

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 ceased 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 have 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

Parshat Yitro: The Prototypes of Very Different Gentiles

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"And Jethro the Priest of Midian, the father-in-law of Moses, heard all that God had done for Moses and his people; that He had taken Israel out of Egypt." [Exodus 18:1]

This Torah portion records how Jethro, Moses' Midianite father-in-law, heard of God's great wonders in redeeming the Israelites from Egypt and came to Moses amidst great praise to the Lord. Upon witnessing Moses' difficult workload in rendering judgments from dawn to night, Jethro gave sage advice in organizing and delegating a graduated judicial system, with only the most complex cases to come before Moses. One of the issues dealt with by the biblical commentaries is the exact time when Jethro arrived on the scene: Was it before or after the Sinaitic revelation?

In terms of the chronological sequence of the biblical account, it would appear that Jethro came to Moses immediately after the splitting of the Reed Sea and before the commandments were given at Sinai.

However, both Nahmanides and Ibn Ezra point out that since Moses could not have been occupied to the point of exhaustion with rendering biblical rulings before the Bible had been given, logic dictates that Jethro arrived and made his wise suggestion after the revelation at Sinai. But if so, why does the Torah record the advent and advice of Jethro before the account of the revelation, and why name the portion which includes the content of the divine words after a Midianite priest, especially since he came on the scene after that revelation took place?!

Ibn Ezra explains:

"Since the Bible has just mentioned the evil which Amalek did to the Israelites [at the end of Exodus Chapter 17 as the conclusion of the previous portion of Beshalach], the Bible

must [immediately thereafter] mention in contrast the good advice which Jethro gave to the Israelites [at the beginning of Chapter 18 in the opening of the portion of Yitro].”

I would add that the Bible is contrasting two very opposite reactions to the miracle of the Exodus. In general, the nations of the world heard of the stunning rebellion of the Hebrews and became terrified:

“Nations heard and shuddered; terror gripped the inhabitants of Philistia...Fear and dread fell upon them; at the greatness of Your Arm they fell silent as stone.” [Exodus 15:14–16]

Two peoples, however, do not merely respond by panicking. Amalek, “first among the gentiles” (Num. 24:20), set out to make war against this emerging new star with the intent of heading them off at the pass. And Amalek played “dirty”:

“Remember what Amalek did to you...when they encountered you...when you were tired and exhausted, and they cut off those who were lagging to your rear [the old, the young and the infirm].” [Deut. 25:17, 18]

Jethro, on the other hand, is filled with admiration and praise: “And Jethro was overjoyed at all of the good which the Lord accomplished for the Israelites in saving them from the hand of Egypt. And Jethro said, ‘Praised be the Lord who has saved you from the hand of Egypt and the hand of Pharaoh...Now I know that the Lord is the greatest of all of the gods...’” (Ex. 18:9–11).

In effect, the biblical juxtaposition is teaching us that all gentiles should not be seen in the same light: there is the gentile who is jealous and aggressive (Amalek), but there is also the gentile who is admiring and willing to be of help (Jethro).

We are still left with the question as to why the biblical portion of the divine revelation should be referred to by the name of a Midianite priest – and I believe that herein lies one of the most profound truths of the Jewish faith. Undoubtedly the Torah was given to the Jewish people, as Maimonides teaches, “Moses our Teacher bequeathed the Torah and the commandments only to Israel, as it is written, ‘a heritage to the congregation of Jacob,’ as well as to anyone who may wish to convert [to Judaism]....”

But in the very same breath Maimonides continues to legislate:

“And similarly Moses was commanded by the Almighty to enforce upon the gentile world for everyone to accept the seven Noahide laws of morality.” [Laws of Governments 8:10]

Maimonides concludes his religio-legal magnum opus *Mishneh Torah* with the “Laws of Governments,” (Lit., *hilkhot melakhim*, Laws of Kings) which climax in an optimistic description of the messianic age, a period of unusual peace and harmony when “nation will not lift up sword against nation and humanity will not learn war anymore” (Laws of Governments, Chapters 11, 12). Jewish redemption is seen within the context of world redemption;

the God of justice, compassion and peace must rule the world, with Israel accepting the 613 commandments and every nation accepting His seven commandments of morality, especially “Thou shalt not murder.”

The paradigm for redemption, indeed the first example of Israel’s liberation, was our exodus from Egypt. There are a number of lessons which must be extracted from this prototype. First of all, the Israelites must win the war against oppression; the God of Israel will only be respected if His people succeed. Second, the message of Israel must be a moral one: “I am the Lord thy God who took you out of the Land of Egypt, the house of bondage.” Israel is entitled to live in freedom – and must be willing to wage battle against autocratic, Amalek-like governments which themselves utilize terrorism against innocent citizens and which harbor, aid and abet terrorists. And Israel must establish Jethro- like partnerships with those who – although they may still follow their individual religions – recognize the over-arching rule of the God of justice, compassion and peace.

The portion of the revelation at Sinai is called Yitro (Jethro); only if the Jethros of the nations of the world accept fealty to the God of peace will the ultimate vision of Torah become a reality for Israel and will the world as we know it be able to survive and prosper.

Shabbat Shalom

from **Rabbi YY Jacobson** <rabbiyy@theyeshiva.net>

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Behind the War On Hamas

The Two Great Evils of History: The Islamists and Hitler

Give Us Two

One of the intriguing things about the Ten Commandments[1], given to the Jewish people is that they were engraved on two separate tablets. Was G-d short of granite that He needed to use two tablets? Why could He not carve the commandments onto a single stone?

There is the stereotypical Jew-bashing joke about this. Before coming to the Jews, G-d approached all the nations and asked if they would like to accept the Torah. Each of them refused because of some commandment in the Bible to which they could not possibly adhere. When G-d presented the offer to the Jews, their sole question was: How much do you want for it?

To which G-d responded: “It’s for free.”

So the Jews replied: “Give us two.”

Yet the issue demands sincere reflection. Why indeed was there a need for two tablets?

Two Versions

The rabbis in the midrash proposed a novel answer. The Ten Commandments, they suggested, were engraved on two tablets, five on each stone, so that they would be read

in two directions -- from top to bottom, and from side to side[2].

The simplest way of reading the Ten Commandments is, of course, from top to bottom:

On the first stone:

- 1) I am the Lord your G-d who has taken you out of Egypt...
- 2) You shall have no other gods...
- 3) You shall not swear in G-d's name in vain...
- 4) Remember the Sabbath...
- 5) Honor your father and your mother...

And the five commandments engraved on the second tablet:

- 6) You shall not murder.
- 7) You shall not commit adultery.
- 8) You shall not steal.
- 9) You shall not bear false witness against your fellow.
- 10) You shall not covet your fellow's house; you shall not covet your fellow's wife ... nor anything that belongs to your fellow.

This was the way of reading the Ten Commandments vertically. Yet due to the fact that the first five commandments were engraved on one stone and the second five on a separate stone, there was another way of reading the commandments -- horizontally instead of vertically, from commandment No. 1 directly to No. 6; from No. 2 to No. 7; 3 -- 8; 4 -- 9; 5 -- 10.

This version of the Ten Commandments would then read like this:

1) I am the Lord your G-d/You shall not murder. 2) You shall have no other gods/You shall not commit adultery; and so forth with the rest of the commandments.

But why is it necessary to read the Ten Commandments horizontally? What insight can we gain from this alternative reading of the commandments?

In this essay we will discuss the juxtaposition of the first and sixth commandments: "I am the Lord your G-d/You shall not murder." The significance of this "horizontal" reading from a historical, political and religious standpoint cannot be overstated. It embodies one of the most stunning aspects of Judaism. What is at stake in this juxtaposition is nothing less than the future of human civilization.

Two Historical Attempts

Two groups have made an attempt to divorce commandment no. 1 from commandment no. 6 -- to sever the idea of a Creator, who conceived the world for a moral purpose, from the imperative to honor the life of another human being. The first group was comprised of the philosophers of the Enlightenment during the 18th and 19th centuries, the second of religious leaders in many and diverse ages. The result for both was moral defeat.

The thinkers of the Enlightenment ushered in the Age of Reason and the modern secular era, founded on the belief that the great ideal of "You shall not murder" did not require the prerequisite of "I am the Lord Your G-d" in

order to be sustained. Religion was not necessary to ensure moral behavior; reason alone, without G-d, would guide humanity into an age of liberty and to the achievement of moral greatness. The sixth commandment could operate successfully independent of the first.

While religion embodied the vision of man standing in a continuous relationship with G-d, the essence of the Enlightenment represented the vision of man without G-d. It was a vision already introduced during the first days of creation near the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, by the most sophisticated animal of the time, the serpent. "You shall be like G-d," it promised Eve[3]. Man could, and ought to, replace G-d. Left to his own (de)vices, the thinking went, the human being will achieve greatness. But the Holocaust spelled the end of this grand faith in the promise of human progress based on human reason. In Auschwitz, the belief that modern man felt a natural empathy for others was ruined forever.

