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from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org> to: weeklydt@torahweb2.org
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The Tenth Step Rabbi Benjamin Yudin

Rashi (Bereishis 33:20) cites the Yalkut Shimoni (Yirmiyahu 23:29) who comments that just "as a hammer that shatters a rock", similarly do the words of Torah splinter into many interpretations. Rashi is reminding us of the excitement found in Torah, that it may be understood on many different levels. In light of the above, I would like to ask what are the Ten Commandments and why the last one?

The Panim Yafos (from the author of the Sefer Haflaah) presents a fascinating insight to the Ten Commandments. Commenting on the verse in Parshas Yisro (19:6) "these are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel", Rashi says "no more and no less". The Haflaah reminds us of the halacha (Yevomos 47a) that when a potential convert comes for instruction, we teach him some kalos - some of the minor, less challenging mitzvos, and some chamuros - some of the major, more challenging mitzvos. He thus understands the above Rashi as Hashem instructed Moshe to proceed slowly with Bnei Yisrael, and provide a gradual initiation into Torah and mitzvos. (I just find it a challenging exercise to identify which of the Ten Commandments are in the category of minor, and which are major laws). Indeed, the Talmud (Kreius 9a) learns many of the laws of conversion from the Sinaitic experience, thus the reference of the Haflaah is most insightful.

What are the Ten Commandments? The Chidushei Harim (Shemos 6:6) interestingly connects three sets of ten ma'amaros, makkos, and commandments. Hashem created the world with ten ma'amaros (statements or pronouncements) (Avos 5:1). The ten makkos plagues, affirmed His being the Creator, and His demonstrating His absolute control over nature. Through the ten makkos the Jewish nation experienced Hashem's tender loving care on their behalf, sparing them from any suffering and preparing them for the acceptance of the Ten Commandments. Just as the ten ma'amaros created a foundation of spirituality for physical world, the Ten Commandments was that foundation for the Jewish nation created at Sinai.

What are the Ten Commandments? The Chizkuni has a novel approach to the Ten Commandments. He notes a progression beginning with acceptance of the absolute sovereignty of Hashem, and each subsequent dibra

(commandment) is an increased level of commitment towards honoring Hashem, refining man's character, and polishing his image of G-d in which he was created. Thus, not only do we accept Hashem as a Creator and a Director of the world, but one may not partner any other being or belief with Him. In addition, even His name is treated with utmost sanctity. Moreover, we not only believe in Him, but emulate Him by ceasing all our creativity on Shabbos, as He ceased to create. We further honor Him as the Creator by honoring parents in their role as creators. As man was created in the image of G-d, this belief in G-d is further extended to the prohibition to murder. Not only may one not kill an individual, but even to violate their soul through immorality is the next realm of prohibition. We are further forbidden to steal, either man or his property, and even to testify falsely. Finally, the tenth step in the realm of spiritual perfection is lo sachmod, the prohibition of coveting the possessions of the next one.

One can ask, how can the Torah legislate to one's feelings and cravings? To answer this, I would like to share the teaching of the Rakanti on lo sachmod - not to covet. He notes that this is not only the culmination of the Ten Commandments, but, citing (Psalms 119:86) "all your commandments are faithful (emunah)", he understands that all of the Ten Commandments and indeed our 613 mitzvos are to enhance our emunah - belief in Him. If one believes that He manages and runs the world, then if my neighbor has certain possessions and assets, it's because he needs them to accomplish his avodah - his unique personalized service of Hashem. If I don't have them, it's not that a mistake was made On High, but those same gifts and assets might very well not be beneficial to me for my exclusive avodah. Someone asked his friend how his business was, he answered "ken zein besser - it could be better." The Chofetz Chaim zt"l overheard the conversation and asked, "how do you know?"

Thus, the Rakanti helps us attain the progression of the Chizkuni. By appreciating and accepting the first step, namely His existence and involvement in every aspect of our lives, we can more understand and accept the tenth step of not coveting.

The Talmud (Yuma 38b) teaches that each individual is destined to receive exactly what they need and what is coming to them; one does not take from another, even a "hairs-breath". Moreover, the Talmud (Sotah 9a) teaches that if one is jealous of the next one's possession, not only does he not get the object of his desire but oftentimes, tragically, because he did not appreciate what he did have, will lose that too.

Finally, I believe lo sachmod is a recipe for healthy living. "Who is the rich one?", we are taught in Avos (4:1), "the someiach b'chelko." This is usually translated as the one happy and satisfied with his lot. True! I would like to suggest in addition, the one who is happy with what the next one has! The realization that I have what I need, and if I don't have it, it is because He knows that I don't need it, and it's best for me this way, keeps one out of the rat-race of life, enabling one to truly enjoy both this world and the next.
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Rabbi Reisman - Parshas Yisro 5774

1. This week I would like to focus on a few Divrei Torah that have to do with the very beginning of the Parsha. The beginning of the Parsha of course is Yisro presenting Moshe with this idea of setting up a system of as it says in 18:21 (שָׂרֵי אֲלָפִים שָׂרֵי מֵאוֹת, שָׂרֵי הַמִּשְׁפָּחִים, וְשָׂרֵי עֵשָׂרֹת) Sarei Alafim, Sarei Maios, Sarei Chamishim, and Sarei Asaros. Anybody who reads it is astounded at the great number of individuals that are seemingly needed for the court system, for people that were traveling in the Midbar and not really involved in a great deal of business.

I have a Metzia for you, something that is not well known and it comes from the Vilna Gaon, from the GRA, but it is in an unlikely source and therefore, apparently has been missed by many. In the Sefer Haksav V'hakabala on Parshas Devarim 1:15 (second volume page # 334 - 335), he quotes the Vilna Gaon to explain the idea of the (שָׂרֵי אֲלָפִים שָׂרֵי מֵאוֹת, שָׂרֵי הַמִּשְׁפָּחִים, וְשָׂרֵי עֵשָׂרֹת)

עֲשָׂרָה) in this Parsha. He explains that the four groups had different jobs. It wasn't just a court system with perhaps an appeals process and then a hierarchy in court which is I think the way most of us understand it. But the GRA says no, there were four groups of Sarim and each had a specific job. The Sarei Alafim were those that led Klal Yisrael in battle as you know and those who led Klal Yisrael in battle were themselves great people. They were people of stature and Talmidei Chachamim. That was the idea of Sarei Alafim, those that were the commanders when Klal Yisrael went to Milchama. The Sarei Maios he says are those that are literally the judges (Shoftai Ha'am Mamush in the Lashon of the GRA). Those who judged were Sarei Maios, 1 to 100. The Sarei Chamishim those who had 50 individuals to take care of were the Melamdim, to teach Torah to Klal Yisrael and they the GRA says are always called the Zekainim, the Ziknei Ha'am. Those are the Sarei Chamishim. The GRA says Chashiv Mai'kulam, the most Chashuv of all these groups were the Sarei Chamishim. Those who were trusted with the teaching of Torah to Klal Yisrael. So they had groups of 50 to whom they taught.

The Sarei Asoros were the ones who actually ran things sort of like the federal employees of the Dar Hamidbar, L'kayeim Psak Din. They ran the things that took place for the Tzibbur that Moshe Rabbeinu had to have instituted, they enforced the law and took care of recording different laws on different rules and regulations etc. Those were the Sarei Asoros, the Gabayim of Klal Yisrael. So that these four groups have some structure to them.

He explains that when Yisro requests from Moshe Rabbeinu that he find individuals who are (אֲנָשֵׁי חַיִל יֵרָאִי אֲלֵקִים, אֲנָשֵׁי אֱמֶת--שֹׁנְאֵי בְּצַע) those four descriptions are not four descriptions of one person but four descriptions that fit the four categories. (אֲנָשֵׁי חַיִל) were the (שָׂרֵי אֲלֵפִים) - people capable of doing battle. (יֵרָאִי אֲלֵקִים) - were the judges, those who were Mekayeim the command of as it says in Devarim 1:17 (לֹא תִגְדְּרוּ מִפְּנֵי אִישׁ) the commandment to fear G-d and not fear man. That is a requirement of a judge. (אֲנָשֵׁי אֱמֶת) - Emes is Torah. Those who teach Torah are (אֲנָשֵׁי אֱמֶת) were the ones who were the ones who so to speak are the federal employees those who had to take care of the law and as you know the government can't function if those who are on the bottom line, those who are making it happen are people who take bribes. And so, beautifully he says that there are four groups, the (שָׂרֵי אֲלֵפִים שָׂרֵי מְאוֹת, שָׂרֵי חֲמִשִּׁים, וְשָׂרֵי עֶשְׂרֹת) and each has its function in the Midbar.

With this says the Kesav V'hakabala we can answer Tosafos, the Ran, and other Rishonim's Kasha in Maseches Sanherdin 18a (top of the Amud). If there were (שָׂרֵי אֲלֵפִים שָׂרֵי מְאוֹת, שָׂרֵי חֲמִשִּׁים, וְשָׂרֵי עֶשְׂרֹת) it means that there were about 70,000 people that were Sarim. If that is the case, you don't need that many (שָׂרֵי עֶשְׂרֹת). We say there were 60,000 (שָׂרֵי עֶשְׂרֹת), that is not true. They weren't serving 600,000 people. There were the Sarei Alafim, Sarei Maios, and Sarei Chamishim which have to be deducted from that total. Similarly the Sarei Alafim, one per 1,000. If you understand without the GRA and you understand simply that even the Sarei Asoros were judges, then the Sarei Alafim are not servicing that many people. The group that they were servicing should have been 530,000 people. That is the Kasha of Tosafos and the Ran. The GRA says no, each group was providing a different service to Klal Yisrael. So that, for example, the Sarei Chamishim taught Torah to everyone including the Sarei Alafim, and the Sarei Maios. Therefore, all were included. The GRA explains further that is why we find when Klal Yisrael goes to battle in the Milchemes Midyan that the Posuk refers to Sarei Alafim and Sarei Maios. As it says in Bamidbar 31:14 (וַיִּקְרָא (מֹשֶׁה, עַל פְּקוּדֵי הַחַיִל, שָׂרֵי אֲלֵפִים וְשָׂרֵי מְאוֹת, הַבָּאִים מִצְבָּא הַמִּלְחָמָה This refers to the officers who go to battle as Sarei Alafim and Sarei Maios not Sarei Chamishim. What happened to them? Similarly in Bamidbar 31:48 (וַיִּקְרָבוּ, אֲשֶׁר לְאֵלֵפֵי הַצְבָּא--שָׂרֵי אֲלֵפִים, וְשָׂרֵי מְאוֹת, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה so the GRA says that the Sarei Alafim certainly, even the Sarei Ma'os led the people in battle, but it stopped there. The Sarei Chamishim were the Melamdei Torah and the Melamdei Torah did not go out to do battle, they had to be there in the

classroom. This is all a little known GRA that explains the different levels of Sarim a Pshat Vort, I guess for a change.

