

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET  
ON YISRO - 5760

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ACKNOWLEDGING THE GOOD

by RABBI YISRAEL MEIR LAU, Chief Rabbi of Israel and Chief  
Justice of the Rabbinical High Court

"And Yitro heard ... everything G-d did for Moshe and for his nation  
Yisrael, that G-d had taken Yisrael out of Egypt" [Shemot 18:1]. What  
did he hear that caused him to come and convert? Rabbi Yehoshua says  
he heard about the war with Amalek and came. Rabbi Eliezer says he  
heard about the splitting of the Red Sea and came. Rabbi Eliezer  
Hamoda'i says he heard about the giving of the Torah and came."  
[Zevachim 116, quoted in the Torah by Rashi]. But this is problematic,  
since the verse explicitly describes what Yitro heard: "Everything G-d  
did for Moshe and for Yisrael." Why do our sages single out the war  
against Amalek and the splitting of the Sea?

It would seem that Yitro was impressed not by G-d's greatness but by  
the good qualities of Bnei Yisrael, which were demonstrated by these  
events. Why is it that in the case of Egypt Moshe said, "G-d will wage  
war for you, and you can remain silent" [Shemot 14:14], while when  
Amalek appeared he said, "Choose people for us, and go fight against  
Amalek" [Shemot 17:9]?

The explanation may be that we owe Egypt a debt, since they opened  
their doors to Yaacov and his children in a time of famine. Because of  
this, we did not repay their evil deeds directly, in spite of the suffering  
and oppression during our exile in Egypt. This noble behavior is what  
captured Yitro's heart. As one of Pharaoh's advisors, he was present  
when the king "who did not know Yosef" [Shemot 1:8] laid his plans,  
"let us be clever with them" [1:10], and he was acutely aware of the  
oppression the nation suffered at their hands. But in spite of this, Bnei  
Yisrael knew to acknowledge their debt to Egypt. There was no such  
obligation to Amalek, and therefore, "Yehoshua weakened Amalek and  
his nation with the sword" [Shemot 17:13].

All three sages quoted above had this thought in mind in their  
commentary about Yitro, with each one emphasizing a different aspect.  
Rabbi Yehoshua stresses the war with Amalek directly and Rabbi Eliezer  
notes the parting of the Red Sea. Finally, Rabbi Eliezer Hamoda'i found  
the principle of repayment of a debt of gratitude in the Torah, where it is  
written, "Do not despise the Egyptians, for you were strangers in their  
land" [Devarim 23:8].

Moshe already showed his gratitude in Egypt, in that he did not wave  
his staff over the land to start the first three plagues - blood, frogs, and  
lice - because "neither water, which guarded you when you were thrown  
into the Nile, nor dust, which protected you when you killed the  
Egyptian, should be struck by your hand" [Tanchuma].

In Yitro's eyes, recognizing a debt of gratitude was the most  
important characteristic, and it impressed him so greatly that he was  
proud to bear the title, "Moshe's father-in-law" [Shemot 18:1]. It is this  
gratitude which led to his daughter's marriage with Moshe, when he was  
told that an Egyptian man saved his daughters from the shepherds and

B'S'D gave the sheep water. Yitro himself acknowledged his debt, when he  
asked, "Where is he? ... Invite him to join us for bread." [Shemot 2:20].  
He showed his appreciation by giving "his daughter Tziporah to Moshe"  
[Shemot 2:21].

The lesson to be learned for all generations is obvious.

A MITZVA IN THE TORAH PORTION: Honoring an Older Sibling  
by Rabbi Binyamin Tabory

The Talmud comments as follows on the verse, "Honor your father  
and your mother" [Shemot 20:12]: "'Your father' includes your father's  
wife, and 'your mother' includes your mother's husband. The letter 'vav'  
implies that this should also be applied to an older brother." [Ketuvot  
103a]. However, it adds that these obligations are only while the father is  
alive, but not after his death (Rashi writes that this refers to the father's  
wife only). According to one of the principles of the Rambam, additions  
which are derived from added letters are not counted as separate mitzvot  
(introduction to the Sefer Hamitzvot, rule 2). And this may explain his  
words in another place: "It is a rabbinical requirement that a person must  
honor his older brother just like he honors his father" [Hilchot Mamrim  
6:15].

The Ramban comments that honoring a brother should be considered  
a Torah mitzva even though it is learned from an added letter in the verse  
but that it is part of the commandment of honoring the parents and not a  
separate mitzva. Therefore, he feels that the mitzva of honoring a brother  
is only while the parents are alive (as opposed to Rashi), "since it is a  
disgrace for them that their children should act shamefully, and this can  
cause them great sorrow. It is everybody's custom to insist that all their  
children honor their older brothers."

It may be that according to the Rambam, who viewed the obligation  
to honor a brother as a separate (rabbinical) mitzva, it continues even  
after the father dies. This is what the Minchat Chinuch understood. He  
wrote (mitzva 33) that the obligations to honor a mother's husband or a  
father's wife are in effect as long as the mother or father is still alive, but  
that the Rambam did not mention this limitation with respect to honoring  
a brother.

In Midrash Lekach Tov, it is written: "V'et - this means that your  
firstborn brother is also included." And Or Ha'afeila (quoted in Torat  
Shlomo) expands this to "This implies that your older brother is like  
your father." Thus, the obligation refers specifically to honoring the  
firstborn, who in some ways represents the father. According to the  
responsa, Halachot Ketanot, a person "is only required to honor the  
firstborn brother and not the second in line, even if he is older by several  
years, since he doesn't inherit the status of the father" [1:123].

The Shevut Yaacov discusses whether there is an obligation to honor  
an older sister. As a reference, he quotes the Midrash Rabba on the  
verse, "And Rachel and Leah answered" [Bereishit 31:14], that Rachel  
died first because she spoke before her older sister (chapter 76).  
However, in the end he rules that the requirement to honor the firstborn  
brother doesn't include a sister or the other brothers. Rachel was not  
punished because she transgressed a specific sin with respect to her older  
sister but because of the more general principle that one should not talk  
before an older person, as in the Mishna (Avot 5:7.) Note that the Chida  
felt that if the Shevut Yaacov had seen the above words of the Ramban,  
he would have ruled differently. This is because the Ramban implies that  
older brothers and even sisters should be honored, because parents want  
their children not to act shamefully.

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From: Shlomo Katz[SMTP:skatz@torah.org] Hamaayan / The Torah  
Spring Edited by SHLOMO KATZ Yitro

Sponsored by Menashe and Rachel Katz and family on the shloshim  
of grandmother, Sarah Deutsch a"h Sponsored by Daniel and Rachel  
Dadusc and family on the yearzeits of father Sion ben Jamilah a"h and

grandmother Jamilah bat Sion a"h

Our thanks to RABBI MICHAEL BRAMSON for his contributions to this week's issue. Our regular format will return next week.

"So shall you say to the House of Yaakov and relate to the Children of Israel." (19:3)

Rashi writes: The House of Yaakov refers to the women; the Children of Israel refers to the men.

R' JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCKIK z"l elaborated on this as follows: People are mistaken in thinking that we have only one tradition, the tradition of our fathers. The verse says (Mishlei 1:8), "Hear, my son, the instruction of your father, and forsake not the Torah of your mother." What is the difference between the tradition or instruction of a father and the tradition or Torah of a mother?

From one's father, one should learn the texts - the Bible or the Talmud, how to analyze, how to classify, how to infer, etc. One should also learn the detailed halachot from his father.

From his mother, one learns that Judaism is more than strict compliance with the laws. R' Soloveitchik said about his own mother: "She taught me that there is a flavor, a scent and a warmth to mitzvot. I learned from her the most important thing in life - to feel the presence of the Almighty and the gentle pressure of His hand resting on my frail shoulder."

For example, R' Soloveitchik continued: "The laws of Shabbat were passed on to me by my father. The Shabbat as a living entity, a queen, was revealed to me by my mother; it is part of 'the Torah of your mother.'" (Quoted in The Rav, section 19.13)

"The entire people saw the thunder." (20:15)

Rashi comments that the people saw something which is usually audible, i.e., the thunder.