The gas chambers were not invented by a primitive, barbaric and illiterate people. To the contrary, this people excelled in sciences and the arts, but nevertheless sent 1.5 million children, and 4.5 million adults, to their deaths solely because they had Jewish blood flowing in their veins. SS guards would spend a day in Auschwitz, gassing as many as 12,000 human beings, and then return home in the evening to pet their dogs and laugh with their wives. As the smoke of children ascended from the crematoriums, these charming romantics would enjoy good wine, beautiful women and the moving music of Bach, Mozart and Wagner. They murdered millions of innocents in the name of a developed ethic, and they justified genocide on purely rational grounds.

In "Schindler's List," there is a scene during the liquidation of the Krakow Ghetto where a little girl hiding in a piano is shot dead by an SS guard. As her little angelic body lay in a river of blood, another guard sits down to play the piano.

First SS guard: Was ist das? Ist das Bach?

Second SS guard: Nein. Mozart.

First SS guard: Mozart?

Second SS guard: Ja. And they both marvel at the exquisite music.

This was Nazi Germany at its best.

Elie Wiesel, who gripped the world's imagination with his book "Night," a personal testimony of life and death in Auschwitz, once asked the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who himself lost many members of his family in the Holocaust, how he could believe in G-d after Auschwitz. If G-d existed, Wiesel asked, posing the single greatest challenge to faith, how could He ignore 6 million of His children dehumanized and murdered in the cruelest of fashions?

The Rebbe shed a tear and then replied, "In whom do you expect me to believe after Auschwitz? In man?"

This must remain one of the lasting legacies of Auschwitz. If there is any faith at all left after the extermination of 6 million people, it must glean its vitality from something

transcending the human rationale and its properties. If morality is left to be determined exclusively by the human mind, it can become a morality that justifies the guillotine, the gulag and the gas chamber. As Dostoevsky famously put it in "The Brothers Karamazov," "Where there is no G-d, all is permitted."

The atheist philosopher Bertrand Russell wrote: "I cannot see how to refute the arguments for the subjectivity of ethical values [resulting from atheism], but I find myself incapable of believing that all that is wrong with wanton cruelty is that I don't like it." Russell's point is critical. Without G-d, we cannot objectively define any behavior as good or evil. As difficult as it is to entertain, no one can objectively claim that gassing a mother and her children is any more evil than killing a mouse. It is all a matter of taste and opinion. The validity and effectiveness of "You shall not murder" can be sustained only if it is predicated on the foundation of faith in a universal moral creator who gave humanity an absolute and unwavering definition of what constitutes good vs. evil.

Professor Abraham Joshua Heschel, who escaped Warsaw a few weeks before it was invaded and lost most of his family in the Nazi Holocaust, captured this sentiment succinctly: "If man is not more than human, then he is less than human." Either we climb to a place beyond ourselves, or we are likely to fall to a place below ourselves. When the vision of the sacred dies in the soul of a person, he or she is capable of becoming a servant of the devil.

Religious Evil

But this is far from the whole picture.

While the Enlightenment abandoned commandment no. 1 in favor of no. 6, various religions over the ages abandoned no. 6 in favor of no. 1. Theirs has been the atrocious belief that as long as you believe in the Lord, or in Allah, you can kill and maim whomever you brand an "infidel." Whether it is a business executive in New York, or a teenager eating a slice of pizza in Jerusalem, or a child on the first day of school in Beslan, or a commuter in Madrid, or a tourist in Bali, or a Chabad couple in Mumbai, if the person is not a member of your faith, G-d wants him or her to die. For the religious fundamentalist, "I am the Lord your G-d" has nothing to do with "You shall not murder."

This is the greatest perversion of faith. When thousands can rejoice gleefully in the torture of Jewish babies, in the rape and beheading of Jewish women, as the Hamas monsters did on October 7th, 2023, while millions of others celebrated, is the most vile desecration of Allah. Faith that does not inculcate its followers with the sanctity of every single human life desecrates and erodes the very purpose of faith, which is to elevate the human person to a state beyond personal instinct and prejudice. If you delete "You shall not murder" from religion, you have detached yourself from "I am the Lord your G-d." To believe in G-d means to honor the life of every person created in the image of G-d. What the juxtaposition of the two

commandments is telling us is that you can't believe in G-d and murder (3*).

Conversely, if you truly believe that taking the life of another human is wrong -- not just because you lack the means or motive to do so or are afraid of ending up in jail, but because you recognize the transcendent, inviolable value of life -- that's just another way of saying you believe in G-d. For what confers upon human life its radical grace, its transcendent sanctity and its absolute value if not the living presence of G-d imprinted on the face of the human person?

3,336 years ago, Judaism, in the most ennobling attempt to create a society based on justice and peace, established its principle code in the sequence of the two commandments -- "I am the Lord your G-d/You shall not murder." A society without G-d can become monstrous; a society that abandons the eternal and absolute commandment "You shall not murder" is equally evil. Both are capable of burning children alive during the day and then retiring to sleep with a clear conscience.

The Mountain

The Talmud captures this notion in an intriguing fashion[4].

The Talmud cites a tradition that when Israel approached Sinai, G-d lifted up the mountain, held it over the people's heads and declared: "Either you accept the Torah, or be crushed beneath the mountain." (The Talmud bases this tradition on the verse in Exodus, "And they stood beneath the mountain[5].")

This seems ludicrous. What worth is there to a relationship and a covenant accepted through coercion[6]?

The answer is profoundly simple. What G-d was telling the Jewish people is that the creation of societies that honor life and shun cruelty is dependent on education and on the value system inculcated within children of the society. The system of Torah, G-d was suggesting, was the guarantor for life and liberty. If you reject the morality of Torah, if you will lack the courage and conviction to teach the world that "I am the Lord your G-d" and that I have stated unequivocally "You shall not murder," the result will be humanity crushed under a mountain of tyrants.

Seventy-five years since Auschwitz and after two decades of incessant Islamic terrorism, the mountain is hanging over our heads once again. Shall we embrace the path of divine-based morality? Shall we never forget that religion must always be defined by "You shall not murder[7]?"

[1]Exodus chapter 20. [2] Mechilta to Exodus ibid. [3] Genesis 3:5. 3*) The Midrash (Mechiultah ibid.) in discussing the connection between the first and sixth commandments presents the following parable to explain the evil behind murder: "There was a king who entered a country and put up portraits of himself, and made statues of himself, and minted coins with his image. After a while, the people of the country overturned his portraits, broke his statues and invalidated his coins, thereby reducing the

image of the king. "So, too, one who sheds blood reduces the image of the King, as it is written (Genesis 9:6): "One who spills a man's blood... for in the image of G-d He made man." [4] Talmud, Shabbas 88a. [5] Exodus 19:17. [6] This question is raised among many of the Talmudic commentators. Many answers have been offered. See Tosfos, Eitz Yosef, Pnei Yehoshua, Shabbos Shel Mi and BenYehoyada to Talmud Shabbos ibid. Midrash Tanchumah Noach section 3. Daas Zekeinim Mibbalei Hatosafos on Exodus 19:17. Maharal Tiferes Yisroel ch. 32, Gur Aryeh on Exodus ibid. and Or Chodash p. 45. Sources noted in Pardas Yosef to Exodus ibid. Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Pulnah in Ben Poras Yosef Parshas Vayeishev. Torah Or Megilas Esther p. 96c; 118c. 7) This essay is based on a Yiddish letter by the Lubavitcher Rebbe written to Dr. Elie Wiesel in 1965 (published in Likkutei Sichos vol. 33 pp.255-260) and on a 1962 public address by the Rebbe (published in Likkutei Sichos vol. 3 pp. 887-895), and on other sources. [7] This essay is based on a Yiddish letter by the Lubavitcher Rebbe written to Dr. Elie Wiesel in April, 1965 (published in Likkutei Sichos vol. 33 pp.255-260) and on a 1962 public address by the Rebbe (published in Likkutei Sichos vol. 3 pp. 887-895), and on a lecture presented by Rabbi Dr. Benjamin Bleich, and other sources.

Perceptions

By Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Parshas Yisro THE Big Reveal

Friday Night

THIS WEEK'S PARSHA is climactic for an obvious reason, and a less obvious reason. The giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai is one of the most important events of all of history, greatly altering the direction of mankind.

The world doesn't know or appreciate it, but all the civility that we live with and depend upon is only because of the Torah. Nothing else comes close to the moral standard it teaches man to live up to, and those who haven't have lived far more barbaric lives...even today. The deterioration of society in any generation is because of a lack of Torah influence.

