

# PHILOTORAH

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א'יליה אבוזתינו שתשלח מהרה רפואה שלמה מן השמים,  
רפואת הנפש ורפואת הגוף לפניו הפלחה, ולנפנעי מעשי טרור ואנטישמיות  
בישראל ובכל מקום שלהם - עם שאר חולי ישראל. אמן.

May HaShem protect our soldiers; may He send Refu'ah Sh'leima to the many injured;  
may He console the bereaved families and all of Israel; may He end this war with  
success and peace for Medinat Yisrael and Klal Yisrael wherever we are.



**YERUSHALAYIM** in/out for Shabbat Parshat **YITRO**

כ' שבט ה'תשפ"ז • 26 '26 February

4:43PM PLAG 4:11PM • 5:56PM R' Tam 6:31PM

Use the Z'MANIM link for other locales

PhiloTorah (291yt) - 1 - all at once file



## Coming Soon... The Four Parshiyot

Not yet, but starting next week...

Parshat SH'KALIM - Read on the Shabbat of or right before Rosh Chodesh Adar (the second Adar, when there are two).

Can fall on 25, 27, 29 Sh'vat (or Adar Rishon), or on 1 Adar (or Adar Sheini).

Maftir SH'KALIM in the second Torah is Sh'mot 30:11-16, the first 6 p'sukim of Parshat Ki Tisa.

Haftara for SH'KALIM is Melachim Bet 12:1-17. S'faradim begin with 11:17-20.

This year: next Shabbat, Parshat Mishpatim. The 27th of Sh'vat, February 14th.

Parshat ZACHOR - Read on the Shabbat right before Purim.

Can fall on 8, 9, 11, or 13 Adar (or Adar Sheini).

Maftir ZACHOR in the second Torah is D'varim 25:17-19, the last 3 p'sukim of Parshat Ki Teitzei.

Haftara for ZACHOR is Sh'muel Alef 15:2-34. S'faradim begin with 15:1.

This year: Shabbat Parshat T'tzaveh, the 11th of Adar, February 28th.

Parshat PARA - Read on the Shabbat right before Parshat HACHODESH.

Can fall on 18, 20, 22, or 23 Adar (or Adar Sheini).

Maftir PARA in the second Torah is Bamidbar 19:1-22, whole first perek of Parshat Chukat.

Haftara for PARA is Yechezkeil 36:16-38.

This year: Shabbat Parshat Ki Tisa, the 18th of Adar, March 7th.

Parshat HACHODESH - Read on the Shabbat of or right before Rosh Chodesh Nisan.

Can fall on 25, 27, 29 Adar (or Adar Sheini), or on 1 Nisan.

Maftir HACHODESH in the second Torah is Sh'mot 12:1-20, in Parshat Bo.

Haftara for HACHODESH is Yechezkeil 16:45-46:18.

This year: Shabbat Parshat Vayakhel-P'kudei, the 25th of Adar, March 14th.

### The Four Codes for Hafsatot

The Four Parshiyot span at least 5 Shabbatot; sometimes 6 Shabbatot.

This means that within the Four Parshiyot period, there are one or two Shabbatot when there is no special Maftir. These Shabbatot are called Hafsatot.

When the first of Adar is a Wednes-

day (occurs 28.5% of years), the 4th of Adar will be a Hafsa (between Sh'kalim and Zachor). The code for such years is DALET,DALET (day of the week of 1 Adar and date in Adar of the Hafsa). This year 5786 is a DALET,DALET year.

When the first of Adar is a Monday (occurs 31.9% of years), the 6th of Adar will be a Hafsa (between Sh'kalim and Zachor). The code for such years is BET,VAV.

When the first of Adar is Shabbat (occurs 11.5% of years, a three-Torah Shabbat), the 15th of Adar will be a Hafsa (between Zachor and Para). The code for such years is ZAYIN, TET-VAV. Note that in these kind of years, the Hafsa is on Jerusalem's Purim, so we (in Yerushalayim) will have 5 Shabbatot in a row with reading from multiple Torahs.

When the first of Adar is a Friday (occurs 28.0% of years), there will be two Hafsatot - on the 2nd of Adar (between Sh'kalim and Zachor) and on the 16th of Adar (between Zachor and Para). The code for such years is VAV,BET--YUD-VAV. In these year-types, HaChodesh will be a three-Torah Shabbat.

Interesting to note that these codes were formulated at a time in the past when 15 was already TET-VAV in order to avoid using a YUD and a HEI which would look like on of G-d's

names, but 16 was still YUD-VAV, and not yet the present-day's TET-ZAYIN.

More calendar notes:

The Four Parshiyot fall out when the calendar follows the LO ADU rule (meaning that every date has four possible days of the week to fall on and three days of the week that it never falls on). That's why there are four possible arrangements for them, as spelled out above.

295 of 385 possible dates on our fixed calendar, follow LO ADU (and the other 6 variations - LO B'HaZ, LO AGU, LO B'DaZ, LO AGaH, LO B'DU, LO G'HaZ).

The 90 dates that don't follow LO ADU are 30 Marcheshvan, all of Kislev, Tevet, and Sh'vat. The 295 dates that do belong to the LO ADU rule are from 1 Adar through 29 Marcheshvan.

## YITRO

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



Written on 138 lines in a Torah (46th)

15 Parshiyot; 4 open, 11 closed

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

1105 words, 4022 letters - ranks 46th  
Yitro is the smallest sedra in Sh'mot

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

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

## MITZVOT

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

Note that 14 of the 17 mitzvot in Yitro are within the Aseret HaDibrot. That means that Ten Commandments is not really the best translation for Aseret HaDibrot. The Ten Statements might be a better rendering of Aseret HaDibrot - or Aseret HaD'varim, as the Torah calls them. Also note that a 15th mitzva for the Aseret HaDibrot is counted from Va'etchanan - V'LO TIT-AVEH (unhealthy desire).

## Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

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

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

## Kohen - First Aliya - 12 p'sukim - 18:1-18

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

**SDT:** The straight reading of this portion is that Yitro heard about the Crossing of the Sea and the battle with Amalek. That's what Rashi says. These are the events recorded in the previous sedra. Other commentaries point to certain textual references about Sinai and are of the opinion that Yitro came after Matan Torah, sometime during the almost one year that the People were camped at Har Sinai. If this is so, then we have an example of "there is no set order in the Torah's account..." and we can add the events of Sinai to the list of what Yitro "heard and came". Of course, when the Torah does not follow chronological sequence, there are reasons... sometimes we get

insights into what those reasons might be.

**VAYICHADE YITRO**, Yitro was delighted with all of the good that G-d had done for the people of Israel. That's the "plain" meaning of the word. Rashi mentions another possible meaning of the word - of the skin breaking out in "goose-bumps", perhaps a subconscious feeling of mortification for the downfall of his former colleagues. One has to be sensitive and careful with what one says to a convert or potential convert.

## Levi - Second Aliya - 11 p'sukim - 18:13-23

On the "following day", Yitro observes Moshe judging the People from morning until night. He offers suggestions for a more efficient system. Moshe should teach the People what G-d requires of them, and he should also handle the most difficult questions and disputes. But the bulk of the daily judging should be assigned to qualified individuals who will be in charge of groups of ten, fifty, a hundred, and a thousand people. Yitro explains that this new system will not only make things easier for Moshe, but the people too will be benefited.

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

some commentaries say it also was before Matan Torah.)

**SDT: "On the following day..."** The plain meaning would be, on the day following Yitro's arrival. Rashi, however, quotes the Midrash in saying that the day was the morrow of Yom Kippur, that very first Yom Kippur when Moshe came down from the mountain with the second set of Luchot. This makes an important statement, that not only is building the Mishkan an essential part of the "getting back to life following the Golden Calf disaster" period, but so is the everyday social and civil functioning of the people.

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

With the first part of Parshat Yitro belonging more to Mishpatim.