2. Let me move over to a second Vort on this part of the Parsha, something that is more B'derech Hadrush. Yisro arrives and he proclaims to Moshe Rabbeinu as it says in 18:11 (עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי, כִּי-גָדוֹל יְיָוָה מִכָּל-הָאֱלֹהִים) now I know that G-d is Gadol. The question is what he learned now that he did not know before? What did Yisro find out regarding the Ribbono Shel Olam that he didn't know? Rashi tells us already in Shemos that Yisro tried all the Avoda Zoras, all the different religions of the world and rejected them all in the favor of Judaism and the Ribbono Shel Olam and his Torah. (עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי) Now I know (כִּי-גָדוֹל יְיָוָה) that Gadol Hashem. What exactly is that referring to? When I was in Eretz Yisrael I heard a beautiful Vort and I looked it up in the Kodshei Yechezkal from the son of the Ustrutzer Rav. The Kodshei Yechezkal writes a distinction in a Drush of Shabbos Hagadol. A distinction between a description of G-d as Gadol and as Rom. We describe Hashem as Rom Hu Al Kol Hagoyim. We describe Hashem as high and as Gadol which literally means big. He says there is a fundamental difference between Ram and Gadol. The Yesod that something is high, it might be an airplane. It might be a bird, a bird flies high. It is not necessarily connected to the earth. It is something which is up. The clouds are high in the sky, the moon is high on the horizon. Gadol refers to something which is connected to the earth and still high. A big building or a tall tree. Gadol is something which reaches the heavens but is connected to the earth. Ram is something which reaches the heavens but is not connected to the earth. In fact, many non Jews, certainly most non Jews that existed in the world from creation until today, the overwhelming majority 90 - 95% believed in a creator, believe in a G-d of some sort. It was illogical to human beings until fairly recently that the world could come about on its own. Tehillim 113:4 (יְיָוָה עַל-כֵּל-גּוִיִם יְרֹרָךְ) We say that G-d is high, above the nations. Tehillim 99:2 (עַל-כֵּל-הָעַמִּים, יְיָוָה הוּא) The nations recognize a creator but fail to recognize that the creator is not just high but that he is connected to the earth. Rom is a cloud, a bird, a star, it is high but it is disconnected from our life here on earth. The Goyim who recognize a G-d see him as Rom. Klal Yisrael says that HKB"H is Gadol in Tehillim 99:2 (יְיָוָה, בְּצִיּוֹן גָּדוֹל) G-d in Tzion is big. He is high but he is connected to the earth. What we do here on earth matters and HKB"H is connected to our behavior and that is the difference between Gadol and Rom. Our Emuna is in Gadlus Hashem. Yisro came and he said (כִּי-גָדוֹל) עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי, יְיָוָה עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי, כִּי-גָדוֹל) (יְיָוָה) now that HKB"H has done this for Klal Yisrael I realize that HKB"H is Gadol. HKB"H in involved with human beings. A beautiful Vort. The truth is, although our faith is that Hashem is Gadol, when it comes to the day to day behavior it slips and we forget that HKB"H is actually the creator and has an active presence in the things that we do.

3. A third thought goes back to an old Vort which I probably mentioned in a previous year (Ed Note: Parshas Bo 5772) but it has a new application. Somebody asked me the following question. Why in Birchas Hamazon do we say in the second Beracha (נֹדֶה לָךְ ד אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַל שֶׁהִנְחַלְתָּ לָאֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֶרֶץ חֲמִדָּה) and then we say (וְעַל שֶׁהוֹצֵאתָנוּ ד אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, טוֹבָה וְרַחֲבָה HKB"H took us to Eretz Yisrael and he took us out of Egypt. The order is bad. First Hashem took us out of Egypt and then he took us into Eretz Yisrael. We say in (נֹדֶה לָךְ) first (עַל שֶׁהִנְחַלְתָּ לָאֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֶרֶץ חֲמִדָּה טוֹבָה וְרַחֲבָה) and then we say (וְעַל שֶׁהוֹצֵאתָנוּ ד אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם). It seems to be out of order. To answer that I recall a Vort from Rav Moshe. Rav Moshe (in Darash Moshe Cheilek Aleph pg # 54) asks in the beginning of this week's Parsha that Moshe Rabbeinu named his children Gershom and Eliezer. Gershom a Ger because I was a stranger in a strange land as it says in 2:22 (כִּי אָמַר-- וְשֵׁם הָאֶנְד, אֱלִיעֶזֶר--כִּי-אֱלֹרֵי אָבִי) Eliezer as it says in 18:4 (בְּצָרָתִי, בְּאֶרֶץ נִכְרִיָּה because G-d saved me from Paroh's sword. The question is asked that this too is not chronological. First Moshe Rabbeinu was saved from Paroh's sword and only later was he a stranger in a strange land. To this Rav Moshe replied when Moshe Rabbeinu was saved from

Paroh's sword we still don't know how wonderful that may be. It depends on what Moshe Rabbeinu does with his life. Later when he went to a foreign land he remained a stranger there. He didn't assimilate with the other people. Moshe Rabbeinu said first let me thank G-d that Ger Shom that I remained a stranger in a foreign land and now I give praise (וַיְצַלְנִי מִתְּרֵב פְּרָעָה). The purpose has to be accomplished. And so, here too HKB"H took us out of Mitzrayim and the purpose was to get to Eretz Yisrael. Therefore, we thank HKB"H for the purpose and once it is clear that the purpose was accomplished, we made it to Eretz Yisrael, then we thank HKB"H for Yetzias Mitzrayim. Opportunities are wonderful if we make something of them. Yetzias Mitzrayim is wonderful only because we made something of it, we came to Eretz Yisrael. Good Shabbos to one and all.

Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com> reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com to: internetparshasheet@gmail.com date: Wed, Feb 4, 2015 at 3:28 PM subject: Parshat Yitro 5775 - Rabbi Berel Wein NEVER AGAIN

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

I am well aware that there is no use beating a dead horse and that the subject of the Holocaust is already in the minds of most of the world's population, truly a dead horse. Last week the United Nations and over fifty countries commemorated the seventieth anniversary of the expulsion of the Germans from the Auschwitz death camp in Poland. This commemoration was marked by the usual plethora of high-sounding words and empty pledges regarding the fact that this type of genocide against Jews should never again be allowed. However, to my ancient and hoary ears it all sounded hollow and almost meaningless in face of the actual realities and facts that comprise the current state of world affairs. This anniversary, occurring so many decades after the event, took place with the presence of the backdrop of most of Europe engaged in its favorite hobby of anti-Semitism and blaming all of its evils on the Jews. Throughout Europe, from Berlin to Paris to London, in Madrid, Rome and Athens, the cry of "Death to the Jews" can be heard often and loud. It is difficult to believe in "never again" when so many millions are shouting "let us do it again." Anti-Semitism is apparently an incurable disease that has rotted the soul of Europe for almost two millennia.

Europe has never learned the lesson of the disaster that anti-Semitism brings upon it. It will take more than formal commemorations, museums, monuments and reassuring speeches to eradicate the scourge that has infested so much of the civilized world. Therefore the outlook for "never again" is fairly bleak. In a powerful article written by Charles Krauthammer in the Washington Post last week, he pointed out that the Islamic terrorists made an error in attacking the offices of Charlie Hebo. Had they contented themselves simply with killing Jews in the Paris kosher supermarket there would have been no demonstrations of millions of people in the streets of Paris objecting to the Islamic terrorist atrocities. No world leaders would have left their comfortable offices to march against terror if only Jews were the victims of that terror. Jewish children were slaughtered in Toulouse a few years ago and the world hardly noticed. Jews were killed in Brussels and after the usual official clucking of regret, everything went back to its previous state. Jews in Antwerp are very nervous walking on the streets of the city where they have lived as citizens for many centuries. The Belgian government, like almost all of its counterparts in Europe, trumpets the cause of the Palestinians and condemns Israel at every opportunity.

Overwhelmed with the flood of Moslem immigrants into its countries, and unable to cope with radicalization of so many of them, Europe has surrendered itself to institutional, diplomatic and economic anti-Semitism. There were no mass demonstrations against Auschwitz while it was occurring. The Jewish world then in denial and fear of the canard of "dual loyalty" remained mostly publicly silent while its brothers and sisters were being systematically annihilated. Sadly, it is apparent that there will be no mass demonstrations against new forms of Auschwitz if God forbid it repeats

itself again. So the Jewish people and especially the state of Israel find themselves in a very difficult, problematic and dangerous situation. In effect, the only defense against anti-Semitism today is the strength of the state of Israel and yet we are constantly reminded by the world's media and diplomats that such a defense is unseemly and in fact somehow counterproductive to Jewish interests. In the woolly world that George Orwell foresaw and that we live in, this type of reasoning is constantly advanced and fostered. So currently "never again" is humbug!" Iran is currently at war with Israel and the Jewish people worldwide. It uses its surrogates – Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, etc. – to wage constant war against Israel and its citizens and Jews everywhere, from Argentina to Mumbai. It is driving steadily and speedily towards achieving its goal of having nuclear weapons and the means to deliver those awesome weapons anywhere in the world. It openly threatens Israel with extinction. While the West and the United States dithers and puts its hopes in negotiations that, even if successful, will not guarantee that Iran will be devoid of nuclear weapons, Israel and the Jewish world finds itself at war with itself. The elections in Israel could not occur at a worse time than now and tragically are being conducted in a very disheartening and shameful manner. No matter who wins, we have already lost. Once again, the Lord has painted us into a very narrow corner. We must do all in our power to extricate ourselves from the siege that surrounds us and from the inner malaise that so weakens us. A realistic view of the true situation in which we find ourselves can serve as the beginning of policies that will enable us to say with some confidence "never again." Shabbat shalom Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha YITRO **Rabbi Wein's** Weekly Blog

There are two different viewpoints as to the timing and to the nature of the visit of Yitro to the Jewish encampment in the desert of Sinai. One opinion is that he came before the revelation of God to the Jews and the granting of the Torah to them. The other opinion is that he came after Sinai and the Torah revelation. I think that these two different opinions really delve into the character and nature of Yitro himself, as much as they deal with chronological events recorded for us in the Torah. Rashi indicates that Yitro came because of his awareness of the miracle of the splitting of Yam Suf and of the subsequent battle between Amalek and Israel. If so, as Rashi seems to indicate by not mentioning the Torah revelation as one of the causes for his leaving his country, his position and his faith to come to join Israel in its journey, then it seems that Yitro's "conversion" to Judaism was motivated by seemingly outside influences rather than by personal soul-searching. If however Yitro arrives at the camp of Israel after the revelation at Sinai, then one can justifiably argue that it was an inner recognition of the veracity of the newly revealed Torah. Recognition of the truths of its monotheistic moral code that Sinai represents would have motivated his abandonment of past idols and ideals and drove him to his new attachment to the God and people of Israel. In this seemingly pedantic discussion on the timeline of events that befell the Jewish people in their forty year sojourn in the desert of Sinai, lies a very deep and relevant understanding of the Jewish world and its obstacle laden path to faith and belief. Throughout Jewish history there have been many who were influenced by outside, historical events that made them wonder in amazement at the survival and influential presence of the Jewish people. The Jew was always outnumbered and discriminated against by world society. It has always been felt by many that it was only a matter of time that Judaism and Jews would finally cease to exist. Yet from the ancient pharaohs to the modern age the survival of the Jewish people has remained a troublesome mystery to world society. The world is aware of the miracles that have accompanied us while crossing the sea of history and of the constant battle that we have been forced to fight against Amalek. This awareness has provided us with a few allies from the outside world to aid us in our quest for equality and fair treatment. These people are valuable friends and allies but are rarely if ever true converts to Judaism. However, we had been blessed

in every generation by the attachment of people to Judaism and Israel because of the appreciation and recognition of the God-given moral code that the Torah represents. It is the inner spiritual drive of their souls that drove and drives these people to become converts to Judaism. Since it is difficult, if not well nigh impossible, for any Jewish rabbinic court to explore the inner soul of any other human being the problems of formal conversion to Judaism, especially in our time, are many and difficult. Yet, Yitro stands as an example as to the benefits to the individual and the nation as a whole of those who are not born Jewish and who stubbornly wish to attach themselves to the people and destiny of Israel. Shabbat shalom Rabbi Berel Wein

from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org date: Thu, Feb 5, 2015 at 5:09 PM

The Structure of the Good Society

Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

In the House of Lords there is a special chamber used, among other things, as the place where new peers are robed before their introduction into the House. When my predecessor Lord Jakobovits was introduced, the official robing him commented that he was the first rabbi to be honoured in the Upper House. Lord Jakobovits replied, "No, I am the second." "Who was the first?" asked the surprised official. Lord Jakobovits pointed to the large mural that decorates the chamber and gave it its name. It is known as the Moses Room because of the painting that dominates the room. It shows Moses bringing the Ten Commandments down from Mount Sinai. So Moses was the first rabbi to adorn the House of Lords.