The less obvious reason has to do with the main purpose of Creation, which so few people know or think about. It's why God started with all of this, "this" including so much more than we see or know about, most of which cannot be picked up by the "James Webb Telescope." To see that part, or what we are allowed to see of it, requires the proper tradition, and a good mind's eye.

That purpose? The revelation of God to man. That's all life is about, and that is all life has ever been about. God created all of it, the Ohr Ain Sof (Revelation Level 1), the Kav v'Tzimtzum (Revelation Level 2), Adam Kadmon (Revelation Level 3), Atzilus (Revelation Level 4), Beriyah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah (Revelation Level 5), just

for this purpose. Oh, and our physical universe too, which is on the lowest level of Asiyah.

Now, if you were to ask the seven billion plus people living on this planet what they thought the purpose of life is, if they have an answer, it is unlikely to be this one. I've asked this question to people with many years of Torah learning under their belt and, not once did I receive such an answer. Some have come close, but no one has said it clearly and decisively. How could something be so central to everything and yet be so unknown to so many people?

Because it is not only about God's big reveal to all of mankind, but mankind's big reveal of God. When Yeshayahu HaNavi called the Jewish people to be a "light to the nations" (which happens to also be imprinted on the wall of the organization that likes us the least), he was telling us this: Go reveal God to the world.

And by reveal, we don't mean on a theoretical level only. We mean, find a way to make the reality of God so real to people that they can relate to Him and feel His Presence as they might another person in the same room. We mean, act in a way that makes the existence of God palpable to you, which will make it more palpable to others...as it was in this week's parsha at Mt. Sinai.

Shabbos Day

TECHNOLOGY MAKES LIFE easier physically and spiritually. I don't mean that it doesn't challenge us spiritually because clearly it does. Technology has created more stumbling blocks for the Torah Jew than anything else in the last couple of decades, if not longer.

What I mean is this. I have great friends and chavrusos I have never met in person, or hadn't for the longest time. In the past that would not have been nearly as true if we had only been able to be pen pals, because there is only so much you can learn about someone from the way they write. But thanks to programs like Skype and Zoom, people can meet with one another from thousands of miles away time after time, and develop relationships and bonds that once were only possible from actually spending time in person.

It makes a profound point that may get lost on most of us and that is, how we can develop close relationships with people we can't really see or hear, just imagine. But you'll ask me, "What do you mean, just imagine? We can actually see and hear who we're talking to when using any of these programs!"

Yes and no. You're not seeing the actual person as you would in real life. Rather, their computer is translating their picture and words into electrical impulses. Those impulses then travel over communication lines and are later reassembled according to their original order by our computers. This results in a pixelated version of your counterpart that you associate with the real thing. In short, it's just information that is allowing your brain to relate to the other party as a real person, and develop emotional responses to them based upon what you are relating to.

The success of a such a digital relationship depends upon the conveyer of the data. When the Internet is slow, the picture freezes and the words become garbled. If it remains frozen, the relationship becomes frozen, and it becomes like talking to a “dead” person, God forbid. Even if an individual stops talking in person, you can still sense they are alive and relatable.

Now we can take that information and apply it to our relationship with God. You don’t have to actually see God to see Him, or actually hear Him to hear Him. As great as that would be, and will be in the future when prophecy returns, it is not necessary for developing a close and personal relationship with God. When someone says, “I would believe in God if I could see Him!” they have to realize that the only reason why they don’t, is because they haven’t taken the time to gather the right information about God to have that relationship. That’s on them, not God.

Seudas Shlishis

TO KNOW GOD is to love Him. And not just love Him, but to “see” Him, to sense His Presence, as if it is palpable. If you ask, “How is that possible?” the answer is, “Is anything impossible for God?” We may not have the ability to create that sense, but if we try, He’ll take care of the rest. So many times in Tanach we find the Shechinah “resting” on a particular person and changing their reality. Yiftach was a virtual nobody who became the leader of his people when God imbued him with His spirit. In Parashas BeHa’alosecha, 70 elders became members of the prestigious Sanhedrin when God gifted them the knowledge to function on such a high level of Torah. It’s what God does when His plan for Creation requires it, and people become worthy of it.

This was essentially the Har Sinai Experience. It was God giving the Jewish people a taste of just how real an experience of God can be if you go after it. This is what Yeshayahu was telling the Jewish people when he said, “Seek God when He is found, call Him when He is near” (Yeshayahu 55:6). In other words, God can be “found” and God can be “near,” if you make it so.

It is not just a gift. It is the very purpose of Creation. When someone creates a situation of revelation of God, they bring meaning to all of existence. They rectify themselves and the world, mitigating the need for God to have to “force” His revelation onto mankind. Because that is all the War of Gog and Magog is intended to do, to get the world’s attention and make them realize Who God really is.

As God will later say in the Torah, “You have been shown, in order to know that God is God; there is none else besides Him” (Devarim 4:35). Once we learn this and project it through our lives, the world will catch on as well. Then we will have been the light unto nations we were taken out of Egypt and to Mt. Sinai to be.

That’s where all of this is leading, what’s going in the world today. All the bad and all the confusion may hide the

Presence of God for now, but that is just to amplify the eventual revelation of God. But this amplification can either be because of us, or through us. Judging by the rate that things are changing for the worse, we don’t have much time left to make that decision.

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Acharis K’Reishis, Part 5

CONTINUING ON WITH the translation, it says:

It has been explained that also in the Egyptian exile, the Jewish people left oppression prior to their redemption. They elucidate the verse, “the rain is over and gone” (Shir HaShirim 2:11) as referring to the main oppression. They also make a parallel to the days of Koresh, as well as the future pekidah, as will be explained. They explain how the order of redemption applies equally to all of them (i.e., to all redemptions).

See the Ma’amar Geulah of the Ramchal [where he says]:

“It is necessary to know that the redemption from Egypt and the future redemption are equal in many ways. It is just that the future one will be even greater, because Creation will then find a rest that it has not known from the day of its existence until now (i.e., the end of history).”

In the commentary of the Ramchal on Shir HaShirim (Otzros Ramchal, p. 45) [it says]: “This is the matter of redemption that is found many times in history. It is all from the same source, that is, the redemption from Egypt and the future redemption come from the same source, as it says [with respect to the final redemption], ‘like the days of your leaving Egypt I will show you wonders’ (Michah 7:15).”

The GR”A explicitly says on Shir HaShirim [on] 2:8, and there [on] 6:10, that the leaving of Egypt was the beginning of all the redemptions, and it will be likewise in the future as well. Therefore, all the specifics of the future redemption are actually similar to the details of the redemption from Egypt. We find that the redemption from Egypt occurred in many levels, as it was mentioned previously (Ch. 2 from Aderes Eliyahu, Parashas VaAira 6:6). “[The verse says,] ‘I will take you out [from under the burdens of Egypt]’ and this refers to the oppression of the Children [of Israel] and all their difficult labor. ‘I will save you [from their labor]’ means you will no longer be slaves to the Egyptians. ‘I will redeem you [with an outstretched arm and great judgements]’ refers to the leaving of Egypt. ‘And I will take [you as a people] and I will be [God to you]’ is the giving of Torah, as it says ‘You will be to Me a people [and I will be God to you]’ (Vayikra 26:12).”

COVENANT & CONVERSATION

Deed and Creed YITRO

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

The parsha of Yitro records the revolutionary moment when God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, entered into a

mutually binding agreement with a nation, the Children of Israel, an agreement we call a brit, a covenant.

Now, this is not the first Divine covenant in the Torah. God had already made one with Noah, and through him all of humanity, and He made another with Abraham, whose sign was circumcision. But those covenants were not fully reciprocal. God did not ask for Noah's agreement, nor did He wait for Abraham's assent.

Sinai was a different matter. For the first time, He wanted the covenant to be fully mutual, to be freely accepted. So we find that – both before and after the Revelation at Sinai – God commands Moses to make sure the people do actually agree.

The point is fundamental. God wants to rule by right, not might. The God who brought an enslaved people to liberty seeks the free worship of free human beings.

God does not act toward His creatures like a tyrant.

Avodah Zarah 3a

So at Sinai was born the principle that was, millennia later, described by Thomas Jefferson in the American Declaration of Independence, the idea that governors and governments derive “their just powers from the consent of the governed.” God wanted the consent of the governed. That is why the Sinai Covenant was conditional on the people's agreement.

Admittedly, the Talmud questions how free the Israelites actually were, and it uses an astonishing image. It says that God suspended the mountain above their heads and said, “If you agree, well and good. If you don't, here will be your burial.” That is another topic for another time. Suffice to say that there is no indication of this in the plain sense of the text itself.