However you look at the first part of the sedra, the story of Yitro seems to be an interruption between the

events of the Exodus and the Splitting of the Sea, the Manna, the battle against Amalek on the one hand, and Matan Torah on the other. But it is definitely NOT an interruption - it is a prerequisite for Matan Torah. Moshe's view of the judging process, as he explains to Yitro who asks him what he's doing, is that the people come to him LIDROSH ET HA'ELOKIM, to seek out G-d. Yitro's point is that there is a lack of civility among the disputing individuals which must be handled BEFORE they can pursue Knowledge of G-d. This interlude about civil justice can teach us that good interpersonal relations allows us to really benefit from Matan Torah. Similarly, DERECH ERETZ KODMA LATORAH.

## Shlishi - Third Aliya - 4 p'sukim - 18:24-27

Moshe accepts Yitro's suggestions and selects the judges. Commentaries point out that the actual qualifications of the judges that Moshe selected were more "modest" than Yitro had recommended. In theory, the very highest caliber person should be sought after as judge. In reality, we often have to settle for the best we can find in our society or our particular location. This was especially so for the recently freed slaves. It takes time to develop high-caliber people.

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

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

This portion started with Yitro's coming, so it ends with his return to Midyan. That return was in the second year before we left Har Sinai.

## R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 6 p'sukim - 19:1-6

*Here begins the Torah reading for Shavuot morning*

[P> 19:1 (25)] The Torah now returns to the sequence of Y'tzi'at Mitzrayim to Matan Torah. On Rosh Chodesh Sivan

(six weeks after leaving Egypt) the Children of Israel arrive at Sinai.

### **Worth reviewing...**

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

After settling at the foot of Mount Sinai, Moshe ascends to G-d (whatever that really means) and G-d tells him

what he is to say to the women and men (sequence is intentional and based on the analysis of the terms Beit Yaakov and then Bnei Yisrael). A clear connection is made between G-d's having taken us out of Egypt and His taking us to Him as His Chosen People - with the condition that we follow Him and His Torah. It is true that a Jew is a Jew regardless of his keeping the Torah or not, but it is clear that G-d has always demanded of us that we be committed to Torah and Mitzvot in order for our relationship with Him to be mutual and actively positive from both sides.

## **Chamishi - 5th Aliya** **- 13 p'sukim - 19:7-19**

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

a vision or spiritual telepathy - so that the people could be part of the experience).

**SDT: G-d tells Moshe that the People should "sanctify themselves today AND tomorrow". It is relatively easy to sanctify oneself on the day of the great miraculous events of Matan Torah. The challenge to each of us is to sanctify ourselves on the many tomorrows that follow. The days after the wondrous events... The days when our lives return to "normal". This is what being Jewish is about. Yom Kippur is special and holy. Our additional challenge is to sanctify the day after Yom Kippur. We sanctify the mundane. Therefore, there really is nothing that is actually mundane for us.**

## Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 20 p'sukim - 19:20-20:14

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

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

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

**[S> 20:2 (5)]** What we call the first two

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

## MITZVA notes

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

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

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

This is defined as

(1) swearing to the truth of something that is obviously true and well-known - e.g. that the Sun is hot - a oath in vain, because everyone knows it to be true,

(2) to swear in denial of an obvious truth - that the Moon is made of cheese. Interestingly, this is not considered a lie or a false oath, since - hopefully - everyone knows that the Moon is not made of cheese. Only when the truth of a matter is unknown do we use the term lie and false oath. A vain oath is just as serious as a false one, so this distinction is largely academic, but it emphasizes the seriousness of being flippant in regard to swearing;

(3) to swear to violate the Torah - e.g. that one will eat pork. Such an oath is immediately void since we are considered to have taken a prior oath (at Sinai) to not eat pork. Hence, the oath is in vain and is a disrespectful use of G-d's name;

(4) to swear to do something that is impossible - e.g. to stay awake for a full week.

The common denominator of these types of vain oaths is that they all "cheapen" the use of G-d's name and threaten the smooth functioning of society which often must rely on the seriousness of a real oath.

In addition to actual vain oaths, this prohibition is considered by some authorities to include the saying of a B'RACHA L'VATALA (a b'racha in vain), and its partner, a BRACHA SHE-EINO TZ'RICHCHA (unnecessary b'racha). 'Merely' saying G-d's name in vain is forbidden but is not considered part of this Commandment #3. It falls under one or more other mitzvot.

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

The mitzva of ZACHOR includes saying Kiddush as Shabbat enters, and Havdala as Shabbat leaves. (Officially, K&H are said in davening as a fulfillment of the Torah command, and again with wine, in fulfillment of a Rabbinic command. It's a bit more complicated than that, but this is the basic idea.) Prohibitions of Melacha are divided into 39 categories, each of which contains other related activities, usually with the same goal. E.g., PLANTING is one of the 39 categories; watering, pruning, fertilizing all help the growth of plants and are TOLADOT of PLANTING, and are also considered Torah violations of equal seriousness to the parent melacha, Planting-ZOREI'A.

Aside from these two mitzvot about Shabbat, there are three others in the Torah - last week's prohibition of T'CHUM SHABBAT, next week's positive command to abstain from melacha (the other side of the prohibition here), and Vayakhel's prohibition of courts carrying out punishments on Shabbat.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**[S> 20:14 (11/15)]** specifies the prohi-

bition of coveting one's fellow's wife, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that is his.

## Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 9 p'sukim - 20:15-23

**[S> 20:15 (4)]** The People are awe-struck by the supernatural phenomena of the Sinai experience and they keep their distance. They ask Moshe to tell them what G-d wants rather than hearing His Voice directly.

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

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

The last 5 p'sukim are read for the Maftir.

## Haftara - 21 p'sukim -

## Yeshayahu 6:1-7:6, 9:5-6

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

## Bringing the Prophets to Life

**Weekly insights into the Haftara by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler**

*Author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)*

## LO BASHAMAYIM HI

**YITRO - 21 p'sukim -  
Yeshayahu 6:1-7:6, 9:5-6**

Our parasha this week is truly the climax of the Yetzi'at Mitzrayim story and of the entire Sefer Sh'mot. From Hashem's initial demand of Par'o to release B'nei 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 s'firat 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 as a simply 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'nei Yisra'el having heard of the miracles wrought for them by Hashem, including the victory over Amalek, which imme-

diately 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 haftara.

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 Moshe at the end of his life: LO BASHAMAYIM HI [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 Shof'tim as those who would bring the laws down to earth and make them practical for mankind.

The haftara 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 haftara to the vision seen by Bnei 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. \*



*The fun way to go over the weekly sedra with your children, grandchildren, Shabbat guests*

## B'SHALACH-SHIRAH

<> One Unexplained

12 springs and 70 (AYIN) date trees.