The Ten Commandments that appear in this week's parsha have long held a special place not only in Judaism but also within the broader configuration of values we call the Judeo-Christian ethic. In the United States they were often to be found adorning American law courts, though their presence has been challenged, in some states successfully, on the grounds that they breach the first amendment and the separation of church and state. They remain the supreme expression of the higher law to which all human law is bound.

Within Judaism too they held a special place. In Second Temple times they were recited in the daily prayers as part of the Shema, which then had four paragraphs rather than three.[1] It was only when sectarians began to claim that only these and not the other 603 commands came directly from God that the recitation was brought to an end.[2]

The text retained its hold on the Jewish mind none the less. Even though it was removed from daily communal prayers, it was preserved in the prayer book as a private meditation to be said after the formal service has been concluded. In most congregations, people stand when they are read as part of the Torah reading, despite the fact that Maimonides explicitly ruled against it.[3]

Yet their uniqueness is not straightforward. As moral principles, they were mostly not new. Almost all societies have had laws against murder, robbery and false testimony. There is some originality in the fact that they are apodictic, that is, simple statements of "You shall not," as opposed to the casuistic form, "If ... then." But they are only ten among a much larger body of 613 commandments. Nor are they even described by the Torah itself as "ten commandments." The Torah calls them the aseret ha-devarim, that is, "ten utterances." Hence the Greek translation, Decalogue, meaning, "ten words."

What makes them special is that they are simple and easy to memorise. That is because in Judaism, law is not intended for judges alone. The covenant at Sinai, in keeping with the profound egalitarianism at the heart of Torah, was made not as other covenants were in the ancient world, between kings. The Sinai covenant was made by God with the entire people. Hence the need for a simple statement of basic principles that everyone can remember and recite. More than this, they establish for all time the parameters – the corporate culture, we could almost call it – of Jewish existence. To understand how, it is worth reflecting on their basic structure. There was a fundamental

disagreement between Maimonides and Nahmanides on the status of the first sentence: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." Maimonides, in line with the Talmud, held that this is in itself a command: to believe in God. Nahmanides held that it was not a command at all. It was a prologue or preamble to the commands.[4] Modern research on ancient Near Eastern covenant formulae tends to support Nahmanides.

The other fundamental question is how to divide them. Most depictions of the Ten Commandments divide them into two, because of the "two tablets of stone" on which they were engraved. Roughly speaking, the first five are about the relationship between humans and God, the second five about the relationship between humans themselves. There is, however, another way of thinking about numerical structures in the Torah.

The seven days of creation, for example, are structures as two sets of three followed by an all-embracing seventh. During the first three days God separated domains: light and dark, upper and lower waters, and sea and dry land. During the second three days He filled each with the appropriate objects and life forms: sun and moon, birds and fish, animals and man. The seventh day was set apart from the others as holy.

Likewise the ten plagues consist of three cycles of three followed by a stand-alone tenth. In each cycle of three, the first two were forewarned while the third struck without warning. In the first of each series, Pharaoh was warned in the morning, in the second Moses was told to "come in before pharaoh" in the palace, and so on. The tenth plague, unlike the rest, was announced at the very outset (Ex. 4: 23). It was less a plague than a punishment.

Similarly it seems to me that the commandments are structured in three groups of three, with a tenth that is set apart from the rest. Thus understood, we can see how they form the basic structure, the depth grammar, of Israel as a society bound by covenant to God as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

The first three – No other gods besides Me, no graven images, and no taking of God's name in vain – define the Jewish people as "one nation under God." God is our ultimate sovereign. Therefore all other earthly rule is subject to the overarching imperatives linking Israel to God. Divine sovereignty transcends all other loyalties (No other gods besides Me). God is a living force, not an abstract power (No graven images). And sovereignty presupposes reverence (Do not take My name in vain).

The first three commands, through which the people declare their obedience and loyalty to God above all else, establish the single most important principle of a free society, namely the moral limits of power. Without this, the danger even in democracy is the tyranny of the majority, against which the best defence against it is the sovereignty of God.

The second three commands – the Sabbath, honouring parents, and the prohibition of murder – are all about the principle of the createdness of life. They establish limits to the idea of autonomy, namely that we are free to do whatever we like so long as it does not harm others. Shabbat is the day dedicated to seeing God as creator and the universe as His creation. Hence, one day in seven, all human hierarchies are suspended and everyone, master, slave, employer, employee, even domestic animals, are free.

Honouring parents acknowledges our human createdness. It tells us that not everything that matters is the result of our choice, chief of which is the fact that we exist at all. Other people's choices matter, not just our own. "Thou shall not murder" restates the central principle of the universal Noahide covenant that murder is not just a crime against man but a sin against God in whose image we are. So commands 4 to 7 form the basic jurisprudential principles of Jewish life. They tell us to remember where we came from if we are to be mindful of how to live.

The third three – against adultery, theft and bearing false witness – establish the basic institutions on which society depends. Marriage is sacred because it is the human bond closest in approximation to the covenant between us and God. Not only is marriage the human institution par excellence that depends

on loyalty and fidelity. It is also the matrix of a free society. Alexis de Tocqueville put it best: "As long as family feeling is kept alive, the opponent of oppression is never alone."^[5]

The prohibition against theft establishes the integrity of property. Whereas Jefferson defined as inalienable rights those of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," John Locke, closer in spirit to the Hebrew Bible, saw them as "life, liberty and property." Tyrants abuse the property rights of the people, and the assault of slavery against human dignity is that it deprives me of the ownership of the wealth I create.

The prohibition of false testimony is the precondition of justice. A just society needs more than a structure of laws, courts and enforcement agencies. As Judge Learned Hand said, "Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it; no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it." There is no freedom without justice, but there is no justice without each of us accepting individual and collective responsibility for "telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

Finally comes the stand-alone prohibition against envying your neighbour's house, wife, slave, maid, ox, donkey, or anything else belonging to him or her. This seems odd if we think of the "ten words" as commands, but not if we think of them as the basic principles of a free society. The greatest challenge of any society is how to contain the universal, inevitable phenomenon of envy: the desire to have what belongs to someone else. Envy lies at the heart of violence. [6] It was envy that led Cain to murder Abel, made Abraham and Isaac fear for their life because they were married to beautiful women, led Joseph's brothers to hate him and sell him into slavery. It is envy that leads to adultery, theft and false testimony, and it was envy of their neighbours that led the Israelites time and again to abandon God in favour of the pagan practices of the time.

Envy is the failure to understand the principle of creation as set out in Genesis 1, that everything has its place in the scheme of things. Each of us has our own task and our own blessings, and we are each loved and cherished by God. Live by these truths and there is order. Abandon them and there is chaos. Nothing is more pointless and destructive than to let someone else's happiness diminish your own, which is what envy is and does. The antidote to envy is, as Ben Zoma famously said, "to rejoice in what we have" and not to worry about what we don't yet have. Consumer societies are built on the creation and intensification of envy, which is why they lead to people having more and enjoying it less.

Thirty-three centuries after they were first given, the Ten Commandments remain the simplest, shortest guide to creation and maintenance of a good society. Many alternatives have been tried, and most have ended in tears. The wise aphorism remains true: When all else fails, read the instructions.

[1] Mishnah Tamid 5:1, Berakhot 12a. [2] We do not know who the sectarians were: they may have included early Christians. The argument was that only these were directly heard by the Israelites from God. The others were heard only through Moses. [3] Maimonides, Responsa, Blau Edition, Jerusalem, 1960, no. 263. [4] Maimonides, Sefer ha-Mitzvot, positive command 1; Nahmanides, Glosses ad loc. [5] Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Vintage, 1954, vol. 1, 340. [6] The best book on the subject is, Helmut Schoeck, Envy; a Theory of Social Behaviour. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969.

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Who Can Legislate Morality?

Rabbi Eliyahu Safran

If there is no God, everything is permitted. -Fyodor Dostoevsky
No one understands better than the Jew that God is the foundation not only for behavior – how we are to act in the world – but also for morality – how we are to be in the world. And, while the two, action and being, are

intimately entwined it is the being, the morality of how God would have us live our lives that takes precedence.

How can I be so certain in my assignment of precedence in this matter? Because our Jewish view is that our actions have meaning. We are not accidental creatures in an accidental world, searching for some artificial construct that we can call "meaning". We are created in the image of the Divine, with the breath of the Divine within our souls. Because of this divinity, this intrinsic holiness, each and every thing that we do, from the most sublime to the most base, has the potential to be infused with that holiness.

God is, therefore we are.

God instructs us as to what is appropriate and what is not. The choice of which to do, of how to act, is our own. God tells us how to behave; the "why" of our behavior, the morality, comes first because God comes first.

Even in God's most powerful "to-do (and not-to-do) list", the Ten Commandments, God makes clear the primacy of our morality.

Even the most "non-religious" person has a ready knowledge of these commandments. Indeed, the non-religious person will likely point to the list and see a universality to the list which, to him, actually suggests these behaviors are not God-driven but man-driven. Eight commandments are focused specifically on reasonable behavior that, in sum, leads to the communal good. Not to work on the Sabbath... to honor... not to murder, commit adultery, steal or provide false witness. Each a statement of behavior; what to do, what not to do.

However, the non-religious person is on decidedly weaker ground when we consider the first and last of the commandments. In these two commandments, something is very different. And it is precisely in how the first and last of the commandments differ from the other commandments that they establish why we are a moral people before we are an ethical people.

The first commandment is to believe in God, to know Him and to be cognizant of His everlasting presence. The last mitzvah forbids us from coveting, from being "envious of a neighbor's house, wife, slave, maid, ox, donkey, or anything else that is a neighbor's."

These two dibrot, the first and last, are mitzvot relating not to action but to mind and thought. As such, they define how and why these laws are not merely societal laws but Jewish laws, moral laws. They also give lie to the observation – too often an accusation – that Jews are a legalistic people, concerned only with rules. On the contrary! Judaism is not simply a body of legalisms, nor is Torah a compilation of beliefs and opinions. Judaism is a unified organism of philosophical-theological truths and legal obligations. It is precisely for this reason that Rambam opened his Yad-Hachazakah with the Halachic principle that "the basic principle of all basic principles and the pillar of all sciences is to realize that there is a First Being who brought every existing thing into being."