What is interesting is the exact wording in which the Israelites signal their consent. To repeat: they do so three times, first before the Revelation, and then twice afterwards, in the parsha of Mishpatim.

Listen to the three verses. Before the Revelation:

All the people answered as one and said, ‘All that God has spoken, we will do [na'aseh].’

Ex. 19:8

Then afterward:

Moses came and told the people all of God's words and all the laws. The people all responded with a single voice, ‘We will do [na'aseh] every word that God has spoken.’

Ex. 24:3

He took the Book of the Covenant and read it aloud to the people. They replied, ‘We will do [na'aseh] and we will hear [ve-nishma] all that God has declared.’

Ex. 24:7

Note the subtle difference. In two cases the people say: all that God says, we will do. In the third, the double verb is used: na'aseh ve-nishma. “We will do and we will hear, (or obey, or hearken, or understand).” The word shema means ‘to understand’, as we see in the story of the Tower of Babel:

“Come, let us descend and confuse their speech, so that one person will not understand another's speech.”

Gen. 11:7

Now note that there is another difference between the three verses. In the first two cases there is a clear emphasis on the unity of the people. Both phrases are very striking. The first says: all the people answered as one. The second says, The people all responded with a single voice. In a book that emphasises how fractious and fissiparous the people were, such declarations of unanimity are significant and rare. But the third verse, which mentions both doing and listening or understanding, contains no such statement. It simply says: They replied. There is no emphasis on unanimity or consensus.

What we have here is a biblical comment on one of the most striking features of all in Judaism: the difference between deed and creed, between asiyah and shemiyah, between doing and understanding.

Christians have theology. Jews have law. These are two very different approaches to the religious life. Judaism is about a community of action. It is about the way people interact in their dealings with one another. It is about bringing God into the shared spaces of our collective life. Just as we know God through what He does, so God asks us to bring Him into what we do. In the beginning, as Goethe put it, was the deed. That is why Judaism is a religion of law, because law is the architecture of behaviour.

When it comes, however, to belief, creed, doctrine, all the things that depend on shemiyah rather than asiyah, understanding rather than action: on this Judaism does not call for unanimity. Not because Judaism lacks beliefs. To the contrary, Judaism is what it is precisely because of our beliefs, most importantly the belief in monotheism, that there is, at least and at most, one God. The Torah tells us in Bereishit about creation, in Shemot about redemption, and in this week's parsha about revelation.

Judaism is a set of beliefs, but it is not a community based on unanimity about the way we understand and interpret those beliefs. It recognises that intellectually and temperamentally we are different. Judaism has had its rationalists and its mystics, its philosophers and its poets, its naturalists and its supernaturalists: Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi Akiva, Judah Halevi and Maimonides, the Vilna Gaon and the Baal Shem Tov. We seek unanimity in halachah, not in aggadah. Na'aseh, we act in the same way, but nishma, we understand each in our own way. That is the difference between the way we serve God, collectively, and the way we understand God, individually.

What is fascinating is that this well-known feature of Judaism is already signalled in the Torah: in the difference between the way it speaks about na'aseh, “as one,” “with a single voice,” and nishma, with no special collective consensus.

Our acts, our na'aseh, are public. Our thoughts, our nishma, are private. That is how we come to serve God together, yet relate to Him individually, in the uniqueness of our being.

Parshas Yisro

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Malka bas Rav Kalman z'l.

Struggling to Accept

Yisro, the minister of Midian and father in law of Moshe, heard all that God did for Moshe and Yisroel [...] (18:1).

This week's parsha opens with Yisro reacting to the news of what Hashem had done for Moshe and Bnei Yisroel. The first words in the parsha are, 'וישמע יתרו' and both Targum Onkelos and Targum Yonasan translate the words as 'and Yisro heard.' Later on in the parsha, when Yisro offers a management solution to the overburdened justice system, the Torah says 'וישמע משה' which both Targumim translate as 'וקבל משה' –and Moshe accepted.'

This difference in the translation of the word 'וישמע' is only natural. When it occurs by Yisro, it is referring to the accounting of the incidents that Yisro had heard. By Moshe the word is referring to his reaction to the solution that Yisro had proffered to resolve an overworked justice system; therefore the Targumim translate it as 'accepted' because the Torah means to inform us that Moshe valued Yisro's solution and agreed to implement his innovative design for the court system.

Yet in Aramaic the word 'קבל' has another meaning, 'to complain.' Meaning, the word for accepting and complaining is the same. This is difficult to understand. A complaint is a personal rejection of an idea or situation; it is the opposite of acceptance. So what is the relationship between these concepts that allows one word to have two seemingly opposite meanings?

As discussed in prior editions of INSIGHTS, Aramaic is the language of understanding another perspective. Perhaps we can discern from here the process of accepting a new idea. In other words, if one just 'hears' an idea, it likely will simply pass through his or her mind with little long-term effect. In order to really internalize an idea, especially one that is personally challenging, we must first begin by resisting it.

If we don't start the process of consideration of a new concept by intensely questioning and struggling to see if it's right for us, then we aren't really opening ourselves to fully incorporating the concept into our lives in a meaningful way. Once we overcome our resistance, we are then open to acceptance. This is the process known as free will. Meaning, this struggle to decide what we want to do is the process of exercising of our free will, which is a key element in the purpose of creation. This is why the story of

Hashem giving Bnei Yisroel the Torah is called Kabolas HaTorah.

Highly Pleasurable

Yisro, the father-in-law of Moshe, took a burnt offering and a peace offering for God; and Aharon and all the elders of Yisroel came to eat bread with the father-in-law of Moshe before God (18:12).

Rashi (ad loc) comments on the last words of this possuk (i.e. 'before God'): From here we see that one who partakes of a meal at which Torah scholars participate is as if he has taken pleasure from the splendor of the Divine presence.

Rashi here is consistent with his commentary on the Talmud (Berachos 63b). The Gemara there states that King Shaul, on the eve of attacking the nation of Amalek, warns the nation of Keinites to withdraw from the midst of the Amalekites or risk being eradicated along with the Amalekites. The Gemara quotes Shaul who explains the reason he allowed them to escape the fate of the Amalekites: 'For you have done a kindness with the entire nation of Yisroel.' The Gemara goes on to explain that their forefather Yisro had hosted Moshe and that was their merit. In fact, the Gemara concludes with, 'Yisro, who only connected himself to Moshe for his own personal honor, receives such a great merit (that his descendants are spared), how much more so an individual who hosts a Torah scholar in his home and provides him with food and drink and benefits him from his possessions, how much more so!'

Rashi (ad loc) explains the kindness that Yisro did refers to the story in our parsha whereby Yisro invites Aharon and the elders to partake in his meal. Maharsha (ad loc) questions Rashi's interpretation by noting that, in this week's parsha, Yisro had actually come to visit Moshe. In other words, Yisro was a guest himself, not a host! Maharsha therefore gives an alternate explanation: Yisro's merit was actually from hosting Moshe when he was an escaped convict from Egypt. The kindness that Yisro showed him at that time was later repaid by King Shaul to his descendants. In truth, Maharsha's explanation also seems to fit the simple reading of the Gemara, for it makes no mention of Aharon and the elders of Yisroel. Why does Rashi feel compelled to explain Yisro's merit from the story in our parsha?

Rambam in the Yad (Hilchos Dayos 6:2) rules: 'There is a mitzvah to cleave to Torah scholars and their students so that one may learn from their actions, as the verse states, 'and to Him you shall cleave.' By cleaving to Torah scholars, one cleaves to Hashem.' In other words, socializing with Torah scholars is a specific commandment that is related to cleaving to Hashem.

Maharsha seems to understand that the Gemara is referring to the mitzvah of hachnosas orchim – hosting guests. But this is difficult to understand. The mitzvah of hachnosas orchim is derived from Avraham Avinu hosting the 'three

Arabs' that he found on the road outside his tent. We don't find that there is a bigger mitzvah for welcoming guests who are Torah scholars.

In fact, a careful reading of the Gemara reveals why Rashi doesn't agree with Maharsha's interpretation. The Gemara makes a very clear statement about the value of hosting a Torah scholar and benefitting him from one's possessions. This doesn't fall under the category of hosting guests, this falls under the mitzvah of cleaving to Hashem. That is why the verse in our parsha ends with the words 'before God.' When Yisro invited Aharon and the elder of Yisroel to partake in his meal he was displaying his desire to be connected with Hashem.

On the other hand, when Yisro offered Moshe refuge by inviting him into his home when he was a stranger in Midian, it was a mitzvah of hachnosas orchim. At that time, Yisro wasn't inviting Moshe as a means of connecting to Hashem. In our parsha, Yisro becomes a convert. Thus the significance of this message is conveyed specifically through Yisro, for a convert is uniquely positioned to attest to the Torah's ability to transform a person into a Godly being. He himself has become a new person through his commitment to Torah. Therefore, he is the most sensitive to the changes in others through Torah study. He understands that Torah scholars become Godly through their commitment to Torah, and cleaving to them is the way to cleave to Hashem.