## YITRO



Hearing ear of VAYISHMA YITRO, and Yitro heard... <> Max Baer Jr. played Jethro (Yitro) for 9 years on the Beverly Hillbillies <> B"H was said by Yitro when he heard all the things that G-d had done for Israel. From that we are taught that one makes a bracha on miracles, and from there

we also learn to say Baruch HaShem when appropriate <> The scales and gavel represent the justice system, Yitro's suggestion, Moshe's response, etc. <> Yitro's advice included the assignment of "captains" of groups of 1000, 100, 50, and 10 - represented by the Roman numerals M,C,L,X <> Bnei Yisrael's arrival at Har Sinai is described by the word VAYICHAN, as Rashi puts it, we were like one person with one heart <> Shofar is one of the symbols of the Sinai experience, as we more than mention on Rosh HaShana <> The washing machine is for the people to clean their clothes during the preparatory days leading up to Matan Torah <> Wine cup is for Kiddush (ZACHOR ET YOM HASHAB-BAT L'KAD'SHO) <> and the negation circle is for the prohibition of Melacha, including writing, watering plants, digging, knitting, building, fishing, shearing sheep <> Do not go up to the Mizbei'ach with steps (the negated ladder) is a prohibition at the end of the sedra <> Volcano represents Har Sinai smoking from the fire of G-d's presence <> An angel flew to the Heavenly Mizbei'ach and picked up a glowing coal in a pair of tongs. He then touched the coal to Yeshayahu's lips, representing a purifying process that would allow the prophet to speak on behalf of G-d <> MEM SOFIT, which is better called a "Closed" MEM, appears in the haftara in the middle of a WORD,

rather than at the end, where we are used to seeing that kind of MEM <> negated golf tee and saw as in LO TISA, Dibra #3 <> Paratrooper wings (two) plus butterfly (4 wings) are for the angels described by Yishayahu as having 6 wings <> the logo in the lower-left is of Mt. Sinai medical facilities <> symbol for UV, ultra-violet light or radiation. In Hebrew, AL-SEGOLI. Feminine form for the color violet is SEGULA, as in G-d's promise that we will be for Him the AM SEGULA above all other nations - hence, ULTRA-SEGULA <> cover of Scholastic Press's Goosebumps series... When Yitro came to Moshe, having heard about the Splitting of the Sea and the battle against Amalek (and maybe about Matan Torah also), Moshe detailed all that had happened to Bnei Yisrael. The Torah describes Yitro's reaction with the words VAYICHAD YITRO. Rashi says that the plain meaning of the word is that Yitro rejoiced because of all the things he heard. Rashi gives a second explanation of the word VAYICHAD. That Yitro's skin erupted in goosebumps. A nervous or frightened reaction, perhaps, to what happened to the Egyptians, to whom he had been allied and with whom he possibly identified. From here, our Sages tell us, we learn to be extremely sensitive to the convert, who has changed his life completely by becoming Jewish, but still has

memories and feelings about his former life <> The can of RAID bug spray a word that occurs in the sedra twice and two other times in the Torah, besides 9 more times in the rest of Tanach - RAID! (go down) <> The words at the top and bottom of the right-hand side of the ParshaPix are the five tastes - Sweet, salty, sour, bitter, and umami (savory) - T'AMIM. Two of them are TAAMEI HA-ELYON, the upper notes, and three are TAAMEI HATACHTON, the lower notes <> the flashlight is called a torch in British English; a torch is a LAPID, as in part of the description of the atmosphere of Har Sinai <> Rabbi She'ar Yashiv Cohen z"l for the son of the navi Yeshayahu - She'ar Yashiv (in the haftara) <> the soldier is an Anshei Chayil (not the one Yitro or Moshe meant, but suitable for ParshaPix) <> the negated electric saw is for the prohibitin of cutting stones for the Mizbei'ach with a metal tool <> the Xed out March is for the Third Month, which is NOT March, but rather Sivan <> the logo of the TODAY show is for BAYOM HAZEH (rather than ON THAT DAY... <> Synesthesia is a condition in which one type of stimulation evokes the sensation of another, as when the hearing of a sound produces the visualization of a color. And in our case, the seeing of the sounds at Sinai. Zeugma is the act of using a word, particularly an adjective or verb, to apply to more

than one noun when its sense is appropriate to only one. This could be the simple explanation of seeing the thunder and lightning. <> The open Torah scroll with the Aseret HaDibrot and an open Gemara on the scroll makes the statement that we received the Torah - Written and Oral at Sinai - not just the Big Ten. To say this, we need to expand the Sinai Experience beyond the one day of Maamad Har Sinai to include the 40 days and 40 nights that Moshe spent on Har Sinai learning all of the Torah from G-d, so that he would transmit all of Torah and Mitzvot to the People of Israel - that's us! <> Eliezer, Yosef, Par'o, Sommelier, Moshe - When one says something to someone else, the common words in the Torah are VAYDABEIR and VAYOMER. Much less common is VAYSAPEIR, and he told. The people listed are the one's who told (rather than spoke or said) something to someone. The Sommelier is the SAR HAMASHKIM who told Par'o his story with Yosef <>  $10 = 6 + 1 + 3$  <> says who? - It is interesting that the sum of the digits of TARYAG, 613, is 10. Because Rav Sadiya Gaon (and others) said that the Aseret HaDibrot contain all 613 mitzvot <> One Unexplained

## The Politics of Revelation

### YITRO

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... (D'varim 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 kohanim 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.

The second key element lies in the prologue to the covenant. God tells Moshe:

"This is what you shall say to the House of Yaakov, 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 kohanim and a holy nation you shall be to Me.' These are the words you must speak to the Israelites." (Sh'mot 19:3-6)

Moshe tells this to the people, who reply:

"We will do everything the Lord has said." (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 Hak-hel, 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 Moshe to consult first with the women and only then with the men ("this is what you shall say to the House of Yaakov" - 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. 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.

### Around the Shabbat Table:

- (1) **What part of the Sinai story feels most meaningful to you, and why?**
- (2) **Why do you think God chose to reveal the Torah to an entire people rather than to one key leader?**
- (3) **How do you define democracy from the Torah perspective?**

**Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH**

## Message from the Haftara

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# Crafting a Covenant for the Imperfect

## YITRO

The haftara for Parshat Yitro recounts the call to prophecy of Yeshayahu, a moment of initial contact with the Divine that is vivid, unsettling, and transformative. It parallels in many ways the revelation experienced by the people of Israel at Mount Sinai in this week's parsha, as they prepared to receive the Tablets of the Covenant. On the surface, both of these revelations were accompanied by an overwhelming sensory experience of thunderous sound, trembling earth, and engulfing smoke. But below the surface, they mark the beginning of a more concrete and binding relationship, one that required intensive preparation, and that did not come naturally or feel entirely comfortable at first.

In both the parsha and haftara, revelation forces its recipients to confront their humanity and imperfection. In our parsha, God instructs Moshe: "Go to the people and consecrate them today and

tomorrow; let them wash their clothes and be ready for the third day, for on that third day the Lord will descend on Mount Sinai before all the peoples' eyes" (Sh'mot 19:10-11). Encountering God requires preparation. When Yeshayahu experiences his prophetic vision, his response is deeply personal (6:5): "I am condemned, for my mouth has been defiled, one man among a people with their mouths defiled, and my eyes see the King, the Lord of Hosts". God responds not by rejecting him, but by purifying him: "One of the Serafim flew to me, and in his hand was a coal, taken with tongs from the altar top. With this he touched my lips and said, 'When this has touched your lips, your iniquity is gone, and all your sin forgiven'" (vv. 6-7).

We learn from these encounters that the divine-human relationship is not built despite human imperfection, but through an honest acknowledgement of it. God does not demand perfection as a precondition for connection; rather, He recognizes these challenges and provides us with the tools to work through them. What's more, only a person like Yeshayahu who understands his own limitations can successfully convey God's message to the people. Yeshayahu's concern about his defiled mouth reminds us of Moshe's famous concern that he was "not a man of words" (Sh'mot 4:10). In both cases,

God does not erase the limitation, but works through it, empowering the messenger to fulfill his mission despite his perceived inadequacy.

It is made clear to Yeshayahu from the outset that the people of Israel will themselves have to overcome significant challenges to be able to hear the prophet's message. "Go – tell this people: Hear, you shall hear but understand it not, see it all but know it not" (Yeshayahu 6:9). The challenge, then, is not only prophetic clarity, but human receptivity. For Yeshayahu, and for us today, the task is to find concrete avenues and methods through which we can meaningfully engage and build a relationship with God. The relationship begins from the starting point of our humanity. This is why the mitzvot, which were first given at Sinai, are designed for human beings with human weaknesses and opportunities, and not for angels.

This idea is illustrated powerfully in a well-known Talmudic story (Shabbat 88-89) in which Moshe is commanded to defend why the Torah should be given to Israel, when the angels demand that it be reserved for them. Moshe points out that the Torah declares "I am the Lord your God who took you out of Egypt." "Did you go down to Egypt?" he asks the angels. "Were you enslaved to Pharaoh? Why should you possess the Torah?"