God is. This is the foundation of our morality. But, not to covet, to not be jealous? Why does this law speak to our morality rather than our behavior? It would seem that jealousy is fundamentally human. I want! I want! And if my neighbor has it, I want it even more! To want is the most natural thing in the world. How can Torah forbid jealousy?

These two commandments, the first and the tenth, teach us that the body of Jewish law, is couched with the spirit and soul of Jewish belief and thought. A true Jew not only acts and behaves Jewishly but he also thinks Jewishly (morally) as well. He must be moral. It is forbidden to take something belonging to another but even more so, it is forbidden to desire it in one's heart!

How does one not desire?

Torah is nothing if not practical. Even if desired, theft, kidnapping, and murder can be restrained. But desire? Desire is a flame in one's heart, flaring unbidden and unrestrained. How does one not desire? Ironically, or insightfully, it is precisely this prohibition which most clearly characterizes the Jewish, Godly aspect of the Ten Commandments, and places morality before us as our primary posture in the world.

The Ktav V'Hakabalah explains that the Torah, which expects that we "love God with all our heart," intends to have us use all of our thinking powers and capacities in the pursuit of God; good, decency, honesty. To love God with all our powers means to use our minds exclusively for that which God would approve and condone. To covet is to use our thoughts and emotions to obtain that which is not Godly, and therefore unattainable. In other words, Judaism teaches that a person may not contemplate or desire that which he may not attain or that which is forbidden to attain. Understood this way, it is clear that "not coveting" is a matter of training and discipline no different from not committing any other act. The Torah's intention is to train the Jew that what is forbidden and prohibited is unattainable and therefore unthinkable. The same individual who can be trained not to murder, steal, or commit adultery can be trained not to covet.

Whatever is unattainable and is not yours, the Torah says, you cannot have. Therefore, don't desire it, or even think about it.

Rabbi Soloveitchik zt"l taught that, "Coveting is an emotion, a feeling... one can be called upon to exclude an emotion in the same way one must abstain from an act which is considered unworthy." He noted that every morning we recite three b'rachos of identity. God placed our souls into our bodies, determining for us our religion, our gender, and our social standing. In short, God determined our identity. We praise Him as the One "she'asa li kol tzarki", who made everything required for me to realize my potential. In our blessings, we see ourselves in God's image. If we look to God, we see ourselves as reflections of the divine, free of the desire for more.

When R' Moshe Sofer of Pshvorsk, a disciple of the Magid of Mezritsch, died he left behind three pairs of Tefillin that he himself wrote. R' Mendel of Kotzk sought to buy one set of these Tefillin for himself even though the asking price was astronomical. He gave his entire savings to a local chasid with the instruction that he buy and bring him one of the pair.

The chasid returned with the sacred Tefillin. While handing them to the Kotzker he confessed in passing, "Because of these Tefillin I transgressed the Torah's prohibition of Lo Tachmod." He lowered his eyes. "I just couldn't control myself. I put them on."

Without blinking an eye, R' Mendel of Kotzk returned the Tefillin to the chasid. "Take them away. I no longer have any use for them. Tefillin that were the cause for one to stumble with Lo Tachmod, are of no use for me." Even the holy, coveted, is reduced.

R' Yechiel Michel of Zlatchov said that "not to covet" is more than merely a prohibition; it is also a promise, an outcome. One able to think in Godly terms, who identifies with God's values and standards, will never covet. It is a matter of perspective – do you look at God or at yourself? To look primarily at oneself is to always want more, to covet. But to look at God and measure a life by His standards?

The command to not covet is a command to develop a spiritual mindset, to develop a way of viewing everything around and about oneself in Godly terms. If you can do that then it is not coveting rather than coveting that is the most human thing of all.

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Yeshiva University High School for Boys
Parshas Yisro 5773

THE VALUE OF WORK RABBI MICHAEL TAUBES

When Yisro advises Moshe Rabbeinu as to how to effectively lead Bnei Yisrael and minister to their needs, he tells him that he must make the people aware of the path that they must follow and the actions they must do (Shemos 18:20). The Gemara in Bava Metzia (30b) derives from one phrase in the Posuk (ibid) that Yisro instructed Moshe to teach the people "Beis

Chayeiheim," which may be loosely translated as "a way of life". Rashi (ibid s.v. zeh bais cha-yeihem) explains this to mean that people must be taught a trade of a profession by which to earn a living.

Chazal in a number of places speak of the value of the involvement in work. In Pirkei Avos (1:10), we are taught to love work; Rashi (ibid s.v. ehov), referring to a Gemara in Pesachim (113a), explains that one should never consider himself too great or too important to work, and adds that by working, a person will not have to become in-volved in theft or dishonesty, and will also not have to de-pend on gifts from Tzedakah to survive. Later in Pirkei Avos (2:2), we read that even continued success in Torah depends on one's being engaged in work as well. The Ge-mara in Gitlin (67b) praises hard work because it "warms one up," meaning that it is healthy for the body, an idea echoed by Klei Yakar (Bereishis 3:19) who affirms that it is healthy to work before eating. He backs this idea up with a Posuk from Tehillim (128:2) which praises one who eats the fruits of his own hard work; the Gemara in Berachos (8a), quoting this same Posuk, suggests that in a certain re-spect, one who benefits from his own hard work is greater than one who is a yarei shamayim, a G-d fearing person. Some of these ideas are codified in the Shulchan Aruch by the Ramo (Yoreh Deyah siman 246 seif 21).

The Beraisa in Avos DeRabbi Nosson (11:1) greatly praises work, indicating that work was presented as part of a covenant, just as the Torah was, that it can save one from death, that Hashem did not allow His Shechinah to dwell within Bnei Yisrael until the people had physically worked to build the Mishkan, and that one must always try to find some work with which to occupy one's time. This last point is followed by the notion that idleness leads one to death; the Mishnah in Kesubos (59b) indicates that idleness can lead to insanity, or, as some understand it, depression. The Gemara in Nedarim (49b) asserts that work brings honor to the one who does it, and the Tosefta in Kiddushin (perek 1 halacha 9) also documents the value of having a trade. The Pardes Yosef, on the above Posuk in this Parsha (ibid) lists, as do others, many of the Tannaim and Amoraim who had professions which they were involved with, including many who were engaged in physical labor.

The Rashbatz, in his commentary on Pirkei Avos entitled Magen Avos (perek Imishna 10), writes that pursu-ing one's profession is a Mitzvah from the Torah. This view may be based on the opinion quoted in the Mechilta De-Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, based on the language of the Po-suk later in this Parsha (Shemos 20:9), that just as there is a Mitzvah to rest on Shabbos, there is a Mitzvah to work the rest of the week. The Mordechai in Shabbos (siman 258, daf 70b in the pages of the Rif) quotes Rabbeinu Tam who ap-parently agrees; he thus allows one to travel on Erev Shab-bos, which is generally restricted MideRabbanan, if it's for the purpose of one's livelihood, because that is considered a Mitzvah. This view is quoted and accepted by the Tur (Orach Chaim siman 248); the Beis Yosef (ibid s.v. I'nyan), however, writes that not everyone agrees, citing the Rivash (shu"t HaRivash siman 101) who disagrees with Rabbeinu Tam about this. The Ra'avyah, though, in his commentary on Maseches Shabbos (siman 198), agrees and goes a step further, suggesting that even if one has enough to live on and wants simply to earn more, that too is still considered a Mitzvah. In the Shulchan Aruch, the Ramo (Orach Chaim ibid seif 4) rules that going someplace for business purposes is considered a Mitzvah; the Magen Avraham (ibid seif katan 19) extends the Mitzvah even to the case where one is look-ing just to increase one's profit, as stated above. He also hints that the Mechaber, based on his ruling elsewhere (ibid siman 531 seif 4), may likewise agree to this. Rav Moshe Feinstein (shu"t Igros Moshe Orach Chaim vol. 2 siman 111) writes as well that one is obligated to involve oneself in business in order to earn a living.

Based on all of the above, it is not surprising that the Gemara in Kiddushin (29a) states that one of the obliga-tions of a parent regarding his child is that he must teach him or see that he learns a trade. One Tanna even asserts that if a parent does not do this, it is as if he taught the child to be a thief. The Ramo in the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deyah ibid) accepts this position.

The Yerushalmi in Kid-dushin (perek 1 halacha 7, daf 19a) actually states that the Torah's directive "uvacharta b'chaim", meaning choose life (Devarim 30:19), refers to choosing a profession; this is why a parents must teach his child a trade. The Gemara later (30b) derives this obligation from a Posuk in Koheles (9:9) where Rashi explains that one's professional pursuits should accompany one's Torah study; both Torah and a profession must thus be taught to the child. The Gemara in Shabbos (150a) allows one to discuss teaching a child a trade on Shabbos because it is a Mitzvah (see Rashi ibid s.v. lilamdo), and it is thus not improper Shabbos conversation. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim siman 306 seif 6) rules accordingly.

At the end of Kiddushin (82a), the Mishnah says that one should teach one's child an easy and clean profession, and then lists certain professions to be avoided because they are dangerous, leading one to either sexual immorality or dishonesty. The Gemara (ibid 82b) elaborates on some of this, distinguishing between certain dignified and undignified professions, urging that one avoid the latter. The Gemara in Erchin (16b) suggests that one should pursue the profession of one's parents. The Chovos HaLevavos (sha'ar habitachon, sof perek 3) discusses different means of earning a livelihood and recommends that one pursue the profession which he desires and for which he is physically fit.

One Tanna in this aforementioned Mishnah (ibid) appears to hold, however, that one should teach one's child only Torah, because unlike any other profession, involvement in Torah brings one everlasting rewards, while excellence in it can be achieved even at an advanced age. This opinion seems to be contrary to the above documented idea that one should pursue a profession and indeed fulfills a Mitzvah by so doing. Many Meforshim, though, hold that there is no dispute here. The Maharsha (Chidushei Aggados on Kiddushin 82a s.v. l'olam) understands that the only issue is how much time and effort one designates to teaching a trade; this Tanna is merely stressing that the emphasis in teaching must be on Torah, but that teaching Torah should be along with, not to the exclusion of, teaching a trade. The Shulchan Aruch HaRav (hilchos Talmud Torah perek 3, bikuntris acharon s.v. vihani) likewise asserts that there is no dispute; one must first teach one's child Torah, but he must then teach him a trade as well. The Sdei Chemed (pe'as hasadeh, ma'areches ha'alef klalim siman 160) quotes a view that people who rely on this Mishnah (ibid) not to teach their children a trade make a serious error and bring about a Chillul Hashem.

