

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 parsha, 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 parsha, 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 your 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 parsha 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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