The Torah, Moshe argues, is meant to guide human life, moral conduct, and the challenges of existence on earth. Our rendezvous with God, through Torah and mitzvot, is meant for fallible people, offering a path by which we draw closer to God, and He to us.

Interestingly, within the kabbalistic tradition, mitzvot are sometimes called "suggestions" (ATIN), not because they are optional, but because they are practical strategies for connection with God. This idea is expressed eloquently by Rabbi Tzadok of Lublin (Dover Tzekek p. 40) when he explains that the Jewish people heard the first two commandments firsthand from God: "I am your God" and "You shall have no other gods". According to Kabbalistic tradition, these two statements actually contain within them the spiritual kernel of all commandments, as they refer to establishing a singular and exclusive bond with God. Thus, the remaining 611 laws are essentially practical suggestions and pathways through which we can live out that bond in our everyday lives.

A truly honest assessment of our relationship with God therefore requires asking ourselves difficult questions: Are we committed to seeking God's presence in our lives? Do the mitzvot still speak to us, or has our observance become perfun-

tory and robotic? Are we willing to invest the effort in deepening our relationship with God?

This is the enduring message that is given to the prophet Yeshayahu: you, the prophet, and they, the people, are human. Human relationships are complex and dynamic, and they require constant work and investment. That is precisely what makes the covenant between God and the Jewish people so precious. It is sanctified and purified not by perfection, but by the efforts both parties invest in it. And it is only through that sustained effort that true closeness can be achieved. 



## It's Like Marble Cake

Parshat Yitro's 75 p'sukim divide among its 3 p'rakim - Sh'mot 18 (27 p'sukim), 19 (25 p'sukim), 20 (23 p'sukim).

Let's pull perek 18 out of the Torah for a moment (don't worry; we'll put it back and hopefully, with greater appreciation).

Parshat B'shalach began with Bnei Yisrael leaving Mitzrayim and successfully crossing the Sea, with the pursuing Egyptians no longer in

pursuit. They traveled from Yam Suf to Mara, where the bitter waters were miraculously turned sweet and drinkable. In Mara, the people had a solid introduction to the Torah they would be receiving a little more than a month later. From there, they went to Eilim. From there, they went to Midbar Sin, a.k.a. Alush, where they first received the manna and where they spent their first Shabbat. From Alush, they went to R'fidim, where they were attacked by and successfully repelled Amalek.

That's how B'shalach ends. The Torah continues (remember, we've removed perek 18) with Parshat... it might have been named Sh'lishi, with Bnei Yisrael having traveled from R'fidim and arriving in Midbar Sinai. Then comes the prelude to Matan Torah and then the awesome Sinai experience.

Nothing seems to be missing. Events in R'fidim at the end of B'shalach to traveling from R'fidim to Sinai in our newly (and very temporarily) renamed Parshat Sh'lishi.

Okay. Now let's put perek 18 back. Yitro, a midyanite priest and father-in-law of Moshe, hears all that has happened to Bnei Yisrael and comes with Tzipora, Gershom and Eliezer to join up with Moshe and his people.

What did Yitro hear and when did he come? If he heard about the Splitting of the Sea and of the battle against

Amalek (which Rashi and other commentaries say), then his coming would be chronologically correct, albeit a puzzling interruption in the sequence of the events from R'fidim to Sinai. If he also heard about Matan Torah, then this first part of Sh'mot 18 happened after Matan Torah, and it is definitely an interruption at this point in the Torah.

Again: the first part of perek 18 might have happened before Matan Torah or after it. The second part seems to be definitely after. Rashi says it was relatively way after - specifically, the day after the first Yom Kippur, four months after Matan Torah.

So we are dealing with EIN SEDER MUKDAM UMUCHAR BATORAH, the Torah is not necessarily in chronological order.

So, what is Yitro's story doing before the episode of Matan Torah?

No doubt, there are a number of suggested reasons. Here's one.

Two to three million people were present at Har Sinai when G-d gave us the Torah. They were totally unified at that point - K'ISH ECHAD B'LEIV ECHAD- like one person with one heart. Jewish unity is very good for us as a Nation. But it has one possible missing feature. People tend to lose their personal identity in a mass of people. Especially when they are single-minded.

Comes Yitro and teaches us something very important. He was a single person. He was alone. And he made his personal journey which ended with his coming to Bnei Yisrael and joining them.

Each of us is a part of Klal Yisrael. Am Yisrael. And that is very good. But our acceptance of the Torah and our commitment to G-d and His Torah has to be both as part of the group and as an individual Jew. That's (perhaps) why the sedra begins with perek 18 and why the sedra of Matan Torah is named Yitro.

And here is something else. The story of Matan Torah, Revelation at Sinai, does not end with Parshat Yitro. Bnei Yisrael hasn't even proclaimed the famous NAASEH V'NISHMA yet. To find those inspiring and amazing words, we need to go to the end of next week's sedra of Mishpatim. The end of the sedra. After over 50 mitzvot related to the proper functioning of Jewish society have been presented.

The bulk of Mishpatim can be seen as a continuation of the part of Yitro's story about suggesting to Moshe how the people should be judged on a day-to-day basis.

Its sort of like marble cake. Make the batter for the chocolate part of the cake, then the batter for the white part. Don't mix them together, rather

put them side by side and swirl gently so they intertwine. Then bake...

The Yitro episode and all the Mishpatim are separate from the whole experience of Maamad Har Sinai and Matan Torah.

But not really separate. It is so significant how they are intertwined. And we must understand the multiple messages in the way they are presented to us in the Torah.

May we each be ZOCHEH to a continual renewal and upgrading of acceptance of Torah and Mitzvot, day after day, year after year, AD BI'AT HAGO'EL... and beyond. **PTDT**

וָפֵל

μUX  
microULPAN

Hey, do you think VAF'L is Hebrew for waffle? It isn't. Just a borrowed word from English.

The real Hebrew word for waffle is

אַפִּיפִית

I don't think you should ask for waffles in a restaurant. Use VAFALEM, but at least you know the real Hebrew word.



*Walk through the Parsha*

with **Rabbi David Walk**



**YITRO**

## Family Reunion

This week's Torah reading is most famous, of course, for its spectacular presentation of the Ten Commandments, but it begins with a touching family scene: Yitro brings Yocheved and her boys, Gershom and Eliezer, back to Moshe. The Torah seems most interested in the interaction between Moshe and his father in law.

We're informed that Yitro came because of what he heard. But what did he hear? The verse says: Yitro, priest of Midyan, Moshe's father-in-law, heard all that God had done for Moshe and for Yisrael - God's people: how the ETERNAL had brought Yisrael out from Egypt (Sh'mot 18:1).

So, he heard that God had taken the Jews out of Egypt. Is that all he heard? Probably not, because in the Song of the Sea it says that: Peoples heard and they trembled (15:14). I guess that mass of 'peoples' who heard about the splitting of the Sea, included Yitro. This also brings up an important point: The rest of the world heard about God's awesome power and ran for the hills in fear. Yitro, on the other hand, immediately set out to greet and rejoice with the newly freed people.

This brings us back to ask why it was so significant that Yitro heard about the Exodus? Actually, the Ohr HaChayim discusses this issue and points out two important ideas. First, we're told that Yitro was a priest of Midyan. Why would we announce that? As the Ohr HaChayim notes: Being a pagan priest is hardly to someone's credit, why would the Torah tell us this? Well, he answers that perhaps the Torah wanted us to know the greatness of Yitro who converted to Judaism even though he occupied an exalted position, and it would presumably cost him his prominence and wealth.