What was the purpose of such a miracle? R' MOSHE FEINSTEIN Z"L answers that it teaches us the extent of our obligation to study Torah. One must apply all of his energies and intellectual capabilities to Torah study until he understands the Torah's lessons as clearly as if they were spelled out before his eyes. It goes without saying that one who issues halachic rulings, leads others, or educates children must spell out the Torah's lessons for his audience with that same degree of clarity. (Darash Moshe Vol. II)

"You shall not ascend My altar on steps . . ." (20:23)

R' AHARON KAHN SHLITA observed: The Torah declares that a kohen must not use steps when approaching the altar, but rather a ramp. A ramp is an incline; on a ramp, one must either continue to move forward or he will inevitably fall backward. On steps, in contrast, one can rest.

The Torah is teaching that if one does not continually move closer to the altar, closer to Hashem, he will inevitably move farther away.

[Ed. note: In the same way, some compare spiritual growth to walking up a "down-escalator." The yetzer hara and man's physical nature both are opposed to spiritual growth, and they constantly exert a downward pull. If one does not keep moving forward, he will move backward. Moreover, if one proceeds only slowly, the best he will do is stay in place. Only with real effort can one move upward on a down escalator.]

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From: Rabbi Yissocher Frand [SMTP:ryfrand@torah.org] "RavFrand"  
List - RABBI FRAND ON PARSHAS YISRO

Even When Involved In Community Affairs, Never Forget the  
Individuals

In the beginning of the Parsha, the Torah says that Yisro took his daughter, Tziporah (the wife of Moshe) and their two sons. The Torah then repeats the names of their two sons (Gershom and Eliezer) and even repeats the reason why they were given those respective names [Shmos 18: 2-4].

The sefer Bais Av from Rav Elyakim Schlesinger raises a simple question: the names and the reasons for these names were "ancient history." We already know these facts. Why does Yisro feel compelled to repeat this information?

The Bais Av suggests the following interpretation. Yisro knew very well that Moshe Rabbeinu was about to become the leader of the Jewish people. As the leader of the Jewish people, Moshe's days and hours would be dedicated to the needs of the congregation. Yisro was gently and subtly trying to tell his son-in-law "Please do not forget my grandchildren; please do not forget your children."

This means that Yisro was telling Moshe, "In spite of all the distractions and trials and tribulations that you will have in your role as the leader of the Jewish people, do not forget your own children."

One can never minimize the importance of an individual -- even relative to an entire community. As a proof to this axiom, Yisro cited the following: "If not for the fact that G-d took interest in you as an individual, where would you be? "For I was merely a stranger in a foreign country" [the reason for Gershom's name]. Furthermore, if not for the fact that G-d concerned himself with the individual... "For the G-d of my father was my Helper" [the reason for Eliezer's name], there would be no Moshe Rabbeinu.

Thus, in a gentle and subtle fashion, Yisro is trying to remind Moshe never to forget the individual.

The Brisker Rav used to say that before any individual can contemplate trying to have an impact and influence on others, the members of his own family must first be taken care of and be spiritually in line. Kiruv (spiritual outreach), like charity, begins at home. When a person has internal problems in his own family, he cannot begin the task of straightening out the world.

We learn this concept from Avrohom. In spite of the fact that he was the "influencer par excellence," despite the fact that the doors on four sides of his tent were open to the world, he had to chase Yishmael away from his household. Why? Because as Sarah argued, and as G-d confirmed, Yishmael posed a threat to the integrity of Avrohom's own household. Yishmael's continued presence in that house could undermine Avrohom's entire mission, and ability to influence his own family as well as others.

This too is what Yisro was hinting to Moshe: Do not forget the individuals -- especially those of your own household -- even relative to the needs of the community.

Mitzvos On Opposite Sides of the Luchos Go In Opposite Directions

Parshas Yisro contains the Aseres HaDibbros [Ten Commandments]. According to tradition, the Ten Commandments are divided into two categories. The first five statements are Mitzvos Bain Odom Lamakom [laws between man and G-d] and the second five are Mitzvos Bain Odom Lchavayro [laws between man and his fellow man].

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch makes the following beautiful comment. The Mitzvos between man and G-d begin with Mitzvos that are intellectual concepts, more theory than practice. But although they begin with 'cerebral' commands such as "I am the L-rd your G-d" and "You shall have no other gods before me," they progress to commands that involve concrete actions -- "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy" and "Honor thy Parents". If Mitzvos between man and G-d do not ultimately climax in specific actions then we have been remiss in the whole nature of these Mitzvos. They must begin in the brain but end

with concrete actions.

On the other hand, the progression of Mitzvos between a man and his fellow man are just the opposite. The first commands in this category require that a person be good in deed - "Do not murder, etc." However, these Mitzvos cannot be mere actions. Ultimately, these Mitzvos must lead us from the world of practice into the world of theory. We cannot merely be content with the fact that we do not harm our fellow man. We must reach a level where we have the proper feelings and thoughts towards our fellow man. These Mitzvos must lead us to the point where we feel close enough to our fellow man that we will not covet what belongs to him or be jealous of him. Regarding Mitzvos between man and his fellow man, it is not sufficient to remain in the realm of (abstinence from) action.

The Mitzvos between man and his fellow man must develop from the world of action to the world of thought and emotion, while the Mitzvos between man and G-d must evolve from the world of thought and emotion to the world of action.

Sources and Personalities Rav Elyakim Schlesinger -- Author of Sefer Bais Av, Rosh Yeshiva in London, a student of the Brisker Rav. Brisker Rav -- Rav Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik (1886-1959); Brisk, Jerusalem; son of Rav Chaim Soloveitchik (1853-1918). Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch -- (1808-1888) Frankfurt-am-main; leader of modern German-Jewish Orthodoxy.

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From: RABBI DR. ZALMAN KOSSOWSKY (Zurich) rabbi@icz.org  
Subject: Yitro - food for thought

... for the past few weeks in the Tora, we have been reading the story of how the Children of Israel became a nation and how they reacted to the events around them. Last week we read of the great wonders that they witnessed as they came to the Sea of Reeds and it split before them.

We also are told that notwithstanding having seen all these wonders, as soon as they were faced with difficulties such as the lack of food or water, they lost their faith and began to wonder if it would not have been better for them to have remained in Egypt.

When we examine such episodes, the message that comes clear to us is that building one's faith in G'd requires more than being witness to even the greatest of miracles. Even though one might think that seeing an outright miracle would be the best proof for the existence of G'd, it seems that history proves otherwise.

I find this a very important lesson for us to learn. ... According to our tradition, all the 613 mitzvot of the Tora are somehow imbedded in these 10 statements that G'd Himself revealed to Mankind at the top of Mount Sinai on that fateful morning 3,312 years ago. ...

According to our tradition, there were 5 statements written on each of the tablets. Given that they were written in the Holy Tongue, Hebrew, the writing started at the top right-hand corner. The first tablet contained 5 statements that focus on what we call bein adam lamakom  $\phi$  the relationship between Man and G'd  $\phi$  while the second tablet, again starting at the top, recorded the second set of 5 statements, all phrased as 'prohibitions', which deal with the bein adam l'chavero  $\phi$  the relationships between Man and Man.

The most important concept that I would like to suggest ... is that you view these two Tablets as what we would call today  $\phi$  "a training program". The principle here is relatively simple. Deep and abiding Faith is not the product of what you see and hear, it is the product of what you do. The Talmud tells us that even the lowliest maidservant

present at the splitting of the Sea, saw visions that not even the Prophet Ezekiel was ever blessed to see.

So, at Mount Sinai, G'd reveals the 10 exercises that help the person to develop such a mature philosophy and Faith. It starts, like every philosophy and scientific discipline, with some Axioms.

