. The entire world was aware.

If so, why does the Torah single out Yitro’s hearing?

Rabbi Frand (*Power of a Vort*) suggests that the answer emerges from a careful reading of Rashi’s words. Rashi does not ask simply what Yitro heard; rather, he asks: “מה שמעך שמע” (what did Yitro hear that caused him to come?). Many people heard. Yitro was the one who **moved**.

The miracles inspired awe across the globe, but they did not change lives. Yitro was different. He translated inspiration into action. The

Torah highlights not the hearing itself, but what the hearing produced.

People can witness extraordinary events and yet remain unchanged. Inspiration, if not seized, is fleeting. How, then, do we ensure that moments of spiritual awakening leave a lasting impact?

Rashi, citing the Gemara (Zevachim 116a), provides the answer: *Yitro heard—and he came*. He acted immediately. Yitro understood that when one encounters the hand of God, delay is dangerous. Procrastination dulls inspiration, and enthusiasm dissipates with time. To preserve the moment, one must act upon it.

This idea is illustrated by a story told about Rothschild. A poor man once came to his home seeking charity. Rothschild was deeply moved by the man’s story, but he had no money with him and asked the man to return the next day. As the poor man was leaving, Rothschild suddenly ran after him and handed him his gold watch.

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Rothschild explained: “Right now, I am inspired by your situation and determined to give generously. By tomorrow, that inspiration may fade, and I may give less. This watch ensures that I act today on the resolve I feel now.”

Rothschild understood what Yitro understood: inspiration must be anchored in action.

We all experience moments of spiritual elevation—during davening, a shiur, a kumzitz, or a quiet moment of reflection. The danger is not failing to feel inspired; the danger is letting inspiration pass without consequence. Growth

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happens when we translate emotion into deed, when we take even one concrete step that gives permanence to a fleeting moment.

Yitro teaches us that greatness is not reserved for prophets or miracle-witnesses. It belongs to those who respond. Many heard—but only Yitro came.

The question Parashat Yitro poses to us is not *what did you hear?* Rather - *what did you do with what you heard?* Inspiration is a gift, but it is also a responsibility. If it leads nowhere, it fades. If it leads to action—even something small—it becomes transformational.

When a thought stirs us to improve, when a moment pushes us to be better, that is our *וישמע יתרו*. The challenge is to become the ones who *come*. To act today, not tomorrow. To turn a spark into a step, and a step into a journey.

May we have the wisdom to recognize those moments—and the courage to act upon them swiftly. ■



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“*Vayishma Yitro*—And Yitro heard...” (*Shemot* 18:1) Rashi famously asks, “*Ma shemua shama u’va*—What news did he hear that [made such an impression that] he came?” To which Rashi offers two interpretations based on the Midrash, Yitro heard about the Splitting of the Sea, and the war with Amalek. What was it specifically about these two events that led him to come? Further, why does Chazal categorize it as the “war with Amalek” and not the victory over Amalek?

The Tosher Rebbe zt”l in *Avodat Avodah* explains that perhaps Yitro’s mindset was as follows. Yitro was already aware of Hashem’s

greatness; however, he was waiting for the appropriate time to join *Am Yisrael* and convert. He was therefore looking for a sign, an opening, an indication that it was the proper time to come. When he heard about the events at *Yam Suf*, and that all of the waters the world over simultaneously split, he understood it as signifying that the wellsprings of wisdom opened in the world, allowing *Am Yisrael* to access the depths of Torah wisdom.

He recognized that the Jewish people not only reached a very high spiritual level but that they were only worthy of this level having undergone tremendous suffering in *Mitzrayim* and displaying intense *mesirut nefesh* by following the word of Hashem and jumping into the sea. Therefore, when Yitro heard and understood these events, he began to wonder if he too, was worthy of receiving the Torah. He asked himself,

“Do I also possess the capacity to grasp the depths of Torah wisdom?” Upon hearing about the war with Amalek, he recognized that this too was necessary before the Torah was actually given.

Yitro concluded that when one battles with “Amalek”—the forces of the *yetzer hara* within himself—he is also worthy of being a conduit to receive Torah. It is not so much as **winning** the war against Amalek; it is rather **engaging in a continuous battle** against the forces that aim to detract us from committing to an ongoing relationship with Hashem. When Yitro perceived this, he knew he could be part of the people who constantly strive to touch Infinity.

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Rav Brodie, the Chevron Rosh Yeshiva zt"l, shares another lesson from this Rashi. Yitro "heard," he understood two essential lessons from these events. He realized that people could see and experience a miracle such as the Splitting of the Sea and yet remain unmoved and unchanged. Even further, that people could be more than unaffected, they can miss the entire point and actually go out to fight against truth! The Midrash specifically delineates "the war with Amalek" to emphasize their sheer audacity in attacking the Jewish people.

As the principle figure in this week's Torah reading, Yitro is the model of one who hears about Hashem's wonders and is moved to change. His actions inspire us to take lessons from every circumstance, motivating us to constantly change and grow. ■



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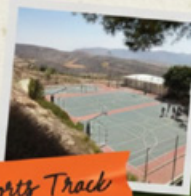
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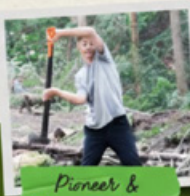
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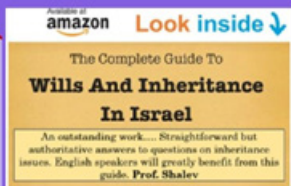
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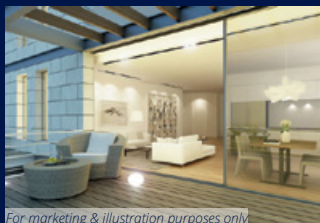
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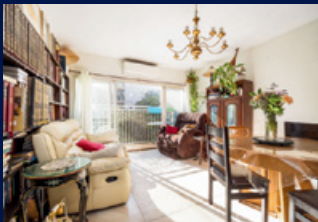
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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
DIRECTOR, TORAH INITIATIVES,
OU ISRAEL

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

וַיֵּצֵא מֹשֶׁה אֶת-הָעָם לִקְרַאת הָאֱלֹקִים מִן-הַמִּחָנֶה וַיַּעֲזִבוּ בְּתַחֲתֵית הָהָר: וְהָר סִינַי עָשָׂן כְּלוֹ מִפְּנֵי אֵשׁ יֵרֵד עָלָיו ה' בְּאֵשׁ וַיַּעַל עָשָׁנוּ כְּעָשָׂן הַכֹּבֵשֶׁן וַיַּחֲדֵד כָּל-הָהָר מְאֹד: וַיְהִי קוֹל הַשֹּׁפָר הוֹלֵךְ וְחֹזֵק מְאֹד מִשְׁה יִדְבֵּר וְהָאֱלֹקִים יַעֲנֶנּוּ בְּקוֹל:

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

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

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

Based on this interpretation, *Hashem*

miraculously spoke or answered *Moshe* through the sounds of the *shofar*.