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Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair -
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Parshat Yitro

The Green-Eyed Monster

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife..." (chapter 20)

Have you had the following experience? You've got your eye on the newest iPhone or the newest Toyota Sienna, or, if you're really well-heeled, the latest Rolex. You start to pray the Shemoneh Esrei, the silent standing prayer, you bend forward, say Baruch Atah... and into your mind floats a picture of this beautiful gold Rolex Seamaster Oyster Limited Edition. Baruch Atah HaRolex! You're obsessed. An embarrassing portion of your waking life might be spent fantasizing about that new car or that new watch that you really want to buy.

Rabbi Elyahu Dessler identifies the two root motivations of our personalities: the desire to give and the desire to take. The desire to take is unique in that it's not really about the object of desire, it's about fulfilling the desire itself. It's about the desire to possess. Therefore, once you get whatever it is, it loses that pristine gleam very quickly. The desire to take is a "green-eyed monster that mocks the meat it feeds on." It can never be satisfied, because as soon as you have your new Rolex, well, you've got it now, right,

and so it loses that delectable allure, and then sometime later, the next obsession takes hold, and so on and on. Does this sound familiar?

It says in the Book of Proverbs: "All the days of a poor man are wretched, but contentment is a feast without end." When you're happy with what you've got, your life is a never-ending feast, but when you look over your garden fence at your neighbor's Sienna, or his family successes, and you compare all that with your own, your entire life will likely be miserable.

There are many modern challenges that a person needs to overcome in order to feel truly satisfied. In particular, it is important to be careful about what we feast our eyes on. To be truly satisfied with our lives, if we are careful where we look and what we desire, then we have a much greater chance for life to become a never-ending feast.

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Office of the Chief Rabbi

Parshat Yitro: Is it possible to see sounds?

25 January 2024

Is it possible to see sounds?

From Parshat Yitro we learn that the answer is, yes.

Immediately after the Torah tells us about the extraordinary encounter that the nation had with Hashem at Mount Sinai, when the Ten Commandments were given:

'Vechol-ha'am ro'im et-hakkolot' – 'the entire nation saw the sounds'.

What can this mean?

I believe we can gain some insight into this, from a Bracha which we recite every single morning.

Upon waking up, we thank Hashem, 'Poke'ach Ivrim', for opening the eyes of the blind.

That is because while we are asleep, we cannot physically see as we usually would and therefore, we appreciate the opportunity to see what is in front of us, from the moment that we open our eyes.

But there is a sad question that is asked in Halacha:

If a person unfortunately is blind, should they recite this Bracha – 'thank you God for opening the eyes of the blind'?

The Mishnah Berurah tells us that the answer is yes and there are two possible reasons.

The first is that the blind person is thanking Hashem, for the sight that other people have, because they can assist the blind person.

Or there is a second reason – that it is because the term 'Poke'ach Ivrim' does not literally mean, 'who opens the eyes of the blind', but rather, 'who enlightens the blind'.

The word 'Poke'ach' comes from the term 'Pe-keach', which means to be bright, to be perceptive, to understand what is happening – and that is what this Bracha is for.

'Poke'ach Ivrim' means, we thank Hashem for enabling us to appreciate the depth of what is in front of us, in the way

that we say in English, 'I see what you mean.' And this doesn't necessarily mean that you physically have vision.

That is the reason why a blind person should say this Bracha and that explains what happened at Mount Sinai.

The nation saw the sound, such was the depth of their spiritual experience, that they could perceive everything that was in front of them. The truth of Hashem. The truth of the Torah He was giving to us.

Our prayer therefore is, that throughout the future, may Hashem bless us and our future generations, so that we likewise, will always be able to see the sounds – to perceive, to understand and to internalise the greatness of the truth of Hashem and the commandments that He gives us.

Shabbat shalom.

Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.

Drasha Parshas Yisro - Most Favored Nation

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

The portion of Yisro contains perhaps the most popular of all Biblical treatises The Ten Commandments. But the portion contains much more than commandments. It also contains Hashem's elocution defining his people as the most treasured in the world. What makes Jew chosen? Before giving the Torah to them, Hashem enunciates the prerequisites. "And now, if you hearken well to Me and observe My covenant, you shall be to Me the most beloved treasure of all peoples, for Mine is the entire world" (Exodus 19:5). Note: Judaism's exclusivity is not dependant on birthright alone. It is dependant on commitment to Torah and Mitzvos. It is not a restricted club, limited only to those who are born as Jews, descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; it is also exclusive to those who commit to observe, whether, of Asian, African, or European descent. Thus, the Torah clearly states that those who hearken and observe the covenant are worthy to be a beloved treasure.

What needs clarification is the final statement, "for Mine is the entire world." What difference does that make in the context of commitment, and Hashem cherishing those who choose His path?

An old Jewish Bubba Ma'aseh serves as a wonderful parable.

Sadie Finkelstein lived in an apartment on New York's Lower East Side for about 50 years. Her son, David, had made it big in the corporate world as cosmopolitan businessman, wheeling and dealing, traveling to places as far-flung as the Himalayas and Russia's Ural Mountains. Of course, he shopped the finest Paris boutiques and European stores on his excursions to the more civilized portions of the world.

For his mother's 75th birthday, David decided to send her a gift of the finest Russian caviar and France's most exquisite Champagne. From his hotel suite in Paris he had

the items shipped with one-day delivery, the Champagne and caviar on ice!

A few days later, David called his mother up. "Ma," he asked, "did you received package?"

"Sure, I received package," his mother said. She did not seem impressed

"Well how was it?" David asked in anticipation.

All he heard was a sigh. Then a pause. "To tell you truth," said Sadie "The ginger ale was a very sour and the blackberry jelly tasted to salty."

What makes a treasured item? What defines glory? If one is locked in his apartment and sees not the world, his treasures may be relegated to crackers and shmaltz herring. One may say, the Jews think that their culture is Divine, but they live in a myopic world. Hashem says, "No!" "You shall be to Me the most beloved treasure of all peoples, for Mine is the entire world"

In proclaiming the Jewish people as the most beloved treasure, Hashem adds, "I know every culture, I saw every diamond, I own all the gold and all the precious jewels, and yet there will be no greater treasure to me than they who observe my laws and commandments!"

In choosing His people, the Almighty explicates, that he has proverbially tasted all the world's delicacies. He has seen all the world's glory. He has seen every fascinating custom and gazed at every civilization. His celestial palate has taste for the most Heavenly and Divine delicacies. Then He defines the Jews as the greatest treasure in a world that belongs solely to Him! That means we are a treasure among whatever archeologists, historians, sociologists, feel is priceless. We are a treasure amongst treasures!

The Almighty who lacks for nothing enjoys nothing more than the joy of His dearest people those who are chosen because they have chosen.

Dedicated in memory of Esther Hammerman by Shayne and Marty Kessler

Good Shabbos!

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Rabbi M. Kamenetzky is the Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore.

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Yisro

Spilling Wine Like Water Is a Positive Omen for the Home

In Hilchos Havdalah (Orach Chaim 296), the Ramo cites a custom of spilling out some of the Havdalah wine on the floor before concluding the Borei pri hagafen bracha to avoid the problem of "kos pagum". (This is not a widely practiced custom.) ("Kos pagum" means the kos (cup) of wine on which a ritual blessing is recited cannot be a kos from which someone previously drank.) The Ramo explains the reason for this custom: "For we say that any

house in which wine is not spilled like water does not possess a 'siman bracha,' so we do this as a sign of blessing at the beginning of a new week."

The Taz comments on this Ramo "Ayn l'zeh peirush!" (This is inexplicable.) First of all, the whole concept of "kos pagum" only applies to a kos (or bottle) from which someone previously directly drank some wine. Furthermore, it is not an appropriate practice to start reciting a blessing and then pour the wine on the ground. There is no greater shame to a bracha than this! As written, this comment of the Ramo makes no sense whatsoever.

The Taz therefore prefers the practice he found recorded in the sefer Yesh Nochalin, to fill up the cup prior to Havdalah such that it flows over the side of the wine goblet. In other words, you fill the kos so full that it spills over onto the ground. This is the intended siman bracha symbolism of wine spilling like water.

The Taz clarifies the concept of "a house in which wine is not poured out like water": The chachomim (rabbis) are not advocating pouring out wine as if it was water. That would be baal tashchis (the prohibition against wastefully destroying). There is no baal tashchis on water, but there is baal tashchis on wine! It is incomprehensible that we should be taught to spill out good wine as if it were water.