Statement 1 is an axiom. A'nochi Hashem  $\phi$  I am the L'rd  $\phi$  means: "be prepared to believe that there is a G'd". The exercise involves repeating to one's self  $\phi$  "this cannot all be an accident, a chance occurrence. There has to be a "Boss", a "Cause" that made this all come to be." Until this becomes part of your perception and weltanschauung  $\phi$  repeat this statement to yourself each time you look at Nature.

Statement 2 is still somewhat of an axiom, but it is also a logical conclusion of Step 1. Lo yi'he'ye l'cha elohim acherim - do not make for yourself false G'ds. Do not make of things that G'd created  $\phi$  'smaller' or 'other' gods.

... it used to be that people worshiped idols and statues. Modern Man does not lower him- or herself to this sort of behavior. But if you think that Modern Man is free of idol-worship, you are making a big mistake. Just as our technology is more sophisticated, so are the modern false gods. A 'false god' is anything, or perhaps everything that you make into the 'most important thing' in your life, other than the REAL G'd Himself. For Modern Man there are a host of idols  $\phi$  from 'wealth' and 'success', through 'beauty' to even 'Science'.

The exercise at this step involves reminding yourself that all these things are "creations" and NOT the "Creator". They may be very important, but none of them are worth dying for, or sacrificing your time with your family and loved ones.

Statement 3 follows. Treat G'd with Awe and Respect. Train yourself that G'd is NOT your 'mate', your 'pal'. Elevate Him, put Him on a pedestal. Lo ti'sa -- this means not only that you ABSOLUTELY DO NOT use His Name in a false oath, but more so  $\phi$  simply do not mention His name unnecessarily or in vain. Thus the Jewish practice of referring to Him as Hashem  $\phi$  the Name, or Hakadosh Baruch Hu  $\phi$  the Holy One, Blessed be His Name. Or the rule that you do not make Blessings unnecessarily.

Statement 4 forces you to confront the basic question of how you relate to the world in which you live. Who, in essence, is the "Boss"? To whom does your body belong? Your life? Your time? Who makes final and ultimate decisions? You? Or is there a "Higher Power" before whom you must give way?

Working 6 days and abstaining from ALL physical creativity on the seventh, on Shabbat - more than anything else, trains you to confront and answer this question every week. It is here that you teach yourself that merely having the ability to do something does not give you the right to do it. Modern Man has created many horrors, most of them inadvertently, because this lesson has not been learnt, or even taught. Merely because it is technologically possible to do something, does not make it moral or even wise to do it. Think of the atom bomb. Think of pollution and destruction of ozone layer. Think of over-fishing and destruction of the rain forests.

In Statement 5 we come to the ultimate exercise in this column in which we train ourselves not just to respect and fear G'd, but also to love G'd. Where do we learn this? In training ourselves to respect and love our parents. Kaved et avicha v'et I'mecha. There are many dimensions here, but two in particular are important for me. The first is that the underlying motive here is "gratitude". Honor and Respect is due to parents simply because they are the "givers of life". In addition, the parent usually is the person who worried, toiled and suffered so that one's needs as a child were met. But even more importantly, one's parents DO NOT have to earn the respect  $\phi$  the obligation to honor one's parents exists regardless of how they behaved. Thus here we learn best how to act out our obligations toward our Creator. Like to our parents, it should be mostly out of gratitude, but even if not  $\phi$  G'd is the Source of

all Life  $\phi$  and for that alone, Honor, Respect and Love are due.

We now move to the top of the next Tablet  $\phi$  and to the exercises that we carry out in our relationships with our fellow human beings.

Statement 6 is simple. Lo tir'tzach  $\phi$  you shall not murder. Just as G'd created you, so too, He created your fellow Man. You have the Divinely granted gift of life, so, too, does your fellow Man.

The logic behind Statement 7  $\phi$  lo tin'af  $\phi$  you shall not commit adultery lies in the reason for the creation of two parts to the humankind  $\phi$  Man and Woman. Lo tov he'yot ha'adam l'va'do  $\phi$  it is not good for Man to be singular forced the Creator to split Adam into two parts. When two such parts come and join together, interfering in this pairing is an act of heresy in which you, as the third party, in essence 'sabotage' G'd's basic Plan and goal. The willingness of one of the original partners to participate in this 'sabotage', in no way reduces the wrong.

Statement 8  $\phi$  lo tig'nov  $\phi$  you shall not steal is an expansion of a concept which has begun to emerge already in the preceding two statements, namely, the existence of a Divinely given right to be the possessor of something. In Statement 6 it is the right to your own life. In Statement 7 it is the right to the integrity of the freely entered-into bonds of marriage. In Statement 8, as mentioned, it is the Divinely given right to be the possessor of legally acquired goods, or according to the Talmudic interpretation of this commandment, it is the right of an individual to be the possessor of his or her own body. According to this view, this commandment is limited to the stealing and selling of people as slaves. The stealing of property is mentioned elsewhere in the Tora.

By this point in your exercise program you are quite fit and your faith in G'd as the Creator and Giver of Life is quite well developed. There may be, however, still some underdeveloped elements in your faith that could allow some serious immoralities in your behavior.

Hashem elokim emet  $\phi$  the Lord G'd is Truth says the Prophet. "Truth" is thus one of the Names by which G'd is known to us.

Statement 9 - lo ta'aneh  $\phi$  you shall not bear false witness is the exercise through which we internalize this truth into our weltanschauung. I cannot tell a untruth, because "G'd knows" the truth, and if I do tell a lie, then I, in essence, deny G'd's knowing of the fact.

There is, however, possibly still one major gap in one's faith and belief system. All the exercises on this second Tablet involve behaviors that are visible to others. A basic premise in our Faith, however, is that G'd also knows all our thoughts. Thus we come to the last exercise, which in many ways is also the most difficult one to fully carry out. Lo tach'mod - you shall not covet. Make no plans, have no thoughts regarding the possessions that your neighbor may have, be they a wife, a house, a servant, whatever. Train yourself not to be jealous. Train yourself to feel that what you have, what you earned and now own, is in essence the result of G'd's Will. Wanting more is in itself not the best thing, but coveting that which already belongs to your neighbor, that is the ultimate challenge of G'd's decision to grant it to him or her.

... this is the ULTIMATE test of your faith. And you can know that you have passed this test when you can look at someone else's success, and be happy for them!

May you both be inspired to join in this training program all the days of your lives. ...

Mazal tov and Shabbat Shalom.

... ps. There is a sequel to this in which I show a relationship horizontally between the two columns, ie. 1 -6, 2 -7 etc. I have also found that it is possible to use what is known as AT BASH, namely, relating 1 to 10, 2 to 9, 3 to 8 and so on. Try it - it is fun, and insightful.

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From: Rabbi Riskin's Shabbat Shalom List parsha@ohrtorahstone.org.il  
Shabbat Shalom: Yitro RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Efrat, Israel-- What is holiness and how do we achieve it? The word for holy, kadosh, appears in its various grammatical forms more than 200

times in the Bible, but a clear definition of the term itself is still difficult to formulate.

Generally, we associate holiness with a separation from mundane, materialistic pursuits, an isolation and insulation from the world and its temptations. But I'd like to suggest that the Jewish concept of holiness is almost the exact opposite of this idea of separation from the world; on the contrary, only by direct, vital and passionate involvement in the world will one achieve true sanctity.

The first time a form of the word kadosh appears in the Torah is at the very beginning of Creation in the context of the first Sabbath: ".And G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified [vayekadesh] it, because in it He rested from all His work which G-d had created to perform" [Gen. 2:3].

In this week's portion of Yitro, the fourth of the Ten Commandments is the mandate to keep the Sabbath, and as we expect to find, holiness is at the heart of the ordinance: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all your creative activity. But the seventh day is a Sabbath unto G-d your Lord" [Ex. 20:8-9].