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

ומה תלמוד לומר "בקול" – בקולו של משה.

What is the meaning of the verse: BaKol? In Moshe's voice...

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

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

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

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

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

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

In contrast, the Rebbe, *Reb Leibele Eiger zy'a* sees encrypted within this verse, a rather beautiful hidden message. *Reb Leibele* suggests

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that the *Torah* which *Moshe* is about to receive, will be a source of healing for the entire world.

"When we daven on Shabbat for one who is ill we say 'shabbat hi milizok urefua krova lavo- Though it is Shabbat and we therefore refrain from crying out, may the healing thus come soon.' The letters of Moshe's name- mem,shin, hey, are comprised of the first letters of the words Shabbat, hi milizok, and the word kol- kuf, vav and lamed is comprised of the first letters of the words urefua krova lavo..."

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



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SUNDAY FEB 8

7:30 PM

Men's Safrut (The Bais)

Rabbi Tzvi Mauner

7 Hartum Street,
2nd Floor

MONDAY FEB 9

8:30 PM

The Bais (for Men)

Semichat Chaver Program

Rav Elyada Goldwicht

@ **Bet Knesset Ohel Yitzchak**

Keren Hayesod St.

*The schedule is subject to change



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last minute schedule changes
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**TUESDAY
FEB 10**

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COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN BAKAA

Classes @ Bet Knesset Nitzanim, 3 Asher Street, Bakaa

9:20 AM

Understanding Tefila

Rabbi Yossi Goldin

11:25 AM

P'shat in the Parsha

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

10:15 AM

Rambam: Letters & Introductions

Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

12:20 PM

Unlocking the Messages of
Chazal

Rabbi Shai Finkelstein

TORAH TUESDAYS WITH THE WOMEN'S DIVISION

Classes @ Beit Knesset HaNassi, 24 Ussishkin St. Rechavia

9:15AM

Torah Tapestries with

Mrs. Shira Smiles

MODIIN-THE BAIS

Men's Programs in Modiin Yeshivat Hesder Meir Harel,
Emek Beit Shean 53, Modiin

10:00AM -2:00PM

Weekly Kollel Boker-Instructors
include

Rabbi David Fine

Rabbi Ian Shaffer

Rabbi Aschi Dick

Rabbi Avi Herzog

1:00PM- NEW!!!

Modiin Lunch and Learn with **Rabbi Aschi Dick**

Masamerica Offices, 28 Dam HaMacabbiim St,

3rd Floor, Shiur followed by mincha at 1:45pm

7:30 PM Men's Safrut in **MODIIN** **Rabbi Phil Schajer**

7:30 PM Men's Safrut in **BEIT SHEMESH** **Rabbi Elie Levi**

This Week's Inspirational Torah Learning with OU Israel

**WEDNESDAY
FEB 11**

COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN RECHAVIA

@ Bet Knesset HaNassi,
24 Ussishkin St., Rechavia

9:15AM

Holy Poetry

Rabbi Dr. Aharon Adler

10:20AM

From Text to Tachlis

Rabbi Jeremy Perlow

(Rabbi Manning will resume Feb. 18)

11:25 AM

Mussar and Self Improvement:

A study of Rav Kook's sefer

Midot HaRayah

Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

12:30 PM

Jews in the Middle Ages:

External Threats and Internal

Developments

Dr. Deborah Polster

SPECIAL EVENT:

7:00-9:30PM

Bat Mitzvah Tzniut and Body
Image Event (Beit Shemesh)

**THURSDAY
FEB 12**

COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN ARNONA

@ Bet Knesset Shai Agnon,
11 Rechov Leib Yaffe, Arnona

9:15 AM

Parshat HaShavua **Rabbi Ari Kahn**

10:30AM

Parashat Hashavua

Rabbi Baruch Taub

11:25 AM

Trailblazing the Text of Tanach

Rabbi Neil Winkler

12:20 PM

Modern Masters **Rabbi Sam Shor**

BET KNESSET OHEL YITZCHAK

@ Keren Hayesod Street

8:00 PM

Halachic Controversies

(the Bais) **Rabbi Aschi Dick**



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SPECIAL EVENT:

7:00-9:30PM

Bat Mitzvah Tzniut and Body
Image Event (Yerushalayim)

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רבקה בת אברהם
on her yahrzeit

MORNING OF LEARNING WED. FEB. 11TH

Dedicated l'refuat

Asher Zelig Eliezer Ben Liba

RABBI GOLDSCHIEDER'S SHIURIM FOR THE MONTH OF FEB.

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THE WED. MORNING BEIT MIDRASH PROGRAM IN RECHAVIA

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l'ilui nishmat: **Daniel ben David z"l**
and **Limud bat Avraham Strauss a"h**,
and **Mordechai ben Moshe z"l**
and **Reizel bat Yosef Meir Marcus a"h**,
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in loving memory of their parents
Rabbi Zvi & Jean Ettinger and
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RABBI MANNING'S WED. SHIUR

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ברנה בת ברנדית ע"ה וזליג בן קלמן זי"ל

RABBI GOLDSCHIEDER'S WED. SHIUR

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RABBI BREITOWITZ'S TUE. SHIUR

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SHIRA SMILES' SHIUR

Dedicated for the year in memory of
Elhanan Efram Ben Abraham z"l
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SAVE THE DATE!

ATID BAKA ROSH CHODESH ADAR EVENT

MONDAY FEB. 16
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AGES 9-12
AND THEIR
MOTHERS



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MOTHER-DAUGHTER PURIM EVENT

Events taking place in multiple locations
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Mother-Daughter
Chavruta Learning

Mini-Shiur

Kahoot
Competition

Purim
Art Project



- Chashmonaim (Rimon Shul) - Tuesday Feb 17
- Yerushalayim - Baka (Matnas) - Sunday Feb 22
- Yerushalayim - Ramot (Ramatayim Tzofim) - Mon Feb 23
- Rehovot (Berman Shul) - Tuesday Feb 24
- Pardes Chana (Klal Yisrael) - Wednesday Feb 25
- Efrat - TBD
- Carmel Hanadiv (מועדון הדיירים) - TBD
- Beit Shemesh (Carlebach) - TBD

ALL EVENTS
RUN FROM
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Director, OU Israel Women's Division
Words of Introduction



REBBETZIN SHIRA SMILES

Seuda
Secrets of the Seuda



REBBETZIN PEARL BOROW

Megilla
Esther: A True Heroine



RABBI MENACHEM NISSEL

Mishloach Manot/ Matanot L'evyonim
Something Fishy
About Adar

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WITH AVIGAIL
SCHEINFELD



Tuesday, Feb. 17
9:15 am - 1:00 pm



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ROSH CHODESH ADAR Women's Seminar in Beit Shemesh