Rather, the Taz notes that the statement "any house in which wine was not poured like water will not see signs of blessing" is written as a "b'dieved" (after-the-fact) expression. If they were advocating a positive practice then it should have said "any house where they do not pour wine like water..." Rather, the intended lesson is "when something gets broken in your house, don't lose your temper!" In other words, if you have an expensive bottle of wine in your cabinet and your child spills the bottle of wine out, don't make a federal case out of it. Such an incident should not cause you to lose your temper.

The chachomim were not only talking about a bottle of wine. Children break things, your wife breaks things, you yourself break things. Don't get so upset about these kinds of things. Even if you suffer a loss from the incident, accidents happen. The wine spilled, the glass broke, the china chipped, the crystal shattered. Don't cry about it. People's natural instinct is to get angry about such matters, therefore the chachomim, hoping to counteract this gut reaction stated: Any house in which wine is not (unintentionally) spilled out like water will not see siman bracha. That is the proper attitude to have when something spills, breaks or gets damaged. It is a bad omen if wine spilling causes more trauma in a house than water spilling.

This is what the Gemara (Sotah 3b) means: "Rav Chisda said 'Anger in a house is like a karya worm to sesame seeds.' (Just as the worm consumes the sesame, anger destroys the house – it will cost you money!) Chazal are saying: If a person loses his temper over things that happen in his house, he will be impacted by financial loss. The loss is not merely the value of what broke or was damaged. If

you lose your temper at home, the Ribono shel Olam will punish you in other ways as well."

What is the "midah k'neged midah" (measure for measure) here? I saw the following suggestion in the sefer, B'Zos Yavo Aharon: When someone breaks something in a household and the owner sustains damage, if the owner is a true believer, he will recognize that HaKadosh Baruch Hu wanted this to happen. The Almighty wanted him to suffer a loss. Therefore, why is he getting angry? At whom is he getting angry?

A person may get angry at his child or at his wife, but it is not really the child or the wife who was the ultimate cause of this loss. They are merely a tool in the hand of the Almighty. If a person was a true ma'amin, he would say, as did Dovid HaMelech (King David): "He (Shimi ben Gerah) is cursing (me) because Hashem said to him 'Curse Dovid'. Who can then say 'Why did you do this?'" (Shmuel II 16:10). Our attitude must be that Hashem wants me to need to replace the glass pitcher or the crystal or the china or whatever it is. This loss came about from the yad Hashem, so why are you getting angry?

It must be that you are getting angry because you think you are in charge. You think that you call the shots. You think that you determine your profit and loss for the year. The Ribono shel Olam says "I will show you, and I will bring poverty to your house, because you are not really a believer in the source of your financial stability. "Therefore, if a person does not lose his temper over such things but rather calmly accepts them as 'bashert' (it was meant to be), such emunah will be a siman bracha because as a reward for such faith, the Ribono shel Olam will replace the loss suffered.

This is really what the Aseres HaDibros (Ten Utterances or Commandments) are all about. The Aseres HaDibros begin with the mitzvah of emunah (belief in G-d): "Anochi Hashem Elokecha" (I am the L-rd your G-d) who took you out of the land of Egypt from the house of slavery." (Shemos 20:2) They end with the mitzvah "You shall not covet your neighbor's house..." (Shemos 20:14).

Anochi Hashem Elokecha is emunah in theory. We all subscribe to that. But emunah in practice is "You shall not covet your neighbor's house." What does it mean to covet your neighbor's house?

It is his house. "I would like such a house. I would like such a car. I would like such a wife. I would like such money. I would like such children. I want that..." This mitzvah is emunah in practice: It is the belief that I already have exactly what the Ribono shel Olam wants me to possess. Hashem does not want me to have that house. He does not want me to have that car. He does not want me to have that wife. He does not want me to have THAT. I already possess what I need. I don't possess what I don't need.

This is why the language of the Orchos Chaim l'ha'Rosh is that the entire body of Torah law is included in the Aseres

HaDibros. The Aseres HaDibros are the “avos” (primary categories) as in “Avos Melachos” (by the laws of Shabbos) and “Avos Nezikin” (categories of damage, as spelled out in Tractate Bava Kamma). The Aseres HaDibros are the “avos” of the entire Torah. The Orchos Chaim further says that if the entire Torah is included in the Aseres HaDibros then the final mitzvah of the Aseres HaDibros is “You shall not covet” to teach us that someone who transgresses “Lo sachmod,” transgresses the entire Torah. The entire Torah comes down to four words: Lo sachmod beis ray’echa (You shall not covet your neighbor’s house).

This cannot just be lip service. We need to truly believe that everything emanates from the Ribono shel Olam – including all our material wealth and possessions, our good times and our bad times, our profits and our losses. They are all from Him. A person with such deeply-held emunah will never be angry.

In reverse, the lesson of the Taz is that any house in which wine is spilled like water (in other words, that has the attitude that it is as if the wine that spilled is only water, so it is nothing to get upset about) will see a siman bracha as a result of its true emunah.

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Hearing and Derher-ing

Rabbi Yakov Haber

"And Yisro, the priest of Midyan, the father-in-law of Moshe, heard all that G'd had done for Moshe and for Israel, His nation, that he took them out of Egypt" (Shemos 18:1). Rashi (combining two views mentioned in Mechilta) comments on the first words of the verse, "Vayishma Yisro - and Yisro heard" - "מה שמועה שמע ובא? קריעת ים סוף ומלחמת עמלק - What hearing (news, events) did he hear (about)? The splitting of the sea and the war of Amaleik." The commentaries ask several questions. If the verse explicitly states that Yisro heard "all that G'd had done," why does Rashi focus only on two of those events. Furthermore, on the phrase "all that G-d had done," Rashi presents a different list: the falling of the man, the well (water from the rock), and the splitting of the sea. Why does this list differ from the first list?

Many note that the verb S-M-A, roughly translated as "hear," has several meanings in its usage throughout Tanach: 1) to biologically hear, 2) to accept or obey (listen to) and 3) to understand.[1] [Yiddish captures two of these meanings with similar words: *herr* = hear and *derher* = insight or idea.] Based on these multiple meanings, the commentaries (see Mizrachi, Gur Aryeh) explain that the first Rashi is not explaining what Yisro heard about; this is

explicitly stated in the verse that he heard all that Hashem did for the Jews and that he took them out of Egypt. [This last point, referencing biological hearing, is perhaps Rashi's point in his second comment.[2]] Rather, the first Rashi is asking what motivated Yisro to come join the Jewish people, namely, based on the third meaning of "shema," what caused him to understand that something particularly unique occurred motivating him to journey to his son-in-law and ultimately convert to the Jewish religion.[3] Similarly, Zohar (quoted by Sheim Mishmuel) asks: "Did (only) Yisro hear and not the whole world? Is it not written (in the Song of the Sea), 'Nations heard and were troubled!' (Shemos 15:14) Rather, the [people of the] whole world heard and were not broken. [By contrast, Yisro] heard and was broken and submitted to the Holy One blessed be He and drew near to His fear." All others only heard; Yisro heard and understood the implications of these earth-shattering events obligating him to make drastic changes to his life.

The Midrash (Shemos Rabba 27:9) comments on Yisro's "hearing":

"Listen to the word of G'd..." (Yirmiyahu 2:4). This is what is written (Yeshayahu 55:3), "Listen and your soul will live!" How dear Israel is that He [Hashem] encourages them! He said to them, "If a person falls from the roof, his whole body gets bruised. The doctor visits him and gives him a bandage for his head, his hands, his legs and all of his limbs. He is all bandages! I (G'd) am not like that. Rather, a man has 248 limbs and the ear is one of them. If the whole body is sullied with sins, but (only) the ear listens, the whole body receives life." "Listen and your soul will live!" (Yeshayahu *ibid.*) That is the meaning of "Listen to the word of G'd, O House of Jacob!" (Yirmiyahu *ibid.*) So you find with Yisro that through listening he merited life since he listened and converted as it is written, "And Yisro ... heard all that G'd did to Moshe and to Israel His nation, etc."