Interestingly enough, the Decalogue is repeated in the Book of Deuteronomy, but with a slight word change as the introduction to the Sabbath commandment: "observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy." (Dt. 5:12). The opening stanza of the Friday evening prayer-song Lecha Dodi (Come my Beloved to Greet the Bride), popularizes the Rabbinical commentary, "Observe (Sh'mor) and remember (Z'chor) in a single command, the one and only G-d made us hear," implying that both verbal imperatives are to be synthesized and taken together as one. The great commentary Nahmanides (Ramban) suggests that 'remember' (Z'chor) implies the positive commands relating to the Sabbath - such as Kiddush, the three festive meals, the joyous relaxation - whereas 'observe' (Sh'mor) implies the negative commands relating to the Sabbath - such as the prohibitive acts of physical creativity. Hence, the Talmudic Sages and the Sabbath Prayer Book are enjoining us to take both the positive and the negative as two sides to the same coin, the one reinforcing and enhancing the other.

I would like to suggest another interpretation and inter-relationship between these two versions of the Sabbath command in the two expressions of the Decalogue which will, at the same time, revolutionize our understanding of holiness. But first, we must attempt to understand two seemingly contradictory rulings attributed to the great Mishnaic Sage, R. Shimon bar Yochai. On the verse "six days shall you work and do all your creative activities," the Midrash Mechilta cites R. Shimon bar Yochai as commenting "this is a positive commandment in and of itself." In other words, not only is it a divine command that we rest on the Sabbath, but it is also a divine command that we work during the other six days of the week!

Hence, in the Mechilta R. Shimon bar Yochai emerges with a positive view of labor. However, in another well known Talmudic passage commenting on the verse "And you shall gather your grain" (Dt. 11:14), the same R. Shimon bar Yochai expresses a far less tolerant view of human expenditure of energy in the work force. After R. Ishmael posits that this Biblical verse modifies another verse which instructs us never to allow the Torah to "...depart from out of our mouth" [Joshua 1:8], R. Ishmael insists that the command to 'gather in your corn,' is teaching us that Torah study must be combined with a worldly occupation.

R. Shimon bar Yochai disagrees: "...If a man ploughs in the ploughing seasons, and sows in the sowing season, and reaps in the reaping season, and threshes in the threshing season..., what is to become of the Torah?" But as long as Israel performs the will of G-d, their manual labor will be performed by others, as it says, "And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks" [Isaiah 61:5]. It is only when Israel does not perform the will of G-d that they must perform their work by themselves, as it says: "And you shall gather in your corn" (B.T. Berachot 35b).

From this source it would appear that R. Shimon bar Yochai views physical labor during the six days of the week as a punishment, hardly as a positive commandment!

To resolve this contradiction, we turn to another fascinating Talmudic text. Three Sages of the Mishna are discussing Rome. The first praises Rome for building such fine bridges, bathhouses and marketplaces; the second sage is silent, and the third, R. Shimon bar Yochai, claims that Rome is only interested in Rome's material self-interest, building "... the marketplaces to put harlots in them, bath-houses to rejuvenate themselves, and bridges to levy tolls...." The government of Rome apparently did not believe in freedom of speech -- and a death warrant is issued for R. Shimon.

R. Shimon bar Yochai, along with his son, flee to a cave in the hills of Peki'In, where they spend the next twelve years studying Torah in splendid isolation (one interpretation has it that they discovered the mystical secrets of the Zohar) - receiving nourishment from a well and carob-tree which miraculously sprung up for their sustenance. Elijah informs them that the Caesar has died and they may emerge from the cave.

The first thing they see, a Judean farmer ploughing his land, fills them with dismay and shock: "How dare one forsake life eternal and engage in life temporal!" And whatever they cast their eyes upon is immediately burnt up. A bat kol (heavenly voice) rebukes them for their destructive gaze, "Did you leave the cave to destroy My world," and they return to the cave. Twelve months pass before they leave, and this time the first thing that they see is "...an old man holding two bundles of myrtle and running...What are these for? they asked him. 'They are in honor of the Sabbath,' he replied. 'But one should be enough?' -- And the old man answered that one branch is for 'remember' (Z'chor) and the other branch is for 'observe' (Sh'mor). At this point, R. Shimon turned to his son and said, 'See how precious are the commandments to Israel.' And they were comforted" (B.T. Shabbat 33).

R. Shimon bar Yochai's two contradictory responses to the world, initial contempt followed by eventual acceptance and affirmation, are reflected in the two contradictory passages that we cited earlier: In the discussion of gathering grain, where he disagrees with R. Yishmael's idea of combining Torah study with work, R. Shimon is expressing his position before he emerged from the cave; the Midrashic statement in R. Shimon's name insisting that it is a positive commandment to work during the six days of the week is an outgrowth of the lesson R. Shimon learned from the old man with the myrtle branches.

And what was that lesson? The Sabbath is a taste of a world of perfection and peace, of truth and tranquility, of a world to come. But that vision is not yet our reality. We still live in a world of darkness as well as light, of chaos as well as order, of sin as well as merit, of persecution as well as joy. We must observe the Sabbath every seventh day in order to keep alive the vision and promise of a more perfect world which is to come. But, we must remember the Sabbath Day work is towards bringing about that redemption during the other six days of the week. Our task is to change the world that is, to plow and reap myrtle branches during the days of preparation in order to pave the way for the Sabbath delight in Eden achieved. And, if we properly remember the goal of the Sabbath during the six days of labor, then our anticipation will turn into preparation, our means will contain the sparks of sanctity so crucial to our achieving the end. And so, our Torah consists of laws of plowing and reaping - prohibitions against plowing with an ox and donkey together in concern for the welfare of the brute beast, and leaving behind portions for the poor in consideration for the less fortunate.

We must remember the sanctity of the Sabbath when we prepare for redemption during the six days of the week by working in this world to achieve the goal of perfection, and we must observe the sanctity of the Sabbath in order to keep alive our vision of ultimate peace and harmony while we still live in an imperfect world. The old man with the myrtle

branches taught R. Shimon the true message of sanctity: "And G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all the work which G-d had created (human beings) to perform." It is a Divine command for us to work six days to bring about the ultimate perfection. 'Remember' and 'observe' are truly one command!

Shabbat Shalom

You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at:  
<http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/index.htm> Ohr Torah Stone  
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From: peninim@shemayisrael.com

PENINIM ON THE TORAH BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM  
PARSHAS YISRO

.... Honor your father and your mother (20:12) The Aseres Hadibros, Ten Commandments, are inscribed on two tablets, with five commandments on each tablet. The first tablet contains those laws that focus upon man's relationship with the Almighty, while the second tablet addresses relationships between people. Interestingly, the mitzvah to honor one's parents is inscribed on the first tablet. What aspect of honoring one's parents warrants placing it among those commandments that deal with man's relationship with Hashem? Simply, one should honor his parents out of a sense of gratitude for all they have done for him. This would render Kibud Av v'Eim a "people oriented" mitzvah.

In explaining the mitzvah of Kibud Av, Sefer HaChinuch states that one should recognize, appreciate and act appropriately towards one from whom he has benefited. He should not be a "naval", an abominable person, who fails to acknowledge the good he received. He should realize he is presently in this world because of his parents. He will eventually realize that it is Hashem Who is the "cause of all causes," the real reason he is in this world. Hashem is the source of his parents and grandparent's existence throughout all the generations. He will, therefore, understand the significance of serving Him.

Horav Matisyahu Solomon, Shlita, notes from the Sefer HaChinuch that hakoras hatov, appreciation and paying gratitude, is not merely the reason for Kibud Av. Rather, it is also its greatest result. Honoring parents changes one's character. The Sefer HaChinuch explains that we are adjured to serve Hashem because of the hakoras hatov we derive from honoring parents. This would explain why this mitzvah is on the tablet that focuses upon man's relationship with Hashem.

We must still address why, if the underlying motif of Kibud Av is hakoras hatov, kavod is the medium for realizing it. Furthermore, what is the connection between the mitzvah of "morah," fear/reverence of parents -- which forbids any act that would offend or detract from the esteem in which they are held -- and hakoras hatov?