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Reading



RACHEL SCHAUM

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Second Class Citizens



LEAH FEINBERG

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Camp Dror



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February 22	<i>Efrat</i>	19:00
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February 23	<i>Carmei Gat</i>	19:00
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February 24	<i>Raanana</i>	19:00
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March 5	<i>Pardes Hana</i>	19:00
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March 8	<i>Chashmonaim</i>	19:00
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March 9	<i>Modiin</i>	19:00
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March 12	<i>Givot Eden</i>	19:30
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March 15	<i>Tel Mond</i>	19:30
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*Come meet Rabbi Kenny Pollack,
Director of Camp Dror*



Any questions? Contact Cindy
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To Listen & Hear

Rebbe David Cohen, zy'a, the holy Nazir of Yerushalayim, was a profound spiritual seeker, mystic, and scholar. Revered for his sensitivity and gentle ways, the "Rav haNazir" was a lofty soul and ascetic, who spent much of his life in meditation and *dveykus*. In 1915, while studying at the University of Basel for his PhD in Greek philosophy, the young searcher heard that the *tzadik* Rav Avraham Yitzchak haKohen Kook was in St. Galen. The Rav haNazir describes their momentous meeting in his introduction to *Oros haKodesh*, "The Lights of Holiness":

"Full of excitement, uncertainty and expectation, carrying a volume of *Shaarei Kedushah*, 'Gates of Holiness', by R' Chaim Vital, I made my way to the Rav after taking a mikveh in

the Rhine River. I found him deeply engaged in learning with his son and was welcomed as a guest to sleep in their home. My heart could not rest at night. My life's destiny was hanging in the balance...

I awoke before dawn. Hearing the sound of footsteps back and forth, I approached the room

from whence the sound emerged and came upon the Rav in the midst of *Birchos haShachar* the morning blessings. The Rav was reciting the *Akeidah*, the section of davening recounting the sacrifice of Yitzchak in a most sublime, supernal melody.

My life then stood in the balance... I listened to him and was transformed; I turned into a new man. ... I had found a master."



Rabbi David Cohen zt'l
- the Nazir

וישמע יתרו

"And Yisro heard..." (*Shemos*, 18:1)

Rashi explains that Yisro — the high priest of Midian, the father in law of Moshe Rabbeinu, and a spiritual seeker in his own right — heard of the great miracles of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* and *Kriyas Yam Suf* as well as the vicious attack of Amalek. The Divine hand and *hashgacha pratit* in these events was open and revealed for all to see. While the voice of Hashem was audible throughout the world, it was Yisro who "heard" and responded to the call, joining Klal Yisrael and changing his destiny.

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v'nishma, “We will perform and we will listen.” Our commitment to ‘perform’ Hashem’s commands to the fullest is expressed as *nishma*; not only will we fulfil them in action, we will ‘listen’ to them, understand and deeply internalize their meaning. Philosopher and street-ball legend Sidney Deane has pointed out the critical difference between ‘listening’ and merely ‘hearing’: beyond the technical auditory experience of sound-waves entering one’s ears, in Yiddishkeit, the modality of “*shema*”, includes attention to the implications behind the message.

The Revelation at Mount Sinai also included the *Torah sheh-b'al Peh*, the ‘Oral Law’ transmitted verbally, מפה לאוזן, “from mouth to ear”. The Rav haNazir explains that the core transmission language of Talmud Bavli is based on different variations of the word *shema*. That is, its didactic metaphors of instruction and understanding are based not on *seeing* but on *hearing*. A traditional teaching, for example, is called שמעתתא, “that which was heard”, and the Gemara often invites us to *Ta shema*, “come and learn.” Talmudic discourses also include phrases such as *shema mina*, “infer from this,” *ka-mashma lan*, “it teaches us this,” and *lo shemiyah lei*, “he did not agree.”

Rav Avraham Yitzchak haKohen Kook was known as הרואה הגדול, “the Great Seer”, and his holy disciple, the Rav haNazir, as השומע הגדול “the Great Listener”. The Rav haNazir wrote extensively on Jewish mystical thought, and advanced a doctrine toward the renewal of prophecy in our age. His magnum opus, *Kol haNevuah*, “The Voice of Prophecy” describes the Torah as an account of our communication with the Ribbono Shel Olam and opens with Yeshayahu’s call to Am Yisrael: הֲטוֹ אֲזַנְכֶם וּלְכוּ אֵלַי שְׁמְעוּ וּתְחִי נַפְשְׁכֶם וְאֶכְרַתְּהָ לָכֶם בְּרִית עוֹלָם, “Turn your ears and come to Me, *listen* and your souls will live, And I will hew an eternal

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covenant with you” (55:3). Hashem is always calling out to us, communicating with us. Our responsibility is not just to ‘hear’ His commandments and instructions, but to actively *listen* to the message of Divine communication.

This week, as we collectively ‘listen’ to the re-reading of the sedra, may we hear the Divine call along with Yisro, and open our hearts to the prophetic call. And as the Rav haNazir concludes his introduction to *Kol haNevuah*: “May it be the Divine will that we be worthy of the renewal of the holy, worthy of the rebirth of our prophetic auditory spirit, through our national revival in our Holy Land.” ■



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Yitro: Boshet and Tzniut in Modern Israel

Despite modern commitments to equality and universalism, different nations continue to display distinct cultural and moral tendencies. Peoples are shaped over time by shared habits, values, and patterns of response that give each society its particular character.

The Gemara in Yevamot describes our people through three defining traits: compassion, the performance of kindness, and *bayshanut*—a capacity for embarrassment.

The first two traits are easy to admire. Compassion is a foundational virtue which opens our hearts to the condition of those around us and prevents emotional distance. It allows us to enter the suffering of another, to feel sympathy rather than observe pain from the safety of detachment.

But compassion alone is incomplete. Feeling for another does not yet repair what is broken. We must also be capable of helping, of acting, and of translating inner concern into concrete

assistance. For some, compassion remains an internal emotion, sincere but inert. Jewish character demands more. *Rachmanut* is meant to flow outward into *gemilut chasadim*, into an active desire to ease the burden of others and to stand beside them in moments of need.

Dovid HaMelech disqualified the Givonim from entering the Jewish people because these traits were absent. Their city had been struck during Shaul's campaign, and they sought redress. But instead of mercy or measured justice, they demanded that seven of Shaul's descendants be publicly executed as retribution. Detecting the absence of compassion and a glaring deficiency of *gemilut chasadim*, he ruled that they could not become part of the Jewish nation.

While the traits of compassion and *gemilut chasadim* are self-evident, the third trait is more confusing. We do not typically view the capacity for embarrassment, or *bayshanut*, as a healthy trait. In contemporary culture, shame is treated as corrosive, something to be shed in the pursuit of confidence and strong self-esteem.

Why would the ability to feel embarrassment be considered a virtue? Isn't shame precisely what we are taught to avoid as we try to build a healthy inner life and a stable sense of self?

BOSHET AT SINAI

Yet according to Chazal, shame is not a pathology but an essential component of healthy moral and religious identity. It was

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not incidental to the revelation at Sinai but one of its intended outcomes. Moshe tells us that Hashem will speak to us from within the cloud, “וַיַּעֲבוֹר תְּהִיָּה יְרָאתוֹ עַל פְּנֵיכֶם לְבִלְתִּי תַחֲטְאוּ” —“so that fear of Him will be upon your faces, so that you will not sin.”