My great Rebbe, the founding Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh, Rav C. Y. Goldwicht zt"l (Asufas Ma'arachos, Mishpatim, "Nishma v'Na'ase"[4]) explains the reason that specifically Yisro taught us the power of listening. Rav Goldwicht raises a contradiction between the famed dual commitment of Klal Yisrael at the giving of the Torah of "na'ase v'nishma - we will do and (then) hear" - implying great initial commitment and fear of G-d even before receiving the specific commandments - on the one hand and the phrase "v'shamanu v'asinu - we will hear and do" (Devarim 5:20), in the opposite order: first listening then doing, presented by the Torah in Moshe's review of the events of Mount Sinai, on the other. Rav Goldwicht answers that the commitment present initially at Har Sinai was not something that all would be able to accomplish. Indeed, even the commitment of the generation which received the Torah did not last and was shortly followed by the cheit ha'egel, the sin of the Golden Calf. However,

Hashem forgave the Jewish people and gave them a second set of luchos. This represented the kabbalas haTorah of the ba'al teshuva, one who needs inspiration before he can make intense commitment. He needs to "hear" before he can do. Yisro, the first convert to the Jewish people l'sheim shamayim (unlike the eirev rav), serves as the paradigm of the proper use of shmi'a, not just hearing but listening and understanding the implications of world events and/or study leading to transformation and commitment. By parallel, the journey of the ba'al teshuva begins by not only studying and experiencing but being receptive to understanding and internalizing their implications.

Rav Goldwicht further quotes the Gemara (Pesachim 50b) that a person should always engage in Torah and mitzvos even for an ulterior motive since such activity will ultimately lead to learning and performing commandments only for the sake of Heaven. This implies that all Jews, not just baalei teshuva and converts, need a dose of pre-hearing, or inspiration, in order to eventually reach the exalted level of lishma implied by the commitment of na'ase v'nishma. Thus, the ladder of religious growth consists of initial inspiration, followed by intense commitment to the totality of Torah - its values and requirements, culminating with additional study only fully accessible and retainable with prior commitment which in turn continually deepens that commitment.

Hashem is always communicating to us, providing opportunities for inspiration - through the messages contained in Torah and through the messages he sends to us in our individual and communal lives. Our own generation, so used to relative stability, has witnessed massive cataclysms in just the past decade in world and Jewish history. It behooves all of us not to follow the example of the rest of world in the piercing words of the above-quoted Zohar to just hear but not listen and understand but to follow Yisro's example to internalize and understand as well. The call of the hour is certainly to come closer to Hashem Yisborach minimally by making incremental changes for the better in our life's activities and priorities in order to facilitate greater closeness to Avinu Shebashamayim and enhanced commitment to His service![5]

[1] Rav Y.D. Soloveitchik zt"l advocated having in mind the third definition when reciting the Shema twice daily since the accepted view of the Sages - as opposed to that of R. Yehuda who insists that the reciter hear the words of Shema - is that the word "Shema" teaches that its recital may be "בכל לשון שאתה שומע" - in any language you understand." (Heard from Mori v'Rabi Rav H. Schachter shlit"a.)

[2] See Mizrachi as to why the war against Amalek is not mentioned in the second Rashi.

[3] See Gur Aryeh, Be'er Yosef and others for insights as to why these specific two events inspired Yisro to join the Jewish people. Also see Mizrachi, Gur Aryeh and others as

to why the other opinion in the Mechilta that Yisro heard about the giving of the Torah at Har Sinai was omitted by Rashi.

[4] See there for a magnificent, much more elaborate presentation than the small excerpt presented here. Also see the insightful article by Dr. Benny Gezundheit, an alumnus of Yeshivat Har Etzion, available here: <https://etzion.org.il/he/philosophy/issues-jewish-thought/issues-mussar-and-faith/> נעשה-ונשמע-לעומת-ושמענו-ועשינו

[5] See also *Inspiration, Application and Preservation for further elaboration on these themes and for techniques for applying inspiration to our lives.*

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Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parashas

פרשת יתרו תשפ"ד

זכור את יום השבת לקדשו

Remember the Shabbos day to sanctify it. (20:8)

Two central themes characterize the observance of Shabbos. It is an expression of our belief that Hashem created the world in six days, which implies the existence of the Creator. We also observe Shabbos in remembrance of Hashem's kindness in liberating us from the bondage of Egypt. The Egyptians made labor on Shabbos mandatory. The Midrash teaches that the Egyptians forced the Jews to work on Shabbos and transgress all thirty-nine melachos, labors, that are prohibited on Shabbos. The Arizal teaches that the thirty-nine labors correspond to the thirty-nine curses which were the result of Adam's eating from the Eitz HaDaas, Tree of Knowledge. (Adam received ten; Chavah received ten; the nachash received ten; and the earth received nine.) The Be'er Mayim Chaim teaches that, by resting on Shabbos, thereby refraining from transgressing the thirty-nine labors, we ameliorate those curses. By forcing the Jews to work on Shabbos, the Egyptians were seeking a means to prevent them from receiving the kedushah, sanctity, associated with Shabbos. When we refrain from transgressing the thirty-nine labors prohibited on Shabbos, we recall the Egyptian's evil decree to make our ancestors work on the holy day. Thus, we establish a zeicher, memorial, l'yetzias Mitzrayim.

In the Echad mi yodea; "Who knows one?" chant at the end of the Haggadah, we ask: Shivah mi yodea, "Who knows seven?" The answer is: The seven days of the week. The obvious question is: Are we the only ones who are aware that a week is comprised of seven days? This certainly is not a Jewish exclusive. "I know seven" implies that only I, the Jew, knows seven. Kuzari explains that the Jewish calendar months are calculated on the basis of the lunar cycle of 29 or 30 days, which makes the year 254 days. The secular months of 30 or 31 days yield to the solar year of 365 days. However, the fact that a week has seven days – no more, no less – has no basis in science or

astronomy. The seven-day week is based on the idea that Hashem created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day – *Shabbos Kodesh*. The non-Jewish world, who refuses to accept the verity that Hashem created the world, does not know the reason that a week is comprised of seven days.

Furthermore, the number seven has profound significance in Torah, because it symbolizes *kedushah*. The number seven is used for: the seven weeks of counting the *Omer*; the seven years of *Shemittah* cycle; land returned to its owner after *Yovel*, jubilee/fiftieth year, comprised of seven cycles of *Shemittah*, *Eretz Yisrael* is blessed with seven fruits. This is in addition to the seven seas and the seven celestial Heavens.

We understand the importance of the number seven and its relationship to *kedushah*. It is no secret to those who oppose us that *Shabbos* is no ordinary day of rest, but rather, a day of spiritual elevation and reflection.

The *Bobover Rebbe*, *zl*, *Horav Bentzion Halberstam*, explained why the Germans write the number seven with a small stroke in the middle. This stems from the fact that the German people are descendants of Amalek, the arch-enemy of the Jews and Hashem. Amalek's goal is to blot out any vestige of *kedushah*. They understand that the number seven has profound meaning to the Jewish People. Thus, his descendants draw a line through the number 7, eradicating the symbol of holiness.

I have always wondered why *Shabbos* observance is one of the first *mitzvos* which the various strains of secular Judaism target for archiving to a remote place in our history. Simply, to them *Shabbos* meant, "No." They were prohibited from doing what they wanted. Going where you want and eating what you want are inconsistent with the imperatives of *Shabbos* and *kashrus*.

Now, with the above in mind, I think their greatest fear was dealing with – and falling under – the rubric of *kedushah*. It is not sufficient for us to be good, moral and ethical. We must also strive for *kedushah*. Hashem wants us to be *anshei kodesh*, a holy people, because He is holy.

When we address issues concerning *kedushah*, we have no barometer for measurement. *Kedushah* is spiritual, and the spiritual is infinite. Thus, we have no idea concerning the value of even the smallest amount of *kedushah*. Likewise, we have no clue what a small measure of *kedushah* can achieve. When one individual creates a change, which manifests itself in elevating *kedushah*, it is an enormous achievement – regardless of how limited the change.

The following story, related by *Rav Goel Alkarif*, demonstrates this idea. Sensitivity towards an infraction can vary from person to person. People have different values, experiences, and perspectives which influence their perception of a given misconduct. While diversity is, at times, beneficial, the Torah should determine our understanding and what is right and wrong in terms of

mitzvah observance. The Torah should be the only barometer of sin. Having said this, I introduce the reader to a wonderful G-d-fearing couple from Bnei Brak. They both work in a *cheder*; he is a maintenance man, and she is a long-time preschool teacher. Their marriage of thirty-five years had been filled with harmony, respect and love. One thing has marred their otherwise happy marriage – they had no biological children. While thousands of children who entered the portals of the *cheder* had been positively influenced by their unique demeanor, they had no children of their own. Then suddenly, after thirty-five years of marriage, at the age of fifty-five, the wife gave birth to twins – a boy and a girl. Words cannot describe the joy that permeated the entire community. Everyone celebrated with them. Theirs was truly a community *simchah*.

When the proud parents were asked what they had done to earn such a Heavenly miracle, they responded with an incredible story. The husband began, "We live on *Rechov Chevron*, a street which is quite heavily traveled during the week. On *Shabbos*, however, fifteen to twenty cars use the street. It may not be a lot, but I figured if we could get the municipality to close the street for *Shabbos*, no cars would traverse, and the holy day would be enhanced. I was very distressed by the *chillul Shabbos* that was taking place right before our eyes, in a city that is the standard for Torah and *chassidus*."