Indeed, the Rambam says that the mitzvah of morah demands that we revere our parents to the point of fear. Why is the Torah so demanding concerning this mitzvah? Horav Solomon cites Sforno's commentary to Vayikra 20:9, where the Torah metes out capitol punishment to one who curses his parents. He attributes this to the fact that this son is not predisposed to that which is written in Mishlei 1:8, "My son, hear the instruction of your father." A man like this will not keep Hashem's statutes and ordinances, for he will utterly refuse to accept them from his father and mother. Sforno posits that there is a corollary between the fear one manifests for his father and his observance of Torah and mitzvos! Torah is transmitted through the generations via parents. If the mitzvah of morah is not upheld, then the mesorah, tradition, will not endure. One who honors and reveres his parents is not merely doing a good deed towards them: he is also deriving an incredible fringe benefit in that when he serves them, he is able to learn from them how to act.

Our relationship with our parents avails us the opportunity for personal development and growth. Parents should realize the important

obligation they have to educate their children in the mitzvah of Kibud Av v'Eim. Children learn from their parents. If parents respect each other - children see and emulate. The esteem that children manifest for their parents is connected with the esteem parents demonstrate for one another. Kavod is the vehicle through which the mesorah -- transmission of Torah's inspiration, influence and character development from generation to generation -- reaches fruition. The essence of the mitzvah of kavod is appreciation. By appreciating our parents we are able to learn from them, catalyzing our own self-development and enabling the mesoras ha'avos -- transmission of our parents' legacy -- to continue. One of the benefits of this mitzvah is a refinement of our middah of hakoras hatov, which accompanies the mesorah. In other words, the purpose of Kibud Av v'Eim is to establish a relationship that is tempered by hakoras hatov to reflect a transmission of the Torah tradition from father to son.

Sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Dovid Lipins Mr. & Mrs. Raphael Manela In honor of the the Bar Mitzvah of our son Chaim Moshe n'y May he be a source of nachas to us and all of Klal Yisrael

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<http://www.ou.org/torah/ti/> OU Torah Insights Project Parshat Yitro  
RABBI MITCHELL LEVINE

American Judaism has seen a proliferation of "how-to" books designed to provide a wide array of practical halachic guidance. Common to these popular guides on Jewish observance is the somewhat frustrating piece of advice to "consult a competent halachic authority." Isn't that precisely what the reader thought he was doing when he opened the book in the first place? This conundrum has its roots in this week's parshah, when Yisro suggests that Moshe Rabbeinu delegate responsibility for "judging and making known the decrees of G-d and his teachings" to qualified leaders, who would be authorized to clarify all "minor matters" that would come up. These leaders would thus be empowered to formulate their own conclusions. They would not automatically apply a standardized view.

But Moshe does not express enthusiasm for Yisro's plan. According to Rashi, in Parshas Devarim, Moshe was disappointed that the people so readily accepted the efficacy of multiple sources of religious instruction. Moshe believed that a truly devout individual should insist on turning only to the highest authority for guidance. Multiple sources yield multiple opinions, and some of those opinions will invariably prove to be wrong. Surely it would be safer to promote the most authoritative view as the standard for all similar cases.

But despite Moshe's initial reservations, our tradition ultimately empowered its custodians to arrive at their own conclusions. The words of the Talmudic sage Rava, "a judge must be guided only by what his eyes see," is a guiding principle of rabbinic decision making. Far-reaching examples abound: Rabbeinu Abraham, son of Maimonides, condemns a judge as "weak and indecisive," because his determinations followed only what is explicitly written.

Similarly, Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin, in a letter to a colleague, suggested that the principle that "a judge must be guided only by what his own eyes see" even obligates him to contradict the view of their great and honored master. Although Rabbi Hayyim must have feared his master as he feared Heaven, perception of truth, and not personal regard, must prevail in rendering a ruling.

Closer to our own time, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, zt"l, devoted the forward of his great collection of responsum, Igros Moshe, to the proposition that a rav must issue his best considered opinion even if it proves to be wrong. A learned and sincere verdict has the sanction of having been "guided only by what [the judge's] eyes see."

Diversity is bound to be unsettling. We naturally crave the security of having acted upon an opinion that we feel has widespread recognition and acceptance. But authentic Judaism cannot be pre-fabricated.

Uniformity is a lesser value than integrity. Unless the information contained is meant to convey examples or elucidate principles, there is no better advice for a popular guide to offer than to "consult a competent halachic authority". Lacking the eyes with which to see the actual circumstances, the real puzzle is how these books can presume to offer anything else.

Rabbi Mitchell Levine Rabbi Levine is rabbi of Congregation Beth Sholom in Providence, Rhode Island

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From: Yeshivat Har Etzion's Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash [SMTP:yhe@vbm-torah.org] PARASHAT YITRO  
SICHA OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT"A  
THE CONVERSION PROCESS OF YISRAEL

Summarized by Matan Glidai Translated by Yoseif Bloch  
The gemara (Berakhot 9a) states that the nation of Yisrael entered the covenant as did any convert in Temple times: through circumcision, immersion, and the sprinkling of sacrificial blood. From the text of the Torah it seems that the circumcision and immersion preceded Ma'amad Har Sinai (the Convocation at Mount Sinai), but the sacrifices appear to be offered at a much later time. They are described at the very end of Parashat Mishpatim, some four chapters after the story of the Ma'amad itself. In fact, Rashi and the Ramban (24:1) are divided on the issue of whether the "covenant of the basins" described there occurred after the giving of the Torah, described in chapters 19-20 (Ramban), or whether it actually happened before, but it is written afterwards (Rashi). The Ramban notes that this is subject to a tannaitic dispute in the Mekhilta. Rashi's opinion thus places all three elements of conversion prior to the Ma'amad. However, according to the Ramban, we must understand why the sprinkling of the sacrificial blood could not have been executed then, thereby completing the process before the Jews came to stand at the foot of Mount Sinai.

The Rambam (Hilkhot Mechusarei Kapara 1:2) writes that a male convert who has been circumcised and immersed but still has not brought his sacrifice is already considered a Jew, though he cannot eat yet from sacrifices, as he has not yet acquired the status of a "fit Jew." This implies that the sprinkling of sacrificial blood is not mandatory; rather, it is a means of raising a convert to the level of a fit Jew, i.e., one who can eat sacrificial flesh. We thus may postulate that the sacrifices could not precede Ma'amad Har Sinai because the nation of Yisrael were then still not at the level of fit Jews. It appears that they were then missing three ingredients:

1) The essential experience and revelation of Ma'amad Har Sinai.

In this experience, each individual of Yisrael felt the reality of G-d. G-d Himself spoke to them, and this event had a profound influence upon the character of each and every person there. No one could rise the next day and recapture what each man, woman, and child among the nation of Yisrael felt on that unique day.

2) Torah and mitzvot. Until that point, faith in G-d had been an abstract concept. At Ma'amad Har Sinai and afterwards, the nation of Yisrael accepted laws which touched on all areas of life, and faith in G-d became something far more tangible.

3) The laws given to the nation of Yisrael in Parashat Mishpatim. These showed them how to found a society based on charity and justice.

One may say that only after the nation of Yisrael accepted these three principles were they able to achieve the heightened status of "fit Jews." It is logical to say as well that this is the motivation beyond the change of expression: before Ma'amad Har Sinai, they say, "All which Lord has said, we will do" (19:8), while afterwards they declare, "We will do and we will listen" (24:7). The gemara (Shabbat 88a) states that placing action before instruction is a secret that the angels use, as it says, "Bless, Lord, His angels, strong ones in power, who do His word, to listen to His word" (Tehillim 103:20). It is logical to assume that a

high level such as this, in which the nation of Yisrael is willing to subjugate themselves to G-d before they know what He wants from them, is possible only after Ma'amad Har Sinai, through which the nation of Yisrael merited the above three items.

These matters are not germane only to their time and place; they can impart to us as well a powerful message. It is untenable for someone to come to yeshiva and leave as he entered. The intimacy with the holy in yeshiva, the constant involvement in Torah, the prayers that emerge from between the walls of the Beit Midrash - all of these elements must change one's character to the extent that the yeshiva experience will continue to have an influence even after one leaves its physical bounds.