Also, the Ohr HaChayim notes that the Talmud (Sanhedrin 106) informs us that Yitro had been one of Par'o's advisers, and was thoroughly familiar with the system by which Egypt made sure its prisoners could not escape. When he heard about the Israelites having left Egypt he simply could not believe this. The Torah therefore had to repeat this aspect of God's achievements as the one that Yitro had heard which precipitated his trip to the encampment of B'nei Yisrael.

Okay, Yitro HEARD about the Exodus and, therefore, arrives with Moshe's wife and children in tow to become part of this most significant historical event. This sweet scene must be understood. It is remarkable that this important personality comes to his son-in-law. The Malbim points out

that normal courtesy would dictate the opposite; the son-in-law should come to his wife's father.

The Malbim further notes that Yitro abases himself before Moshe, because he formerly had doubted his son-in-law's sincerity. Moshe seemingly abandons his wife and small children to visit his people in Egypt. Now he recognizes the nobility of Moshe and his motives, the Redemption of the Children of Yisrael. He abases himself before God's representative to the world.

We have this warm and positive feeling towards Yitro and are moved by his reaction to the news of wonders wrought by Moshe on behalf of B'nei Yisrael. When he proclaims "Baruch Hashem!" we are emotionally moved. When he abandons his previous status and belief system, we are truly impressed.

It is the essence of his 'hearing' which should really cause us to be blown away by Yitro and his behavior. But before we get back to Yitro, I feel that I must share an insight about SH'MI'A, 'hearing'.

The S'forno explains that SH'MI'A does not always mean 'hear'. It can also mean becoming aware of something which occurred some time before the 'hearing' of the event. On the other hand, R'IIYA, which usually means 'seeing', can sometimes be used to indicate first hand knowledge

of an event. This explains why the Torah tells us that the witnesses at Mount Sinai 'saw the thunder' (KOLOT, 20:15).

Yitro had this delayed and second hand testimony about the amazing events surrounding the Exodus. Then he reacts. However, his reaction is not the expected or common one. What do you do when all the realities of your perceived world are undone and totally overturned? Most people react in shock and dismay. Most of us like and feel comfortable with the norm, the regular and comfortable.

So, the Torah tells us, in the Song of the Sea, that most people were in shock and dismay that their world had been turned topsy turvy. But not Yitro! According to the Midrash, he had studied all of the world's idolatries and knew how corrupt and wrong they were. His reaction to this triumphant introduction of monotheism was to shout 'BARUCH HASHEM'!

I can't help thinking of the scene as the British forces surrendered to the Americans at Yorktown in 1781. The band played 'The World Turned Upside Down'. The sentiment dismayed all royalists, and delighted all those desiring representative government.

How should we feel when the world is turned upside down? We should analyze the situation and decide if the change is for the better or not. Yitro

got it right! He was delighted that paganism was defeated; monotheism triumphed.

There is so much going on in this story of reunion, and we should feel so happy for Moshe and his family. But it's the reaction of Yitro which provides us with the truly significant lesson of the story: Analyze the situation and then choose the proper reaction. Yitro chose very well indeed. 

## Rav Kook Torah



by Rabbi Chanan Morrison  
[www.ravkooktorah.com](http://www.ravkooktorah.com)

## The Lesson of Mount Sinai

What does the name Sinai mean? The Talmudic interpretation is surprising – and somewhat shocking:

“What is Mount Sinai? The mountain that brought enmity (SIN'A) upon the nations of the world” (Shabbat 89b).

What is the nature of this animosity? What does it have to do with Mount Sinai?

### Why Sinai?

Where would one expect that God would reveal His Torah to the Jewish people? The logical place would be on the holiest mountain in the world –

Jerusalem's Mount Moriah, the site of the Akeidat Yitzchak, Yaakov's holy "gate to heaven" (B'reishit 28:17), the spot where both Temples stood. Why did the revelation of the Torah take place outside of the Land of Israel, in the middle of the desert?

The fact that the Torah was not given to the Jewish people in their own land, but rather in a desert, in no-man's land, is very significant. This indicates that the inner content of the Torah is relevant to all peoples. If receiving the Torah required the special holiness of the Jewish people, then the Torah should have been given in a place that reflects this holiness. Revelation on Mount Sinai attests to the Torah's universal nature.

This idea is corroborated by the Talmudic tradition that "God offered the Torah to every nation and every tongue, but none accepted it, until He came to Israel, who received it" (Avoda Zara 2b). This Midrash is well known, but it contains an implication that is often overlooked. How could God offer the nations something that is beyond their spiritual level? It is only because the Torah is relevant to all peoples that their refusal to accept it reflects so harshly on them.

The Torah's revelation on Mount Sinai, as a neutral location belonging to none and thus belonging to all, emphasizes the disappointment and

estrangement from God that the nations brought upon themselves by rejecting the Torah and its ethical teachings. It is for this reason Mount Sinai "brought enmity upon the nations of the world."

In the future, however, the nations will recognize this mistake and correct it:

"In those days, it shall come to pass that ten men from all the languages of the nations will take hold of every Jew by a corner of his cloak and say, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you!'" (Zachariya 8:23)

*Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 133-134.  
Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV,  
pp. 219-220*

## Rav Kook on T'hilim

*from an unpublished work  
by Rabbi Chanan Morrison*

## T'hilim 9 - Nations Who Forgot God

The Sages expressed mixed feelings towards the ancient Persians. Rabban Gamliel lauded them for their modesty and refined manners, while Rav Yosef was far less complimentary, branding them as a nation

“consecrated and destined for Gehinnom.” Why such harsh words for a people renowned for their refinement and culture?

## Destined for Gehinnom

When we observe a primitive people who rob and plunder, we attribute their actions to their savage and uncultured nature. However, when dealing with a civilized nation, we expect them to recognize the value of just and equitable dealings. When a highly-developed society is gripped by a belligerent spirit of conquest and oppression, like the ancient Persians who subjugated the Jewish communities under their control, then they are destined to be judged harshly by the Eternal Judge.

The expression “consecrated and destined for Gehinnom” indicates that this judgment is not due to a primitive nature, but rather the result of a willful choice. The cultured Persians should have chosen the path of goodness, but instead opted for the path of violence and subjugation.

## Forgetting God

This idea may also be heard in King David’s call for God’s justice against evil nations:

“The Eternal has made Himself known, executing judgment... The wicked will return to the grave, all the nations who forget God.” (T’hilim 9:17-18)

This depiction of “nations who forget God” indicates that in fact these nations should remember God. They possess the potential and sophistication to know God and emulate His ways of kindness and justice. But instead, they chose to pursue a path of moral treachery, so they are called “nations who forget God”.

*Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I on B'rachot 8b (1:111)*

## The Daily Portion - Sivan Rahav Meir

### Five things for Shabbat: Are you ready?

*Translated by Janine Muller Sherr*

1) This week’s parsha, Yitro, is the fifth parsha in the Book of Sh’mot. In this parasha, the nation of Israel arrives at Mount Sinai where God reveals the Ten Commandments to the people.

2) The Revelation at Sinai was a transformative and unprecedented world event. In this parasha, we read about God’s historic revelation to one nation and the foundation principles that were subsequently adopted by all of humanity: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not steal; Remember the seventh day to keep it holy; Honor

you father and mother; You shall not make for yourself an idol.' These core beliefs at the heart of so many mitzvot and laws.

**3)** It is important to keep in mind that the most repeated word/phrase in the Ten Commandments is "no" or "You shall not". In fact, this word appears no less than 13 times! These are not declarations of rights, but of obligations. God calls on us to establish a society in which limits are enforced and people exercise self-control.

**4)** Note that the parasha in which the nation of Israel receives the Torah is not named after Moshe, but after Yitro, his father-in-law, a non-Jew who converted to Judaism and joined the Jewish people. Before the Giving of the Torah, Yitro offers Moshe wise counsel about delegating his responsibilities and recruiting other leaders who can help him judge the people.