It is worth noting that there is a notion that one may pursue Torah as one's "career" (Toraso umanusu). The Gemara in Berachos (16b) formulates a Tefillah to request the ability to do this, and the Gemara in Shabbos (11a) cites some examples of people who achieved this. The Rambam (Hilchos Shemittah V'yovel 13:13) seems to allow and even praise one who dedicates himself to Torah alone and avoids the mundane activities of this world. It appears, however, that even one at this level is not necessarily free of having a profession as a means of support. The Rambam himself writes elsewhere (Hilchos Talmud Torah 3:10) that it is a Chillul Hashem not to work in order to learn Torah and then live off of Tzedakah; the Kesef Mishneh (ibid), however, makes some important comments there, offering an alternative approach to this issue, but the Ramo cited above (Yoreh Deyah ibid) appears to accept the position of the Rambam (ibid). The Rosh (shu"t HaRosh klal 15 siman 8) actually defines a person for whom Toraso umanusu as one who has to work, but makes it of secondary importance, while the Shulchan Aruch (ibid siman 243 seif 2) rules that one who works in order to support himself (see Shach ibid seif katan 7) but learns Torah whenever he is not busy with his work still has the status of one for whom Toraso umanusu. The Perishah, in his commentary on the Tur (Orach Chaim siman 106 os 5) distinguishes between different definitions of the concept of Toraso umanusu. The Maharsha (Chidushei Aggados on Kiddushin daf 30b s.v. im ha'isha) writes that even one who learns Torah all the time must have some work; Rav Yaakov Emden, in his Lechem Shomayim on Pirkei Avos (Perek 1, Mishnah 10) concurs. Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch (Bereishis 48:3) writes that when Jews involve themselves in many different

professions, the message is shown clearly that Torah applies to all, regardless of one's calling or talent.

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Rabbi Weinreb's Parsha Column,

Yitro: The Maternal Influence Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

When I was young I was an avid reader of novels. As I've grown older, I have found myself more interested in good biographies. I especially appreciate those biographies of great men that try to focus on what exactly made them great. Particularly, I try to discover the roles played by father and mother in the formation of these personalities.

Until relatively recently, Jewish tradition did not have many biographies of our heroes and heroines. Bible and Talmud contain much material about the lives of prophets, kings, and sages, but only occasionally give us a glimpse of the role that parental influences played in making them great.

I recently came across a passage in a book by a man I admire. His name was Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines (1839-1915). He was the head of a very innovative yeshiva in Lida, Lithuania, and was one of the founders of the Mizrachi Religious Zionist movement. He was a prolific writer, and one of his works is entitled Nod Shel Demaot, which translates as "A Flask of Tears."

In this book, Rav Reines writes about the important role that mothers play in the development of their children—sons and daughters alike. He emphasizes the role of the mother in the development of the Torah scholar. He claims that it is not only the father's teaching that motivates and informs the budding Jewish leader. Rather, it is the mother's feminine intuition and maternal compassion that are, at the very least, equally formative.

The sources of his thesis include a verse from this week's Torah portion, Parshat Yitro (Exodus 18:1-20:23), in which we read that the Lord called to Moses from the mountain and said, "Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and declare to the children of Israel...you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation..." (ibid 19:3-6).

The Midrash explains that "the house of Jacob" refers to women and "the children of Israel" to men. Both men and women must be involved if we are to become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." "Why the women?" asks the Midrash, and answers, "Because they are the ones who can inspire their children to walk in the ways of Torah."

Rav Reines adduces another biblical verse to make his point. He refers to the words in the very first chapter of the Book of Proverbs, in which King Solomon offers this good counsel: "My son, heed the discipline (mussar) of your father, and do not forsake the instruction (Torah) of your mother" (Proverbs 1:8). From this verse, it seems that the mother's message may be even more important for the child's guidance than that of his father. After all, father merely admonishes the child with words of "discipline," whereas mother imparts nothing less than the "instruction" of the Torah itself.

Then comes the tour de force of Rav Reines' essay: the biographical analysis of a great Talmudic sage, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya. The student of Ethics of the Fathers (Pirkei Avot) will recognize his name from a passage in Chapter Two of that work. There we read of the five disciples of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai. They are enumerated, and the praises of each of them are recounted. Of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya, we learn, "Ashrei yoladeto, happy is she who gave birth to him." Of all the outstanding disciples, only Rabbi Yehoshua's mother is brought into the picture. What special role did she play in his life that earned her honorable mention?

Rav Reines responds by relating an important story of which most of us are sadly ignorant. The story is recorded in Bereshit Rabba 64:10. It tells of a time, not long after the destruction of the Second Temple by Rome, when the Roman rulers decided to allow the Jewish people to rebuild the Temple. Preliminary preparations were already under way for that glorious opportunity when the Kutim, usually identified with the Samaritan sect,

confounded those plans. They maligned the Jews to the Romans and accused them of disloyalty. The permission to rebuild was revoked.

Having come so close to realizing this impossible dream, the Jews gathered in the valley of Beit Rimon with violent rebellion in their hearts. They clamored to march forth and rebuild the Temple in defiance of the Roman's decree.

However, the more responsible leaders knew that such a provocation would meet with disastrous consequences. They sought for a respected figure, sufficiently wise and sufficiently persuasive, to calm the tempers of the masses and to quell the mutiny. They chose Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya for the task.

The Midrash quotes Rabbi Yehoshua's address in full detail. He used a fable as the basis of his argument: A lion had just devoured its prey, but a bone of his victim was stuck in his throat. The lion offered a reward to anyone who would volunteer to insert his hand into his mouth to remove the bone. The stork volunteered, and thrust its long neck into the lion's mouth and extracted the bone.

When the stork demanded his reward, the lion retorted, "Your reward is that you can forevermore boast that you had thrust your head into a lion's mouth and lived to tell the tale. Your survival is sufficient reward." So, too, argued Rabbi Yehoshua, our survival is our reward. We must surrender the hope of rebuilding our Temple in the interests of our national continuity. There are times when grandiose dreams must be foresworn so that survival can be assured.

Rav Reines argues that this combination of cleverness and insight into the minds of men was the result of his mother's upbringing. The ability to calm explosive tempers and sooth raging emotions is something that Rabbi Yehoshua learned from his mother.

He was chosen for this vital role in Jewish history because the other leaders knew of his talents, and perhaps even knew that their source was to be traced back to his mother, of whom none other than Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai had exclaimed, "Happy is she who gave birth to him."

This wonderful insight of Rav Reines is important for all of us to remember, particularly those of us who are raising children. Psychologists have long stressed the vital roles that mothers play in child development. In our religion, we put much stress on the father's role in teaching Torah to his children. But we often underestimate, and indeed sometimes even forget, the role of the mother.

Our tradition urges us to embrace the role of the mother not just in the child's physical and emotional development, but in his or her spiritual and religious growth as well.

We would do well to remember that Rav Reines is simply expanding upon God's own edict to Moses at the very inception of our history: "Speak to the house of Jacob! Speak to the women as well as to the men."

Mothers, at least as much as fathers, are essential if we are to create a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

from: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com> to: Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com> date: Thu, Feb 5, 2015

Peninim on the Torah

by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

- Parshas Yisro

If you this thing... then you will be able to endure, and this entire people, as well, shall arrive at its destination in peace. (18:23)

Yisro intimated to Moshe Rabbeinu that, by following his advice, the people would be confident that they would be judged justly. They would, thus, be at peace, content with the rulings that had been administered. The words, yavo b'shalom, "shall arrive at its destination in peace," is a phrase which is used in connection with the deceased. We say: lech b'shalom, "go in peace;" tanuach b'shalom, "rest in peace," and v'saamod l'goralcha l'ketz ha'yamim, "and arise for your reward at the End of Days." When speaking to the living, wishing them well, we say, lech l'shalom, "go to peace." Why does the Torah change its style?

Horav Yashar quotes the Chafetz Chaim who posits that anyone who has money in his possession that does not belong to him - whether he stole it or owes it to someone -

cannot possibly reach Olam Habba, the World to Come. He must return to this world reincarnated, until he somehow returns the money that he owes.

Horav Shlomo Levinstein, Shlita, relates an incredible story that took place concerning Horav Meir Premishlaner, zl. The holy Chassidic Master once spent Shabbos at the home of one of his wealthy chassidim, who had apportioned an entire wing of his palatial home for the Rebbe. That Friday afternoon, after chatzos, midday, the chasid came to the Rebbe and asked, "Rebbe, is there anything I can do? Whatever the Rebbe asks, I will be happy to do."

The Rebbe replied, "I noticed that you have a number of horses and cows in your stable. Could you possibly give me a horse as a gift?"

"With the greatest pleasure," the Chasid responded.

"If so, I would like the black horse," the Rebbe stated.

"The Rebbe specifically wants that black one?" the Chasid asked.

"Yes. Is there a problem?" the Rebbe asked.

"Well, possibly. This horse works like ten horses. He is quick getting the job done and is waiting for more work. It is a great loss to give up that horse."

"I specifically want that horse," the Rebbe said. "If you have difficulty parting with that horse, fine, but I am not interested in any other horse."

"Rebbe, please," the Chasid pleaded. "Any other horse would be no problem. It is just that this horse is very special."

The Rebbe thought for a moment. "I am sure you have many promissory notes which attest to people owing you money. Can I have one of these documents?" the Rebbe asked.

"Surely, Rebbe, anything and I will be most honored to give the Rebbe a document."

The Chasid immediately called for a servant to bring the document box containing all of the debts. The Rebbe rummaged through the box and, after a moment, raised up a certain document and said, "I want this one!"

Once again, the wealthy Chasid asked, "The Rebbe specifically wants this one?"

"Yes. This is the one I want. Is there a problem?" the Rebbe asked.

"This is a lost document. The man who owed me the money passed away and his sons deny the loan and refuse to pay. The Rebbe would do well taking another document."

The Rebbe insisted on taking that document. He was not willing to exchange it for another one.

"Well, if this is what the Rebbe wants, it is his, and I am most happy to give this document to the Rebbe as a gift," the Chasid said.

"Are you giving it to me willingly, without any second thoughts?" the rebbe asked.

"Certainly. It belongs to the Rebbe."

"Rav Meir Premishlaner made a kinyan, actively acquiring the document into his possession and said to the Chasid, "Now the debt owed to you is instead owed to me. Correct?"

"Yes. The debt now is owed to the Rebbe. It is no longer mine."

"If so," said the Rebbe, "I write off the loan. The deceased no longer owes any money. The loan is absolved."

Five minutes went by, and the Chasid's stable hand came running in and said, "The black horse just died suddenly. One minute it was standing there. The next, it was dead!"

The Chasid realized that he had been punished by Heaven for refusing to give the horse to the Rebbe. He immediately turned to the holy sage and begged his forgiveness for his insolence.

The Rebbe calmed him down, "It had nothing to do with you. The man who owed you the money passed away before he could pay you back. In Heaven, however, one is not permitted to receive his reward in Olam Habba, World to Come, until his obligations in this world have been settled. Since he owed you money, it was decreed that he should return to this world reincarnated as a horse, where he would work for you, without reward, of course. Thus, he would pay back his loan.

"Your black horse worked so hard, because he was the gilgul, reincarnation, of the fellow who owed you money. He wanted to pay back the loan as quickly as possible. When I came to your house, I noticed how hard the horse was working and took pity on him. This is why I wanted the horse. Had you given him to me right away, it would have been considered to be the absolution of the loan. You refused, so I was compelled to ask for that loan. Once I received it as a gift and wrote it off, the horse had fulfilled his function in this world and could now return to his eternal repose."

The Chafetz Chaim underscores the significance of not retaining in one's possession funds that are not his. While, at times, many of us are compelled to borrow from another for economic reasons, paying back the loan should always be our first priority. It goes without saying that, if one has money in his possession that had been appropriated unethically, he should return it immediately.