Just as Ma'amad Har Sinai permanently elevated the nation of Yisrael and was not an isolated incident, so too our lives in yeshiva must raise our level of devotion to the spiritual. In yeshiva, we must hope for constant progress, whether in terms of Torah and mitzvot, in terms of our relationship to G-d, or in terms of our concepts of charity and justice. As the mishna in Avot (1:18) states: "On three matters the world stands: on Torah, on service (the link to G-d), and on acts of kindness."

(Originally delivered at seuda shelishit, Shabbat Parashat Yitro 5756 [1996].)

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From: Jeffrey Gross[SMTP:jgross@torah.org] Weekly-halacha for 5760 Selected Halachos Relating to Parshas Yisro

BY RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER...(20:12)

HONORING PARENTS: WHAT IS THE LIMIT?

The sensitivity that one must have in performing the mitzvah of kibud av v'eim, honoring one's parents, is expressed in our Sages' comment on the verse quoted above. The Rabbis(1) criticize Yosef for not objecting to hearing his revered father described as "your servant, our father." Even though Yosef was not at liberty to reveal his identity at the time, he is nevertheless faulted for not being offended by the desecration of his father's honor. This teaches us that it is not enough to merely honor and fear one's parents in their presence. Even when they are not physically present, we are commanded to see that their honor is not compromised in any way. Let us explain:

There are two major categories under which the halachos of conduct towards parents are subsumed: kibud, honoring them, and mora, revering them.

**KIBUD AV V'EIM - HONOR OF PARENTS**

Kibud is accomplished in three different ways: Through the children's thoughts - children are supposed to view their parents as being honorable and respected people - even if they are not considered as such in the eyes of others. This attitudinal aspect of the mitzvah is the main part of kibud(2); Through the children's actions - this includes feeding, dressing and escorting them, and generally assisting them in all of their needs as a servant would do for his master. These actions must be done b'sever panim yafos, pleasantly and enthusiastically. The manner in which one assists parents is a crucial aspect of the mitzvah(3). Even if the child is in the midst of learning Torah, he must stop to assist his parents(4). Through the children's speech - e.g., when a child is honored, he should credit his parents for the honor bestowed upon him. When a child asks others to grant his request or to do him a favor, he should not request it in his own merit, but rather, in the merit of his father or mother [when applicable](5).

Parents may excuse their children from the mitzvah of kibud(6). In fact, it is advisable for them to do so. A parent who constantly exacts respect from his children will surely cause his children to be punished on

his account(7). Consequently, although according to the halachah(8) a child should stand up when a parent enters(9) the room(10), in practice this halachah is not widely observed. It is safe to assume that most parents excuse their children from demonstrating this honor towards them(11), and since they do, the children are not obligated(12). It is recommended, though, that children ask their parents explicitly if they excuse them from demonstrating this kibud(13).

Reciting Kaddish after a parent's death falls into the category of kibud(14). Consequently, a parent may excuse his child from saying Kaddish after his passing(15).

**MORA AV V'EIM- REVERENCE OF PARENTS**

The second category of the halachos governing the conduct of children to parents is mora, reverence, or fear. It means that one should act towards his parents as he would towards a sovereign with the power to punish those who treat him disrespectfully(16). Specifically, this commandment prohibits a child from sitting in his parents' set places at home or in shul, interrupting them, contradicting them [in an abrupt or disrespectful manner] and calling them by their first names(17).

Most poskim maintain that parents may also excuse their children from the mitzvah of mora(18). Consequently, it has become customary that children sit in their father's place in shul, since parents are not particular about this show of respect(19).

Parents may not, however, allow themselves to be degraded, hit or cursed by their children. Those actions are not excusable(20).

Even if a parent is, G-d forbid, insane and has embarrassed the child in public, it is nevertheless forbidden for the child to shame or degrade the parent(21). One may, however, take steps to ensure that his parents are not publicly embarrassed [e.g., one may arrange to have others bar the parents from a public gathering, etc.(22)].

When an elderly father lives with his son, the son is not required to give up his seat at the head of the table(23), although the custom in many homes is to do so(24). In any case, the son must allow his father to wash his hands first and to be served first(25), etc.

A son should preferably not daven Shemoneh Esrei within four amos [approximately eight feet] of his father(26).

If her husband objects, a married woman is not required to honor her parents. She is, however, obligated to revere them and to avoid demeaning them(27).

FOOTNOTES: 1 Sotah 13b. 2 Chayei Adam 67:3. See explanation in Sichos Mussar (5731, Ma'amar 22). 3 Y.D. 240:4. 4 Pischei Teshuvah 240:8; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (oral ruling quoted in Kibud v'Horim K'hilchasam, pg. 25). 5 Y.D. 240:5; Chayei Adam 67:5. 6 The parents may change their mind and revoke their exemption - Maharam Shick Y.D. 218. 7 Y.D. 240:19. See Alei Shur pg. 261 for elaboration. 8 This is a Biblical obligation? Rosh Kiddus hin 1:57. There are various views in the poskim as to how many times per day this obligation applies? see Chayei Adam 67:7; Aruch ha-Shulchan 24; Shevet ha-Levi 1:111-4; Avnei Yashfei 1:185. 9 According to some poskim, the obligation to stand up for a parent begins when the child hears their footsteps? see Gilyon Maharsha Y.D. 240:7 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:24. Other poskim rule that the obligation begins only when seeing them? see Chayei Adam 67:7; Chazon Ish Y.D. 149:10. 10 Y.D. 240:7. This is an obligation of kibud? Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:24; Chazon Ish Y.D. 149:4; Gesher ha-Chayim 20:9. 11 See Sefer Chasidim 152 and 339. 12 Even when parents have exempted their children from honoring them, if the children honor them they are fulfilling a mitzvah? R' Akiva Eiger and Pischei Teshuvah Y.D. 240:16. 13 Harav S.Y. Elyashiv, quoted in Avnei Yashfei 1:185 and in Mora ha-Horim v'Kibudam pg. 49. 14 Chayei Adam 67:6. 15 Pischei Teshuvah Y.D. 344:1. 16 Rambam, Sefer ha-Mitzvos 211. 17 Y.D. 240:2. 18 Birkei Yosef 240:13. See also Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:133. 19 Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:9. 20 Teshuvos Rivash 220; Meishiv Davar 2:50. See Minchas Shelomo 32. 21 Y.D. 240:8-10. 22 Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:32. See Tzitz Eliezer 12:59. 23 Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:11. 24 She'arim ha-Metzuyanim B'halachah 143:2. Harav S.Z. Auerbach, Harav S.Y. Elyashiv and Harav C.P. Scheinberg are quoted (Mora ha-Horim v'Kibudam, pg. 19; Kibud v'Yiras Horim K'hilchasam, pg. 62) as ruling that it is proper for the son to offer his seat to his father. If the father declines, then the son may sit there. 25 Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:11; Harav S.Y. Elyashiv and Harav B.Z. Abba Shaul (oral ruling quoted in Mora ha-Horim v'Kibudam, pg. 19). 26 O.C. 90:24 and Mishnah Berurah 73, 77, 78. See Beur Halachah there. 27 Y.D. 240:17, Shach 19 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 38. See, however, Tzitz Eliezer 16:28.

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From: RABBI JONATHAN SCHWARTZ jschwartz@ymail.yu.edu  
Subject: Internet Chaburah-- Parshas Yisro

Prologue: In their moment of glory, when emotion overtook them, they were commanded to be careful. The children of Bnei Yisroel were warned to be sure not to ascend Har Sinai nor to touch it. How could Hashem give these simple messages to Bnei Yisroel at the moment of their greatest emotional and spiritual rise?

The Brisker Rav (Gri"z Stencil to Shir HaShirim) noted that this question is the correct key to understanding of a particularly difficult Possuk in Tehillim. When discussing Matan Torah, the possuk (Tehillim 68:18) notes that during the Matan Torah, the ground shuddered and the skies dripped. Elsewhere, the Paitan describes how the voice of Hashem shattered cedars in Lebanon (Tehillim ibid see Rashi) and mountains danced. The Brisker Rav noted that during this time, the only thing that did not undergo some major metamorphosis was Klal Yisroel who were busy keeping the Mitzvos of watching their ascension of the mountain.