**5)** But this is not merely a historical event; it's happening now. Our parasha calls on us to feel as if we are once again standing at the foot of Mount Sinai, to imagine experiencing the Giving of the Torah, and to be deeply stirred by the Ten Commandments, as we receive them again this week.

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by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

YITRO

## Kohanim or Prophets?

In the Bible there are two ways of being a religious leader.

One can be a kohen, concerned with rituals and practices, or a prophet who preaches the word of HaShem.

This week's portion defines Israel as a people of kohanim - MAMLECHET KOHANIM V'GOI KADOSH - "a kingdom of kohanim, a holy people" (Sh'mot 19:6).

We all minister to God in His sanctuary, not merely in the official house of worship but in the home (the MIKDASH M'AT, miniature temple), the factory, office, school and street. We have prayers to say, kashrut to maintain, Shabbats and festivals to honour.

Every day of the year, every stage in life has its rituals to observe. That might be called the particularistic dimension of Jewish identity: we are Jews "far zich" - "amongst ourselves".

From the example of Moshe (D'varim 34:10), we also learn that we are a

people of prophets with a universalistic mission amongst mankind. As prophets we belong to the world.

ALEINU, the great concluding prayer of every Jewish service, written by Rav in the 3rd century CE, sums up our two dimensions: particularism in the first paragraph, universalism in the second.

The prophetic role begins with Judaism but is capable of being shared by other peoples.

## Yitro's 7 Names

People's names in the Bible all have a special meaning.

In the case of Yitro - there are seven names and seven meanings, according to rabbinic midrash.

His two main names are connected with a root that means "additional" - he was "Yitro" because he performed extra good deeds and "Yeter" because he caused extra texts to enter the Torah.

He was "Chovav" because he was beloved of God, "Re'u'el" because he was God's friend, "Chever" because he was a close associate of the Almighty, "Puti'el" because he abandoned idolatry, and "Keini" because he was zealous for God.

Many people these days acquire their names just because of what is fashionable at the time or because

their parents liked the sound of a particular name. Biblical parents were more creative and thought hard about what they wanted their child's name to express.

In modern Israel this type of creativity has come to the fore again, and sometimes there are names that are specially coined for the occasion.

It can be a good idea. We need to encourage parents everywhere to invent names with more than mere sound to recommend them.

Of course in many cases the task has already been done by family tradition and the name of a precious loved one is perpetuated in a new generation.

-OZ

## Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

## Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

### YITRO

*(Yitro) Moshe's father-in-law said to him: 'What you are doing is not good. You will wear yourself out...' (18:17-18).*

*Moshe listened to his father-in-law, and did all as he said. (18:24)*

Yitro, the text relates, observed the pressure Moshe was under in dispensing justice to Am Yisrael. He accordingly advised him to delegate

responsibilities. Routine matters would be dealt with through a judicial hierarchy composed of eligible worthies. That would free Moshe to focus on major issues, and in consultation with the Almighty (c.f. Bamidbar 9:8) when necessary. And the Torah tell us that Moshe duly listened to his father-in-law and carried out his recommendations.

Yet Moshe does not give Yitro a single mention when recalling the establishment of that system in the parallel text some 40 years later (D'varim 1:12-18). Why then, did Moshe accept his father-in-law's advice? And having acted on it, why did he not give credit where credit was due?

In response, though the Torah tells us that Moshe followed Yitro's advice, Abarbanel explains that he did so only superficially. There were subtle, but very meaningful differences. Yitro urged that the judges should be from anshei chayil - as Rashi explains, men with wealth. In contrast, Moshe would ultimately open these positions to anyone who could fulfil them: "Choose for yourselves wise men, who are known as such" (1:13). Then Moshe insisted that they be chachamim, people of wisdom - not just people of integrity as Yitro emphasized. One may add that Moshe stressed: "listen between the litigants and judge honestly" (1:17).

Being able to properly listen is a very rare quality, especially when 'in too much a hurry' and 'have seen it all before'. It was the crucial quality that Moshe insisted on, not Yitro. The virtues emphasized by Yitro of being G-d fearing, honest, and untainted by greed were all important, but they would be ineffective by themselves in the absence of wisdom: knowing how to listen, and perceptively and sagaciously read the situation.

It is the capacities to listen carefully, read a situation for what it is, and apply wisdom honourably and sincerely in the knowledge that "the judgement is G-d's" (ibid.) that takes us a lot further than Yitro suggested to Moshe. Thus Moshe accepted Yitro's advice as far as it went, but he went very much further by extending the pool of choice for judges on one hand, and by greatly tightening the requirements for judges on the other. Both were needed to make the system as fully effective and as Torah-compatible as possible. Without chochma - wisdom, the system would be worthless. And that chochma was entirely G-d's. As declared: "For it is G-d who gives chochma" (Mishlei 2:6).

Perhaps also this helps to explain why straight afterwards "Moshe sent his father-in-law away" (18:27). He honoured Yitro's effort as an outsider to associate with Klal Yisrael, and he

wanted to make him feel good in doing so. Yet at the same time he saw that relations would inevitably conflict and sour were he to stay and find that Moshe didn't see and do things as he wished. So Moshe tactfully terminated the visit leaving Yitro the sense of goodwill that comes from having been taken seriously and listened to. 

## Dvar Torah by Rabbi Chanoch Yeres

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

*Graciously shared with PhiloTorah*

### YITRO

At the end of the p'sukim of this week's parsha in which we receive the Torah, G-d gives Moshe three commandments:

not to make gods of gold or silver,

not to build an altar of stone with iron tools,

and not to construct steps leading up to the Altar (20:19-23).

The first of these commandments seems superfluous, the prohibition against making idols, is already stated explicitly in the Ten Commandments. However, the other two prohibitions seem to have little to do with the first commandments and almost nothing to do with Mt. Sinai? Furthermore, the Israelites have yet

been commanded about sacrifices. What relevance then could these commandments have for Israel?

The answer to these questions can be derived from the preface to these Mitzvot. "You have seen that I have spoken to you (directly) from the heavens."

In the previous verses Israel requested that rather than hearing G-d's awesome power directly, Moshe should act as their intermediary. By commanding these three mitzvot, G-d informs the Israelites that while in the future He will not appear in such awesome power, nevertheless, their direct line to G-d always remains open even without an intermediary.

Now we can better understand these commandments. The Abarbanel explains that the need to instruct us again not to make idols is to stress that we are not to create idols to stand between Israel and G-d.

In addition, the command not to use metal instruments in building the Altar is to reject any man-made technology for this holy purpose. It is understood that man abuses his technological advances for corruption and violence.

Finally, not only the actual Altar, but even the approach must be in absolute purity. Man must approach G-d in modesty and not with GILUI

ERVA that is unavoidable in walking up steps to that AVODA.

This group of Mitzvot, therefore is very relevant to the Mount Sinai experience. G-d wanted to reassure Israel that while grand public miracles like Sinai will not be visible in the future but this in no way diminishes the personal relationship which would continue between G-d and the Jewish people. We see this idea permeated through this text as G-d refers to himself numerous times. All these references to G-d can be seen as a reminder of the holiness necessary to approach Him and furthermore, it is a reassurance to us, even today, that G-d's personal relationship with His Chosen Nation will not waver nor diminish. 

## The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

YITRO 5785

In our Parsha, the awesome Revelation at Sinai is followed by what appears to be a rather prosaic ruling that enjoins the kohen from climbing with steps upon [Gd's] altar (20:23). Rather than steps, a ramp was constructed to reach the altar. The question is plain: How may this apparently anticlimactic conclusion to an otherwise inspirational and highly spiritually charged narrative be explained?