Chazal are struck by the unusual phrasing. Why should yirat Shamayim be described as resting “on your face”? The Gemara in Berachot explains that this refers to *boshet*. One who experiences embarrassment—who feels exposed before moral truth—is protected from sin. *Boshet* is not incidental; it is a safeguard.

The encounter at Sinai was meant to generate precisely this response. Standing directly before Hashem was not only meant to inspire awe or obedience, but to cultivate an inner sensitivity and a quiet discomfort at the thought of moral failure. The question, then, is not whether shame belongs in religious life, but how to define *boshet* in a way that is healthy rather than harmful. How to distinguish between an embarrassment that sharpens moral awareness and a shame that diminishes us from within?

STANDING BEFORE HASHEM

Boshet stems from the recognition that Hashem witnesses all our behavior. He is always present. We are held accountable not only for public actions but for choices made in private. This awareness creates an inner discomfort when we cross religious or moral red lines. We are “seen” even when we imagine ourselves hidden from public view.

On his deathbed, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai told his students that he wished the fear of Heaven would be as real to them as the fear they feel before other people. Ideally, *yirat Shamayim* should surpass fear of human judgment and social impression. But Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai was realistic. He hoped, at the very least, that we would behave in private

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Social awareness and concern for reputation place guardrails around behavior we might otherwise rationalize. In private, we sometimes feel unencumbered, as though no one is watching—despite the fact that we are always visible to the Divine eye. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai was urging his talmidim to internalize that Divine scrutiny, so that even unseen moments would be shaped by restraint and responsibility.

This is the definition of healthy *boshet*: a steady awareness of Hashem’s presence that places quiet limits on our behavior and protects us from sin.

TZNIUT

However, *boshet* rooted in the awareness of Hashem’s presence goes far beyond avoiding sin because someone is watching. It shapes our overall deportment, even when no mitzvah is being performed and no aveirah is being

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avoided. The question is not only what we do, but how we carry ourselves. Do we project our own personality outward, or do we feel humbled by the Divine presence and act with inwardness rather than self-projection?

That inwardness is what we call *tzniut*. *Tzniut* is not limited to women or to questions of dress. It applies equally to men and women and speaks to a broader trait: not drawing undue attention to yourself, not placing the self at the center. This posture flows directly from the recognition that Hashem is in the room. When He is present, there is little space for the projection of human talent or personality for its own sake.

When Moshe first encountered Hashem at the sneh, his instinctive response was to hide his face. He could not imagine asserting his own identity while standing before such an overwhelming Divine presence. Ideally, *tzniut* grows from that same sense of *boshet*—from the awareness that Hashem’s presence fills the space. At Har Sinai, that presence was experienced with such intensity that *bayshanut* became embedded in our national consciousness.

This understanding of Hashem’s presence as the foundation of *tzniut* also explains the rare exception—moments when restraint gives way to outward expression in the service of Heaven. When Dovid HaMelech danced with unrestrained energy as the Aron was returned from the Pelishtim to Yerushalayim,

his behavior seemed out of character with his usual quiet dignity. This behavior drew the sharp criticism of his wife.

Yet Dovid was not projecting himself. He was not placing his own presence at the center. His dancing was directed outward, toward honoring Hashem, not toward drawing attention to his own personality. Because the focus was entirely on *kavod Shamayim*, and not on self-display, this behavior did not violate *tzniut*. It expressed it.

AN AGE WITHOUT EMBARRASSMENT

The modern world has quietly but powerfully eroded our capacity for *boshet*. Much of contemporary culture trains us not only to avoid embarrassment, but to view it as a weakness. When embarrassment is framed as something to overcome rather than something to heed, its moral function is slowly stripped away. Visibility is rewarded, and there is constant pressure to project ourselves outward. Withdrawal, concealment, and inwardness are treated not as virtues, but as failures—signs of insecurity or irrelevance.

Social media accelerates this shift. These platforms are built around constant self-presentation: images are curated and moments are shared not because they are meaningful, but because they can be seen. When exposure becomes routine and expected, embarrassment no longer functions as a moral brake. The instinct to pause, to ask whether something should remain private, slowly erodes.

In a culture built on constant exposure, *boshet* slowly disappears.

RETHINKING BOSHET IN ISRAEL

Life in Israel complicates the question of *boshet* even further. For nearly two thousand years, *boshet* seemed well suited to our condition. We had been exiled from Yerushalayim after repeated failure before Hashem, and



Daniel's words after the first destruction became an enduring refrain of Jewish history: "לָךְ ה' הַצְדִּיקָה וְלָנוּ בִשְׁתַּת הַפְּנִים"—"To You, Hashem, belongs righteousness, and to us, embarrassment."

History appeared to reinforce that posture. We lived as a minority within foreign and often hostile societies. Their values were alien, and at times corrosive, to our religious beliefs and practices. Humble withdrawal fit both our need for cultural insulation and the deeper logic of galut. Boshet functioned as a form of spiritual self-protection, a quiet refusal to place ourselves at the center of worlds that were not our own.

Now we have returned to Israel, and the moral landscape has shifted. We are struggling to build a Jewish State that asserts the presence of Hashem and His people in history, standing against foreign hostility and sustained opposition. We act with Hashem as our partner, carrying out His will as we attempt to redeem history and settle the Land He promised us. In such a setting, what exactly are we meant to be embarrassed about? When Jews act bravely in defense of His presence in this world, this does not feel like a moment for withdrawal.

Like Dovid HaMelech dancing before the Aron, there are times when restraint gives way to visible action because the focus is not self-projection but service of Hashem. This is not a failure of *tzniut*. It is its transformation under different conditions.

Moreover, our physical survival in this environment seems to demand boldness rather than shyness and confidence rather than hesitation. Facing the odds arrayed against us, brazenness often appears necessary. It can feel as though the trait that defined us for generations has lost some of its resonance.

The Gemara in Sotah teaches that as Mashiach approaches, the world will be filled with



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chutzpah. This line is often read as a foreboding warning about moral deterioration. It may also allude to the courage and daring chutzpah that will be required to stand firm against a world that resists our return and our mission. This gemara may be telecasting a shift from boshet to a necessary daring.

In our moral and religious inner lives, we must still cultivate boshet—the quiet awareness of standing before Hashem—but in defending Israel and advancing our national mission, we are called to act with confidence, resolve, and unembarrassed strength. Both should emerge from the same source: an awareness that we live in the presence of Hashem and act in service of His will. In private and in our inner religious lives, that awareness gives rise to boshet and inwardness. In the public arena of history and national defense, that very same awareness demands confidence and resolve. ■



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

The haftorah opens with a vision of staggering holiness. The heavens are filled with angels calling to one another, “קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ”, the thresholds tremble, and even the physical space

And yet, when Yeshayahu turns from vision to future, the language shifts. The redemption he describes is not framed in celestial or mystical terms, but in ethical ones. The long-awaited leader is not introduced by supernatural feats or spiritual ecstasy, but by the values that will sustain his rule: לְהַכִּין אֹתָהּ: “לְמַרְבֵּה הַמְּשֻׁרָה...” The future of the nation will be secured not through moments of inspiration alone, but through the consistent exercise of justice and righteousness.