We now understand why Yisro employed a lashon, vernacular, which is usually reserved for speaking to - and concerning - the deceased. Yisro was intimating that, if justice prevails as the result of competent and honest judges, the litigants who are

involved will ultimately find their eternal repose without issue. Monetary issues will be dealt with by men of sterling character. Thus, no one will be "left behind" due to monetary issues.

Honor your father and your mother, so that your days will be lengthened. (20:12)
The fifth commandment, to honor one's parents, is a cornerstone of faith in the entire Torah. Our mesorah, tradition, is based upon a chain that has been transmitted throughout the generations from Har Sinai, where the Torah was given. This mesorah continues through this very day, through the vehicle of the parents of every generation. Each parent serves as a link to his child, maintaining this mesorah when he, in turn, becomes a parent. Without the respect demanded in the fifth commandment, we have no assurance that the other commandments will be observed.

Hashem, father and mother are partners in the creation of a child. Thus, one must honor his parents, because they are partners with Hashem. All things considered, despite being partners with Hashem, they, too, must honor Him. Thus, they may not ask their child to go against Hashem. Such respect for parents goes against the underlying basis of the goals of this mitzvah. One question that still remains: While it is true that parents must also honor Hashem, solely from the perspective of the partnership, one might contend that parents actually comprise the majority of the partnership. Should their demands not be recognized? Indeed, this is a rhetorical question, since there is no such thing as majority partners against Hashem. He grants life to all of the partners; therefore, in a sense, He is always the majority partner.

This idea is best explained with an insightful mashal, parable, by the Maggid, zl, of Dubno. There were once three brothers who decided to travel to three different parts of the world to develop a more cosmopolitan view of wisdom. They felt that exposing themselves to the varied wisdoms and disciplines of the multifaceted world community would enhance the individual wisdom of each of them. After one year, they returned to their home base to share with one another the new wisdom which they had mastered.

One brother related that he had learned to make a looking glass through which he could see all over the world. The second brother had learned to make a flying machine that could transport him to any destination in the world in a very short time. The third brother also had picked up an important piece of wisdom. He discovered a magic potion that had the ability to heal any ailment. There was no disease in the world that it could not tackle. The brothers were proud of their individual achievements. Time would tell when and how they could be put to good use.

One day, the brother who possessed the wonderful looking glass was gazing throughout the "world," when he saw a princess in a faraway country who had fallen gravely ill. The doctors who were treating her had already despaired of finding a cure to save her life. Her father, the king, was beside himself. This was his only child. Words cannot describe the scene playing out at the bedside of the young princess.

Seeing this, the brother immediately went into action. He called his two brothers, and they immediately boarded the miraculous flying machine, taking along the cure-all potion which would hopefully save the life of the princess. They arrived in the kingdom and immediately went to the hospital where the princess was lying in bed, presenting a deathly pallor. Were they in time?

The brother who had the magic potion immediately went over to the distraught king to offer his services. What did the king have to lose? His daughter was at death's door. The brother administered the potion to the princess, and, within minutes, her color returned. A few hours later, she was sitting up for the first time in weeks. Two days later, the doctors declared her disease-free. She was cured of all illness. Overjoyed, and beyond belief, the king addressed the three brothers, "As reward for saving my daughter's life, I will give her hand in marriage to one of you. The problem is that the decision concerning who should marry her is something that the three of you must decide among yourselves.

The brothers began debating the issue, each one claiming that, without his contribution, the princess would not have been cured. "Without my looking glass, we would never have been aware of her illness" was the first brother's position. The second brother claimed, "Without my flying machine, we could never have transported the medicine." The last brother argued that the discovery and travel would have been meaningless without his magic potion.

Unable to reach a decision, the king turned to his daughter and said, "You decide which one you should marry." The princess was an astute young woman. She replied, "All three of you equally deserve to marry me. That, however, concerns the past, but, if I were to become ill again, only the brother who is in possession the miracle cure could save me. It is he whom I want to marry."

The lesson is simple and clear. Yes - there are three partners in a person, and one feels a sense of indebtedness to all of them. This sense of gratitude is only with regard to the past. As far as the future is concerned, we are far more beholden to Hashem than to our parents. Every moment of our lives is a special gift from Hashem. Without His Will, we simply would cease to exist.

When parental wishes come into an opposition with those of G-d, the future decides the issue. Without Hashem, we have no tomorrow. In fact, today is dependent upon Him as well! Both the child and his parents are in Hashem's debt. The question of precedence is a moot issue.

Upon perusing Rabbi Yechiel Spero's latest volume, "A Touch of Chizuk," I came across a story which is particularly inspiring and quite relevant to our dvar Torah. Rabbi Yosef Mendelovich was a Russian refusenik who fought fiercely for the freedom to practice his religion. (He was known as a "Prisoner of Zion." A political activist who has devoted his life to speaking out against religious persecution, especially of Soviet Jewry. One of the first and most famous refuseniks, his devotion and commitment to Judaism served as the standard for others to emulate.) The dread KGB took special joy in making his life miserable. While serving time in the Russian Gulag for some trumped up charges, he taught himself to daven and observe mitzvos.

The prison guards were the lowest form of humanity in a country not known for maintaining a very high level of humanity. They did everything within their power to break his spirit. The more they worked at destroying him, the more stoic he became. He showed them that his commitment to Hashem was stronger than their devotion to evil. He had a greater will to fight for freedom than they had to take it from him.

He wanted to wear a head-covering, but yarmulkes were not accepted as part of the prison uniform. Thus, instead of wearing the traditional yarmulke, he took a handkerchief and wrapped it around his head. (Interesting how some of us feel that wearing a yarmulke in public is not pc). It was a constant battle to wear that handkerchief, but it was a battle that he won.

One day, after being locked up for some time, he was informed that his elderly father was coming to visit him. This was very unusual. His father was not a well man and the long journey to the Gulag was not an easy trip. Once again, the guards were determined to break his spirit by testing his will. Waiting with bated breath for his father's arrival, he sat in the waiting room with his handkerchief on his head. His father had arrived and was waiting on the other side of the door. One can only begin to imagine the excitement, the yearning of son for father, and father for son. As he was about to go to meet his father, the guard stopped him and said, "Remove your head-covering!"

Yosef was confronted with a dilemma. According to Jewish law, there was no problem with removing his head covering. He knew that his father was waiting anxiously to see him. On the other hand, he also knew that this was a test - a test to see if they could break him. If he gave in and removed his handkerchief - then they had succeeded in defeating him. Once defeated, it would be most difficult to once again ascend the spiritual ladder. So he refused to remove his head covering. The guards, heartless animals who did not know the meaning of compassion or decency, likewise refused to budge. "No visitation," they said. Instead of running through the open door into his father's embrace, he returned to his cell - miserable, but triumphant. The guards did not succeed in breaking him. Sadly, his father would never see him again. He took ill shortly afterwards and succumbed to his illness.

This is a very sad story - one that has the reader asking, "Was he correct in his refusal to remove his handkerchief? Was he right in "probbing frumkeit" taking a stringent stand concerning his observance of this one tradition - at the expense of his aged father's desire to see his son, to have a little nachas, before he died?"

I am not one to decide right or wrong. One thing I am certain of, however, is that when his father's neshamah, soul, ascended to ginzei Meromim, the Heavens Above, it viewed the refusal of his son, Yosef, from a different vantage point. The nachas that the neshamah experienced then is indescribable. In fact, I wonder if Yosef Mendelovich's handkerchief in this world did not translate itself into a special crown for his father in the Eternal World.

Do not steal. (20:13)

The Talmud Sanhedrin 86a, teaches that the Lo signov, "do not steal," associated with the Aseres Hadibros, Ten Commandments, is a reference to kidnapping. This is not about stealing money from someone; rather, it is a case of capital punishment for stealing a human life. Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl, points out that stealing is often viewed relatively. In other words, if someone appropriates an object illegally, his warped mind will likely convince him that this object is now his, and whoever takes it from him is the thief. This idea applies across the board to every case of monies finding their way into our possession, in a less than savory manner. We now think that since we have possession it is ours. This is the moral bankruptcy of a twisted mind.

Rav Galinsky relates an incident that occurred in which he was accosted by a less-than-observant Jew, who was furious over the successful efforts of Rav Galinsky and others like him, people who were sacrificing themselves to rescue lost souls who had been forced into abdicating their religious observance.

The man began the conversation with a shout, "Galinsky! When will you do teshuvah, repent?" Rav Galinsky immediately countered, "What sin have I committed that requires expiation?"

"You are stealing souls away from us!" the man yelled. "How dare you attempt to inculcate 'saved' Jewish children who have been force-fed with your archaic laws and rituals?"

Rav Galinsky replied, "At worst, we are guilty of being gonev min haganov, stealing from a thief. You grabbed innocent Jewish children from their homes, cut off their peyos, side-locks, and infused them with Communism, teaching them a godless lifestyle. All we are guilty of is taking back what is rightfully ours. Yet, you have the audacity to call us thieves!"

"I remind myself of a story that took place in Russia years ago, before the Western Union telegram for wiring money. In those days, when one wanted to send money from place to place, he would dispatch a special messenger to deliver the money. Obviously, since this mission was fraught with danger, the messengers were not your everyday garden-variety citizen. They were powerful, strong and capable men, who could take care of themselves. When confronted with a gun, however, the hardiest messenger turns into butter.

"One such messenger was waylaid by a robber who demanded the money he was carrying in his pouch. Only a fool stands up to a loaded gun, so the messenger turned over the pouch together with everything that he was carrying in his pockets. He was left bereft of all valuables. The messenger asked the robber, 'Can I ask you for a favor?' (Apparently, it was a more 'cultured' thief.) The man who sent the money is a very suspicious person. He will not believe that I was robbed. Please shoot a hole in my jacket, so that I can prove to him that I was the victim of a robbery.'

"The thief was a practical person. Why not accommodate the victim. So he shot a hole in his jacket.

"You know, perhaps one is not enough. Can you shoot some more?" Once again the robber acquiesced putting another two holes in the jacket.

"Just to be safe, can you shoot another bullet into the bottom of the jacket?" the victim asked.

"I would love to help you out, but I am clear out of bullets," the thief replied.

"If this is the case," the victim declared, "then you have no advantage over me." He immediately jumped on the thief and pummeled him quite mercilessly. Once he retrieved his pouch with the money, he heard the thief moaning, 'Not only did you beat me within an inch of my life; you took away my pouch with my money!'

"Your money?!" the victim screamed, 'Your money? I took back what you originally stole from me!'"

Rav Galinsky concluded his tale, "We suddenly become the kidnappers, and you are the victims! We are only taking back what was ours to begin with!"