If we view ascending Gd's altar as a metaphor to serve HaShem, then the contrast between steps and a ramp teaches an important lesson. Attempting to reach a summit via steps affords the climber both the opportunity to rest at each step, and by standing level, avoiding slipping backwards. Using a ramp, however, not only does not allow for a respite, but one must exert a steady effort just to remain stationary and even greater exertion to move forward. So too, in our aspiration to forge a lasting relationship with HaShem, especially after a thrilling and ecstatic encounter with Divinity, we must be committed to brook no slacking-off, that our strivings must be constant and persistent with the realization that if we do not commit to constantly move upwards, we will inevitably backslide. And even when we do choose to take some moments of relaxation - which inevitably we must from time to time, we must be ever vigilant and alert - with an effort of conscious awareness - lest we succumb to our worst demons (yetzer haras), fritter away our forward progress, and slide - fall back and stumble into sin. Hence, the imagery of a ramp toward the altar serves as a fitting epilogue to the Giving of Torah instructing the Jew how to climb the ladder of moral and religious enlightenment and incorporate the experience of Sinai into his daily life.

Rashi, quoting the Midrash (Mechilta, Yitro 11), suggests another answer to our question. If the purpose of the ramp was to avoid even the slightest exposure of the nakedness of the kohen's legs as the verse explicitly indicates (which taking wide steps might occasion), then the law contains a far-reaching ethical lesson: "If regarding these stones which have no perception to care about their humiliation, the Torah nevertheless stipulates that since they serve a useful purpose, you should not treat them in a disrespectful manner, then in the case of your fellow-man who is created in the image of your Creator, how much more so must you treat him with respect and dignity." The message here is quite blunt. If after your spiritually enthralling rendezvous with Gd and hearing His voice, if that incomparable, rapturous experience does not translate into ethical and moral excellence insofar as your relationship with others, then the Revelation will have proven to be a transitory, ephemeral event with no lasting concrete value. If the great theophany at Sinai yields no righteous behavior, then, if we may coin an expression, that stirring experience will have been just so much "spiritual candy". In a word, the Parsha of Yitro must immediately be followed by the ethics of Parshat Mishpatim.

A final message of this simple passage is offered by Rav Ben Tzion Zachs (Menachem Tzion, p. 270). The Talmud (Sanhedrin 7b) states: "Bar Kapara taught, [based on a homiletical interpretation of this verse]: From where do our Sages derive [the ethical principle to]: Be temperate in judgment (Avot 1:1)? As it is written: "Neither shall you go up by steps onto My altar" (Sh'mot 20:23), [i.e., do not ascend hurriedly], and juxtaposed to it, [it is written]: V'EILEH HAMISHPATIM, And these are the ordinances that you shall set before them" (21:1). According to Rashi and Maharsha (ad loc.), the injunction against reaching the altar via steps was to caution a person not to rush to the top. Rather, he is counseled to ascend slowly and deliberately. The lesson that Bar Kapara derives from this ruling is that judgments should not be reached hastily and forcefully (as one typically climbs steps in such a fashion), but rather with patience and forethought.

On this last insight, Rav Shlomo Zevin extends this advice to propose an even more valuable lesson (L'Torah UI-moadim, pp. 98-100). Often in life, people experience a new awareness that inspires them to move their lives to a different level, to live deeper. They are moved to make changes. Yet often, as a result of a genuine longing to abandon a previous lifestyle of shallowness, falsehood, or shame,

people begin to take wide and expansive steps, determined to reform their lives and transform into a greater person in short spans of time. Therefore, the Torah is teaching us to never disregard the value of one small move in the quest for truth. Wherever you are in life, you can serve Gd genuinely according to your own unique talents and abilities. Challenge yourself to encounter your own inner light and truth; you need not climb on the truths and experiences of others. Grow slowly and be true to yourself. Take the ramp, not the stairs. Don't jump ahead of yourself, because your authentic self may be left behind. King Solomon put it simply (Mishlei 25:6): "Do not stand in the place of the great." Why? Not because by stepping into the shoes of the great, you will be robbing somebody else of his or her place of greatness. Rather, by doing so, you will be denying yourself your own individual process, the one that is great for you. Real people are inspired by other people but never copy them.

Of course, there are moments when a huge jump is justified. Big things happen when ordinary people muster the courage to actualize extraordinary visions. Sometimes, the path to recovery and to healing always requires a drastic leap. Yet we must ensure that these big steps enhance our true identity rather than crush it;

that they embody our inner calling and not a superficial emulation of other people's standards and behaviors.

To anchor down this truth, Rav Zevin quotes a fascinating Talmudic passage (Chulin 105a). Mar Ukva, said the following curious statement about himself: "I am, in comparison to my father, what vinegar is in comparison to wine. When my father would eat meat, he would wait a full 24 hours until he ate cheese. But I? When I eat meat, I eat cheese during the following meal." The obvious question is, if this sage held his father's behavior in such high esteem, to the extent of seeing himself as vinegar compared to his father as wine, why didn't he change his behavior and follow his father's custom and turn himself into "wine"? The answer may be that Mar Ukva was keenly aware of the truth that his father was on a totally different spiritual level than he. Waiting a full 24 hours between meat and milk would be merely an act of copying and mimicking his father's behavior. For his soul, this would be a meaningless experience. The halacha of waiting only 6 hours would suffice for Mar Ukva.

Thus, immediately following the most spiritually exhilarating event in history, the Torah culminates with this declaration: "You shall not

ascend My altar via steps, so that your nakedness not be exposed upon it." Do not become who you are not. Do not jump to places beyond yourself. Every movement forward must be internalized and integrated into your individual identity because when you take steps that overwhelm you, rather than elevate you, you may end up naked, and worse, you might fall down and lose everything.

In sum, the concluding pasuk in our Parsha has multiple meanings, each of which provide an extraordinary lesson and necessary epilogue to ensure that the glorious spiritual revelation and exalted religious teachings of the sacred covenant at Sinai would not be for naught. 



## GM - YITRO

Our commitment to G-d as a Nation is expressed by the neat partial pasuk (NPP) in this week's sedra, Sh'mot 19:6

וְאַתֶּם תְּהִיוּ לִי מְמֹלֶכֶת קֹהֲנִים וְגַם קָדוֹשׁ

"You (plural) will be a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation to Me."

In Hoshei'a 2:22, there is an expression of our commitment to G-d as individuals.

וְאַרְשֵׁתְּךָ כְּלֵי בְּאֶבְיוֹנָה וַיַּדְעָת אֶת־יְהֹוָה:

"And I (says HaShem) will betroth you (singular) to Me with faith, and you (singular) shall know G-d."

Each and every Jew must be committed to G-d and His Torah and Mitzvot on two different levels: As part of Klal Yisrael and as individuals.

This, perhaps, is why the Torah begins the story of our national experience of Revelation at Sinai, with the story of one individual who came to Judaism on his own - Yitro.

The NPP from Yitro and the pasuk from Hoshei'a are GMs at 1998.

Unrelated, but... In the year 1998 from Creation, Avraham Avinu was 50 years old and Sara Imeinu was 40. He wasn't Avinu yet, nor was she, Imeinu. They were still Avram and Sarai. Among the 10 generations from No'ach to Avraham, all were still alive except for Peleg who had died in 1996 and Nachor (Avraham's grandfather) who had died in 1997. In 1998, Hammurabi was king of Babylon (Bavel).

*USFUNEI T'MUNEI CHOL* is the working title of my hopeful book of Gimatriya Matches. The title translates to Hidden in the Sand. That's how I feel about my Gimatriya searches. Like walking along the beach with a metal detector. Beep-beep-beep. Lean down and find something. Usually, nothing of note. But sometimes you find something special.