The Brisker Rav explained that in the moment of the greatest display of strength by Hashem ("Hashem Oz"), he still allowed Bnei Yisroel to exist in peace ("Hashem Yivorech Es Amo BaShalom"). The greatest gift he could give his nation at the moment of their greatest emotional drive was Mitzvos that would keep them from getting too overrun in the moment.

Similarly, the Rov ztl., (Hesped for Brisker Rov) is quoted as having described the difference between Aninus and Aveilus as being based in the right of a person to question Hashem as when a person is in Aninus. After that initial moment of doubt, when the person becomes exempt from performing proactive Mitzvos, the Rov explained that we are immediately hit with Aveilus which carries its Halachos with it. The purpose of the sharp contrast is to provide man with a venue for channeling his emotions so that they do not take advantage of him. Emotions can bring one to spiritual heights or leave one bereft of Torah. The placing of things in context, especially in the context of Mitzvos can allow a spiritual experience to be nurturing and successful and not, G-d forbid, harmful.

This week's Chaburah examines other spiritual experiences that can cause one to act out of character or role. It is entitled:

For What Purpose? ...

Battala News Mazal Tov to JJ and Aliza Sussman on their recent Marriage Mazal Tov to Ari and Yael Rosenthal upon the birth of a baby Boy. Mazal Tov to Sarah and Judah Diamant upon the birth and Bris of Avrohom Aryeh.

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From: Mordecai Kornfeld [SMTP:kornfeld@netvision.net.il]

INSIGHTS INTO THE DAILY DAF brought to you by Kollel Iyun Hadaf of Yerushalayim daf@dafyomi.co.il, http://www.dafyomi.co.il

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Yevamos 50

AGADAH: FILLING ONE'S LIFESPAN, OR ADDING TO IT QUESTION: The Gemara records a Machlokes Tana'im regarding the meaning of Hashem's blessing to His people, "The number of your days I shall fill" (Shemos 23:26). The Beraisa says that it is referring to the days of a person's lifespan. Rabbi Akiva says that if a person is worthy, then Hashem lets the person live his entire allotted time. If a person is unworthy, then Hashem reduces his allotted time. The Chachamim argue and say that if a person is worthy, then Hashem \*adds\* to his allotted time, and not that Hashem merely keeps the person alive for his allotted time.

RAV YAKOV D. HOMNICK uses this Gemara to explain an odd incident that is recorded in the Gemara in Megilah (28a). The Gemara there relates a number of incidents wherein the Talmidim of a Tana or Amora asked their teacher how he merited to live such a long life. In each case, the Tana or Amora answered by relating an act or acts of especially upright conduct which he practiced. In the middle of the Sugya, the Gemara relates that Rabbi Akiva once asked Rabbi Nechunya ha'Gadol how he merited to live so long. Rabbi Nechunya's attendants

thought that Rabbi Akiva was asking in a derogatory fashion, as if he was upset that Rabbi Nechunya had lived so long, and they began to hit him. Rabbi Akiva escaped to the top of a tree, from where he called to Rabbi Nechunya. "If the Torah says, [You shall prepare] a lamb (Bamidbar 28:4), then why does it add the word \*one\* lamb (Keves \*Echad\*)?"

>From Rabbi Akiva's question, Rabbi Nechunya saw that Rabbi Akiva was a genuine Talmid Chacham, and he ordered his attendants to leave him. Rabbi Akiva then answered his own question -- the Torah adds the word "Echad" to teach that the lamb must be the one which is the most special of its flock.

Rabbi Nechunya then told Rabbi Akiva why he merited to live so long. "I never accepted any presents, I never stood up for my due (to get back at someone who had pained me), and I was forgoing with my money."

Why were the attendants so upset with Rabbi Akiva's question to Rabbi Nechunya, and what did Rabbi Nechunya see that changed his viewpoint about Rabbi Akiva's question?

ANSWER: RAV HOMNICK explains as follows. Our Gemara records the Machlokes between Rabbi Akiva and the Chachamim about how Hashem allots to a person years to his life. Rabbi Akiva says that if a person merits, then Hashem \*fills\* his allotted lifespan, while the Chachamim say that He \*adds\* to it. Since Rabbi Akiva is the minority opinion, the Halachah should follow the Chachamim.

For this reason, the attendants of Rabbi Nechunya were upset with Rabbi Akiva for asking how their master lived so long. Since his extra years were a blessing of \*addition\* to the time he had been allotted to live, it is not proper to speak about it openly, for a "blessing [of addition] exists only upon something which is hidden from the eye" (Bava Metzia 42a). They feared that by revealing the extra years granted to Rabbi Nechunya and discussing why he was blessed with those extra years, it would become something that was no longer hidden, and the blessing would not continue.

Rabbi Akiva, though, was acting according to this own opinion in Yevamos, that when a person lives for a very long time, it is not an \*addition\* to his allotted life, but rather Hashem has granted him the ability to live out his allotted time (which, in Rabbi Nechunya's case, happened to be a long time). Therefore, Rabbi Akiva was searching for the proper manner of conduct which would merit living out one's fully allotted time. Since that does not involve a blessing of \*extra\*, additional years, it is not subject to the requirement that it remain "hidden from the eye!"

Rabbi Akiva conveyed his intention by hinting to the lamb of the Korban Tamid. If one uses each day of his life to fulfill Hashem's will, such as by fulfilling a daily obligation like the Korban Tamid, then he will merit living out all of his days.

This is also evident in Rabbi Nechunya's response to Rabbi Akiva. When Rabbi Nechunya understood that Rabbi Akiva was asking how he managed to live out his fully allotted time (and not how he merited to have additional years added to his lifespan), he answered, "I never accepted any presents," meaning that he felt full and satisfied with his portion in life and needed nothing else. Measure for measure, he was awarded with the full portion of his lifespan. Similarly, "I never stood up for my due, and I was forgoing with my money" -- but rather he trusted in Hashem to repay his due in full measure, for which he was rewarded with fully living out his allotted years!

This is the only incident in that Sugya which discusses the ways to deserve fully living one's allotted time, since it is Rabbi Akiva asking the question. The other cases are in accordance with the Chachamim in Yevamos, and thus they discuss how to \*add\* to one's lifespan.

A remarkable support for this is what the MESILAS YESHARIM writes about the Sugya. The Mesilas Yesharim (ch. 19) writes that these stories teach how to act with Chasidus, adding to the requirement of the law, for which one will be rewarded measure for measure by Hashem \*adding\* to one's allotted lifespan. The Mesilas Yesharim cites a number of the stories in the Gemara in Megilah \*before\* the one with Rabbi Akiva, and he also cites the story of Rabbi Zeira that \*follows\* the one with Rabbi Akiva, and he omits the story of Rabbi Akiva! The reason for this, says Rav Homnick, is that the story of Rabbi Akiva does not demonstrate how to \*add\* to one's lifespan, but rather how to merit completing one's allotted time!

This explains why, when Rabbi Nechunya said that he never accepted any presents, the Gemara brings an example for this attribute from the conduct of Rabbi Zeira, who never accepted presents. In the very next case of the Gemara, though, Rabbi Zeira was asked how he merited to live so long. He answered with six reasons, but he did not mention that he never accepted presents! It must be that the conduct of not accepting presents is a reason for one to have his allotted time completed, but not to have more years added, while Rabbi Zeira was explaining why extra years were added to his life! (From SEFER MARBEH SIMCHAH on Maseches Megilah) ... The \*D\*AFYOMI \*A\*DVANCEMENT \*F\*ORUM, brought to you by Kollel Iyun Hadaf For information on joining the Kollel's free Dafyomi mailing lists, write to info@dafyomi.co.il, or visit us at http://www.dafyomi.co.il Tel(IL):02-652-2633 -- Off(IL):02-651-5004 -- Fax(US):603-7375728

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From: Kenneth Block [SMTP:kenblock@worldnet.att.net] Subject: NCYI Weekly Divrei Torah - Parshat Yitro

RABBI YOSEF GOLDBERG Young Israel of Wavecrest & Bayswater, NY  
Daf Yomi: Yevamos 60

This Shabbos marks the first Yahrzeit of my father, Reb Mordechai ben Tzvi Gershon, a"h, who had the possibly unique distinction of having been the father of two sons who are Young Israel rabbis. I am deeply grateful for this opportunity to honor my father on this occasion with a Dvar Torah that will hopefully be read by thousands of Jews on the very day of the Yahrzeit.