The Malbim highlights that *mishpat* and *tzedakah* address two distinct needs. *Mishpat* refers to law applied with clarity, structure, and consistency. *Tzedakah* speaks to moral sensitivity, to the ability to see the human being

standing before us and respond with compassion. A society may function with order yet lack righteousness, or act generously yet collapse without structure. Redemption, Malbim explains, depends on the careful integration of both.

Seen this way, the haftorah traces a deliberate arc. Holiness fills the heavens, but redemption is realized on the ground. The angels proclaim *kadosh* above,

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but human beings are charged with translating holiness into the way power is exercised below — in courts, in leadership, and in the daily interactions that shape communal life.

The haftorah reminds us that true faith is not measured only by moments of spiritual elevation, but by the values that guide us when inspiration fades. Holiness that remains abstract may uplift, but holiness anchored in *mishpat* and *tzedakah* has the power to rebuild.

Redemption does not arrive when holiness overwhelms us.

It arrives when holiness guides us. ■

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Mitzvot as Bridges: Teaching Our Children to Connect with Hashem

This week, our family is celebrating a very special milestone — our son Netanel's Bar Mitzvah. As anyone who has planned a Bar Mitzvah knows, the months leading up to it are filled with excitement and activity — arranging the celebration, preparing for guests, practicing the leining, and managing countless details. In the midst of it all, it's easy to lose sight of what this moment truly represents: *Kabbalat Ol Mitzvot* — accepting the responsibility of mitzvot and the privilege of living a life filled with meaning and purpose.

In honor of Netanel's Bar Mitzvah, I'd like to share a few insights from the OU Israel Women's Division Bat Mitzvah Program, which runs in both Yerushalayim and Beit Shemesh. About 110 mothers and daughters are currently taking part in this six-part journey, exploring what it means to live a life of mitzvot, connection, and responsibility.

In our recent session on *Kabbalat Ol Mitzvot*, participants heard the inspiring story of a young *ba'alat teshuva* who chose to begin keeping mitzvot at age twelve and visited a bakery to perform *Hafrashat Challah* (one of the mitzvot a girl can only do upon becoming Bat Mitzvah). The mothers and daughters also spent time learning through the sources and

discussing the purpose of Mitzvot.

The conversation about the meaning of Mitzvot is one that belongs in every Jewish home, so I wanted to share some of these ideas for you to bring to your Shabbos table or to discuss with your children whenever the opportunity arises.

We often think of the word *mitzvah* as coming from the root צִוִּי — a command. But some point out another root within the word: צִוּתָּא, meaning connection. As Rabbi Natan of Breslov writes in *Likutei Halachot*, “The word *mitzvah* means connection, from the root *tzavta* and *chibur*, for through every mitzvah a person connects and attaches himself to Hashem.”

This teaches us that mitzvot are not only obligations — they are opportunities for closeness. This applies both to mitzvot we enjoy and to those we find difficult.

In *Pirkei Avot* we learn:

רבי חנניה בן עקשיא אומר: רצה הקדוש ברוך הוא ליכות את ישראל, לפיכך הרבה להם תורה ומצוות.

Hashem desired to bring merit to the Jewish people and therefore gave them many mitzvot. The simple understanding is that Hashem gave us numerous mitzvot to provide us with many opportunities to earn reward.

The **Rambam**, in his commentary on this Mishnah, explains that because there are so

many mitzvot, it is impossible for a person to go through life without fulfilling at least one of them perfectly. Through that one mitzvah done with complete sincerity and devotion, a person merits *Olam Haba*.

This is a beautiful idea to discuss around the Shabbos table. Ask your children (and yourselves) - if you could choose one mitzvah to be your “special mitzvah,” the one you would strive to perfect and make your own, which would it be? Every person should aim to make at least one mitzvah “their mitzvah” — the mitzvah through which they express their unique love and devotion to Hashem.

At the same time, it’s equally important to talk with our children about the mitzvot that are difficult. Every person has certain mitzvot that feel especially challenging, and those struggles themselves hold tremendous spiritual potential. Rather than skipping or resenting them, we can use them as opportunities to deepen our connection with HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

As ***Pirkei Avot*** (5:23) teaches: **בן הא הא אומר** – לפום צערא אגרא – “The greater the effort, the greater the reward.” Why should the harder mitzvot bring greater reward? Because the struggle itself reveals our love. We can illustrate this idea to our children in the following story -

Chana loved her mother very much. Her mother was always doing so much for her – making delicious dinners, buying her new clothes, and

spending quality time with her. One day, Chana’s mother asked her to clean her room. Chana really didn’t understand why her mother wanted her to do that. She liked living in a messy room so why should she clean it? And besides, it was super messy and would take hours to clean and she really didn’t feel like it. But she thought for a moment and decided to do it anyway — as a way to show her mother how much she loved her.

You can discuss with your children that just like Chana shows her love for her mother by doing the thing that is the most difficult for her, when we choose to do Mitzvot that are very hard for us, these are the most special Mitzvot. These are the mitzvot that we don’t do just because they’re fun or we connect to them. These are the mitzvot that we do simply because Hashem said to do them, and we love Hashem and want to do what He asked of us.

By discussing this concept with our children when they have difficulty getting up for shul or waiting between meat and milk, these moments can become lessons in turning struggle into connection.

In conclusion, one of our greatest privileges as parents is helping our children see mitzvot not as burdens but as bridges, as opportunities to connect to Hashem. May we all continue to grow in our *simchah shel mitzvah* (joy in serving Hashem) and may our children embrace their mitzvot with pride, purpose, and love. ■

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RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

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Rav Kook: In His Image and Human Dignity (Midot HaRa'aya, Kavod, piska #1)

“When the obligation to honor God (*kevod Shamayim*) is grasped in an enlightened manner, it raises the worth of man and the worth of all creatures, filling them with largeness of spirit combined with genuine humility... It is for this reason that the sages declared that the dignity of every person (*kavod habriyot*) is so important that it supersedes a negative precept of the Torah (Berachot 19b). Thus, we learn that an enlightened conception of *kevod Shamayim* engenders as its beneficent by-product the principle of human dignity.” *(Midot HaRa'aya, Kavod, piska #1)*

In the above passage, Rav Kook addresses the concept of *kavod*—honor or dignity—and teaches that the honor and dignity we must ascribe to every human being has its source in the honor and dignity that stem from God Himself. It is noteworthy that the Torah begins not with mitzvot, but with the creation of humanity: “*Be’tzelem Elokim*”—man was created in the image of God (Bereshit 1:27). Everything else follows from this profound truth.