Dedicated in loving memory of our dear mother and grandmother Leona Genshaft Leah bas Refael Hacoheh a"n niftara 16 Shevat 5770 by her family Neil and Marie Genshaft Isaac and Naomi

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from: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com> to: Potpourri <parshapotpourri@shemayisrael.com> date: Thu, Feb 5, 2015 at 6:45 PM subject: [Parshapotpourri]

Parsha Potpourri by Rabbi Oizer Alport

Parshas Yisro - Vol. 10, Issue 17 Compiled by Oizer Alport

Vayishma Yisro chohein Midyan (18:1) Parshas Yisro contains the details of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, which cemented our relationship as Hashem's chosen nation. While one would expect the parsha containing such a pivotal and lofty event in Jewish history to open on an inspirational note, it instead begins by discussing the arrival of Yisro to join the Jewish people in the wilderness. Why was this event selected to serve as the introduction to the giving of the Torah? Further, in introducing us to Yisro, the Torah refers to him as a priest for idol-worship in Midian. After Yisro abandoned his idolatrous past and displayed great self-sacrifice in coming to convert and join the Jewish people, why would the Torah denigrate him by emphasizing his ignoble history? Moreover, Rashi writes (18:11) that Yisro was able to say with certainty that Hashem is superior to all other gods because he had previously served every idol in the world. What is this pejorative statement intended to teach us?

Rav Yosef Elefant explains that Yisro was a truth-seeker, and in his quest for emes (truth), he relentlessly explored and experimented with every idolatrous practice and religion in the world. After recognizing the falsehood of one idol, he would move on to the next, leaving no stone unturned in his pursuit of meaning and answers. No matter how many wrong turns he took, Yisro never despaired in his search for the truth, and he maintained his intellectual honesty and integrity to acknowledge when yet another attempt was in vain.

One of the names by which the Torah refers to Yisro is Putiel (6:25), which Rashi explains is a reference to the fact that he used to fatten calves to sacrifice them as a

form of idol-worship. The Torah's allusion to Yisro's heathen past, along with the fact that he formerly served as an idolatrous priest in Midian, is not a contradiction to the concept that one should not remind a sinner who has repented of his earlier ways. This information is conveyed as a way of praising Yisro for his relentless determination in his quest. The Torah tells us that when Yisro explored a new belief system, he didn't do it half-heartedly. His integrity obligated him to go all-in in his service of each idol in his ongoing pursuit of emes. Rav Ephraim Wachsmann explains that for this reason, the Torah emphasizes that there was something unique about Yisro's hearing, as even after serving every idol in the world, his ears and mind remained open to hearing and discovering the truth.

Rav Elefant notes that Yisro's pursuit of the truth didn't cease when he arrived in the wilderness to join the Jewish people and finally found the answers he had been desperately seeking for so long. Shortly after his arrival, he approached Moshe and rebuked him (18:13-26) regarding his system for judging and resolving disputes, which Yisro felt was unsustainable in the long-term. Although one would expect a newcomer to refrain from offering an unsolicited opinion, and certainly not to the leader of the entire nation, Yisro's dedication to emes mandated that when he saw something that needed to be changed, he felt compelled to speak up about it.

With this introduction, we can now appreciate why Yisro's arrival, which demonstrates a burning passion for truth, was selected as an appropriate introduction to the giving of the Torah, which is the epitome of emes. The Gemora (Shabbos 55a) teaches that the seal of Hashem is emes, and the giving of the Torah enables us to access the world of Divine wisdom and unadulterated truth. The paradigm for reaching that level is Yisro, who serves as a role model for us in his unquenchable desire for truth, which enabled him to repeatedly reexamine his beliefs until he ultimately discovered the one and only Truth.

Vayishma Yisro (18:1) Rashi writes that Yisro was known by seven different names, each of which has a different meaning. One of the names is Yeser, which connotes the fact that he merited having a section added to the Torah as a result of his suggestion to Moshe in our parsha to appoint judges.

However, he is universally referred to by the name Yisro (יִסְרוֹ), which refers to the fact that by converting to Judaism and accepting the mitzvos upon himself, an additional letter was added to his name. Of all of the seven names, why is this one specifically the most important? Shouldn't Yeser, the name which represents the fact that an entire section of the Torah was added as a result of his advice, be considered the most significant?

Rav Shlomo Margolis suggests that the selection of the name Yisro hints that as important as Torah study is and all the more so to add an entire portion to the Torah itself, nevertheless a person's ultimate purpose in this world is to perfect himself and his character traits. This is reflected by Yisro's desire to convert and ascend the spiritual ladder.

Rabbeinu Bechaye similarly notes (18:21) that in enumerating the desirable traits that Moshe should seek in judicial candidates, Yisro astoundingly made not a single mention of the importance of wisdom. Rather, he emphasized the importance of honesty and proper character, just as the Torah itself primarily praises Noach, Avrohom, and Yaakov for their righteous character traits.

The following story depicts a contemporary application of this principle. Rav Eliyahu Chaim Meisels was a great Torah scholar who served as the Rav of Lodz in Poland. He was famous and renowned for his concern for the poor and downtrodden, and stories of his compassion on their behalf abound. He was once asked by his good friend Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, the Rav of Vilna and leading sage of the generation, why he never published a work of his Talmudic novellae as was common for scholars of his ilk. Rav Meisels took out an old, tattered notebook and explained that this book, containing a detailed list of all of the charity and interest-free loans he had distributed throughout his lifetime, was the most important book that he could take with him to the next world. Shortly before Rav Chaim Ozer's death, he commented that although his classic work *Achiezer* was indeed a masterpiece and worthy of the utmost respect, he now realized that Rav Meisels had been correct. The primary work he looked forward to taking with him to the World to Come wasn't the book he authored with his pen, but the book he wrote with his deeds of chesed (kindness) for others.

Applying this lesson to ourselves, we realize that the Torah is teaching us a valuable and profound lesson. In our pursuit of personal greatness and maximizing our individual potentials, we certainly recognize the need to study and develop our minds. However, it is important to understand and remember that doing so is only part of a much larger quest to perfect our souls and inner characters.

From: "Insights Into Halacha" <yspitz@ohr.edu> Date: Feb 5, 2015 1:20 PM Subject: More Common Kiddush Questions: Kiddush B'Makom Seudah
by **Rabbi Yehuda Spitz**
Kiddush B'makom Seudah

Have you ever wondered why after partaking of Kiddush in shul, many people nonetheless make Kiddush again at the onset of their Shabbos Day Seudah? If one already fulfilled their Kiddush obligation in shul, what could the requirement possibly be for another at home? How many times must Kiddush be recited? Additionally, if people generally make Kiddush on Mezonos on Shabbos Day, why don't we do that on Friday night as well? Interestingly, the answers to all of these questions are intertwined. But to gain a proper understanding of the relevant issues, some background is order.

Mattan Torah, the most pivotal event in Jewish history, is prominently featured in this week's parsha, Parshas Yisro. The fourth of the Aseres Hadibros is the exhortation to remember and keep the Shabbos properly. In fact, the Gemara (Pesachim 106a) teaches us that 'Zachor es Yom HaShabbos lekadsho'[1] is not only the basis of our obligation to make Kiddush upon Shabbos's entrance on Friday night, but also a support for making Kiddush on Shabbos day.

There are differences, however. Friday night's Kiddush, marking the beginning of Shabbos, is an actual chiyuv D'oraysa, based on the pasuk.[2] Yet, Shabbos Day's Kiddush is purely a rabbinic enactment to honor the Shabbos. As the Rashbam (Pesachim 106a s.v. amar) citing the Sheiltos D'Rav Achai Gaon (Parshas Yisro: 54) explains, the reason why we make Kiddush on Shabbos day is in order to show honor to the day, by drinking wine, which highlights the difference between weekday and Shabbos.[3] One practical difference between the two is that the preamble to Friday night Kiddush (Vayechulu) is actually part of the Kiddush, attesting to Hashem's creation of the world in six days, as opposed to Shabbos Day, when the sum total of the Kiddush is really just the bracha of 'Hagafen'.[4]

Defining Delight

Yet, there is another integral component to Kiddush besides the Kiddush itself. The Gemara Pesachim (101a), citing Shmuel, and duly codified as halachah,[5] rules that Kiddush must be performed B'makom Seudah, in the same place as a meal. In other words, in order to fulfill the Kiddush obligation, it must serve as the preamble to an actual Seudah.

The Rashbam (ad loc. s.v. af) explains that this halachah is gleaned from the pasuk in Yeshaya (Ch. 58: 13) 'V'karasa L'Shabbos Oneg, and you will proclaim Shabbos as a delight for you', meaning in the same place where you proclaim Shabbos (making Kiddush), there must also be the delight (referring to celebrating the Shabbos Seudah).

But now that we know that Kiddush must always come before a Seudah, what exactly must this Seudah consist of? How do we define this 'delight'? Here is where it gets complicated. Both Tosafos and the Rosh explicitly state that this Seudah must be an actual bread meal,[6] meaning the full Shabbos repast replete with washing,[7] Mayim Acharonim,[8] and Bentsching. However, the Tur cites an opinion of the Gaonim that for this halachah, Seudah does not necessarily mean a full Seudah, but rather eating only a bit ('achal davar mu'at') or even drinking a cup of wine is sufficient.

The Beis Yosef[9] opines that Tosafos and the Rosh did not mean to actually argue on the Gaonim, but rather they would agree that a full meal is not mandated. In this case, in order to constitute a meal, a small amount of bread would suffice, as would drinking a cup of wine. Although many question the Beis Yosef's supposition of Tosafos and the Rosh's opinion,[10] nevertheless, in his Shulchan Aruch, the Beis Yosef codifies this as actual halachah, that one may fulfill his obligation of Kiddush B'makom Seudah utilizing (an additional cup of) wine as his Seudah.[11]

Munching Mezonos

The Magen Avraham takes this ruling a step further.[12] He explains that if a Seudah for Kiddush purposes includes wine, whose bracha is Hagafen,[13] then certainly it would include 'minei targima', types of cakes and cookies (of the five grains), whose bracha is Mezonos. This is because in the order of preference of brachos (hamega'eish),[14] Mezonos is considered more important than Hagafen. If so, certainly one may consider noshing on Mezonos as a Seudah for Kiddush purposes.

This novel approach of the Magen Avraham's was accepted and considered 'Minhag Yisrael' by all sectors of world Jewry.[15] That is why by almost any Kiddush in almost any shul anywhere in the world it is de rigeur to have a Kiddush with minei Mezonos as the Seudah.

Kiddush Controversy

However, not every authority agreed with the Magen Avraham's view. For example, Rabbi Akiva Eiger argues that neither wine nor Mezonos should fit in the Seudah category. Moreover, the Vilna Gaon famously did not rely on this leniency, and made certain that his Kiddush (even on Shabbos day) was exclusively 'B'makom Seudah Gemurah', meaning, a full bread Shabbos Seudah, 'from soup to nuts'.[16] Although here the Vilna Gaon's shitta is considered a minority opinion, nevertheless, the Pri Megadim, Mishna Berurah, and Aruch Hashulchan all ruled that it is preferable to be particular to perform Kiddush along with a full Seudah.[17] Based on this, as well as the opinions of many Rishonim, there are those who are makpid not to make Kiddush unless as part and parcel of a full bread-based Seudah.

Night or Day?

Although the Magen Avraham did not distinguish between the Friday Night and Shabbos Day Kiddush, and held that his ruling should apply equally, on the other hand, Rav Yitzchok Elchanan Spektor, the Kovno Rav and Gadol Hador of the late 1800s, did. He explained that on Shabbos Day, when Kiddush is only mandated derabbanan, one may certainly rely on Mezonos as a Seudah. Yet, on Friday night, when Kiddush is an actual chiyuv d'oraysa, due to the strength of the opposition to the Magen Avraham's approach, he maintains that one should not rely on mere Mezonos, but should ensure that Kiddush is recited along with an entire bread-based Seudah.[18]

This is why one does not often see a Friday night Kiddush being performed with Mezonos instead of Hamotzi. An interesting upshot of this shitta is that many Yeshivos, following the Chazon Ish's precedent based on this approach,[19] do make Kiddush on Simchas Torah night on Mezonos, as the Kiddush on Yom Tov, even at night, is also derabbanan.