The Commandment to honor one's parents is the fifth dibra of the Aseret HaDibrot (which we should really translate as the Ten Statements rather than Ten Commandments for there are more than ten commandments contained within the Aseret HaDibrot.) The first five

statements of the Aseret HaDibrot contain mitzvot that are between man and G-d. The second five statements contain mitzvot that are essentially between man and his fellow man. The fifth dibra, which states the commandment of honoring one's parents, is considered a transitional one, since that commandment is between man and man as well as between man and G-d, as we will see. Before discussing the dual nature of the mitzva of honoring one's parents, I would first like to show that the sixth dibra, which states the prohibition against murder, is also a transitional dibra containing elements of sin against both man and G-d.

In Parshat Noach (Breishit: 9:6) the Torah states the following: "One who spills the blood of another man, by man shall his blood be spilt, for in the image of G-d (He) created man."

Radak (Rabbi Dovid Kimchi) in his commentary on Breishit states the following: "For he (man) is the most honored of all earthly creatures, so much so that G-d created man in His image, through the intellect which He bestowed upon him. Therefore, all other creatures should fear man, and man himself may not destroy his fellow man's body or intellect, for if one slays another man he has destroyed the work of G-d." Here Radak clearly formulates that the sin of murder is a sin against G-d. Radak continues his analysis, offering a different explanation for the culpability not only of a murderer, but of any violator of a sin for which the Torah assigns a death penalty: "... and similarly G-d has commanded us to spill the blood of anyone whose sin merits such punishment... for he (the sinner) has first destroyed his own Divine image by transgressing the commandment of G-d. Behold there is no image of G-d nor intellect found in a transgressor (of G-d's commandments), for intellect would dictate that a servant obey the dictates of his master." The Radak maintains that the sinner, by deciding to sin, murders the image of G-d with which he had been born. It is this murder of the Divine image that had once belonged to the sinner that brings about his death sentence. According to this concept, all capital punishments found in the Torah are for one basic offense the annihilation of the image of G-d within the sinner.

I would like to point out that this concept of Tzelem Elokim the image of G-d is central to the halachot of mourning. Halacha (Yoreh Deah 340: 5) requires anyone who is present at the death of a Jew to tear his garments. This is because a Divine entity the image of G-d, has passed from the earth. The very same section of Shulchan Aruch states: "...however, we do not mourn for someone who was accustomed to sin." The rationale behind this is that through excessive sinning, the sinner has forfeited the image of G-d. Hence, there is nothing to mourn in the loss of such a person.

Ramban in his commentary to Chumash Shmot (20:11) offers the following analysis of the mitzva of honoring one's parents: "Behold, the Torah has now completed (with the end of the fourth dibra) all of the dibrot that relate to our obligations to the Creator and the honor due Him. It now continues to teach us about matters that pertain to mortals. The Torah begins this section with the parent who is to his progeny a type of creator who played the role of a partner (with the Creator) in their existence. For HaShem is the Primary Father and the human parent is the secondary father. Therefore the Torah states in Dvarim (5:15): 'Honor your father and your mother as I commanded you...' As I commanded you in My honor so do I command you in the honor of those who were My partners in your creation. Scripture does not specify to us what that honor is. Rather, it is derived from the preceding dibrot which pertain to the Primary Father, blessed is He. Thus, one must acknowledge one's father that he is his father. He may not deny him saying that someone else is his real father. One should not serve his father with the expectation of receiving an inheritance or some other desired gain. One may not take the name of his father in vain (halacha does not permit a child to refer to his parents by their names). One may not swear by the life of his father falsely or in vain.... And our Rabbis have stated (Kiddushin 30b) that the honor due parents is compared to the honor due G-d."

Ramban also quotes the Ibn Ezra, who states: "Behold that five of the dibrot involve the honor of the Creator and five are for the benefit of man. Honoring parents is the honor of G-d. For it is for the purpose of honoring the Creator that He commanded us to honor our human parent who served as a partner with G-d in bringing us into existence." Ibn Ezra maintains that the commandment to honor parents is purely a commandment between man and G-d.

However, it is clear from other sources that the commandment of honoring one's parents is also between man and man. The first segment in the Chidushei Rabbi Akiva Eiger on the 'Laws of Honoring Father and Mother' in Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah (Siman 240) refers us to two earlier Responsa, one of the Spanish Rishon, Rashba, and the other of an early Greco-Turkish Acharon, Rabbi Binyamin Ze'ev. Both Responsa deal with the question of why we do not make a blessing before performing an act of honoring one's parents. For example, if a father asked his child to bring him a glass of water, why would the child not be able to recite a blessing "... Who commanded us to honor father and mother" before providing the glass of water to the parent? The Rashba in Responsum 18 of the first volume of his Responsa has a lengthy discussion as to why we make blessings on some mitzvot and not on others. One of the rules he lays down is that Chazal never instituted a blessing over a mitzva that can be dispensed with. Honoring one's parents is an example of such a mitzva; for if the parent wishes to forego any honor from the child, then the child is free of the obligation of honoring his parent. One could argue that if this mitzva is purely between man and G-d, how could the parent forego the honor due G-d?

Rabbi Binyamin Ze'ev takes a different approach. Since the formulation for the blessing on mitzvot contains the phrase "Who sanctified us with His commandments...", any mitzva which is practiced by Jew and non-Jew alike such as the honoring of parents cannot receive a blessing on the mitzva. Only those mitzvot which are the exclusive property of the Jewish people receive a blessing on their performance.

This concept is found in an earlier source Rabbeinu Bechaya ben Asher, in his encyclopedic work, Kad Kemach (section on tzitzit) and in his commentary on the Torah (Bamidbar: 15:38) where he states: "All of the commandments can be divided into two groups those done only on the basis of Divine command; and those that would be performed on a rational basis even if we were not so commanded. The Sages of the Truth, of blessed memory, instituted for us the formulation of blessings only on those commandments that we do by dint of Divine commandment. The fact that we alone perform these commandments is the essence

of the sanctity that they impart to us."

The almost universal rationale for honoring parents stems from the appreciation of all that the parents have done for their children. We all owe infinite gratitude to our parents for our being alive; for the care and attention given to us during infancy, childhood, and adolescence; and for the continuing positive impact that they play in our lives for as long as G-d blesses us with their presence upon this earth. It is because of this universal reason that the Talmud in Kiddushin (31a) relates the story of a non-Jew, Doma ben Nesina, who refused, out of filial devotion to wake his sleeping father, even though a great profit could have been made by his doing so. This story is used as a sterling illustration of what constitutes the true honor due a parent.

In his classical halachic compendium, the Chayei Adam, Rabbi Avraham Danzig of Vilna, discusses the reasons for the mitzva of honoring one's parents. He cites both themes that we have mentioned: a) the concept that parents are partners with G-d in the formation of the child, and therefore their honor is a form of honoring G-d, Himself; and b) that the honor due to parents is a form of accrued debt that a child owes the people who conceived, nurtured and raised him or her. The Chayei Adam states: "One who does not honor his parents is called wicked, as Scripture states: 'A wicked man borrows and does not repay.'" (Psalms: 37:21)

The Chayei Adam cites a passage from the Zohar on Parshat Ki Teitzei that typifies the person who honors his father and mother as: "A man who endeavors to look after his father and mother, who loves them more than he loves his own body, spirit, and soul; and to whom the entire world is considered as insignificant in comparison to his ability to do the will of his parents."

May the Holy One, Blessed be He, bring about the time when all parents will be reunited with their children and when death will be swallowed up for eternity.

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