The council member with whom he met explained that, in order to close a street for *Shabbos*, it was mandatory that all residents sign a consent form. "We decided to undertake the daunting challenge of going to every resident of the affected area, which included a number of four-story apartment buildings and ask the residents to sign. We understood that this task would involve a considerable amount of time, but, when one is childless, he unfortunately has a lot of available downtime. It took three years to sign everyone up. It involved much effort, since not every resident was predisposed to the idea. Some simply did not care. Others were loath to affix their name to any public document. Finally, we returned to the municipality with the requisite signatures. Alas, we discovered, to our chagrin, that a number of the early signatures were invalid. People had moved, and new people had moved in. We needed recent signatures. Had we not been driven by a burning desire to honor the *Shabbos*, we probably would have given up, but we were driven – and we returned to the task. We did it! The second time around was easier, and successful. The street was closed. Nine months later, we were blessed with a Divine miracle: the birth of our twins!"

Rav Alkarif sums up the story with an insightful comment: "Tel Aviv's mayor is secular. He is bent on opening businesses on *Shabbos*. (The fact that Tel Aviv is a Jewish city in a Jewish land and hosts a number of large Orthodox communities is not his concern. He wants a cosmopolitan city that will compete with large urban

metropolises of the world.) In Bnei Brak, a simple committed Jew lives whose heart is pained when he sees even the slightest vestige of *chillul Shabbos*. Bnei Brak is a large Torah city in which very few cars drive through on *Shabbos*. *Rehov* Chevron has perhaps fifteen to twenty cars on a *Shabbos*. Nonetheless, those few cars were enough to inspire one Jew to take a stand on behalf of *Shabbos*... One should never think, ‘What can I achieve? What difference can one person make?’ We must remember that every Jew is a *keili*, vessel, to increase *kavod Shomayim*. Every minor change – however minute – brings him closer to his Father in Heaven. Who is prepared to relinquish such an opportunity?

כבד את אביך ואת אמך

Honor your father and your mother. (20:12)

The imperative to honor one’s parents is etched on the same Tablets as the belief in Hashem and the admonishments prohibiting murder and immoral relations. It is a special *mitzvah* which defines, not only our relationship with our parents, but our relationship with Hashem as well. One who does not see the need to honor parents will not see the need to honor Hashem. The *mitzvah* has nothing to do with gratitude, because we received it in the wilderness at a time in which parents did not provide for their children’s needs. Hashem did. [It has not changed. Hashem is still the sole Provider. He just does it through the agency of parents.] The *mitzvah* to honor one’s parents is not contingent upon what they have done for us, but rather, it is based upon who they are and the institution they represent. Whether parents are good or bad, kindhearted, thoughtful, caring – or abusive, we honor them, because they partnered with Hashem in bringing us into the world.

Even the most loving parent can be demanding. This makes it difficult for their son or daughter, because he or she needs validation and acceptance. When they think it is not forthcoming, they become frustrated and even upset. This leads to friction, which is the precursor of transgressing the honor we owe our parents. Does this mean that it is always the fault of the son or daughter? I think not. If anything, the parents share culpability. I recently read an article in which a distinguished writer related sitting with the son of a famous man who had died. He asked the son what he would emphasize in the eulogy he would render for his father. He said, “I will remember that my father always made me feel special. He may have judged my actions, but he never judged me. When I went through a period of rebellion and dressed inappropriately, he would make a point of putting his arm around me in public to demonstrate to everyone that, as far as he was concerned, I was perfect just the way I was.”

This is an incredible testament by a son who must have been a challenge. He will remember his father as making him feel that he was good enough. Sadly, some of the parents who really mean well laud one child over another,

expounding one child’s successes in contrast to another child’s failures. Their excuse for this cruel behavior, “I am motivating him to work harder, like his older brother.” This is not motivation, but unvarnished, inexcusable abuse. Children should not have to earn their parent’s affection. It should be free and forthcoming. Is this not the way our Heavenly Father acts towards us?

It all has to start someplace. The Torah teaches, ‘And these are the generations of Yitzchak ben Avraham; Avraham begot Yitzchak’ (*Bereishis* 25:19). *Rashi* comments: “The *toldos* of Yitzchak are Yaakov and Eisav about whom the *parshah* will speak.” This comment has an obvious problem of textual sequence. The Torah begins the *toldos* of Yitzchak and immediately informs us that Avraham begot Yitzchak. The offspring to whom the *pasuk* refers are those of Yitzchak – not Avraham.

Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita, offers an insightful explanation. The Torah alludes to us that, even when one is married and a father to his own children, he is (still) the son of his father. He must remember to honor his father. “Fatherhood” does not divert one from “sonhood.” Furthermore, one should not forget the lessons and traditions of his youth. If he wants his son to follow his lessons, he must follow those his father has bequeathed to him.

One aspect of *kibbud av v’eim* we often seem to gloss over is the honor we must give our parents once they have passed from their earthly abode. The *Kedushas Levi* (*m’Berditchev*) was very stringent concerning *aveilim*, mourners, who are supposed to *daven* from the *amud*, lead the services, during their first year of mourning for a parent. He insisted that they recite *kaddish* at the appropriate place in *davening*. He explained that the souls of the departed benefit greatly from the positive spiritual activities of their children. Indeed, everything a child does affects the soul of his/her parent. Even if a son does not explicitly state that he is performing the *mitzvah l’ihy nishmos* his parents, it is automatically considered to be so. If one wants his activity to be counted on behalf of someone else, however, he must explicitly say the name of the deceased whose memory he is honoring.

I cite an incredible *Pele Yoetz* of which we should all avail ourselves. I will present parts of it with a free translation. “The principal way of honoring parents is after their death (*Kiddushin* 31b). One should do everything possible to bring pleasure to his parent’s soul every single day without fail. Not like so many ignoramuses who remember their parents only on their *yahrzeit* with a *kaddish*, a little *tzedakah*, or some Torah study. Woe is to those parents who expect their children to redeem them and elevate them because those children are doing practically nothing, and whatever they do is insignificant... instead, it is proper for a son to have his father’s image seared in his mind’s eye and imagine that his father is screaming at him bitterly from amid a burning flame, saying, ‘My son, my

beloved, I beg you, save me from the sword hovering above my soul..." The author goes on passionately exhorting everyone never to forget about their parents, even for one moment.

The *Chida*, *zl* (*Kikar L'Eden, Likutim* 5), writes that every *tefillah* and *mitzvah*, every word of Torah studied and every *chiddush*, original, innovative Torah thought, bestow reward on one's parent as if they themselves had performed it... "As, in this way, he fulfills the *mitzvah* of honoring one's parents more than any honor that he showed them in this world, and he will be a source of *nachas* for them."

The *Minchas Elazar* (*Munkatch*) writes: "One should recite the phrase, *HaRachaman Hu yevareich es avi mori v'im* *morasi*, 'May He bless my father, my teacher... and my mother, my teacher,' even if he is not presently sitting at their table." The *Sefer Darkei Chaim v'Shalom* writes that one should continue reciting this phrase even after his parents have passed on, for they require a blessing even in their Heavenly repose. *Rebbetzin Zilberstein, A.H.*, daughter of *Horav Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv, zl*, and wife of *Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita*, made a point to eat a piece of bread daily in order to *bentch* and say the above phrase: *Ha'Rachamon*. She explained that she lived in Bnei Brak, and her elderly parents lived in Yerushalayim. It was very difficult to travel back and forth daily. As a result, she was missing out on the *mitzvah* of *kibbud av v'eim*. She felt that by, reciting the *Ha'Rachamon* every day, she was honoring her parents – so she ate bread.

חיה לאה בת שמעון ע"ה

נפטרה ח"י שבט תשס"ט

*By her children Birdie and Lenny Frank and Family
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prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum*

Ohr Somayach Insights into Halacha

For the week ending 7 February 2015 / 18 Shevat 5775

More Common Kiddush Questions

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 *Bentching*. 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 shittah 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]

The author wishes to thank Rabbi Eliezer Brodt for making available his unpublished ma'amar on topic.

[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"i 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's), 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 Magen Avraham, 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 Vedibarta 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).

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

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.

This article was written L'iluy Nishmas the Rosh HaYeshiva Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben Yechezkel Shrag , Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R' Boruch Yehuda, R' Chaim Baruch Yehuda ben Dovid Tzvi

L'Refuah Sheleimah for R' Shlomo Yoel ben Chaya Leah, Henna Rasha bas Yitta Ratza and Rochel Miriam bas Dreiza Liba, and l'zechus Yaacov Tzvi ben Rivka and Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam v'chol yotzei chalatzeha for a yeshua sheleimah teikifu'miyad!

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שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
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