Every human face I encounter—including my own reflected in the mirror—bears divine fingerprints. The *kavod* intrinsic to God is, therefore, intrinsic to every human being.

THE LAW OF KAVOD HABRIYOT

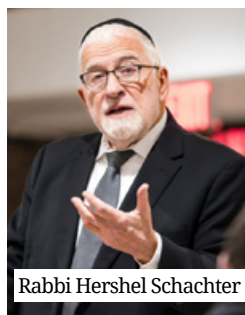
The Talmud takes the spiritual concept of *kavod habriyot* and gives it practical expression

in halachic terms. A striking passage reveals Judaism’s radical commitment to human dignity: “Human dignity is so great that it overrides negative commandments in the Torah” (Berachot 19b). It is breathtaking to consider that within a legal system centered on divine law, human dignity can, at times, supersede explicit prohibitions.

KAVOD HABRIYOT

AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The notion of *kavod habriyot* is rooted in the belief that every Jew bears the imprint of



Rabbi Hershel Schachter

tzelem Elokim, the divine image. Rabbi Herschel Schachter, the eminent posek of Yeshiva University, cites the Meiri’s introduction to his commentary on the Talmud, where he quotes a Midrash

describing the two tablets brought down by Moshe from Mount Sinai. Each tablet contained five commandments, arranged in parallel.

The first commandment, which establishes the existence of God, parallels the sixth, the prohibition against murder. The connection, Rav Schachter explains, lies in the fact that every human being is endowed

with a spark of Godliness. To take a human life is, in effect, to deny the reality of God. This idea forms the basis of *kavod habriyot*. (YUTorah, Tircha D'Tzibbur, Kavod Habriyot and Kavod HaMeit)

RAV CHAIM SHMULEVITZ'S SHMUESS

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz, famed for his powerful *shmuessen* (mussar talks) in the Mir Yeshiva of Jerusalem, addressed the subject of *kavod habriyot* with exquisite sensitivity. In one memorable address, delivered orally to his students, he began by citing the opening verses of Sefer Devarim. Moshe Rabbeinu, nearing the end of his life, prepares to rebuke the Jewish people. He alludes to the sin of the Golden Calf and the episode of the spies who delivered an evil report.

Strikingly, Moshe mentions neither sin explicitly. This seems puzzling. Would it not have been more effective to state the offenses clearly? Rashi provides a powerful answer: Moshe avoided naming the sins outright “*mipnei kevodan shel Yisrael*”—in order to preserve the dignity of the Jewish people (Rashi, Devarim 1:1).

In other words, even when delivering rebuke, Moshe carefully measured his words so as not to shame the people unnecessarily. The dignity of each individual—and of the community as a whole—is sacred. Embarrassment, even in the service of moral instruction, must be minimized whenever possible. (*Artscroll, Sichos Mussar, trans. Klugman and Scheinman, pp. 240–241*)

Rav Chaim then shared one of his most startling examples of *kavod habriyot*, drawn from the story of Bilaam. God Himself protected the dignity of even a person as wicked as Bilaam, described by the Sages as the patriarch of evil (see Avot 5:19 and Rabbeinu Yonah).

Rashi notes that the donkey who rebuked Bilaam died immediately afterward, so that



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people would not point and say, “This is the donkey that rebuked Bilaam and left him speechless.” Allowing the donkey to remain alive would have perpetuated Bilaam’s humiliation, which would have violated the principle of *kavod habriyot*. Therefore, it died. (*Ibid.*, p. 241)

Finally, Rav Chaim emphasized a crucial point—perhaps the most important of all, particularly in our daily interactions. *Kavod habriyot* does not merely require refraining from insulting or degrading others. One is obligated

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to actively enhance and magnify the honor of one's fellow human being. We must recognize the immense potential inherent in every person. A human being, created in the image of God, can reach heights far beyond our imagination. It is this inherent loftiness that obligates us to the highest standard of *kavod habriyot*. (*Ibid.*, pp. 242–243)

REB ARYEH BEAUTIFIES A MITZVAH

A beautiful story is told about the tzaddik of Jerusalem, Rav Aryeh Levin, which captures this lesson vividly. In the days following Yom Kippur, Rav Aryeh went to purchase an etrog for Sukkot. Like many Jerusalemites, he went to Meah Shearim to carefully select a prized fruit.

Rav Aryeh entered a shop, the shopkeeper showed him an etrog, and Rav Aryeh glanced at it briefly and asked to buy it. He paid and hurried out. A young man who witnessed the scene was surprised. Unlike others who examined numerous etrogim for the slightest

blemish, Rav Aryeh had purchased the first one he was shown.

The young man followed him and asked respectfully, “Why does everyone carefully inspect many etrogim, while you, Rav Aryeh, took only a quick look and rushed out?”

“You ask a good question, my precious boy,” Rav Aryeh replied. “Everyone knows that there are two mitzvot the Torah commands us to beautify. One is the etrog, as it says, ‘Take for yourselves a fruit of a beautiful tree.’ The other is *‘vehadarta pnei zaken’*—to honor the elderly.

“I had to decide which mitzvah should take precedence. I am on my way to a dental office to retrieve dentures belonging to an elderly man in a nursing home. Without them, he cannot eat properly. If I lingered over the etrog, I might miss the bus and delay returning his teeth. God willing, he will be able to eat his meal tonight with dignity, like a proper human being.”

With that, Rav Aryeh apologized and rushed off to catch the bus. (*Tablet, Reb Aryeh's Etrog, Haim Be'er*)

Rav Aryeh teaches a profound lesson in sensitivity. When weighing competing mitzvot, he determined that preserving a person's dignity and self-worth takes precedence over ritual beautification. The inner beauty of the human soul, created in God's image, demands our utmost care.

CHAIM THE MISFIT

The following humorous story sheds light on the importance of valuing every individual.

In a small Eastern European shtetl, the community faced a dilemma. The Torah portion containing the *tochacha*—the rebukes and curses—was approaching, and no one wished to be called up for that aliyah. Even the rabbi and the *baal koreh*, who traditionally received it, declined. The congregation regarded it as a bad omen to recite blessings over such harsh

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After much deliberation, the leaders devised a plan. They would ask Chaim, the town misfit, who rarely attended synagogue, to take the aliyah. They even offered him a few rubles to ensure he would come and accept. Chaim readily agreed.

On Shabbat morning, prayers began, but Chaim was nowhere to be seen. Anxiety mounted as the service progressed. The Torah was taken out, and still he had not arrived. Suddenly, just as panic set in, the door burst open and Chaim ran inside.

"I'm here!" he announced. "Ready for my aliyah!"

The rabbi approached him and asked, "Why are you so late?"

Chaim replied, "Do you think you're the only synagogue reading the *tochacha* today? This is my third Torah reading this morning."

Perhaps this humorous vignette reminds us to ask ourselves whether we truly recognize the *tzelem Elokim* in every person—even those we are tempted to dismiss.