Kiddush X 2

This also explains why many are makpid to make Kiddush again as part of their Shabbos Day Seudah at home, even after partaking of Kiddush in shul. As Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, and later Rav Moshe Sternbuch pointed out,[20] although according to the normative halachah Kiddush-goers had already fulfilled their obligation in shul, nevertheless, according to the Vilna Gaon, they have not done so at all. Therefore, they aver, in order to ascertain that one be yotzei Kiddush B'makom Seudah according to all opinions, one should make Kiddush again as part of the actual Seudah.

Rav Moshe Feinstein[21] takes a different approach to explain the halachic preference of making Kiddush again at home. He explains that in his opinion, 'V'karasa L'Shabbos Oneg' has a second, opposite meaning - that in a place where one wants to have an oneg (and any additional eating one does on Shabbos is considered oneg as well) he must also make Kiddush. (This would only apply until one has made Kiddush with bread.)

In view of this, Rav Moshe is able to synthesize the opinions of Tosafos and the Rosh with that of the Gaonim. He maintains that Tosafos and the Rosh were referring to the general understanding of the pasuk, that a Seudah for Kiddush requires bread. However, the Gaonim were referring to the secondary understanding of the pasuk, meaning that whenever one wants to eat, one should make Kiddush first. This would include eating Mezonos or even drinking wine, as commonly done at a Kiddush in shul.

It should be clear, however, that according to Rav Moshe, one will not fulfill his full chiyuv of Kiddush B'makom Seudah until making Kiddush again along with a full Seudah.

So the next time you arrive home Shabbos morning to the delicious Seuda waiting, rest assured that by making Kiddush (even after enjoying a Kiddush in shul) you are partaking in the beautiful mitzvah of "V'karasa L'Shabbos Oneg." [22]

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For any questions, comments or for the full Mareh Mekomos / sources, please email the author: yspitz@ohr.edu.

[1] Parshas Yisro (Ch. 20: 7 - 11). Although not exact to the lashon of the Aseres Hadibros featured in Parshas Va'eschanan (Ch. 5: 12), 'Shamor es Yom HaShabbos Lekadsho', nevertheless, we know that 'Shamor V'Zachor B'Dibbur Echad' (as mentioned in Rav Shlomo Alkabetz's timeless 'Lecha Dodi'). In fact, it is precisely this nuance that teaches us the joint obligations of positive and negative commandments (Zachor V'Shamor) on Shabbos, which obligates women the same as men. This was discussed at length in a previous article titled 'Facts and Formulae for the Forgetful'.

[2] See Gemara Brachos (20b & 27b), Rambam (Hilchos Shabbos Ch. 29: 1 & 4), Sefer HaChinuch (Parshas Yisro: Mitzva 31), Tur & Shulchan Aruch and main commentaries (Orach Chaim 271) at length, and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (77: 1).

[3] Similar sevaros are given by other Rishonim, including the Meiri and Tosafos Ri'd in their commentaries (Pesachim ad loc.). See also Shulchan Aruch HaRav (Orach Chaim 289: 2) and Aruch Hashulchan (ad loc. 3).

[4] This nuance, as well as its practical ramifications, was discussed at great length in a previous article titled 'Common Kiddush Questions'.

[5] See Rif (Pesachim 20a), Rosh (ad loc. Ch. 10: 5), Tosafos (ad loc. 100b s.v. yedei Kiddush), Rambam (Hilchos Shabbos, Ch. 29: 8 & 10), and Tur and Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 273: 1).

[6] Tosafos (Pesachim 101a s.v. ta'eemo) and Rosh (ad loc. Ch. 10: 5). Tur (Orach Chaim 273: 5).

[7] Several issues related to what types of water with which one may wash Netillas Yadim were discussed in a previous article titled 'The Colored Water Caper'.

[8] The importance of Mayim Acharonim was discussed in detail in a previous article titled 'Mayim Acharonim, Chovah?'.

[9] Beis Yosef (Orach Chaim 273: 5 s.v. kasvu Hagaonim).

[10] For example, the Drisha (Orach Chaim 269: 3 s.v. ode) argues that although this shitta of the Gaonim would fit with the Rambam's (Hilchos Brachos, Ch. 4: 1) and the Rashbam's (Pesachim

101b s.v. aval) definition of Seudah, nevertheless, it cannot fit with the shitta of Tosafos and the Rosh; an assessment later shared by Rabbi Akiva Eiger (Orach Chaim 273: 7), the Mekor Chaim (ad loc.), the Tosefes Shabbos (ad loc. 11), and the Erech Hashulchan (ad loc.). Rav Yitzchok Elchanan Spektor (Shu"t Ein Yitzchok Orach Chaim, 12: 7), Rav Yitzchok Isaac Chaver (Shu"t Binyan Olam 8), and Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky as well (Emes L'Yaakov on Pesachim 51b and Emes L'Yaakov on Tur & Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 273: 5) conclude that the Beis Yosef's position is tzarich iyun. Additionally, Rav Nitronaei Gaon (Shu"t Hagaonim, Orach Chaim 79), and as well as other Rishonim, including Rabbeinu Yonah (Ch. 7, 36b in the Rif's pages, s.v. birchas) and the Rashba (Shu"t vol. 5: 212, and in his commentary to Brachos 51b s.v. shehayayin), maintain that Seudah can only mean a bread-based meal. However, several Acharonim do suggest different mehalchim to answer up these kushyos; see the Maharsham's Daas Torah (Orach Chaim 273: 5 s.v. kasvu Hagaonim), Shu"t Beis She'arim (96), and Shu"t Minchas Yitzchok (vol. 8: 46, 2) for possible solutions. Rav Moshe Feinstein as well (Shu"t Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim vol. 4: 63, 7 & 8; cited later on in the article) proposes a novel approach to solve the issues.

[11] The Be'er Heitiv (Orach Chaim 273: 6), citing the Bach (ad loc. 3 s.v. aval), Levush (ad loc. 5), and Taz (ad loc. 4), explains that an additional cup of wine (or at least another revii), aside for the one drunk as Kiddush, must be drunk as the Seudah.

[12] Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim 273: 11).

[13] Or is it Hage fen? This was discussed in a previous article titled 'Geshemor Gashem?!'.

[14] Hamega'eish: Hamotzi, Mezonos, Hagafen, Ha'eitz, Ha'adamah, Shehakol.

[15] See Shu"t Ginas Veradim (Orach Chaim 3: 12), Birkei Yosef (Orach Chaim 273, 2 & 6), Be'er Heitiv (ad loc. 7), Shaarei Teshuva (ad loc. 7), Shulchan Aruch Harav (ad loc. 7; interestingly, in the next siman: 5, he writes that even so, one must have another Seudah on bread, as the Mezonos at a Kiddush does not constitute a meal to fulfill one of his three Shabbos Seudah obligations), Pri Megadim (ad loc. Eishel Avrohom 11), Chayei Adam (vol. 2, 6: 22), Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (77, 14), Ben Ish Chai (Year 2, Parshas Bereishis 7), Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 273: 8), Mishna Berurah (ad loc. 25), and Kaf Hachaim (ad loc. 41). Many contemporary poskim as well, including Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (see Halichos Shlomo on Moadim vol. 1, Ch. 1: footnote 72 and Va'aleihu Lo Yibol vol. 1 pg. 141), Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (Kovetz Teshuvos vol. 1: 24 s.v. umei), and Rav Moshe Feinstein (see footnote 21), rule that the ikar halachah follows the ruling of the Magen Avraham.

[16] Rabbi Akiva Eiger (Orach Chaim 273, 7 & 9), based on the words of Talmidei Rabbeinu Yonah in Brachos (ibid.) that the Magen Avraham himself cites in Orach Chaim (188: 9). The Gr"a's shitta is recorded in Ma'aseh Rav (122) and cited in Biur Halacha (275: 5 s.v. kasvu). See also footnote 10.

[17] Although, in his Mishna Berurah (ibid.), the Chofetz Chaim fully rules like the Magen Avraham, on the other hand, in his Biur Halacha (ibid.), he only cites the Vilna Gaon's opinion, implying his predilection to be machmir for this shittah. This is similar to the Pri Megadim, who, likewise, in Orach Chaim 273 (ibid.) rules like the Mogen Avrohom, but in Orach Chaim 271 (Eishel Avrohom 3), he writes that 'mikol makom lechatchilla tov pas'. The Aruch Hashulchan (ibid.) as well, although stating that the ikar halachah follows the Magen Avraham's ruling, nevertheless concludes that it is preferred (mehadrin) to be makpid on only making Kiddush with a full Seudah. Several contemporary sefarim including Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchasa (vol. 2, Ch. 54: 22) and Yalkut Yosef (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 273: 9, in the parenthesis) write that indeed it is preferable to be machmir on making Kiddush with actual pas as the Seudah. It is recorded (Orchos Rabbeinu vol. 1, pg. 125) that the Chazon Ish was machmir for the Gr"a's shittah for himself, but not for others.

[18] Shu"t Ein Yitzchok (Orach Chaim, 12: 11). See also the lashon in the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (77, 14), who implies this way as well.

[19] See Shu"t Ein Yitzchok (ibid. 5) who explains at length that the obligation for Kiddush on Yom Tov is derabbanan. The Chazon Ish's ruling for making Kiddush on Mezonos as the Seudah on Simchas Torah night is widely known; it is cited in Piskei Teshuvos (273, end footnote 68), and is customary in many Yeshivos.

[20] Shu"t Salmas Chaim (old print vol. 1: 59; new print Orach Chaim 255) and Shu"t Teshuvos V'Hanhagos (vol. 1: 264). This is similar to Rav Yosef Eliyahu Henkin's assessment (Shu"t Gevuros Eliyahu vol. 1: 83 s.v. umatzinu) of why one who makes Kiddush as part of davening in shul is not yotzei and nevertheless needs to make Kiddush again at his Seudah at home. Rav Henkin explains that 'lo yotzai' here does not mean that he was not allowed to do so, but rather that he still has not yet fulfilled his obligation; as such, he must be metaken and mashlim his chiyuv by making Kiddush at his Seudah.

[21] Shu"t Igros Moshe (Orach Chaim vol. 4: 63, 7 & 8). See also Shu"t Vvedibarta Bam (72), quoting Rav Dovid Feinstein. According to this understanding, Rav Moshe also rules that the ikar din follows the Magen Avraham, that one may make Kiddush on Mezonos. However one will not have fully fulfilled his obligation of Kiddush B'Makom Seudah until making Kiddush again as part of a full bread-based Seudah.

[22] For more issues related to Kiddush B'makom Seudah see R' Zvi Ryzman's Ratz KaTzvi (vol. 1: 11) and Shu"t Divrei Pinchas (vol. 1: 27).

Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.

L'iluy Nishmas the Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R' Yechezkel Shraga, Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R' Boruch Yehuda, and l'zchus for Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam and her children for a yeshua teikef u'miyad!

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