# RED ALERT!

## YITRO

by Rabbi Eddie Davis (RED)  
of the Young Israel of Hollywood -  
Ft. Lauderdale (Florida)

## DIVREI TORAH

- According to our Sages, Yitro came to meet Bnei Yisrael for two reasons. Firstly to convert to Judaism, and secondly, to escort Tzipora and her sons to be together again with Moshe. When Moshe led the Jewish nation out of Egypt, he was totally absorbed by the huge task of being the leader of a nation of some 2.5 million people. He didn't think of his small family that he had sent back to Midyan when he arrived in Egypt over a year ago. (Oznayim LaTorah). The Talmud (Yoma) states that in order for the Kohein Gadol to represent the nation on Yom Kippur, he must be married. Similarly, for Moshe to be a monarch of this new nation, he must be married. His family is the critical anchor to his life. Kol HaKavod to Yitro for pointing this out to his son-in-law. The king needs his helpmate in order to function properly. Without them, he will become worn out very soon.
- After seeing the judicial system that existed, Yitro saw that it was immensely difficult for one man to rule a large nation in the area of social law. He suggested to Moshe that he

appoint many, many more judges to help out. After receiving the approval of the Almighty, the plan was implemented. When computed, the result was a huge number of judges. Not all of them did the actual judging. Many were assisting in conducting the business of judging and policing the business at hand. I wonder though, how many cases there were. Nobody was working or earning a living at that point of time. Without running a business, the economy of the nation was really on hold. Everyone had gold, silver, cattle, and sheep, but no need to buy or sell anything. Realizing that we are a contentious people still should not have caused so many cases to be heard!

- There is a Rashi quoting a Midrash which states that in the desert, Jews would wake up each morning to find their clothing cleaned and pressed. So why does Hashem tell Bnei Yisrael to wash their clothes (19:10). Maybe that's why the Yalkut Shimoni (279) writes that when the Torah states "wash their clothing", it means that they should go and immerse themselves in the Mikve. The Malbim (and the Oznayim LaTorah) write that originally Man was created as just a soul. The body was created as the clothing to the soul. Hence it would make sense that when the Torah says to wash their clothing, it could mean the original clothing to the soul, namely the body because it is the

clothing of the soul.

- The Ibn Ezra is very wordy in his commentary on the Aseret HaDibrot, and has some interesting comments. He writes that the Torah has a pattern. It starts with a commandment directed at the brain and heart (Believe in Hashem and No other gods), then moves to one directed at one's speech (Don't take Hashem's name in vain). Then Hashem directs itself to one's actions (Shabbat and Honoring parents.). The final 5 commandments reverses the order. Action (Don't Murder...) followed by speech (Don't testify falsely), ending with thought (Don't desire). The Torah directs itself to the entire human being, by going Thought, Speech, Action, Action, Speech, and Thought. The idea is that we have to control ourselves fully and dedicate our entire being to the service of the Almighty.

- The Abravanel writes that there are really more than Ten Commandments in this list. He counted at least fourteen. His premise is validated since there are four commandments within the second commandment concerning Idolatry. He states that there are Ten subjects of Mitzvot listed here. And that every one of the 613 Torah Mitzvot can be classified under one of these categories. Saadya Gaon states the same idea centuries before the Abravanel,

which means that this is a common thought among commentators. [Note: Originally, our Sages inserted the Ten Commandments into our daily morning prayers, placing them right before the Sh'ma. Then when the early Christian sect stated that only these Ten are important; and the others are not important, our Sages pulled the Ten Commandments out of the morning prayers. It comes to my mind that this idea could have motivated the Abravanel to state what he did. The Ten Commandments represent all 613 Mitzvot!]

- “I am the Lord, your God, who took you out of Egypt...” (20:2). Why not “who created the Heaven and Earth”? By stating the latter clause, people could conclude that Hashem was directing these Mitzvot to the entire world. Hashem said what He did in order to make it clear that these Mitzvot are meant only for Jews. Non-Jews are obligated to do only the Seven Mitzvot of Bnei No'ach and no more. A non-Jew is permitted to observe some other Mitzvot, except the Mitzva of Shabbat and Brit Mila. Those two Mitzvot are designated by the Torah's use of the word OT, meaning that these two Mitzvot define a meaningful, loving relationship between Hashem and Am Yisrael. With the Exodus from Egypt, we were no longer slaves to Pharaoh, but we did become servants of Hashem.

- Why does Hashem's name appear only in the first half of the Ten Commandments and does not appear in the last five Commandments of the Ten? Chizkuni offers answers, the second one is that these first five are Mitzvot between Man and Hashem. Hence since any violation of these five are against Hashem, His name appears. The last five are between Man and Man. Beyond Chizkuni's comments is a different message. Man should have reached the ability to establish these last five without Hashem's directives. He should not have been needed to command them. We could have concluded to legislate them on our own. The Chayei Adam mentions that all Mitzvot between Man and Man are actually more important because they also came from Hashem. Therefore in reality, all Mitzvot, including between Man and Man are also between Man and Hashem since they also came from Him!

- MIDRASH. The Mechilta compares the Tenth Commandment of Don't desire something that doesn't belong to you to the Fifth Commandment of Honoring your parents. A desirous person will have children who will dishonor him. Selfishness can lead a person to overstep his bounds of proper conduct. He will put his selfish desires above all other considerations.

## Questions by RED

### From the text

1. Whom was Yitro escorting to join Bnei Yisrael? (18:2,3)
2. The Torah never states specifically that Yitro converted. What verse in this Parsha do we see that Yitro was attracted to Judaism? (18:11)
3. What advice did Yitro give Moshe to assist in the judicial system for the nation? (18:19...)
4. What reward does the Torah say Hashem will grant you for fulfilling the Mitzva of Honoring your parents? (20:12)
5. Why were Bnei Yisrael terrified after the Revelation of Hashem? (20:15-17)

### From Rashi

6. What did Yitro hear regarding Bnei Yisrael? (18:1)
7. Aharon and all the Elders came to eat with Moshe's father-in-law. Where was Moshe? (18:12)
8. Hashem said that Bnei Yisrael would become a "treasure" to Him. How are we a treasure? (19:5)
9. How do we remember the Shabbat during the week? (20:8)
10. Why does Rashi define Do Not Steal as a prohibition against kidnapping and not material objects? (20:13)

## From the Rabbis

11. According to the Ramban, Yitro eventually returned to join Bnei Yisrael with his family. Where did he settle in Eretz Yisrael?

12. On the Mitzva to remember the Shabbat, Rashi quotes Shammai the Elder who stated that if you see a nice food during the week, you should buy it for Shabbat. Is that the Halacha? (Ramban)

13. How can Hashem command not to desire something? (Ibn Ezra)

## Midrash

14. How is the prohibition against stealing connected to the prohibition against swearing falsely? (Mechilta)

## Haftara - Yishayahu

15. What verse in the Haftara is quoted multiple times in our davening?

## Relationships

- a) Moshe - Gershon
- b) Moshe - Gershom
- c) Miriam - Yefuneh
- d) Yaakov - M'rari
- e) Yavan (Greece) - Mitzrayim (Egypt)

## ANSWERS

1. Moshe's wife Tzipora and their two sons, Gershom and Eliezer.

2. "Now I know that Hashem is greater than all the gods..."

3. To appoint assistants to help judge

and enforce the laws and decisions.

4. Longevity in Eretz Yisrael.

5. Bnei Yisrael were afraid of getting too close to Hashem lest they die for being so close.

6. The Splitting of the Sea and the war against Amalek.

7. Moshe stood over the guests and served them.

8. Hashem will love Bnei Yisrael more than any other nation in the world.

9. If you see a nice object during the week, buy it for Shabbat.

10. Because Do Not Steal should be like Do Not Murder and Do Not Commit Adultery; they should all be capital offenses. (The prohibition against stealing an object is stated in Vayikra 19:11.)

11. Near Yericho

12. No, it is not the Halacha, but it is a good idea.

13. It is possible through education.

14. If you steal, you will swear falsely to cover up your sin.

15. ...KADOSH, KADOSH, KADOSH...

## Relationships

- a) Nephew & Uncle
- b) Father & Son
- c) Daughter-in-law & Father-in-law
- d) Grandfather & Grandson
- e) First Cousins (Yavan is a son of Yefet; Mitzrayim is a son of Cham)