LIFE LESSONS

- When we disagree with others, we must never allow differences of opinion to become dislike of the person.
- Learn to perceive and be sensitive to the *tzelem Elokim* present in every human being.
- Change something in your home to make it kinder and more welcoming—a place where every guest feels valued and respected. ■



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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Possibly Early Mincha

Question: I (a woman) noticed after finishing *Mincha* that it was two minutes after the earliest time to *daven Mincha*, so I must have started *Shemoneh Esrei* (=SE) before the time. Should I repeat SE?

Answer: Earliest *Mincha* time on our halachic calendars is a half hour after *chatzot* (astronomical midday). Since the three *tefillot* relate to morning, afternoon, and night, we would have expected *Mincha* to begin at *chatzot*. The reason it does not is critical to answering your question.

One *gemara* (Yoma 28b) reports that Avraham *davened Mincha* right after *chatzot* and wonders why in the *Beit Hamikdash* they never slaughtered the afternoon *korban* until a half hour later. One of the *gemara*'s answers is that Avraham was an expert in knowing when it

was *chatzot*, whereas others wait a half hour to make sure it is afternoon. The Magen Avraham (233:1) learns from here that fundamentally the earliest time for *Mincha* is *chatzot*, and our practice of waiting a half hour is precautionary.

Another *gemara* (Berachot 26b) writes categorically that the earliest first starting time of *Mincha* (*Mincha Gedola*) is 6.5 hours (i.e., half an hour after *chatzot*), which corresponds to the earliest afternoon *korban* of the year (*Mincha Ketana* is at 9.5 hours into the day, the usual time of the *korban*). One reconciliation of the *gemarot* is that Yoma follows the approach that the *tefillot* were modeled after the patriarch's *tefillot* and that Berachot follows the approach that they are modeled after the *korbanot*, i.e., never before 6.5 hours (Magen Gibborim 233:1).

Conceptually, the Magen Avraham (*ibid.*) saw the extra half hour as a precaution, according to which we would expect that if one accidentally *davened* during the half hour he would be *yotzei*. Yet, he infers from the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 233:1) that since he views *Mincha Gedola* itself as *b'di'eved*, before 6.5 hours must be totally invalid. The Pri Megadim (*ad loc.*) counters that there could be three levels: optimal- *Mincha Ketana*; less than optimal- *Mincha Gedola*; *b'di'eved*- during the half hour.

The Mishna Berura (233:2) suggests that if we wait a half hour due to concern for mistake, we should treat someone who *davened* then like one who is unsure if he *davened* properly, who does not need, according to the basic law, to *daven* again (see Be'ur Halacha 107:1). However, he also raises the following reason not to be *yotzei b'di'eved*. Irrespective of the original

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reason for adding the half hour, once it was set, prior to that time is simply and fully the wrong time (Sha'ar Hatziyun 233:6). This approach finds expression in the opinion that during this half hour, one can even *daven Shacharit* (see Mishna Berura 89:7). The Mishna Berura does not resolve the question whether one who *davened Mincha* during the half hour must repeat *Mincha*. (If one chose to do so, she **might** make a condition that if she was already *yotzeit*, the second *tefilla* is a *nedava* (see opinions in Ishei Yisrael 27:9).)

We now turn to your case's specific details. The fact that you **ended SE** at the right time does not help. Although a minority opinion holds that if one starts *SE* at the right time, he is *yotzei* even if he finishes after the end point, that is because the beginning may have special importance (see Aruch Hashulchan, OC 110:5). The end does not have such importance!

What is helpful is that your case occurred in early winter. It is not clear whether the half hour is a *sha'ah zemanit* or 30 minutes on the clock (see Sha'ar Hatziyun 233:8), and most calendars are *machmir* in both directions. Therefore, you started before the end of the

30 minutes, but after half of a winter *sha'ah zemanit*. Your being a woman might call for slight leniency. Women are obligated in *tefilla*, but **some** say that once a day suffices (see Mishna Berura 106:4). Even if you *daven Mincha* regularly, this doubt can be added to the others.

Most *poskim* rule that one who *davened Mincha* during the half hour after *chatzot* was *yotzei* (see Ishei Yisrael 27:5; Tefilla K'hilchata 3:39). This is clearer in your case due to the additional indications. ■

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Celebrations of Geulah

Among the concluding chapters of Divrei HaYamim we learn of two unique Pesach celebrations conducted within approximately one hundred years of one another. The first was celebrated by Hizkiyahu and the second by his great-grandson, Yoshiyahu, two kings of Yehuda noted for their exceptional righteousness and attempts to effect a national *Teshuvah* movement.

In the very first year of his reign, Hizkiyahu introduced a program of spiritual rehabilitation, including the purification and restoration of the *Beit HaMikdash*, which had been defiled by idolatry and largely abandoned by a populace that had yielded to the temptation of other forms of worship.

The work of clearing and purifying the *Mikdash* began on *Rosh Chodesh Nissan*, and took over two full weeks - the work was completed on the *sixteenth* of that month. The *sixteenth*! What happened to the *Korban Pesach*, which was required to have been offered in the late afternoon of the *fourteenth*? When the Kohanim came to Hizkiyahu to tell him that the work was completed, he initiated a celebration that included *korbanot* numbering in the thousands, accompanied by the musical instruments of David HaMelech, but no mention is made of the *Korban Pesach*. Only after the celebration is

complete do we find a decision being rendered to celebrate Pesach in the following month, a move the Talmud tells us was not approved by the Sanhedrin. We might be justified in thinking that what we have here is a celebration of *Pesach Sheini*, as described in the Torah; however, the *mitzvah* of *Pesach Sheini* is for one day only; the Pesach celebrated by Hizkiyahu and the nation lasted for a full seven days!

There are two salient features of this Pesach celebration: The first is the sub-par level of spiritual exactitude. Pesach was celebrated at the wrong time and by people who were not in an ideal spiritual state. Many of those who joined the celebration, especially the refugees from the northern kingdom, had not had time for ritual purification before partaking of the *Korban Pesach*. With the clear lack of *Kedushah v'taharah*, it's very possible that expectations were low for a meaningful Pesach. Perhaps this is why there is such emphasis on the rejoicing following Hizkiyahu's prayer and Hashem's acceptance of this sub-par Pesach observance. *Simcha* becomes the second defining element of this Pesach.

The people were overjoyed that Hashem had accepted even their imperfect observance of Pesach as an expression of their sincere desire to renew their relationship with Him. At the core of these verses we find that Hashem had done the unexpected - He acquiesced to the prayer of Hizkiyahu and pardoned the people, going beyond the letter of the law as a special favor to His beloved nation.

After Hizkiyahu's death, under the leadership of his son and grandson, Menashe and

Ammon, the nation sunk to new lows, defiling the *Mikdash* once again with idols and impurity. Yoshiyahu ben Ammon was an outlier - he was a righteous king, a throwback to the time of his ancestor David HaMelech. At his initiative, a program of restoration was instituted in the *Mikdash*, and once again it was cleaned and purified. At the culmination of the rededication of the *Mikdash*, Yoshiyahu instructed the nation to celebrate Pesach.

In stark contrast to the Pesach of Hizkiyahu, this Pesach was observed in strict accordance with the law. While we might think of the two celebrations in one breath, given the chronological proximity and the similarity of the broad circumstances, they were in essence quite different from one another. Each highlighted a different path toward *Avodat Hashem*. Hizkiyahu emphasized purity of intention and the emotional, prayerful aspect of worship, while Yoshiyahu emphasized strict adherence to the letter of the law.

Sadly, while both of these celebrations were intended to mark new beginnings, they were followed by backsliding into sinfulness, and the spiritual renaissance fueled by each of these exceptional kings dissipated quickly as the path toward the destruction of Yerushalayim and the *Beit Hamikdash* gained momentum.

The key to the message of these celebrations lies at the heart of a passage following yet another Pesach celebration in Tanach, that foreseen by the Navi Yehezkel which will be celebrated in the future *Mikdash*. Yehezkel teaches that on the holidays, when the people come before Hashem, they should leave the Sanctuary by the gate opposite the one through which they entered (Yehezkel 46:9).

In order for religious inspiration to leave a permanent impact on our psyche, we have to be inherently changed by the experience that



offered the inspiration. If we're the same person coming out of the *Mikdash* as we were going in, that which took place therein is stripped of its meaning. The Pesach celebrations of Hizkiyahu and Yoshiyahu were regarded as so extraordinary as to be digressions from the "normal" way of the world, impossible to carry forward into daily life. The people enjoyed them, but were not, in essence, changed by them, and quickly regressed into their patterns of sinfulness.

As we approach the conclusion of the current cycle of Nach Yomi and prepare for a new beginning, let us ensure that our religious experience does not become stagnant but is a constant source of energy and renewed excitement. May our learning continue to serve as a source of inspiration, and may we strive to unify the *simcha* and enthusiasm with which we perform the *mitzvot* together with the strict observance of the *mitzvah* itself. In doing so may we hasten the rebuilding of the *Mikdash*, ushering in a celebration of Pesach the likes of which we have never yet been privileged to experience. ■

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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Trusting Instead of Judging

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Somewhere along the shidduch journey, we sometimes allow a damaging story to take hold.

As a society, we might believe that if someone is still single, they must be *too picky*.

If someone hasn't married yet, they probably *haven't worked on themselves enough*.

If someone married young, it must be because they were more mature, more ready, more emotionally healthy.

But let's be honest - with kindness and with truth: that story simply isn't accurate.

We all know people who married young who are stunning and people who married young who aren't. People who are easygoing and people who are very difficult. People who were deeply emotionally aware, and people who were still quite childish. They didn't "earn" marriage by being better. They were *blessed*. Hashem opened that door early for them.

And many of the people who have been single for years? They've done *so much work*. More reflection. More growth. More self-awareness. More humility. More courage. More tefillah. They have sat in discomfort, faced rejection, invested in therapy and coaching, learned communication skills, healed wounds, and kept their hearts open - again and again.

Therapy and coaching are incredible tools, and yes, we encourage everyone to use them, single or married. But getting married early is not proof of superior emotional health. And staying single longer is not proof that something is "wrong."

Shidduchim are not a merit badge.

They are not a personality test.

They are not a reward for good behavior.

Hashem makes shidduchim.

Full stop.

Hashem can choose different paths for different souls. Some are given an easier road to building a home. Others are chosen for a far more challenging journey - one that requires

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strength, patience, and faith that others can't even imagine.

So instead of judging, hinting, diagnosing, or offering unsolicited "advice," here's what to do:

Be there.

Give chizuk.

Speak with respect.

And most importantly: *set them up*

Not as a favor.

Not as pity.

But as partners with Hashem in helping another Jew build a bayit ne'eman b'Yisrael.

Because the greatest measure of our character isn't how quickly we got married, but how we show up for others while they're still waiting. ■

**Want to set up your friends?
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Pitom Haketoret, Zayit, Efrat

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RABBI SHLOMO RAYMAN
BEIT SHEMESH DIRECTOR

PROPHECY TO THE PEOPLE: YITRO'S NOVEL IDEA

One of the first things I learned as a commander in the IDF is the importance of delegating jobs to other people. Why do something yourself if you can get others to do it? It is one of the most obvious and intuitive responsibilities of any leader.

In Parashat Yitro, we find Moshe working himself to exhaustion as the nation's sole judge. When Yitro advises him to delegate, we must wonder: why didn't Moshe think of this himself? Delegation seems like such an obvious solution to a heavy workload.

Perhaps there is something deeper going on here behind the scenes.

Moshe believed that interpreting God's will required prophecy. To Moshe, God's laws were a divine mystery that only a prophet could relay. He assumed no one else was qualified to determine God's intent in a dispute.

Yitro's *chiddush* (innovation) was that human intelligence can internalize divine wisdom. He taught Moshe to show the people the *derech* of the Torah—to teach them a framework of Torah that isn't just a set of arbitrary rules, but a system

humans can understand and extrapolate from.

Yitro revealed that the Torah is not meant to stay “in Heaven.” By teaching the underlying principles, Moshe could empower others to apply God's will using their own judgment. This transformed the Torah from a series of prophetic decrees into a living “way of life” accessible to all.

Torah doesn't belong to the prophets; it belongs to each and every one of us. Through hard work and creativity, we can learn the Torah system and connect our human minds to the divine wisdom of the Torah.



ARIEL ROSENSWEIG
11TH GRADE, BEIT SHEMESH

WISDOM IN COLLABORATION

This week's Parsha, Yitro, begins with a powerful lesson in leadership and responsibility. After observing Moshe judge all the disputes of Bnei Yisrael by himself, Yitro tells him, “לֹא-טוֹב הִדְבֵּר אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹשֶׂה.” Yitro sees that Moshe's dedication is admirable, but warns that judging alone will wear him out and exhaust the people. Instead, he advises Moshe to appoint capable men as leaders over groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, so that they may judge minor disputes while Moshe focuses on the most difficult cases.

This advice demonstrates that even great leaders cannot carry every burden alone. Great leadership requires sharing responsibility, trust, and the ability to empower others.

Rashi explains that Yitro's counsel was not only practical, but also wise, as it strengthened the entire nation by creating an organized

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system of justice. The Ramban adds that Moshe accepted this advice humbly, showing that even the greatest leaders can learn from others.

This lesson connects directly to the giving of the Ten Commandments in the Parsha. Bnei Yisrael had to prepare themselves to receive the Torah, a moment that required order, guidance, and mutual responsibility. Just as Moshe organized the people for justice, the Torah provides a framework to help everyone live together with clarity and purpose.

Parashat Yitro teaches that wisdom, guidance, and collaboration are essential in both leadership and spiritual life. True strength is not only in what we can do alone, but in how we share responsibility and grow together.

Shabbat Shalom. ■

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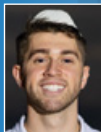
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